

# CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIETY

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THE BIENNIAL JOURNAL OF THE KUYPER FOUNDATION

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VOL. XVIII, No. 1

SUMMER 2008

*Women in Islam*

*Gnosticism in the Cinema*

*State Law and the Doctrine of State*

*Mother State or Mother Church?*

*Formative Ideals of Western Civilisation*

*The Biblical Heritage of Common Law*

*Christianity & Society* is published biannually in Summer and Winter by the KUYPER FOUNDATION, a Christian charitable trust founded in 1987 to promote a renaissance of Christian culture in society by furthering awareness of the implications of the Christian faith for every sphere of life, including the Church, family and State. Its vision of Christian society was expressed in the words of Abraham Kuyper, the Dutch Christian theologian and statesman, who said: "One desire has been the ruling passion of my life. One high motive has acted like a spur upon my mind and soul. And sooner than that I should seek escape from the sacred necessity that is laid upon me, let the breath of life fail me. It is this: that in spite of all worldly opposition, God's holy ordinances shall be established again in the home, in the school and in the State for the good of the people; to carve as it were into the conscience of the nation the ordinances of the Lord, to which Bible and Creation bear witness, until the nation pays homage again to him." The Foundation seeks to promote this vision of Christian society by publishing literature, distributing audio-visual materials, and running lecture courses and conferences.

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# EDITORIAL

## WAS ABRAHAM KUYPER A PRINCIPLED PLURALIST?

by Stephen C. Perks

THE model of social order espoused by Abraham Kuyper and the Dutch neo-Calvinist school of thought that flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Holland under his leadership is usually identified by the term *sphere sovereignty*. It has, however, also been referred to as a form of *pluralism*, and also as a form of *political pluralism*, since it proposes a plurality of governments in society each relating to different social spheres, none of which derives its legitimacy or authority from any of the other forms of social government and none of which takes precedence over the others. The only person to possess sovereignty is Christ himself, who delegates his sovereignty in a restricted form only to specific and limited spheres.

This model and the pluralistic terminology sometimes associated with it must not be confused with the modern concept of *principled pluralism* espoused by some Christian thinkers, which is a different notion altogether in which the State is understood to be a religiously *neutral* institution that guarantees civil liberty and equality for all religions. This latter notion is really no different from the modern secular humanist concept of the State and the complete antithesis of the idea of the State set forth by Abraham Kuyper and the school of thought associated with his name, which denies the possibility of religious neutrality in any sphere of life, including the political sphere. The terminology of *political pluralism* was used in the early twentieth century by political theorists to describe the alternative to political monism.<sup>1</sup> However, the debate between political pluralism and political monism has now been eclipsed by the triumph of the modern monist State and the general acceptance of its claim to complete sovereignty. The terminology of *pluralism* is now associated with the modern concept of multiculturalism and a religiously *neutral* State. Old terms have been given new meanings and unfortunately it seems that this has led to confusion

over Kuyper's political views among some Christians seeking to justify modern pluralistic ideals. As a result it has been claimed that the modern "Christian" notion of principled pluralism has its origin in Kuyper's political ideals. This claim seems to be based on an inadequate understanding of both Kuyper's thought and the nature of the debate regarding monist and pluralist political ideals in the early twentieth century (Kuyper died in 1920). A careful reading of Kuyper's works that have been translated into English shows this to be a completely mistaken idea. In Kuyper's model of social order (*sphere sovereignty*) the State no less than the Church and all other institutions is under obligation to honour God and submit obediently to his ordinances. In his *Lectures on Calvinism* Kuyper states:

The magistrates are and remain—"God's servants." They have to recognise God as Supreme Ruler, from Whom they derive their power. They have to serve God, by ruling the people according to His ordinances. They have to restrain blasphemy, where it directly assumes the character of an affront to the Divine Majesty. And God's supremacy is to be recognised by confessing His name in the Constitution as the Source of all political power, by maintaining the Sabbath, by proclaiming days of prayer and thanksgiving, and by invoking His Divine blessing. Therefore in order that they may govern, according to His holy ordinances, every magistrate is duty bound to investigate the rights of God, both in the natural life and in His Word. Not to subject himself to the decision of any Church, but in order that he himself may catch the light which he needs for the knowledge of the Divine will.<sup>2</sup>

It is clear from this that Kuyper did not hold to the modern notion of principled pluralism, i.e. that idea that the State should be a religiously neutral institution and should act as a referee between the various different religions that constitute the modern idea of a multicultural society. According to Kuyper, the magistrate (the State) is to submit himself to God and order his work by the light of his word.

1. See, for example, Kung Chuan Hsiao, *Political Pluralism: A Study in Contemporary Political Thought* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1927).

2. Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, [1931], 1976), p. 103.

Despite the clarity of Kuyper's position on this issue some principled pluralists have argued that their political theories have their origin in the teaching of Abraham Kuyper. Typical of this claim is an article that recently appeared in the magazine *Christian History and Biography*. The author, Richard Mouw, states that "Kuyper's overall prescription for how to order society has come to be labeled [*sic*] 'principled pluralism'."<sup>3</sup> This is a most disingenuous remark because it is only Mouw and those who have misrepresented Kuyper's views as pluralist in the modern sense, and those who have been misled by their terminology, who label Kuyper's views in this way. Others would reject such a description of Kuyper's political thinking. For example, in his essay "The Life and Vision of Abraham Kuyper" Joel R. Beeke comments: "Kuyper believed in what we might call a 'limited pluralism.' For him, pluralism meant making common cause with Roman Catholics for the cause of promoting political and cultural work that could be carried across confessional lines. He certainly didn't believe that the State should use the power of the sword to support the confessions of the State Church. Simultaneously, he would have been aghast at what is now called 'principled pluralism,' i.e. that the State should be religiously neutral and that all kinds of religions should have equal validity."<sup>4</sup> And yet Mouw con-

tinues his article by saying that for Kuyper the "State should function not as a coach or cheerleader but as a referee, seeing to it that all perspectives—religious and irreligious—are treated impartially as they compete in an arena characterised by fair play."

It is hardly possible to imagine a greater misrepresentation of the political views of Abraham Kuyper, who stated clearly that the magistrate is duty bound "to serve God, by ruling according to *His* ordinances." At best this misrepresentation of Kuyper's views is the result of confusion over two very different uses of the word "pluralism" separated by nearly a century. Mouw anachronistically assumes that the term "pluralism" as used in the early twentieth century in the context of the debate between political pluralism and political monism must have the same meaning when used almost a century later, and in a completely different context, and indeed a completely different culture, to describe the idea of the religious neutrality of the State, a concept that Kuyper himself categorically rejected. At best, therefore, this confusion reveals poor scholarship. Even so, it seems difficult to understand how this misconception has become so uncritically accepted by certain American evangelical academics in the context of scholarship that could genuinely be described as honest. The modern "Christian" notion of principled pluralism is the antithesis of Kuyper's view of the State. Nor is it difficult to get access to Kuyper views on this matter. *Lectures on Calvinism* is still published by Eerdmans and the text is no longer under copyright and can be accessed at [www.kuyper.org](http://www.kuyper.org). C&S

3. Richard Mouw, "The Postmodern Maze" in *Christian History and Biography* (Spring 2007), Issue 94, p. 38.

4. Joel R. Beeke, "The Life and Vision of Abraham Kuyper" in *Christianity & Society*, Vol. XIV, No. 1 (January 2004), p. 29b.

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# THE IMPULSE OF POWER: FORMATIVE IDEALS OF WESTERN CIVILISATION

by Michael W. Kelley

## PART II: MEDIAEVAL MAN: “THE GRAND SYNTHESIS” 3. THE MONASTIC RETREAT: THE ASCETIC IDEAL

In a study of the main ideals of Western civilisation, the single most important factor to be observed in late antiquity is “the rise of Christianity.”<sup>1</sup> One might even argue that until the triumph of Christianity over its pagan rivals was complete, Western civilisation does not emerge in any true sense. This chapter examines the nature of the Christianity that developed and which came, in so remarkably short a span of time, to dominate the ethos of Western society, from emperor to slave. It was not until the fourteenth century Renaissance that a new *humanistic* ethos arose and struggled to usurp the dominance of Christianity as the prevailing religion of Western man.

Christianity was born into a society and culture that was thoroughly in the grip of the ideals of classical man. If we consider the account given in Acts 1:15 of the believers gathered together with the disciples shortly after the Ascension, we are amazed to find that from the core number of about 120 persons huddled together in fear of the Jewish authorities the Church grew with such rapidity, not only in numbers but in social influence, that by the fourth century a succession of Roman emperors (with the exception of Julian the Apostate, 361–363 A.D.) appeared who claimed, at least nominally, to be Christians. While it is necessary to begin with the New Testament narrative in order to understand the origins of the Church and the first spread of Christianity, we do not have a clear picture of the type of Christianity that came to dominate the West for over a millennium until evidence emerges in the historical record of the second century A.D. This account may be discovered and

pieced together principally from the sub-apostolic literature, as well as from the works of certain noteworthy authors, e.g. Polycarp, Ignatius, Justin and Irenaeus, and especially the two Alexandrines, Clement and Origen. The purpose of their writings was to defend Christianity against attacks from Jews and pagans and to provide the faithful with useful arguments in the face of what proved to be a far greater threat to Christianity than the persecuting opposition of Jews or Romans, namely, the manifold heresies of Gnosticism.<sup>2</sup> Clearly, Christianity did not achieve success without a struggle against attempts to eliminate it from without and to subvert it from within. Christianity did not arise merely as one religion of man in a world immersed in religious movements and steeped in a variety of cultic attachments. It came as a doctrine, as the certainty of truth—a certainty founded upon divine revelation and the authority of Scripture—as it pertained to God, man, the world, sin and redemption. It necessarily opposed each and every belief and concomitant life-style as these were traceable to the superstitions of ancient man and practised everywhere by pagans. By definition, a religion of truth is uncompromising. It cannot tolerate different religious viewpoints. Truth is one and indivisible, and those who are convinced must persuade others as well. Christianity was bound to conflict with what on its terms were false religions and beliefs.

At the same time, it is of overwhelming importance to recognise that Christianity’s eventual triumph over the ancient pagan world was tragically undermined by an op-

1. The most extensive English language account can be found in W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984). A shorter, but no less valuable, version is his *The Early Church* (Phil.: Fortress Press, 1982).

2. In the second century A.D. Gnosticism, as Kurt Rudolph has mentioned, was already turning out a vast literature and gaining adherents over wide areas of the eastern Roman Empire. Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature & History of Gnosticism*, trans. and edited by Robert McLachlan Wilson (Harper: San Francisco, 1987), p. 25.

posing development, the incursion into the life of Christianity of a deeply rooted pagan outlook that took hold as monasticism. Far from being a fringe movement attached to Christian soil, monasticism arose as the principal expression of Christian culture and dominated its civilisational agenda throughout the period of its predominance in the West. In this respect a false Christianity appeared along side true Christianity, the two virtually indistinguishable for centuries. Not until the Reformation of the sixteenth century did a genuine biblical Christianity finally begin to emerge from the baleful influence of so deep-seated a corruption of its true nature.

What monasticism represented it is possible to recite; why it triumphed over Christianity at the same time that Christianity gained victory over ancient paganism it is difficult, if not impossible, to explain. But if we hope to understand what came to have decisive significance for Western civilisation we cannot leave monastic Christianity out of account or fail to provide some possible explanation of its advancement. We begin by recalling the essential vision of the Classical heritage, for, as we said, Christianity entered the world at the time when that heritage had reached its zenith.

#### 1. *Christianity and the World of Late Antiquity*

Edward Gibbon, that connoisseur of prolixity and style, enthused:

If a man were to fix the period in history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian [96 A.D.] to the accession of Commodus [180 A.D.]. The vast extent of the Roman empire was governed by absolute power, under the guidance of virtue and wisdom.<sup>3</sup>

He believed the Roman empire at this moment in its history had reached the culmination of its greatness, that it is obvious, at least to us rationally enlightened modern men, that no greater condition of human goodness and beneficence was to be found in the history of mankind than in that time of Rome's climax. Were that true, we ought to ponder what enormous transformations occurred in Rome and in the rationale undergirding its institutions following this pinnacle century, built as they had been on the Classical heritage that, two centuries later (in the late summer of 390) a Christian bishop, Ambrose, could demand of an emperor, Theodosius, that he repent publicly in accordance with Christian moral precepts for malevolent deeds which he, as supreme power and sole authority, had ordered to be carried out. Clearly a significant change had come about in Western society and in the concept of Rome that still stood at the heart of its vision, not so much in the external nature of things as in the realm of ideals and values. As Frend points out, "A vital principle of Western society had . . . been established. A Christian moral order stood above the will of the ruler or any reason of state."<sup>4</sup> Henceforth, an authority higher than the will of the emperor commanded submission and obedience. The elevation of a new Divine authority over *all* earthly

3. Edward Gibbon, *The History of The Decline and Fall of The Roman Empire*, ed. J. B. Bury (New York: The Heritage Press, 1946), Vol. 1, p. 61.

4. W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, p. 625.

power removed the last vestiges of *divinity* associated with Caesar. The idea *Princeps legibus solutus est*, that the ruler is above the law, was confronted, not for the last time. Christianity, perhaps, made no greater contribution to the transformation of the ancient classical world than this.

But in the second century A.D. Rome was still viewed as the hope of the world, still believed by the vast majority of her subjects to be the salvation of man from chaos and disorder. Her emperors were venerated as the bringers of social peace and economic prosperity, the protectors against sub-human barbarians lurking with savage designs just beyond the *limes*. Divine Rome was the pride and longing of thousands from Spain to Syria, from Gaul to Africa. In the second century, "There was no widespread discontent in the empire that would lead to a questioning of the benefits derived from traditional gods and ways of life."<sup>5</sup> Gibbon's evaluation of this century, it would seem, was not altogether fanciful. But historical changes were soon to disturb the tranquility of *Roma aeterna* and render hollow the classical ideal that lay at its root.

Christianity entered the world at precisely that moment when Augustus had established and secured the principle of "Caesarism."<sup>6</sup> Caesarism was the fulfilment in Roman garb of the classical heritage, which derived from the Greeks. As Cochrane noted, "for centuries . . . unique associations were to cling to the reign of Augustus as the claim of a new and better epoch for humanity."<sup>7</sup> Augustus had triumphed over the forces of social and civil disorder; he had re-established Rome on the principle of public power over the divisive private powers of parties and factions that were the principal sources of the civil wars of the first century B.C. The power of the previously dominant noble *gens* (family/clans) gave way to the power of monarchy. In truth, the power of one party destroyed all competing parties for control of the public *auctoritas*. It was the party of Caesar, or the party of the *people*, that broke the power of the aristocrats.<sup>8</sup>

Every revolution demands legitimation, requires a basis on which it can be justified. Since order was religiously defined in the ancient world, any change of order must be vindicated by an appeal to religion. The new Caesarism sought to explain itself as the necessary outworking of the religious and philosophical principles inherent in Greco-Roman ideals. That system of thought conceived of order as the descent and association of the gods with man through some particular human agency. Indeed, the ancients had ever longed for the appearance of a god in human form. "For," as Stauffer explained, "where the deity moves as a man among men, the dream of the ages is fulfilled, the pain of the world is scattered, and there is heaven on earth."<sup>9</sup> It was natural, then, to see in Caesarism the principle of divinity at work in the world as the final hope for mankind.

5. Frend, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

6. No better discussion on this subject is available than in Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957). "Caesarism" is dealt with in the first three chapters.

7. Cochrane, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

8. The best account is to be found in Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960). See, also, Lily Ross Taylor, *Party Politics in the Age of Caesar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961).

9. Ethelbert Stauffer, *Christ and the Caesars*, trans. by K. and R. Gregor Smith, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), p. 36.

What Caesarism inherited from the Classical world of ideas was the belief in salvation through politics, that the rightly ordered State offered the embodiment of the defeat of the forces of chaos and the permanent realisation of order and prosperity. It was the highest form of salvation envisioned by ancient man, for beyond this life nothing remained but the everlasting darkness of the Stygian gloom. Besides, this life, too, was sufficiently threatened with dissolution and the forces of anarchy. Classicism, as a product of the distillation of centuries of Greek thought passed on to Rome, was a Herculean effort “to rescue mankind from the life and mentality of the jungle, and to secure for him the possibility of the good life . . . it was envisaged as a struggle for civilisation against barbarism and superstition.”<sup>10</sup> For the Greeks this conception was first associated with the polis, the city-state. However, when it was dealt a severe blow in the crisis of the Peloponnesian War and finally demolished when the might of the kingdom of Macedon subjected the independent city-states of Greece to its absolute power, the concept in this form perished. All the same, belief in the triumph of civilisation as conceived by the Greeks persisted and, in time, was transferred to the emerging concept of the *res publica* of Rome. Here, at last, was the hope of political salvation.

Caesarism sought justification, then, in the older religious conception of *Roma aeterna*, a concept of social justice, peace, and harmony. Its religious ideal was “that of an order which professed to satisfy the permanent and essential requirements of human nature . . .”<sup>11</sup> It assumed, of course, that a correct insight into the “essential requirements of human nature” was clearly obtainable. It was not sheer power that Caesarism stood for, but a power bent to the service of order, justice, and right living. Caesarism meant power to apply superior *divine* wisdom to a total civilisational project. Caesar, so it was thought, represented the possession of such knowledge and capability. And as *Roma aeterna* stood for the divine embodiment of law and order so, beginning with Augustus, “law was to be the gift of the Caesars to the world.”<sup>12</sup>

The idea of *Roma aeterna* was deeply indebted to the “vision of Hellas,” a belief in “the excellence of man as man.”<sup>13</sup> The latter affirmed the possibility of the realisation of the good life by virtue of capacities intrinsic to human nature. Human nature was viewed as being fully in accord with a cosmic principle of order and goodness, and needed only to be rationally internalised in order for man to live well. To discover the *Reason* or *Mind* of that order was the essential commitment of the Greek spirit of inquiry. Plato and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Aristotle confidently believed that the highest application of that principle was made possible in civic association. Man was a *political animal*, and could only hope to realise the essence of what it means to be human in political society. The *city* alone held out the hope of escape from the dark forces of chaos and flux.

There was, however, a disturbing dimension to Classicism that tended to upset the placid confidence it had in the esteemed capability of the cultivated *virtue* of man. It was the problem of fortune or fate. Here was a power in the cosmos to which even the gods were subject. It could, and often did, nullify virtue and reduce order to chaos, war, revolution, and

social upheaval. It might, at times, support the cause of virtue, but it might equally counteract it and bring it to naught. Men would sometimes feel powerless and helpless in the face of overwhelming disasters of nature, and in civil affairs, instead of a man close to the gods sitting on the throne, fortune or fate might cast up one who was more like a devil. To place hope in human saviours, as Caesarism came to represent, could easily lead to disappointment. And the Caesars themselves, even if they were relatively benign, could easily lead people to expect results which, because fate intervened, they could not accomplish. If the belief was firmly maintained that Caesarism would defeat the hidden power of fate in the cosmos, then the cure could sometimes be worse than the disease. What Caesarism came to mean was the tyranny of the *political* over the whole of life. Everything was subject directly to Caesar who possessed ultimate power to grant or withhold benefits as he wished. In the end, it led to what Cochrane has described as “the tragedy of the Caesars.” “It was, in a word, the tragedy of men who, being required to play the part of gods, descended to that of beasts.”<sup>14</sup> When virtue fails or is thwarted, all that remains is raw power. Large numbers of people, at the same time they tenaciously clung to the ideal of Rome, increasingly sought a refuge from the grim realities of its outworking in history. To find escape, they turned to the mystery religions and orientalism.

Mystery cults were nothing new in the classical context. They had existed for centuries. Virtually all were derivations of one sort or another from ancient chthonic religion, or religion of the cycle of life and death, and fertility.<sup>15</sup> The Olympian religion associated with the concept of the polis and of the rational ordering of life according to *nomos* did not completely eliminate the powerful attraction of these earlier mystical attachments. A significant expansion of their influence occurred following the conquests of Alexander the Great (334–323 B.C.), which effected the demise of the city-state and ushered in the Hellenistic kingdoms. The movement of Greeks into the east during this period brought about a closer contact with oriental influences and hence a major revival of mystery cults.

The mystery religions offered a new form of personal devotion and an immediate sense of the divine which helped to satisfy a craving for purpose and destiny in a world that, for many, could not be achieved by mere *political* salvation. Thus, beginning in the time of the Hellenistic kingdoms, but not reaching a peak until the vast conquests of Rome, the mystery religions came to mean a broad-based rebellion against salvation by means of political power and order. What the orient contributed to this growing counter-culture was an anthropological and cosmical dualism whereby a retreat from the total realm of the material in all its associations and a complete absorption in the domain of spirit took hold as the only means to escape from what was regarded as confinement in a world of evil and misery.<sup>16</sup> But every counter-culture offers itself as a culture and is presented with a philosophical justification. The term that best describes this development is *gnosis*, or what we have learned to speak of as Gnosticism. Far from appearing as one more idealism

10. Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture*, p. 160.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 74.      12. *Ibid.*, p. 23.      13. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

15. See, e.g., Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1987).

16. Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis*, p. 283.

among many, Gnosticism developed as a sub-culture, in time extensive enough to challenge, if not eventually to displace, the political culture of Graeco-Rome. For vast numbers in the east it was the very air they breathed. It was in this cultural world that Christianity first made its appearance. And this cultural world seeped into Christianity. This influence needs to be kept in mind as we proceed to examine the nature of monasticism in the early Church, for monasticism was deeply infected with the dualistic ideology so culturally pervasive in the centuries of its emergence and growth. A cultural cancer on the organ of the Classical world provided the basis of monasticism.

## 2. *Early Monasticism*

Although histories have been written about monasticism and the personalities behind its advance, there really is no one cause or inventor of monasticism. It is one of those murky developments that seems suddenly to appear after a previous, largely hidden, period of gestation. It is an already existing attitude waiting for some particular character to provide it with notoriety. That person would appear to be Anthony, an Egyptian who made the name of *hermit* a Christian badge of honor.

Anthony (251–356 A.D.), a Coptic Christian, born into a wealthy family of Christian farmers in upper Egypt, not far from Memphis, has been called the first of the *Desert Fathers*. It seems that both his parents died around 270, leaving Anthony the heir to a prosperous estate. Upon hearing a sermon one Sunday on the text of Mt. 19:21—“Go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and come follow me and you will have treasure in heaven”—Anthony immediately complied. He sold the lot, placed his sister in some sort of nunnery, and headed straight into the inhospitable desert to practise until his dying day the most abstemious asceticism imaginable. We can scarcely conjecture why Anthony thought it necessary, in order *to follow* the Lord’s injunction, to live in solitary confinement and to deprive his body of the least possible comfort, unless we realise that a whole attitude about the realm of matter and the flesh had long been asserted by the Church. As Peter Brown has observed: “Anthony and the monks of the fourth century inherited a revolution; they did not initiate one.”<sup>17</sup>

The Church had been encouraging the notion that the body and everything associated with it was evil and a hindrance to *realised* perfection (not simply *positional* perfection in Christ), without which it was impossible to get into heaven. This fact is more easily understood when we consider that Anthony was merely the first in what was to become a virtual flood of followers. Throughout the next few centuries thousands turned to the harsh asceticism of monasticism in order to escape every aspect of life in society and to retreat into a self-absorption of heroic deprivation and denial. As the vast majority of this army of hermits and monks were of similar social circumstances to Anthony, it is inaccurate to see in this movement a protest of the poor and down-trodden, the dregs of society, against a social system that had excluded or oppressed them.<sup>18</sup> It was a freely chosen

way of life. Most came from well-off circumstances and turned in deliberate rejection from anything having to do with life in this world. What Anthony and those who emulated his way of life initiated can be called the first *liberation* movement in Christendom. “To enter the Desert” as Robert Markus comments, “was to assert one’s freedom to extricate oneself from the suffocating bonds of that society, from the claims of property relationships, of power and domination, of marriage and family, and to re-create a life of primal freedom, whether in solitude or in an alternative and freely chosen social grouping.”<sup>19</sup> Far from being a biblical attitude, this was a humanistic gospel of salvation by meritorious accomplishment and an assertion of a religion of self-will in opposition to the grace of God. At the same time, it evidenced a perverse ingratitude toward the Creator and Lord of all life, including that of the body.

Anthony’s brand of *eremitic* asceticism conflicted with the idea of the Church as a community, a people gathered together to form the basis of a new humanity. This contradiction did not engender misgivings about monasticism *per se*; others simply conceived it in terms of organised social groups. A second type of Egyptian monasticism, styled *cenobitic*, emerged under the influence of one Pachomius (290–345 A.D.). With him “we may discern the beginnings of a more ordered community asceticism which was to extend its influence throughout the Greek world, and ultimately provide a model for monasteries in the West.”<sup>20</sup> Pachomian monasteries sprang up throughout Egypt and in Palestine and attracted thousands of devotees. The ideal continued to be one of withdrawal from life in society, but now to form a society apart based upon iron discipline and organised regimentation. There was at least some recognition that Christians had a reason for their existence beyond mere self-flagellation. In these communities some obligations were required in the way of work. But monasticism, by its very nature, conceived of work as a distraction from a *higher* calling. Not for the last time in history would toil be viewed as an obstacle to piety and inner fulfillment. About the only *work* most of these monks cherished was hours spent in prayer, rote memorisation of Scripture, and days and nights of rigid fasting from food and sleep.

Completely independent of Egyptian monasticism there sprang up in Syria and its environs the most virulent strain of monastic asceticism. In Syria, a crossroads of east and west, the dualistic temper reached a peak of expression. In Syria were also to be found the worst excesses of anarchic rebellion against all earthly institutions and societal forms, in which individuals went to great lengths to display utter contempt of normality. It was Syria that would produce the likes of Simeon Stylites, men with a penchant for exhibition and studied theatrics. But precisely because Syrian monasticism had reached such outlandish proportions was it taken with utter seriousness by many in society. For how could such persons not possess great powers for man’s benefit who possessed such power over themselves? Men capable of such feats as sitting on pillars for decades must, indeed, be in contact with heavenly powers. Might not one

17. Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 208.

18. “. . . the founders of the monastic movement and their recruits

were not oppressed peasants.” Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity* (New York, W. W. Norton & Co., 1971), p. 101.

19. Robert Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 165.

20. Frend, *The Early Church*, p. 192.

besech them for intercession with such forces on behalf of more down-to-earth humans? In Syria monasticism produced the concept of the *holy man*, a man to be reckoned with, a man capable of bringing upon the surrounding communities, and on the great cities, blessings or curses. Superstition and divination continued to be practised in the name of Christianity. Brown summarises these: “Syria was the great province of ascetic stars . . . Egypt was the cradle of monasticism . . . the holy men who minted the ideal of the saint in society came from Syria, and, later, from Asia Minor and Palestine—not from Egypt . . . the holy man in Egypt did not impinge on society around him in the same way as in other provinces.”<sup>21</sup>

A third form of monasticism has been associated with Asia Minor and the name of Basil the Great (c. 330–379 A.D.). It has often been said that it was Basil, his brother Gregory of Nyssa and their close friend Gregory of Nazianzus—the Cappadocian Fathers—who were responsible for laying the foundations of Byzantine or Eastern Orthodox Christianity. It was certainly these three who, because they all were steeped in classical culture (graduates, we might say, of the university of Athens), helped to produce that combination of classical learning and Christianity which allegedly combined piety with intellectual rigour to foster that ideal which came to be known as the *contemplative* life. They were not, of course, the first to encourage this sort of development—the Alexandrines, Clement and Origen, had already shown the way. But under Basil’s influence this notion of a *philosophical* Christianity was introduced into the monastic context. For, as Frend has observed, with Basil, “the ideal of the hermit was replaced by that of the Christian-Platonist spiritual brotherhood.”<sup>22</sup> His purpose, apparently, was to combine asceticism with philosophical reflection and to erect monastic communities along such lines. Basil, moreover, was among the first to bring order, method, and purpose into monasticism; it was primarily his legacy that was carried over into the West. A Benedictine long before Benedict, he organised monastic life along societal lines in accordance with a *rule*. Those who entered must submit to the rules and live as they prescribed. The times of the day were arranged for varying activities, some for work, some for prayer, some for study of Scripture, but also for the classical authors. Moreover, Basilian monks were not to be so self-absorbed and withdrawn that they engaged in no forms of service to the community. To prevent this Basil established monasteries in towns and cities as well as in the country. His monks were not to despise the institutional Church, but to promote it and offer dedicated service to those who were compelled to live in ordinary society.

Basil’s system might appear to be a considerable improvement over the morbid strains of monasticism that were associated with Egypt and Syria. In fact, the combination of classical culture with Christianity had the effect of subordinating Christianity to Classical culture, of making Christianity merely the addendum of *faith* to the *reason* of things as determined by non-Christian man. Further, the establishment or the institutionalising of monasticism in accordance with rules devised by man and with the intention to produce holiness, when combined with clericalism and ecclesiastical

hierarchicalism, eventually destroyed the authority of *Sola Scriptura* and reduced genuine faith to the customs and commands of human agents and institutional prescriptions.

We have no idea how extensively monasticism was practised; it certainly was not the whole of Christianity during the first few centuries. But it was unsurpassed in influence as the ideal Christian life. While other monastic traditions were to evolve in the course of Western history, the core of its concept and practice was already fully determined by the fourth century.

### 3. *Essential Traits and Characteristics of Monasticism*

In the growth of the monastic concept three features stand out with peculiar prominence: (a) monasticism as ethical martyrdom; (b) the cult of virginity; and (c) the cult of the holy man with power to work miracles.

Among the essential contributions of monasticism to Christianity as it arose in the West, and as in other contexts is still influential in the present day, was the unbiblical assumption of two types of Christian faith and ethic: one for *higher* Christians, and one for *average* Christians. Monasticism, of course, meant to follow the stricter pathway of *superior* sanctity, whereas *ordinary* Christians, those who had not the faith to renounce all worldly associations of family, work, property, relationships and general mundane affairs, must be content to live in terms of a *lesser* holiness. This whole concept developed in the wake of the legitimation of Christianity under Constantine in 313 A.D. A Church that was granted a relative peace with the pagan world of persecuting opposition longed for the good old days of the martyrs when a forced absorption in the *militia Christi* ideal fostered a purer devotion to heavenly life and a willingness to let go of this world’s goods. “With the ending of the age of persecution,” as Markus points out, “monasticism came to absorb the ideal of the martyr. Like the martyr, the monk freed himself from the world for God and found the fullness of freedom in his death.”<sup>23</sup> Not for the last time would the Church set its sights by the dead hand of the past rather than march forward with a biblical agenda for the future. But, then, the Church under the influence of monasticism was incapable of shaking off the pagan conceptions that dominated it. Like classical man, monasticism shared a hankering for a golden era of heroes, for, as Markus also observes, “the age of the martyrs retained something of the flavour of a heroic age . . .”<sup>24</sup> The concept of the hero easily supported the ideal of perfection that monasticism sought to achieve. Thus, “the martyr was the human image of perfection, a model to follow. To be persecuted for the Lord’s sake was the hall-mark of the true Christian.”<sup>25</sup> The accomplishment of great feats of self-immolation was the core ideal of sainthood. In the eyes of later Christians “martyrs were idealised as athletes and prizefighters in a supernatural combat.”<sup>26</sup> Here were super saints indeed! What champions of spiritual warfare against this world and all its evil associations! “The martyr’s rewards were believed to exceed those of any other Christian overachiever. His death effaced all sin after baptism; pure and spotless, he went straight to heaven.”<sup>27</sup> The problem for

21. Peter Brown, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 109.

22. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, p. 631.

23. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, p. 71.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

26. Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1986), p. 436.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 435.

monasticism was how to emulate this behavior and so achieve the same outcome. It would be accomplished by means of a similar, though bloodless, endeavor—by *ethical* martyrdom. “The emotional energies previously absorbed by the duty to rise to the demands made on a persecuted Church were largely re-directed towards disciplined ascetic living.”<sup>28</sup> The mantle of the martyr was assumed by the monk—the saint as hero.

To practise *ethical martyrdom* required an intense commitment to depriving the body of each and every form of sensual gratification and denying it the urges which it insistently demanded, whether these were conceived as legitimate or not. Naturally, the most persistent and vehement of the body’s passions was to be found in the dimension of sexuality. Here was an impulse of the flesh that must be overcome at all cost. The struggle between spirit and matter reached its quintessence at precisely this point. Nothing represented for the seeker after *higher* sainthood the enemy of the body quite so unmistakably as the sexual impulse. The cult of the martyr-hero was given added impetus by the cult of virginity.

The monastic mindset could conceive of no place in God’s purpose for the body, except to view it as a form of punishment for man’s sin. Man’s true destiny was heaven, there to live as angels do in complete perfection of bodiless existence. Here on earth his calling was to be saved from the body and all its associations. To be saved from sin meant the same as to be saved from the body. If anything gave prominence to the body, if any part of man could divert his attention from his true destiny, nothing did so with greater tenacity than the sexual impulse. The monastic ideal called for resistance to sex as a vulgar and ignoble desire and the suppression of this normal feature of human nature.

Sex, of course, is a human desire that, like any other, is susceptible to moral abuse and perversion. The biblical view was, and is, that God created man, male and female (Gen. 1:27), that man was given a sexual nature at the very beginning. Moreover, to satisfy properly the desire that accompanied that nature, God instituted marriage (Gen. 2:20–25), the bonding of man and wife. All this is mentioned in Scripture as having been done *before* any sin entered into man’s experience. It is only when sin entered the world that the sexual impulse took on the characteristic of a *lust* which man would satisfy as he pleased and in whatever circumstance he saw fit. Instead of defending and promoting a biblical view, monasticism simply stood in the grip of a profoundly pagan conception that insisted on a sharp dualism of matter and spirit; as matter was the source of evil, so escape to the realm of spirit meant true salvation.

The concept of virginity as a higher spiritual and ethical ideal is not easy to trace historically. Early in the post-apostolic period marriage was not thought to be alien to the Christian life, but decent, honorable and acceptable. It had been the purpose of the early Church to insist on decorum and orderliness in the conduct of man’s life here on earth, to restrain his passions and lusts as is proper for godliness and holiness. The marriage state took on the added dimension of bringing that most unruly passion of all into control and subjection to the will of God. Indeed, marriage was the only legitimate outlet for the sexual urge and not just for procreation or the producing of children. However, it very quickly developed that sex even within marriage was considered “to

be a clear second best to no sex at all.”<sup>29</sup> The married state came to be viewed as second-rate holiness. Couples were urged, and numerous spouses took it upon themselves, to practice sexual abstinence within marriage. In the second century a widespread consensus arose which spoke vociferously against marriage and idealised the virginal state. It was even suggested that married couples could, by giving up sex within marriage, return to the purity of virginity. At this time the Church also began to teach that second marriages, after the death of one of the spouses, ought not to be contracted. They were positively forbidden for the clergy (and soon first marriages as well). This had the effect of creating a large number of widows who, unless they were wealthy, became wards of the Church. If they were wealthy they became the object of solicitation by bishops and clerics who hoped to entice their wealth for the Church. “By idealising virginity and frowning on second marriage, the Church was to become a force without equal in the race for inheritance.”<sup>30</sup> The family, it would seem, as a covenant institution in God’s purpose had little place in the thinking of many in the Church, nor was promotion of that institution in accordance with biblical directives seen as a feature of genuine holiness.

By the end of the second century there was little concern to distinguish between sexual promiscuity and proper conjugal sex. For those who adopted monasticism, the one was no more acceptable than the other. Origen (186–253/4 A.D.), clearly the greatest speculative mind whose theology was to dominate the Church’s thinking for the next two centuries, simply looked at the sexual nature of men and women as if it had no bearing upon human personality, as if in the present it simply did not matter and could therefore be dispensed with. He shrank from the very concept of gender in man. However, for Origen, to reject sexuality meant far more than simply suppressing the sexual nature. Rather, it meant the reassertion of a primal freedom so basic as to dissolve all distinctions of bodily existence. There was apparently nothing normal in sex whatever, not even procreation. Body gender represented an intrusion from an alien sphere. Sensual experiences of this sort, or of any sort for that matter, were destructive of true human personality, whose delights and pleasures exist in another world. Virginity alone could reunite man with his true personality; it was the original link between heaven and earth.<sup>31</sup> Origen’s legacy to monasticism is profound.

The third essential characteristic of the culture of monasticism that left its imprint deeply etched in Western Christianity was that of the monk as *holy man*. Although we have touched on this already, a few comments are added to fill in the main features of this aspect of the monastic ideal.

As mentioned, the idea of the monk as holy man originated principally in the Syrian context, but eventually spread beyond merely local manifestations. Basically, the idea arose concurrently that the monk, besides having acquired remarkable freedom from the contamination of the realm of matter and having the characteristics of an ascetic overachiever, at the same time, came into possession of mysterious powers. Such powers meant more than just the indefatigable stamina to suppress one’s own bodily appetites and pour contempt upon all worldly interests; they came to be viewed as the ability to work miracles and wonders. The holy man

28. Markus, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

29. Fox, *op. cit.*, p. 355.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 310.

31. Brown, *The Body and Society*, pp. 171–175.

became more than just a model of stern piety and disciplined resolution; he was a veritable agent of great power to work marvels on behalf of the community. Here was the ancient pagan world of “oracles and divination” refitted for Christian consumption. “The rise of the holy man as the bearer of objectivity in society is” as once again Brown comments, “a final playing out of the long history of oracles and divination in the ancient world. The ‘god-bearing’ hermit usurped the position of the oracle and was known to have done so.”<sup>32</sup>

The ancient world-view was possessed of the notion that what affects this life, whether for good or evil, had its source in what took place in the invisible world, where a plethora of spirits and *dæmones* was responsible for everything that happened. Especially in an agricultural society, where the prosperity or adversity of life was so hazardous an affair, and where life often teetered on the brink of ruin, poverty, or disease and starvation, people were eager to secure assistance against the demonic powers whose control of the elements of nature was unquestioned. Who better to aid them than the local holy man whose ability to intervene with the power of heaven was not in doubt? Accordingly, “The idea of the holy man holding the demons at bay and bending the will of God by his prayers came to dominate Late Antique society . . . it placed a man, a ‘man of power’, in the centre of people’s imagination . . .”<sup>33</sup> The holy man perched on his column out in the desert became the object of visitations by a regular procession of crowds, from peasants to court officials and imperial representatives, anxious to solicit his support for every conceivable exigency, whether it be concern for the crops or matters of State. The holy man acquired the status of an arbitrator or mediator between heaven and earth. In doing so, he added new meaning to the Roman idea of the *patronus*, a man of prominence in the community on whose help large numbers depended in everything from healing to advice on legal matters. The holy man provided the historical background to what would emerge as the concept of the *patron saint*, a role that virtually undermined Christ as sole mediator between God and man.

#### 4. Pagan Sources of Influence

As we have already indicated, monasticism derived primarily from non-Christian sources and attitudes. What were the distinctive and fundamental features of these significant influences?

As mentioned, the most pervasive influence came from the thought-world of what today is referred to as Gnosticism. Gnosticism in late antiquity was more a religious-cultural mindset than a particular school of thought or movement. To discover its origins has been for scholars an almost impossible task. About the most certain thing one can say is that it was the product of that special concoction called Hellenistic syncretism, a mixture of Greek, Iranian, and Jewish speculation. And like most composite ventures it offered itself in a variety of forms with peculiar emphases. There was no one thing called *Gnosticism*, any more than today there is any one thing called *Rationalism*. And yet there is a common mental framework that can be traced through each and every specific type. It is this shared perspective that gives it a unique cultural appearance, much as *secularism*

today, although made up of endless traits, nevertheless exhibits general characteristic beliefs. With these alone are we concerned.

Above all, Gnosticism holds to a deep-seated dualistic world-view. “[A]t the base of Gnosis” explains Kurt Rudolph “is a dualistic view of the world which determines all its statements on a cosmological and anthropological level . . .”<sup>34</sup> There are two sides to reality, namely, one of matter and the other of spirit. Furthermore, these two dimensions of things are profoundly and completely alien to one another. They are as opposed to one another as good is to evil. Basically, the realm of spirit is good, whereas matter is evil. It is not that matter has become evil; it is rather that matter *per se* is evil, and its very existence is due to an evil being who brought it into existence. The significance of this doctrine is important so far as man is concerned, for man is a spiritual being who lives in an alien material body. This fact alone explains the cause of evil in man and in the world and leads to the conclusion that so long as man dwells in the body he is unavoidably contaminated with an evil that is antithetical to his true spiritual nature. The great problem, then, is to discover the way that will deliver man from matter and release him for his true *spiritual* existence.

Gnosticism’s chief concern, then, was to offer a gospel of redemption from the realm of matter. To do so it had to explain the origin of matter and spirit as deriving from two separate divine sources, a good God and an evil God. Thus, not only is man as a spiritual being opposed to his material existence, but the true and good God is equally opposed to the realm of matter. In fact, in most Gnostic systems, spirit as such is God, and, since man himself is spirit encased in matter, he shares in the divine substance. If he seems not to know this it is because of an original ignorance which led him far away from his true *divine* nature. It is through *Gnosis*, or *knowledge* that man can recover his true self and return to his true home in the world of light and harmony. Accordingly, Hans Jonas writes, “Equipped with this *gnosis*, the soul after death travels upwards, leaving behind at each sphere the psychical ‘vestment’ contributed by it: thus the spirit stripped of all foreign accretions reaches the God beyond the world and becomes reunited with divine substance.”<sup>35</sup>

Gnosticism represented a revolt against creaturehood. It hated the idea that man was finite and mortal. It did not wish to recognise that man was responsible for the evil that encompassed his life in this world. Its God possessed no personality; he simply stood for the possibility of liberation from finitude and creatureliness. The Gnostic concept of redemption was one of liberation from matter and time, not restoration of the whole of existence from sin and guilt. Under the influence of Gnosticism Christ came to play the role of one who liberates man by showing him the way. Christ was a model of how it could be done, a perfect exemplar of triumph over this world. Death, not resurrection, was the preeminent means of liberation and escape from the confines of the body. Much of this explains why monasticism was supportive of a docetic Christology. A Christ who merely *appeared* in bodily form was more favourable to an outlook deeply antipathetic to the body than a Christ who actually became man in real *fleshy* terms.

32. *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity*, p. 134.

33. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, p. 145.

34. Rudolph, *Gnosis*, p. 57.

35. Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, revised edition, 1963), p. 45.

The direct impact of Gnosticism on Christianity came through Judaism, for, without a doubt, “the majority of Gnostic systems came into existence on the fringes of Judaism.”<sup>36</sup> This explains why Gnostic writings are so pervaded with biblical themes and ideas. And if we keep in mind that the early Church, the Church in the time of the apostles, was predominantly Jewish in make-up, then we can understand so much of what the writers of the New Testament meant when they spoke so forcefully against heresies that even then were causing great upheavals in the various churches. Thus, in 1 Cor. 15:12 Paul writes, “But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” It is this last phrase that stands out. “No resurrection” meant for many no *literal* resurrection, for Christ was merely raised *in spirit*, as he never possessed true bodily existence, surely the suggestion of Gnostic ideas. Paul had to combat this false resurrection doctrine which Jewish Christians were getting from outside Jewish sources. Again, Paul had to combat a “deceptive philosophy,” that apparently was enticing Colossian Christians, with the strong assertion that “in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form . . .” (2:9) and that they should not be deceived “by fine-sounding arguments.” (2:4). Furthermore, Paul berated those who made great cause and show of piety with “their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body,” which was “without any value in restraining sensual indulgence” (2:23). Paul tells Timothy that he is to “command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer nor to devote themselves to myths and genealogies” (1 Tim. 1:3, 4). Gnosticism was full of this sort of thing. Concerning false doctrines that will be the product of “deceiving spirits,” Paul says that “They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods . . .” (1 Tim. 4:3). This, too, was true of Gnostic teaching and, as we saw, became a central feature of the monastic lifestyle. Other examples could be provided, but with these we can at least discern something of the influence that a Gnostic-Judaistic presence had on the first century Church. Unquestionably, by the second century, with the beginnings of monasticism, this pagan religion was starting to burrow deep into the conscience of the Church.

Asceticism, which in the main derived from the oriental culture of Gnostic dualism, stood firmly opposed to the classical concept of virtue as the assertion of the excellence of man in and through the world. For classical man the world was not an altogether alien place, but was the product of a rational order, and man was fitted with the ability to discover the reason of that order and so to live in harmony with nature. This was especially true of the Stoic mind, the denouement of Classical culture. Of course, classical man, beginning with Plato, made a sharp distinction between spirit and matter, but classical man did not think that the latter, though recalcitrant, was necessarily alien to the higher spiritual ideal of life. Man was capable of making the material submit to the power of spirit or mind. The passions could be brought under the control of reason and compelled to obey the *inner* man in his pursuit of *Paideia* or ordered culture. Not so for Gnosticism. The realm of matter was viewed with complete hostility. The only option available was to be rescued from it through a fierce inner resolve to suppress every area of its insistence. This sharp contradic-

tion between radically opposite cultural ideals would seem to exclude the possibility of any synthesis between them. We might be surprised to learn, then, that a type of monastic *Christianity* developed which, in fact, sought to combine aspects of both ideals and was to leave its legacy on the development of Christian culture in the West, in the Middle Ages especially, as the final stage of monasticism. With the emergence in the late second and early third century of the Alexandrine school of theology we encounter for the first time the rise of an ascetic classicism as the form of a Christianity that would remain the essence of its ideal until modern times. To be sure, it was an alliance that was not easily, nor at all times, maintained, but, in general, it continued to assert itself against all attempts to dissolve it completely. Only when the Renaissance and Reformation came along did it finally collapse as a predominant cultural ideal.

The classical ideal conceived the life of the mind, of intellect and reason, to be the highest form of human activity. To contemplate the *form* of things, to grasp the logic of relationships, to transcend mere sensation and feeling to that higher realm of truth, goodness, and beauty was not merely the greatest realisation of what it means to be man; it was to rise to the level of god-like behavior. Connected with this activity was the idea of self-mastery and the inner formation of soul or character as the essence of what it means to be human and to live the happy life. He who attained this outcome was considered to be wise and was styled *philosopher*. To achieve this goal required a withdrawal from the world of ordinary concerns and an escape from mundane affairs. All preoccupation with practical matters and with things that concerned the needs of the body must be reduced to a minimum. How natural, then, for monasticism to appreciate this aspect of the classical world of thought! In the first place, it adopted the essential negation of the body and the realm of matter in general from Gnosticism. But mere negation was not enough; some sort of activity must take place, some kind of living in the world was required. What positive quality must one see in, especially, Christian living? It was Clement (*c.* 150–*c.* 215) and Origen, the Alexandrine theologians, who, in the second place, brought to bear on the monastic ideal the classical concept of the contemplative life of the mind. Here was the beginnings of the *Christianae vitae otium*, the concept of the Christian life as one of intellectual leisure and undisturbed contemplation.

Clement, as the older of the two, and having been Origen’s teacher, may be responsible for fostering this development in the first place. He was the first to combine the emphasis on *Gnosis* of the Gnostic schools with the Stoic idea of contemplation and cultivation of mind. He liked the idea of a *deeper* understanding, but disdained the notion of it as non-intellectual. He did not hesitate to view Christianity in the language of higher *enlightenment*. For him Christianity was true *Gnosis*. The goal of the true believer was to rise above mere faith to the purer regions of *knowledge* and direct contemplation of God. Faith was a mere way station on the pathway to greater certitude and comprehension of the mystery of things. However, like classical man, Clement thought of this task in elitist terms. Only a special few could ever hope to achieve such an exalted state in this life. Here was nurtured the concept of the expert theologian to whom the *simple* or ordinary believer must defer in order to solve the riddles and enigmas of God, man, and the world. This was

36. Rudolph, *Gnosis*, p. 277.

especially so when it came to understanding the meaning of Scripture. Scripture was viewed as possessing metaphysical and ethical truths that the ordinary believer could not hope to comprehend. Only those who had acquired Gnosis, who had penetrated its recondite message were enlightened as to its true meaning.

If Clement initiated this trend, it was Origen who developed it as an art form. In Origen's mind Christianity meant conversion "from ignorance . . . to enlightenment."<sup>37</sup> The real meaning of Scripture was as a source of deeper, hidden meanings made available by a process of interpretation leading beyond the literal and moral levels to the *spiritual* meaning that was of a higher and different order of knowledge. Origen began with the notion that "every word of Scripture meant something, otherwise it would not have been written . . ."<sup>38</sup> But what it meant was not its redemptive-historical meaning, nor was it concerned to trace the re-establishment of God's authority over man, a message about sin and redemption and covenant renewal. Its meaning lay beneath the surface of its language in an arcane search for the process of purification of soul from ignorance and irrationalism. Its message was about a Christ whose chief responsibility was to educate mankind in the proper way to rise above the world and to enter into sublime unity with God. Man was free to follow the lead of Christ, the embodiment of Logos, and so rise above his primitive existence to a higher culture of the mind, there to meditate on God in unobstructed spiritual ecstasy. Biblical Christianity was replaced with Platonic Christianity. The result was the incalculable devastation of a genuine biblical culture in the formation of the West.

##### 5. *Quid sit Christianum esse? Augustine—The Almost Reformer*

Aurelius Augustinus (354–430 A.D.), otherwise known to history as St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo in North Africa, is without a doubt, the greatest Christian theologian and churchman of late antiquity. His greatness, however, lies not so much in his towering intellect, which is demonstrated with such fascinating skill in his voluminous writings, but, far more importantly, in that he came to a clearer biblical recognition of the falsity of the monastic ideal and hence of the truth concerning God, man, and the world. With Augustine was inaugurated a theological tradition, appropriately designated the *Augustinian tradition*, which took hold in the West and provided a powerful countercurrent to the strong false Christianity which had virtually absorbed the Church and threatened to drown it in the depths of an erroneous pagan outlook. We can only guess what might have been the result for Western Christianity apart from the influence that this tradition made possible through this man's careful devotion to Scripture as the source of Christian faith and life. The wide differences that came to separate Catholic Christianity from Byzantine Christianity provide but one example of the enormous legacy which *Augustinianism* has left behind. Another is the fact that the Reformation, which broke once and for all with the predominant monastic culture, as well as with the deadening humanistic hierarchicalism that flowered alongside it, was made possible on the foundation of a revived and purified

Augustinianism. Clearly, this man's thinking has left no negligible mark on the West.

Our concern is not with the details of his life and thought, but with the painstaking reconsideration by Augustine of *what it means to be Christian*. That reevaluation was away from monasticism and in the direction of a more faithful Scriptural understanding. This re-direction of thinking, because it was nothing less than seismic in scale, should not be underestimated. And, yet, we must add a word of caution. Although Augustine redefined the nature of Christianity, it is no little disappointment to consider that he failed to break as completely with the dominant monastic ideal in his own life and actions. In the end, he merely checked its excesses; he did not attack its essential idea, and thus monasticism continued to plague the Church throughout the Middle Ages. It may have done so in any case: but equally, it is just as possible that had he made a clean break and renounced it altogether, he might have initiated a *reformation* as early as the fifth century. But, alas! Augustine pulled back from taking that momentous step. As a result, he leaves to us the legacy of a man whose place in the Church was that of an *almost Reformer*.

Most students of the history of Church and doctrine are familiar with Augustine's personal pilgrimage to faith. The story is well-known of his upbringing under a pious mother whose ardent concern for her son's salvation was to meet with a youthful self-will and *flesh-filled* worldliness on his part. After a long digression into the classical heritage in order to find answers for his restless soul, he at last succumbed to her wishes that he join the Church and become a Christian. Of course, looking back Augustine could rightly say that it was not because of his mother, though her prayers and tears were certainly instrumental in his conversion, but it was due to the mysterious workings of grace that God was pleased through the entreaties of his mother to effect in him a transformation of heart. Once he had made his choice in this respect he never turned back, and his life and thinking are a testimony to a man who advanced continuously in the direction of bringing every thought into submission to his Lord and to his word.

However, at the beginning, it is well to remind ourselves, Augustine's assumptions were deeply colored with the central notions of the type of Christianity which by his day was universally accepted. The influence of Platonic thought and the concepts of Gnosticism as Augustine encountered them in the Manichees who were present everywhere, especially in North Africa, would shape his mind and behaviour for years to come. Indeed, though he progressed beyond them to purer biblical notions, the broad idea of monasticism as the essence of what it means to be Christian, at least for those called to a higher perfection, never entirely left him. It was the Christianity that he first came to know, and nothing anywhere represented an alternative. How else was he to conceive it? And yet, in time, through closer contact with Scripture, he matured in his understanding to the point where he very nearly cast off its false assumptions completely. The catalyst in this change in his thinking was a certain monk, Pelagius, a man whose name came to stand for the greatest heresy in Christian doctrine until it was replaced by that of Arminius.

At the time that Augustine converted to Christianity he was already of the persuasion that the ascetic-classical synthesis best expressed the truth so far as the good of man was

37. Frend, *The Early Church*, p. 90.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

concerned. He accepted the notion that the best for man consisted in a life that aimed to liberate mind or reason from enslavement to sensuality and the fetters of subjection to bodily appetites and material concerns. Influenced by Platonist ideas, Augustine believed it possible to practise a morality of detachment and to experience an inner freedom from the body and its desires by means of an innate rational power. When he became a Christian he began to recognise the erroneousness of this position, for no such rational power exists in man to lead him into the truth and right conduct. Augustine had learned the truth about *sin*. Man's achievement of the good through mere rational resources was no longer the essence of his faith. Instead, Augustine came to understand that man needed God's grace and initiative in salvation for the whole man, for the power of sin was too great for man to be able to overcome its ravaging effects on the whole of life. Sin, a deep-seated perversion in the inner man, was seen by him to be the *fons et origo* of corruption in the life of man against which no solution was available but what God himself had provided through Christ. Only by faith in God and what he has done did he come to know deliverance from sin's corroding power.

It was Pelagius who may be credited with spurring Augustine on towards redefining Christianity more in terms of this central biblical teaching concerning the priority of God's grace for the restoration of moral health to man. Pelagius's chief concern was to teach the reformation of morals for the benefit of reforming society. But Pelagius did not regard the problems of society to lie in some shared human corruption called sin; rather, man's problem was bad habits which could be corrected by means of an inner resolve to be virtuous. Once he had willingly decided to pursue this course God would then *assist* him with grace and favour. Pelagius believed that man's body was a drag on his inner spirit, which was basically good. But he was also confident that spirit in man was capable—it had the *power*—of constraining the body to be morally upright, *perfect*, in fact. Pelagius, and with him the entire monastic-classical world of thought, Augustine believed, was mistaken in its optimism about man. He was compelled to re-evaluate this entire outlook in the light of Scripture. What he found there was a major departure from what had until this time held Christianity in a strong grip of error.

Augustine's great contribution to Western Christianity lay in a better understanding regarding the Creation, including the whole material realm and the place of the body, and the cause of evil in the world and the means to be saved from it. He denied the prevailing dualism of body and spirit which viewed the body as evil *per se* and regarded escape from it as the solution to man's problem. He also called into question the ascetic notion of the pursuit of *perfection* by means of harsh treatment of the body as the essence of holy living.

Augustine saw from Scripture that the whole world, including matter and the body, were products of God's creation. Matter and body were not something evil in themselves, nor did they cause man to do evil. God had a purpose for man in the way he made him and therefore to treat the body as alien was false. As Augustine wrote in *The City of God*: "A man's body is no mere adornment, or external convenience; it belongs to his very nature as a man."<sup>39</sup> More

than this, the body as gender-defined was also quite normal. "For Augustine sexuality was without question part of man's created nature. Sexuality was part of what it meant to be human."<sup>40</sup> The Biblical view that *male* and *female* was as God intended it and that, furthermore, the bond of marriage was basic to His purpose for man from the beginning re-emerged as basic to Christian culture.

There is, of course, a disturbance at the center of life and the world, but it is not caused by desires of the body as such. Rather, the appetites of the body are themselves affected by this disturbance which Augustine recognised to be the result of a perversion in the soul of man inherited from an original disobedience of Adam in paradise. Sin has entered into man's experience for which man alone is responsible. By an act of will he brought upon himself the curse of disobedience. The body is stained with the pollution of soul and has come under the power of *lust*. Augustine would assert that "the corruption of the body, which weighs down the soul, is not the cause of the first sin, but its punishment. And it was not the corruptible flesh that made the soul sinful; it was the sinful soul that made the flesh corruptible." (Bk XIV, Ch. 3, p. 551) The spirit, as was long asserted, was not contaminated by the body; rather, the spirit itself was the reason for the contamination of the whole man, body and soul. No solution was to be found in attempts to deny the body its proper place in God's Creation.

Augustine saw the problem to be in the *will* of the creature. What he meant by the *will* is what today we would call the *heart*. An inner rebellion against God, a disobedience in the *heart*, is the reason for the moral perversion of man. What is more, man possesses no resources in himself to rectify this situation. His *will* is enslaved to the lusts of the flesh, and all attempts to free oneself by ascetic practices or rational self-control are entirely fruitless. Augustine recognised the absolute need of a power which was unavailable to man within his own experience. The power of God's grace alone could restore man to moral health. We receive this grace by faith and not by merit. Further, we do not simply need it as assistance, but as complete necessity. Nor is faith merely for novices who leave it behind for a *higher Gnosis*. No Christian at any time is without the need to walk by faith and rely upon the grace and power of God alone to keep him in the right way.

The consequences for monasticism were significant. The grounds for a distinction between a life of renunciation for *super* saints and an ordinary piety for average Christians became untenable. "In the last resort Augustine could admit only one division, that between those destined to be saved and the reprobate . . . Mediocrity and perfection were no longer opposite sides of a great divide that cut through the Christian community, creating a two-tier Church."<sup>41</sup> As all were saved by grace, there was no longer reason to claim any superior value in the ascetic practices of those who sought perfection as a distinguishing mark of the Christian. For Augustine, the perfection of faith was a goal which *all* Christians must pursue, but which in this life they may never expect to achieve. Since none can be perfect in this life, there is no claim to anything special for monks, nor should one believe they are capable of that which lay persons were not. No special group had a monopoly on faith or the grace of God. The goal of redemption is to restore man to a right

39. Henry Bettenson, trans., *Augustine, Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans* (New York: Penguin Books, 1972), Bk 1, Ch. 13, p. 22.

40. Markus, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

obedience in life, not to seek release from it. Whatever was a part of man's life in the Creation remained as much a part of it in redemption. To deny the body its rightful place in God's purposes, in both Creation and redemption, did not make a man holy. Instead, holiness was something a person must first receive as an unmerited gift of grace. By means of it alone could a man start once again to make some progress in faith and obedience to God's will in all areas of man's life. Augustine had shifted the ground upon which the monastic ideal had sought firmly to plant itself.

Augustinianism, in contradistinction from morose asceticism, encouraged an express affirmation of life. However, Augustine refused to surrender the idea of monasticism fully to a richer Kingdom vision for Christianity. He could not imagine that Scripture offered, indeed enjoined, a comprehensive civilisational programme, a total cultural project for man. He could not conceive that such an outlook was basic to its *gospel*. For Augustine this life was good and to be received with thanksgiving. But he still believed that those who left it for the life of the monastery and the Church in general chose a *better* calling than those who remained *in the world*. Marriage was all right, but it was essentially for *weaker* brethren. Life in the world in general, like commerce, work, civic duties, and so forth, were acceptable, but basically necessary evils. If one could, that is, if one possessed the faith, one should leave these behind for the cloister and the pursuit of "the community of the Heavenly City."<sup>42</sup> Augustine rec-

ognised that not everyone possessed such faith and so must live ordinary lives in the world.

Augustine, then, continued to adhere to the monastic ideal, but stripped it of its ascetic excesses. It was a life that still required the renunciation of property, the practice of strict celibacy, and some obligations to fast but not so as to cause harm to oneself. He saw it in the context of the *Christianae vitae otium*—communal living for the pursuit of wisdom. Monasticism existed to foster *fellowship* and a community of seekers after God. Why the concept of community was viewed by Augustine as only made possible on a monastic basis is not easy to answer. He could not conceive of a Christian society as possible on any other basis. Augustine could not find the key to social formation and structure in Scripture. Like all his contemporaries who derived their ideas of society from pagan philosophy, Augustine basically adopted the Stoic ideal of friendship as the form of society most suitable for earnest Christians to live.<sup>43</sup> Its conception centred on a retreat from the world of material interests in order to live with like-minded companions in a life of leisured detachment and simplicity of devotion to learning and training in wisdom and virtue. Because Augustine shrank from completely renouncing monasticism, he failed to break through the concept of a *Church within a Church*. He could not grasp a *Church within the Kingdom of God*. *C&S*

42. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

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# THE BIBLICAL HERITAGE OF ENGLISH COMMON LAW<sup>1</sup>

by Bruce Dayman

*"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"* (Ps. 11:3)

MANY believe that the future destiny of liberty in Western society directly depends on what we do with our heritage, which is now in a tremendous state of change. The great turning points of the history of Western Europe and North America for the last 1500 years can actually be charted in terms of major crises of law; the Christianisation of the Roman State and then its downfall; the rise of the Christian kingdoms in early mediaeval Europe; the later struggle between divine right monarchies and the constitutional, feudal and ecclesiastical systems; the seventeenth and eighteenth century revolutionary explosions in Europe and

America; down to our present war between totalitarian secularism and Christian libertarianism.

The great hinges of history come to life with light and meaning when we understand that they are essentially struggles between two different systems of law, or more correctly, between a systems of law and a system of non-law. It was the great legal scholar, Sir William Blackstone, who said that there is no such thing as a bad law, there is only the Law of God and anything opposed to that is non-law.

These struggles that have determined Western history and culture up to this point can be described in terms of a battlefield with two opposing armies facing each other in deadly array. One army represents ancient English Common Law tradition which is rooted in the Bible and in the

1. I am grateful to Dr. Douglas F. Kelly, Ph.D for much of the content contained in this essay.

earliest history of mediaeval Christian Europe, and also in the post-Constantinian Roman Empire (A.D. 350). The other army represents the centralised, totalitarian, bureaucratised contenders for the ancient and modern pagan States down through the ages.

Freedom, life, learning, artistic beauty, physical and spiritual well-being have increased because at the turning point of history the armies of biblically-based Common Law have defeated the hostile forces of totalitarian humanist statism.

Once again, in the early part of the twenty-first century we are facing one of the major turning points of Western history and culture. We may not realise it, but our lives are being lived out on a battlefield where the forces of godly Common Law are locked in a life and death struggle with the anti-law system of tyrannical secularist totalitarianism. How this struggle turns out is of great interest to us all and the advancement of the Kingdom of God. In order to think strategically about our future we need to contemplate our heritage.

It may sound strange, but English Common Law does not have its origin in England. It is ultimately rooted in the Bible and was mediated through the experience of the Christian Church in the late Roman Empire and in the feudal Christian kingdom of mediaeval Europe.

It is an interesting fact that it was not until after the conversion of the emperor Constantine in the fourth century that the Roman Empire became officially Christian and the top leaders of the State became intensely concerned with turning out clear, understandable codicisms of law so that, as the Old Testament prophet says, “He that reads may run.”

Constantine had law collected and reformed in the light of Scripture to a degree, and enforced, that would not only protect the Church but would also, for instance, stop infanticide. The later Christian emperor Theodosius the Younger had a great collection of law made in AD 438 known as the Theodosian Code which directly influenced the States of Europe for more than a thousand years. The emperor Justinian who was still later, had an even more important body of law known as the *Corpus Juris Civilis (Body of Civil Law)* collected about the year AD 533.

At the same time as the civil law was being codified in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, Europe was also experiencing the rise of Canon Law or Ecclesiastical Law. The Council of Nicea, in AD 325, which produced the Nicene Creed, also declared twenty canons or rules which were laws regulating Church life. Justinian, in his Code, said that Canon Law was binding on the Empire. Why was there this sudden concern in the fourth century with the clear, understandable public codification of law?

It was a vast change from pagan Rome, even though Rome was interested in law in a way in which Greece was not. But in general, it was not particularly interested, at least the State was not, in making the law clear, consistent and publicly available. Blackstone, in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, relates that according to the historian Docius, the pagan emperor Caligula “wrote his laws in a very small character, that is small hand, and then hung those laws on high pillars, the more effectual in snaring the people.” When you look at the government taxation codes today, you may wonder, “Who knows Caligula?”

It was with the rise and triumph of Christianity that both Church and State wanted the people to know God’s way and

how to walk in it, in large characters. In other words, when the righteousness of God comes home to the soul there is an immediate concern to extend that righteousness to every area and relationship of life and culture. Of course neither Church nor Christianised State has accomplished this to this hour. But to deny that this desire to do so was the tremendous motivating force in the history of Western Christian culture would be to miss the essential clues for understanding what has happened in history for the last 1500 years. The secular history books will not tell you this.

English Common Law rises in Scripture and is filtered through semi-Christianised Roman civil law codes and through ecumenical Catholic canon law. Then something momentous happened in history which makes possible the rise of English Common Law in the so-called Early Middle Ages. That is, semi-Christianised Rome fell and left a vacuum of authority in Europe so that governmental power was radically limited and decentralised for centuries. We should never weep over the fall of the Roman Empire. It meant that an octopus State was dead and left the people free for quite a while in many respects.

Professor A. R. Lewis has described the results of the fall of the centralised Roman State:

When in the 9th and 10th centuries, the Carolingian emperors, Anglo-Saxon rulers and the Ottonian House in Germany re-established something like states in the west, the basic patterns of religious, economic, and cultural life had already been established in response to organic social forces, not governmental pressures.<sup>2</sup>

Economic and religious life in Western Christendom was never the same. This is why liberal historians do not like the Middle Ages. There is a lack of statism during this time. Western Europe was set free from a jealous centralised government for over 400 years. This gave the Church a God-given breathing space in which it could apply the principles of the Word of God to local cultures without interference from a central State.

The next stage of development of European Christian law is the specific rise of English Common Law in the Early Middle Ages. In the Saxon culture of England there were old traditions of rule by the village council of elders called Witan, which had a considerable amount of procedure for settling disputes. Over the centuries, this Saxon procedure was merged with and transformed by biblical principles and statutes, so that by the late ninth century, King Alfred the Great also compiled a code of Saxon Law based on the authority of the Word of God as this had been worked out through the precedence of trials and other experiences of his people.

By the beginning of the eleventh century there were three principal systems of law in England: Mercian Law, West Saxon Law and Dane Law. All of them were influenced by the Bible. Of these three systems of law King Edward the Confessor, who died in 1066, extracted one uniform law or digest of laws to be observed throughout the kingdom.

After Edward’s death at the Norman Invasion of 1066 there were further developments. It is important to note here that while there were some written codes, most of the Common Law of England was, in the words of Blackstone,

2. A. R. Lewis, “The Closing of the Medieval Frontier,” *Speculum* xxxii, (1958).

“not committed to writing, but only handed down by tradition, use and experience.” That is, it proceeded on the basis of precedence established in trials in various courts, which then gave a guideline for similar disputes that would arise in the future, much like the biblical case laws to which indeed the Anglo-Saxon judges continually referred. But with the Norman Invasion a large number of competent scholars in Roman civil law codes and ecclesiastical canon law came into England. These scholars tended to place more stress on the written legal corpus than upon the largely oral court precedence.

Blackstone explains:

From the election of Theobald, a Norman abbot, to the seat of Canterbury in 1138, the nation seems to have been divided into two parties. The bishops and clergy, many of them foreigners, who applied themselves wholly to the study of civil law and canon law, which now came to be inseparably interwoven with each other; and the nobility and the laity, who adhered with equal tenacity to the old Common Law. Neither of them allowed that the opposite system nor recognizing [*sic*] the merit which is to be abundantly found in each.

What was happening in England at this time, the twelfth century, was part of a larger phenomenon that was occurring throughout Europe. That is, the Church was developing a universal or catholic law system, while individual States were beginning to develop separate and particular codes of law to further their purposes against the papacy and the bishops.

Having said this we must be careful not to overemphasize the tension between Norman civil/ecclesiastical written law on the one hand, and Saxon juridical precedent on the other hand. In actual fact, these two streams enriched one another and were not truly opposed to each other because both were Christian-based.

English Common Law, both in its pre-Norman and post-Norman phases of development, was simply one species of a broader European catholic Bible-based law. English Common Law, far from being exclusive to the English, is simply one part of a European catholic Christian law. According to Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy in his remarkable book, *Out Of Revolution*:

The lawyers of today think of Common Law as opposed to Roman Law or Canon Law. To the pride of modern Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence, Common Law seems a popular law and a native kind of law, in short, Anglo-Saxon law. But Common Law was a product of union between universal Christian law and local customs. And the union was legalized by the office of Chancellor. The lawyers of the seventeenth century knew pretty well that the Common Law was Christian law. A pamphlet of 1653 explains the true meaning of Common Law. Credited to the use of the Commonwealth, it says, “The ancient law of this nation was grounded first upon the Old and New Testament. The Common Law contains elements of Hebrew, Roman, and Ecclesiastical Law. Common Law is European law.”

So by now you are probably asking just what is Common Law. Well, first we’ll look at the forest, then the trees. Simply stated, the Common Law guarantees the liberty of the free man over against all governmental authority by laying down the principle that his personal liberties can never be infringed, except upon *the due process of law*.

If you want to boil down the very essence of due process

of law, you will find it in the Magna Carta of 1215. The origins of justice in what is left of the democracies of the free world have been traced to the 39th and 40th articles of Magna Carta. It has been called the fountainhead of Anglo-American liberty.

These articles give us the distilled substance of Anglo-American and indeed Western Christian due process of law. The 39th article of Magna Carta assures that no man shall be imprisoned, except by the legitimate trial before his peers or by the law of the land. The government cannot throw someone into prison and leave him there, as they do in Argentina and other places. This would restrict their liberties, which are in accordance with written law based on the Word of God. That’s what the 39th article says in the Magna Carta, which was forced on King John by his barons.

The 40th article assures that to no one will we sell, or refuse, or delay, right or justice. In other words, the law will equally apply to everyone, those that can pay and those who can’t. “One law for all.”

Along with these two assurances, another central maxim of English Common Law is this: Apart from specific law there is no crime or penalty. In other words, this protects us from arbitrary bureaucratic law, from *ipso facto* law. In these three great maxims, article 39 and 40 of Magna Carta and then this great central maxim, we have a trio of legal truths that establish and protect individual liberty. As Martin Luther said, you will find the gospel in a nutshell in Jn 3.16, so we may similarly say that you can find the heart of religious and civil liberty in the nutshell of due process of law contained in these article of Magna Carta and in the maxim that I quoted.

This is where the fight is today. It is between freedom-loving Christian people versus the arbitrary bureaucratic secular States. Due process of law is what it is all about. Nothing slows down power hungry bureaucrats more and nothing other than the gospel itself annoys them more than due process of law. If you remember anything today, keep this in mind. You may need it sometime. Having looked at the woods, let us now examine some of the trees.

First we will examine the trees or the details of English Common Law liberties objectively and legally with Blackstone. Secondly, we will look behind these major details to their theological underpinnings with a contemporary professor of law, Helen Silving.

First, Blackstone:

The basic liberties guaranteed for the godly Common Law may be reduced to three principles or primary articles: the right of personal security; the right of personal liberty, and the right of private property. Because as there is no other method of compulsion or of a bridge in man’s natural free will but by infringement or diminution of one or another of these important rights. The preservation of these inviolate may justly be said to include the preservation of our civil immunities in their largest and most extensive sense.

Blackstone says the right to personal security consists “in a person’s legal and uninterrupted enjoyment of his life, his limbs, his body, his health and his reputation.” He goes on to say that “Life is the immediate gift of God, a right inherent by nature in every individual, and it begins in contemplation of law as soon as an infant is able to stir in the mother’s womb.” He then goes on to show the utter illegality of abortion and then demonstrates man’s inherent right to self-

defence because God gives life. The State didn't give me life. The State doesn't have the right to take away my life except on due process of law laid down by God.

Unless we go down to the underpinnings of these things, down to the roots, we will lose the battle. (Ps. 11:3) "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" One person has looked at the theological underpinnings of the Common Law, the Magna Carta and our North American constitutions which depend on those two documents. Professor of Law, Helen Silving may not even be a Christian yet she gives insight and honesty which outshines many Christian scholars. She quite frankly notes the amazing refusal and/or inability of most legal scholars to connect English Common Law, and especially its capstone, the Magna Carta, to their perfectly obvious roots in Holy Scripture.

She points out the remarkably blind scholarship involved in seeking to explain the rise of the liberty of the Magna Carta by turning a blind eye to 1200 years of Christian history and suddenly jumping back into the pagan Greek and Roman world to explain it. This procedure "may be owing to unconscious motivations of secularism." This is why abortion is legal today. She says,

Returning to the initially posed question as to the origins of Magna Carta, and its no crime and no penalty outside the specific principles of law, one might wonder why comparative legal scholars have paid little attention to the striking parallelism which obtains between these provisions contained in these documents and biblical tenets?

The Magna Carta of England and the Magna Carta of Spain in 1188 have their common origin in the Bible. The draftsmen of both Charters, the Spanish and the English Magna Carta, were undoubtedly churchmen, learned in the Bible and Canon Law.<sup>3</sup>

Professor Silving goes on to demonstrate that the Magna Carta derives its very vocabulary, its covenantal structure of self-blessing and self-cursing, and its basic content directly from the Old Testament. We need not deal here with the matter of the vocabulary and covenantal structure of the Magna Carta, but it is essential that we briefly consider the biblical, theological background of the political liberties conveyed in this great charter. Let us look at six points:

1. The corner stone to the whole Common Law system is the covenantal fact that both civil government and the individual are under the authority of God's written law which is the Covenant. Silving says, "According to the Biblical conception, kings and other rulers are, in fact, not above the law and kings are known to have yielded to censure by prophets." She then adds, "the king has to govern under the law, and if he does not govern under the law, the people have the divine right to replace him." She speaks of these great principles: that there is no crime and no punishment outside the law; that these principles are contained in the biblical provision; that the king should govern under law; and that this should be laid down in writing before his succession to power. "And thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly" (Dt. 27:8). "On this side Jordan, in the land of Moab, began Moses to declare this law, saying . . ." (Dt. 1:5). "Certainly," says Silving, "the notion of limitation of government power is expressed in the maxim

and reflected in the very procedure of the sovereign submitting himself to the restrictions."

A most important feature of the Charter is its provision for its sanction against non-observance by the king, in the form of the king's advance consent to rebellion, by the people, against him, should he violate the Charter. This is found in article 61 of Magna Carta. "The notion of advanced self-subjection to a sanction, in the event of a future failure to observe the law is clearly Biblical" says Silving. "The Magna Carta stands for the idea expressed in England, by the lawyer Bracton, of subjection of the king not so much to man, but to God and the law. This idea was rooted in the Bible and has dominated Anglo-American thought." The English Puritan uprising of the 1640s, the Whig Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the American War for Independence of 1776 all saw themselves as faithfully carrying out this provision of the Magna Carta, and of the Word of God which under girded it. All these history transforming movements wanted to re-submit the civil government to the authority of the Law of God which expressly limits and defines governmental power. Unless we quickly recapture an understanding of this part of our biblical Common Law heritage, freedom will have very little future.

2. The Common Law specifically carried out the biblical injunction that the law was to be administered without respect of persons. "To no one will we sell, to no one will we refuse, or delay, right or justice." Juridical impartiality is found in the Bible in the prohibition against partiality to the poor, as against deference to the rich (Lev. 19 and Ex. 23).

3. A shield of liberty against the intrusion or tyranny is the privacy of the home. "Every Englishman's home is his castle." Professor Silving states that our injunction against unreasonable search and seizure, and our general conception of the privacy of the home might be traceable to the biblical prohibition against entering the house of a debtor in order to obtain a pledge (Dt. 24.10-11).

4. Another shield of liberty is the due process of law which we have already discussed at some length. This too is found in the Old Testament. Professor Silving says, "The Magna Carta's roots in the Bible gave it a democratic imprint." That no free man must be imprisoned except by written law is significant, not only for itself, but also at reflecting the biblical tenet, "that the manslayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment" (Num. 35 and Josh. 20).

5. Another heritage of liberty and right bequeathed to us by English Common Law is that punishment must be proportional to guilt. This is laid down in articles 20 and 21 of the Magna Carta and comes from such passages as Dt. 25.1-3 and many others.

6. The last shield of liberty given us by Common Law is freedom from double jeopardy. That is, not being tried twice for the same crime. This is under heavy attack in our day.

Though space doesn't permit, it is important that we should not confuse Common Law with Natural Law, or the Law of Nature. Natural Law can supposedly be found in nature and extracted by the human mind, but if such a thing exists, that is not what Common Law claims to be. Blackstone called the Common Law the Law of Nature, by which he meant the Law of God which rules all of nature and is contained in the Bible. We must not conclude that these truths are attainable by Reason. They come by Revelation.

English Common Law came to Canada via the early

3. See Helen Silving, "The Origins of Magnae Cartae," *Harvard Journal of Legislation*, 3 (1965): 117-31.

English settlers and was even partially introduced into Quebec through the Conquest. Today in Quebec, *private law* (or *civil law*) is based on the *Code Civil du Quebec* which is derived from the French *Code Napoleon*, whereas in the other Canadian provinces private law is based on English Common law.

While laws are enacted by Parliament (legislature) we are seeing more and more involvement by the judicial wing. Many have expressed concern over the possibility of judicial tyranny rearing its ugly head. As a matter of fact, we can see this in abortion legislation, the striking down of the Lord's Day Act, and laxness in many other criminal areas including homosexual rights. On top of this, we need to watch that the doctrine of the *divine right of parliament* does not gain acceptance as it did in various times in England, in which Common Law was overruled. In order to guard against moving toward greater governmental tyranny we need to prayerfully consider the following four things:

1. There is a crying need among God's people for an understanding of the real issues that affect us and confront us today. 2. There is a need for intelligent and committed

leadership in all areas. Leadership means service. 3. With so much responsibility and so many battles to be fought, we may feel that there is just too much and we cannot accomplish it. We get weary and give up. If this were a football game we would be at the end of the first quarter. We can win this game if we persist in the power of God's grace. Too much is at stake to let ourselves grow weary and quit. 4. Above all else we need a true visitation of the Holy Ghost in our time. That is what has always given the victory in the past. If we fail to seek this, all our other solutions will likely fall to the ground.

A Song of degrees of David.

If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say; If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: Then the proud waters had gone over our soul. Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

(Ps. 124) C&S

# WOMEN IN ISLAM

by *Christine Schirrmacher*

THERE is only very little that can be said in general about all women in Islam. The differences in the circumstances of life created by the urban or rural environment are too large; the gap between women in Afghanistan and Tunisia, between sternly religious families and secularized Muslims in the Western world, is too great. The question whether the woman concerned obtains access to schooling changes the circumstances of her life just as decisively as does her age at marriage and the view of the individual family about which Islamic regulations are to be applied in this family and how strictly. This article names several of these fundamental guidelines without, thereby, claiming automatically to describe the concrete living conditions of all Muslim women.

## *Up to Four Women*

Polygyny (multiple wives)—possibly unlimited—probably existed in pre-Islamic Arabia. In Sura 4:3, the Koran limits the number of a man's wives to four and, beyond this, allows an unlimited number of concubines: "And if you fear not acting justly in regard to the orphans, than marry women as it befits you: two, three, or four. But, if you fear not acting justly, then marry only one, or whatever [female slaves] you

possess. In this way, you can most easily avoid doing injustice" (4:3).

A few countries, such as Tunisia, legally forbid polygamy. In the other countries, however—provided that the marriage contract makes no other provision—a woman can do nothing if her husband desires to take a second wife. In several Islamic countries today, though, she can require in the marriage contract that she be guaranteed the right to a divorce if her husband takes a second wife during her lifetime. In the other Islamic countries, polygamy is in no way the rule, but—simply for economic reasons—always the exception, since the Koran and Islamic tradition demand that all women be treated justly in regard to the material care and affection provided by the husband.

A few Muslim theologians have interpreted the only Koran verse that mentions the number of four wives (Sura 4:3) in the sense that the Koran here actually speaks explicitly against polygamy, since the equal treatment of several wives is never really possible, as the Koran itself concedes: "And you will not really be able to treat your wives justly, however much you try to do so" (4:129). The majority of Muslim theologians, however, have held fast to the permission, in principle, to marry four wives.

### *The Duty of Marriage*

In Islam voluntary unmarried existence is actually unthinkable. The Koran, of course, clearly commands marriage in Sura 24:32: "And give in marriage those among you who are single." The Islamic tradition declares marriage to be a good custom that is to be observed, that is, it is *sunna*: "Marriage is a part of my *sunna*, and whoever is against my *sunna* is against me," so Mohammed is reported to have said.<sup>1</sup> Unmarried, divorced, or widowed women in the Islamic world usually do not live alone but rather move in again with their extended family, which has the goal of seeing them married again. The fundamental reason for this is the Islamic concept of marriage, which assumes that, without the control of the extended family, a single woman living alone would give rise to rumours about her moral conduct.

### *Early Marriages*

The Koran makes no concrete statements about an acceptable age for marriage. It is known of Mohammed that he married some of his wives while they were very young or still children, especially his later favorite wife Aisha, who was six years old at the time. This fact later was cited repeatedly as justification for child marriages. Today, the law books of most Islamic countries contain provisions that determine a minimum age for marriage, which is frequently set at 14 to 16 years for girls and approximately 16 to 18 years for boys, a regulation that, in practice in rural areas, is not infrequently circumvented by the misrepresentation of birth dates. Thus, for example, Moroccan women report that, as recently as several decades ago, girls not yet in puberty, at the age of eleven or twelve years, were given in marriage. However, it happened that the marriage of nine year-olds also occurred, and that girls became mothers already at the age of ten or eleven.<sup>2</sup>

### *Arranged Marriages and Marriage Contracts*

To the present day, marriages occur frequently within the network of family relations, above all between cousins, because marriage also is considered very much under the aspect of a bond between two families. Once young people reach marriageable age and are not yet promised to a cousin, the traditional way is the arrangement of a marriage through the mother or an older female relation of the groom. Of course, modern marriages are certainly not arranged everywhere, and the number of "love marriages"—above all in urban areas—is steadily increasing.

If the family arranges the marriage, however, the mother of the groom will make inquiries at the appropriate time about the family of the chosen young woman and about her financial circumstances, but above all about her reputation, her health, and her domestic abilities. One or two visits in the home of the young woman take place, on the occasion of which the amount of the marriage portion and the festivities are discussed. If both families reach agreement, then an official date for the wedding is set and the couple are

considered engaged. The assent on the part of the young woman plays a more important role today than in earlier times. Today she is free to reject one candidate, but a second or third candidate less so, since she then easily can be considered difficult and unmarriageable and, thus, can bring shame upon her family.

The actual marriage ceremony is simple; the presence of the bride is not absolutely necessary. She can have her father, brother, or other male relative stand in for her. Originally, the inclusion of an administrative authority in the ceremony, for the registration of the marriage, was not required, but only the presence of a clergyman as well as two witnesses. Today, marriages are also frequently registered with the State authorities. The marriage is purely a contract in civil law between the groom and the legal representative of the bride, and is given no particular divine blessing and includes no promises of lifelong fidelity. The marriage contract regulates, above all, the financial aspect of the marriage portion (Arabic: *mahr*). The groom either pays the marriage portion completely to his bride as her property at the time of the marriage ceremony, or it is agreed upon that the first part ("morning portion") is due at the time of the wedding ceremony and the second part ("evening portion") in the case of divorce or the death of the husband, as a means of providing the wife with some financial security in these cases.

### *The Wedding Celebration*

At the following wedding celebration, men and women by tradition celebrate separately. The high point of the festivities is the act of bringing the bride into the house of the groom. There, the marriage is consummated and, as proof of the virginity of the young woman, the bed sheets are shown to the female relatives. The respectability of the bride and the honor of the whole family are thus demonstrated. If the husband discovers that his bride is no longer a virgin, she is sent back to her family in shame and dishonor. For the family of the girl and for the bride herself, this is certainly the greatest conceivable disgrace of her life. Absolute abstinence before marriage, as a rule, is not expected from the husband to the same extent as from the woman.

### *The Provision for the Family*

The husband is obligated to provide for the family. The wife, for her part, legally cannot be forced to contribute to the livelihood of the family. The wife has the obligation to care for the household and the children. Joint ownership of property in our understanding of the concept does not exist, since neither husband nor wife acquires the right to the property of the other through the marriage. The morning portion at the time of the marriage ceremony, as well as the evening portion in the case of divorce, is considered the property of the wife and is not permitted to be used for meeting the costs of living.

Once married the man, according to the Koran, has an unlimited right to marital intercourse whenever he wishes. "Your women are a fertile field for you. Go to your field whenever you wish" (2:223). Refusal on the part of the woman is always grounds for divorce, and there are some traditions that pronounce a curse on the wife for her refusal. The wife, too, can sue for divorce in this regard, but only after a long period of continuous sexual neglect.

1. Hans Bauer, *Von der Ehe. Das 12. Buch von al-Gazâlî's Hauptwerk* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1917), p. 5.

2. Fatima Mernissi (ed.), *Der Harem ist nicht die Welt. Elf Berichte aus dem Leben marokkanischer Frauen* (Hamburg: Lüchtherhand, 1988).

*Sons and Daughters*

An Islamic marriage never will voluntarily remain childless. Childlessness is considered to be a disgrace and the wife is almost always given the blame for it. Infertility is a frequent ground for divorce. Often the “Evil Eye” of a third party is seen as the cause of childlessness, and many infertile women visit the graves of holy figures, or consult conjurers in order to attain fulfilment of their desire for children by use of magical practices, sacrifices, and occult ceremonies.

A birth is always a joyful event, especially the birth of a boy. The wife is awarded full recognition really only through the birth of a child, for she now has fulfilled the most important expectation of her parents and in-laws. To have given birth to a son is such a tremendous event that many mothers afterward are no longer called by their own names, but rather only as the “mother of Azîz” (Arabic: *umm Azîz*) or “mother of Ismâ’il.” The tradition says that “Paradise lies at the feet of mothers,” and the Koran demands esteem for and the respectful treatment of parents, especially in their old age: “And we have commanded the people to be good to their parents” (46:15). Only when the parents keep their child from the faith is the child theoretically allowed to be disobedient.<sup>3</sup>

At the birth of a child, the prayer call is whispered in its left ear and the confession of faith (“There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his Prophet”) in its right ear. Special care is taken to ensure that the “Evil Eye” might not possibly strike the child, for the high rate of infant mortality in the Islamic world was and is still today attributed above all to the effects of the “Evil Eye”, that is, to the adverse magical practices of a third party. For this reason, it is attempted to protect the child from this influence by using various protective magical practices, such as blue beads sewn to the clothing of the child. Annemarie Schimmel mentions the custom of asking forty men named Mohammed for money and then buying clothing for the child from the money received.<sup>4</sup> Sometimes, among other practices, a boy will be dressed in girl’s clothes so that the demons are led astray from thinking that they have a boy before them.

*Circumcision for Boys and Girls*

Circumcision, which the Koran nowhere explicitly demands, is obligatory for boys in the entire Islamic world, and is celebrated with a family festival, usually when the boy is between seven and ten years of age. Afterwards, the boy belongs to masculine society and is gradually made acquainted with the duties of his religion.

In spite of the official State prohibition of it in most Islamic countries, the circumcision of girls is practised to a greater or lesser extent in several States, primarily in southern Egypt, Somalia, Sudan, as well as by the Bedouins of North Africa. The Koran provides no basis at all for this custom, which has survived in only a few Islamic countries, where traditional groups defend it stubbornly as a means of preserving the chastity of the unmarried women. Some Muslim states condemn the circumcision of girls as repre-

hensible, but cannot effectively prevent its practice in certain areas of the society. Only recently, the circumcision of girls, legally forbidden in Egypt as early as 1959, was re-legalised there. It is possible that this custom has its origins in African religions. In Egypt, the circumcision of girls was carried out during the time of the Pharaohs.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the circumcision of girls should not be considered as specifically Islamic.

*The Veil*

Although in all Islamic countries full or partial veiling is practised by at least a portion of the women, the command to wear the veil is not at all so easy to derive from the Koran. The Koran says merely that women should cover themselves in a virtuous way for their own protection: “Oh, Prophet! Speak to your wives and daughters and to the women of the believers that they should draw their garments down low over themselves. Thus it is most readily ensured that they are recognised and not molested. God is, however, compassionate and ready to forgive” (33:59).

In the case of some of these instructions it is not easy to decide from the context whether they concern only Mohammed’s wives or whether, because his wives are intended to be models for all women, all women in general are addressed here indirectly.

The veil, or the headscarf, is worn from about the age of puberty. The woman then can show herself unveiled only before the men of her extended family. The Koran gives no clear instruction about whether the “veil” means merely a headscarf worn over the usual clothing, as is frequently usual in Turkey, or a full-length veil that leaves the face free or provides only slits for the eyes, as is currently usual in Afghanistan.

*The Punishment of the Wife in the Koran and in Tradition*

The Koran explicitly concedes to the man the right in certain situations to punish his wife (or wives): “The men take precedence over the women because God has honored them more than the others and because they give (to their wives) from their property . . . And if you fear that the wives rebel (against you), then remove yourselves from them in the marriage bed and beat them. If they then obey you, then undertake nothing further against them” (4:34).

The husband, thus, is given the right to resort to corporal punishment if he merely fears that his wife could rebel against him. He can use such punishment to compel her to obedience if admonishment and the refusal of marital intercourse have not moved her to relent. Whoever examines the exact wording of the Koran verse could even say that the man not only has the right, but even the duty to punish, for Sura 4:34 is formulated as a command to husbands: “Beat them!”

This is not to say that in every Muslim family the husband beats his wife. There is also just as little justification for claiming that men in the Islamic world would not avail themselves of this right. N. Tomiche mentions, for example, that the right of punishment is legally established in Egypt. There are said to be courts there that concern themselves

3. So Jacques Jomier, *How to Understand Islam* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1989), p. 75.

4. Annemarie Schimmel, “Traditionelle Frömmigkeit,” in Munir D. Ahmed and others, *Der Islam, III. Islamische Kultur, Zeitgenössische Strömungen, Volksfrömmigkeit* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1990), pp. 242–266, here: p. 244.

5. Frank Bliss, *Frau und Gesellschaft in Nordafrika. Islamische Theorie und gesellschaftliche Wirklichkeit* (Bad Honnef: Deutsche Stiftung für Internationale Entwicklung, 1986), p. 118.

with the permissible length of the stick with which the woman can be beaten.<sup>6</sup> “Moderate” punishment by the husband will hardly be a cause for legal action against him, since the wife is assumed to be fundamentally responsible for the success of the marriage and, in the case of punishment, the assumption is abnormal behaviour on her part.

In the tradition, it is reported of Mohammed himself that he confirmed the right of punishment for the case of a wife who receives as a guest in her home someone whom the husband is not able to abide: “But, she should not allow anyone to sit in your private quarters who you do not like. If she, however, does this anyway, then you are permitted to punish her, but not too hard. Her rights in regard to you are that you provide her in an appropriate form with food and clothing”<sup>7</sup>.

The famous theologian Abû Hamîd al-Ghazâlî (died 1111) demands that the “malice” of the wife be treated with “discipline and severity”<sup>8</sup> and, in the case of “disobedience on the part of the wife,” he advocates “forcibly returning [her] to obedience.”<sup>9</sup> If her husband punishes her and, as a last resort, beats her, then “he should beat her without causing her injury . . . that is, he should cause her pain, but not so that one of her bones is broken or she bleeds. He also is not permitted to strike her in the face; that is forbidden.”<sup>10</sup>

### Adultery

Adultery in general is considered in Islam to be a serious offence; the Koran requires 100 lashes for the man and the woman (24:2) and warns explicitly against leniency and compassion. In Islamic law, however, the penalty of death by stoning has come to be accepted since the tradition mentions this punishment and it is assumed that earlier the Koran also once contained this “stoning verse.”

However, four witnesses are required to provide proof of adultery, a circumstance that is likely to be extremely rare. If this condition cannot be fulfilled, then the charge is interpreted as a false accusation, which, according to Islamic law, likewise is punishable by death. A wife can ward off the accusation of adultery made by her husband, but which he cannot prove through the evidence of four witnesses, by calling upon God four times as her witness that her husband is lying and the fifth time swearing to God that she is innocent and imploring God that he otherwise might punish her with his curse (24:6–9).

These are the legal provisions, which offer only few possibilities for legal proceedings. It is quite another question how adultery, or the suspicion of it, is punished in practice. One can certainly assume that a woman is not very frequently charged with adultery in a court of law, but that the family of a woman fallen into “disrepute” itself much more frequently assumes the responsibility of punishment.

6. N. Tomiche, “Mar’a,” in: *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. VI (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), pp. 466–472, here: p. 471, and Frank Bliss, *Frau und Gesellschaft in Nordafrika. Islamische Theorie und gesellschaftliche Wirklichkeit* (Bad Honnef: Deutsche Stiftung für Internationale Entwicklung, 1986), p. 69.

7. From a translation by Talib Y. Fehlhaber, cited in: Ahmad v. Denffer, *Wallfahrt nach Mekka. Das Wichtigste über umra und hadsch*, Schriftenreihe des Islamischen Zentrums München, Nr. 15 (Munich, 1987), p. 84, unfortunately with no source reference.

8. Hans Bauer, *Von der Ehe. Das 12. Buch von al-Gazâlî’s Hauptwerk* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1917), p. 78. 9. *Ibid.*, p. 87. 10. *Ibid.*

In fact, it appears that, in practice, the proven case of adultery is not always required for the punishment of a woman, but rather that only minor deviations from socially accepted behavior are sufficient. For an unmarried woman, this immoral behavior would exist, for example, in a conversation with an unrelated man. The woman then gains a bad reputation and thus has fewer chances for marriage. It can happen that a girl who once has exchanged a few words with a young man in a public place is then shut up completely at home and monitored constantly until she is married.

Jürgen Frembgen reports from his experiences gathered during several lengthy stays in Pakistan: “Among the Pakhtun and Baluch, the forbidden glance of a woman in the direction of a strange man, or a short conversation, already can be interpreted as unchaste behavior and adultery, which makes further life together with her husband impossible and often enough means the killing of the wife,”<sup>11</sup> or “contacts between a man and a woman who are not married to each other can . . . be interpreted as adultery and result in a vendetta.”<sup>12</sup>

### Divorce and Repudiation of the Wife

The tradition, to be sure, records that Mohammed characterised divorce as the most reprehensible of all permitted actions. Yet, divorces in Islamic law were and are very simple for the man and, accordingly, frequent. The husband can repudiate his wife at any time and without naming his grounds for it by repeating the divorce formula (for example: “I repudiate you!”) three times. If he pronounces the formula only once or twice, then the divorce is still revocable. He takes his wife back again before the “waiting period”—the period in which a possible pregnancy would become evident—has run out and consummates marital intercourse with her, which amounts to a repeal of the divorce. If, however, the divorce formula has been spoken three times, then the man can marry this particular woman again only if she, in the intervening period, has been the wife of another man and again has been divorced from him (2:228–230).

This regulation of the three-fold divorce formula is intended actually to protect the woman from impulsive divorces that are pronounced in annoyance, intoxication, or just in fun. Divorce, however, remained even in the Islamic era a comparatively uncomplicated process for the husband, since his decision alone is sufficient.

Today, however, this simple divorce has been made *de facto* more difficult in several Islamic countries. Often (but not everywhere), legal proceedings in a court of law are necessary. In some cases, too, the man must initiate a legal action in order to obtain a divorce; sometimes he is urged to undertake attempts at reconciliation. A particularly frequent ground for divorce today is still likely to be the infertility of the wife or the birth of several daughters and no son.

In most Islamic countries today, a wife, too, can obtain a divorce in certain cases, but always with the help of a formal trial. Among the grounds that a wife can present before a court are several years’ absence of her husband from the home and his presence at an unknown location, the neglect of his obligation to pay support, a term in prison extending

11. Jürgen Frembgen, *Alltagsverhalten in Pakistan* (Berlin: Express Edition, 1987), p. 32. 12. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

over several years, continued impotence, neglect of marital duties for at least three years, mental illness, dangerous, contagious, or repulsive diseases such as leprosy or elephantiasis, exceptional cruelties on the part of the husband, robbery of the wife's property, hindrance of the wife in the practice of her religious duties, verifiably unequal treatment of wives, seduction of the wife to immorality, and a permanently immoral lifestyle (individual "lapses" are not grounds for divorce<sup>13</sup>). The principle of irreconcilable differences in the marriage also is applied today under certain conditions.

According to Islamic law, the children from a divorced marriage always belong to the father. They can remain with the mother until they have grown out of infancy, that is, girls until ten or twelve and boys no older than seven (in Iran only until the age of two). Afterwards, the children come to their father or to his family and belong to him alone. The wife then no longer has any rights in regard to her children, and also no right of visitation.

#### *The Islamic Women's Movement*

The model and goal of the women's movement in the Islamic world, which is active in all countries at different levels of intensity, is neither the adoption of what in the Islamic view is considered to be the decadent and morally reprehensible Western social order, nor liberation from the regulations of the Koran. The women's movement argues that neither the Koran nor the tradition is correctly interpreted today, and that Mohammed's wives possessed a more privileged position than women today. "Back to original Islam and its rights for women!" is the frequent demand of Islamic women's movements. A call for the assertion of women's rights in the framework of a suspension of Islam would have no chance of being heard on a broad scale in the Islamic world. Women's rights advocates who would do so would be charged with being godless and Western. For this reason, women in the Islamic world have attempted repeatedly to sue for their rights by "correctly interpreting" the statements of the Koran and the tradition.

#### *Differences with Christian Marriage*

The Islamic marriage differs from the Christian marriage in many respects. Through the provision for the security of the bride with the evening portion, the Islamic marriage in a certain sense reckons already at the time of the marriage ceremony with the possibility of a later divorce and also with the possibility of the man marrying additional women. A promise on the part of the marriage partners with God's help to remain true to each other until death does not exist. Marriage in Islam is generally only a contract in civil law that determines mutual obligations and is not an eternal bond founded by God and blessed by him. The fear of a threatening divorce is quite real for almost every Muslim woman when she does not fulfil the expectations of her husband in the management of the household and the number of children.

The Christian marriage, in contrast, is intended as lifelong companionship with only one partner. Precisely because of the commitment to one human being, i.e. to exclusivity, it is compared in the Bible again and again with the covenant between God and human beings, which likewise is committed to exclusivity and is concluded for eternity. Married Christians swear an oath before God that only death should separate them. Also in contrast to Islam, mental illness, prison, or the impossibility of finding a sufficient livelihood would not be a ground for divorce according to the Bible, for it is exactly here that it ought to be demonstrated that Christian marriages are maintained not only so long as the marriage partners "function" flawlessly, but precisely in those instances when he or she most urgently needs counsel, help, and support. The Christian marriage vow to be there for the partner in "good as well as evil days" obligates the partner to sacrifice himself or herself for the other precisely in times of need.

The Bible speaks in many places of the fact that love for the neighbour or for the marriage partner is not just a feeling, but also that there must be a decision of the will for love, and that love means devotion and sacrifice (cf. Eph. 5:25–31). The Bible repeatedly exhorts husbands and wives to exercise love in the marriage. It is not the codification of certain obligations in the marriage, such as provision for the family or the care of children, that forms the chief component of Christian marriage, but rather the intellectual-spiritual communion of the marriage partners in their relationship to God and the mutual completion of two, in nature, different human beings borne by love and forgiveness that stands at the centre of Christian marriage. The story of Creation already makes this especially clear. Adam misses a partner that is like him, does not stand under him like the animals, and does not stand over him like God, his Lord. After he has given all the animals a name, he rejoices at the creation of the woman, for God says: "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make a partner for him that is suitable to him" (Gen. 2:18).

Divorce was an "abomination" to God already in the Old Testament (Mal. 2:11, 14–16) and was allowed at all only because of the "hardheartedness" of the people (Jesus in Mt. 19:8, Mk 10:5). Divorce in the biblical understanding thus is intended to be an absolute exception, but not allowed for from the very beginning. On the basis of this idea of lifelong companionship, a divorce in German law, too, is still quite a tedious affair that "enforces" a delay of a complete year for reconsideration, even in severe cases of irreconcilable differences. If only one marriage partner desires the divorce, then even several years can pass before the divorce is finalised.

On the other hand, the Koran nowhere speaks explicitly about the intellectual and spiritual communion of marriage partners and, to my knowledge, this component remains practically unconsidered among the commentators on the Koran and in the literature in questions concerning marriage and the family. Since Islam has no ecclesiastical structure encompassing all the faithful and the mosque offers women only a limited sphere of activity, a woman can live out her faith only in private. She cannot, however, intellectually and spiritually shape her environment and culture together with her husband. *C&S*

13. So Asaf A. A. Fyze, *Outlines of Muhammadan Law* (Geoffrey Cumberlege: Oxford University Press, 1949/1955), pp. 145–147, for at least the Indo-Pakistani sphere.

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WHAT is the nature of Christianity? Is it a religion or a cult, i.e. a personal worship hobby? This question goes to the heart of the modern Church's failure to exercise a world-transforming faith. The Church's abandonment of Christianity as a religion, i.e. as a world-view that structures every sphere of human life and society, has exposed the Western world to the religious influences of secular humanism, New Age-ism, the Green and ecology movements, which are all really modern variations of pagan religion, and which have now begun to transform Western society in a direction diametrically opposed to the principles and practice of Christianity. The result has been that while Christians have maintained their faith as a cult, a system of belief that is little more than a personal worship hobby, when it comes to the question of how Christians should affect the world in which they live they have largely fallen back on trying to clean up secular humanism. In this process the Church has become increasingly irrelevant and powerless as society has been first secularised and then repaganised.

The antidote to this failure on the part of the Church to affect the world, which is her mission field, and the present condition of Western society to which this failure has led, is the rediscovery of Christianity as the true religion, i.e. as an overarching structure to human life that anchors both the individual and the society of which he is a part in God's will for man in Christ. This religious structure the Bible calls the covenant, and it embraces the whole of human life, including politics, education, science, art, welfare, health care, marriage, family life, Church, business, economy. Until the Church rediscovers this religious structure for life the Christian faith will continue to decline amidst the rise of other faiths that do provide the individual and society with a religious structure for life, and Christians will continue to have saved souls but live their daily lives as secular humanists without answers for the desperate problems that face the modern world.

These are some of the main issues addressed in this collection of essays, which include:

- *Christianity as a Cult*
  - *Covenant Signs and Sacraments*
  - *Common-Law Wives and Concubines*
  - *Socialism as Idolatry*
  - *Censorship*
  - *The Church Effeminate*
  - *What is Spirituality?*
  - *Sodom and Gomorrah*
  - *Corruption*
  - *Idols for Destruction*
  - *Cleaning up Secular Humanism*
  - *Protestantism and Science*
  - *Misconstruing Federal Theology*
  - *What happened to the Protestant Work Ethic?*
  - *Christianity and the Rule of Law*
  - *The Church as a Community of Faith*
- *The Implications of the Information Revolution for the Christian Church*
  - *Preach the Gospel and Heal the Sick*

# STATE LAW AND THE DOCTRINE OF STATE

[*Die Staatslehre und die Principien des Staatsrechts*]

by Friedrich Julius Stahl

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

by Ruben Alverado

THE following is a translation of the introduction to Part II, Book IV of Friedrich Julius Stahl's *The Philosophy of Law*, entitled "The Doctrine of State and the Principles of State Law." It is a tour de force, a gauntlet thrown down before the ignorant modernist who cannot conceive of the State as anything other than the creature of the will of man, the construct of autonomous citizens. For Stahl, the State is above all a God-given reality, something which precedes the will of man, whether ruler or subject c.q. citizen, the existence of which is bound up with the existence of peoples and nations, and which is the expression of their essence. This is the true popular character of law and State (cf. *Principles of Law*, §§2, 25) as opposed to what Stahl labels the revolutionary character of popular sovereignty as the ephemeral will of the people.

Does this mean that Stahl discounts this will of the people, the notion of the consent of the governed? No—rather, it means that his concept of sovereignty differs fundamentally from the modern, the revolution concept. For the revolution concept makes the will, be it of the people or the ruler, into a law, subjecting it to no law, in fact denying the concept of a transcendent standard altogether. This is the first counterpoint of Stahl's conceptual framework.

He then embeds this notion of transcendence within the concept of what he calls the ethical kingdom. This is the supreme category by which to understand human community. The ethical kingdom is "self-conscious, indivisible rule in accordance with ethical-intellectual motives, over conscious, freely obedient beings, which thereby also spiritually unites them. Accordingly it is rule of a personal character in

every aspect, a *kingdom of personality*" (§1 below). The ethical kingdom is rule, but rule not over robots or slaves but over freely-choosing, voluntarily submitting persons, by an ethically accountable, personal ruler, either individual or corporate. The character of personality is crucial to Stahl's conception, for rule can never be of an entirely abstract, objective nature, as if natural laws existed which are self-evident and self-enforcing. Above all, God in heaven rules over the affairs of men and makes his will to be known, and he empowers peoples and nations to participate in that rule on their own account and for their own benefit. As Stahl put it in the *Principles of Law*:

Now then, in accordance with the self-reliance and unique originality that runs through the entire realm of personal being, the human community is to establish this order, through which it maintains God's world order, *on its own as its own order*. . . That is the high position and worth to which the human race is called, that it not simply fulfill God's commands but that it also establish and maintain this order as an instrument and vessel of world rule under God's influence. Man thereby assumes the godlike position of ethical steward, of lawgiver and judge (*Principles of Law*, p. 8f.).

Both laws and persons are integral elements of the ethical kingdom. And civil society is one form of that kingdom, a low form because of its fragmentary, irregular fulfillment of the ethical requirement, but nevertheless a full-fledged level in the scale of ethical being.

The State is the form taken by civil society as ethical kingdom. "The State is the association of a people under a government (ruling authority)" (*State Law and the Doctrine of*

*State*, §36). *The State is therefore more than just the government*: it is the union of all the members of the nation into an association, an ethical kingdom. Stahl distinguishes this sharply from an ethical organism: “The organism contains determinate, various members which mutually supplement each other, of which none have an independent existence, all of which in fact are required for the organism to exist (head, rump, two arms, legs, etc.). The kingdom, on the other hand, contains an unlimited quantity of equal independent existences, which neither mutually presuppose each other nor are required for this concept the way they are in the case of the organism, but stand under a higher rule” (§1 below). In other words, the State is not an organisation, a group whereby the members are dependent and harnessed to the pursuit of a result; it is not a “command economy”; it is rather an association united by a general rule, both of government and of laws, wherein the members are autonomous and enjoy a relative independence while pursuing the common goal of a public ethical order. Hence, “the State is . . . based not on the ethical vocation (ethos) of individual persons but on the ethical vocation of the human community (of the people) as a whole” (*State Law and the Doctrine of State*, §36).

Accordingly, the State has two poles, which Stahl elsewhere characterises as “institutional” and “congregational” (see my biography of Stahl, *Authority Not Majority*, p. 29ff.). In the same way that the Church embodies these two aspects, the State has an institutional, “top-down” element, in his view epitomised in the monarch, and a congregational or associational, “bottom-up” element such as is evidenced in a republic. Both of these poles need to be accounted for in a properly constituted State, just as they exist in every form of ethical kingdom. It is not all subjection and it is not all autonomy and independence.

Historically, the progression is for monarchy to be ever more fully supplemented by popular representation. But the latter is no end in itself; the State must ever remain a vehicle of order and authority, no matter the level of popular participation. The ruling authority exists on the basis of divine right, regardless of the degree to which popular participation and the consent of the governed become reflected in it.

Although the State initially manifests itself as an ethical kingdom of the human community, it nevertheless, considered more deeply, is likewise a *divine institution*.

The regard of the *State* rests above all on the *decree* (authorisation, appointment) of *God*. This is the final ground of the . . . “original regard inherent in itself.” Its entire legitimate order—law, constitution, ruling authority—has its binding power therefrom. In particular, the ruling authority has regard and power from *God*. It is by the grace of *God*. “The powers that be are ordained (*tetagmenai*) of *God*” (Rom. 13:1). Out of himself, no man can have authoritative power over another man, not even the collective over the individual. Nor can men ground authoritative power through contract, in that they do not dispose over their life and their freedom, for which reason one cannot grant power. This is the divine right of the ruling authority. It has its validity in all forms of State, for the committees and magistracies in the republic no less than for the king in the monarchy, electoral as well as hereditary. For when the persons who are to exercise the ruling authority are indicated by election, the office and regard themselves are not based in the will and authorisation of the elector but only on *God*’s commandment and authorisation. The divine institution of the State and its ruling authority merely means that its regard is based in *God*’s *command-*

*ment and order*, not *God*’s *immediate* (intervening in nature) *act*; the complete freedom of men (nation) therefore continues to live unrestricted in this or that constitution. But that divine institution in turn does not *merely* mean that the State in *general* is *God*’s commandment but also that everywhere the *specific* constitution and the *specific* persons of the ruling authority have *God*’s sanction . . . The State, however, in that it is not the work of each individual person but only of the *community* as a whole, is made into the shape of *God*’s order, in which it is fashioned through the *community*, either in conscious act or in mores and custom. (*State Law and the Doctrine of State*, §48)

This is ultimately the reflection of what Stahl refers to (*Private Law*, §21) as the “Two Poles of World Order: The Fear of *God* and Full Humanity.” Contemporary society has taken on board the concept of full humanity, and this is its true claim to fame: the principle of humanity, the recognition of the rights of man, “the idea that the well-being, the right, the honor of every individual, even the most humble, is the concern of the community, which views each person in accordance with his individuality, which protects, honors, looks after him without regard for descent, class, race, gift, as long as he has a human face” (*Private Law*, p. 37). But in doing so it has forgotten the fear of *God*, the source of goals and higher principles, the elevating principle in life.

The State is based solely on human rights, not on higher goals; this is the sympathy for all opposition against all authority; it lacks the recognition of unconditional commands for the legal order. From this springs opposition to the death penalty and in fact to any sort of punishment. In the absence of a higher command that the criminal must be punished, that where blood is shed, blood must be shed, this becomes an institution for improving the criminal or a means of providing for the security for others. From this springs the claim for unconditional divorce, making the happiness of the spouses, their sense of what is agreeable, the decisive concern and not the higher, unconditional command that what *God* has joined together, let no man tear asunder. From this everywhere stems the revolt against all discipline, against all restrictions established for the fulfilment of a higher order of life (*Private Law*, p. 39).

In terms of the State, the one-sided contemporary philosophy is expressed in a one-sided emphasis on law and freedom without any recognition of the concept of ruling authority. “The newer school of thought, as it confronts us in the great multitudes, in the era in its totality, has appropriated essential aspects of the ethical kingdom (freedom, self-action of peoples and individuals, the law as the all-permeating necessity of public life in contrast to arbitrary rule), but in exchange has forfeited the first and foremost of those aspects, the given higher real authority, the ruling authority, for and over the people, in which it is to become politically unified” (§1 below). This one-sidedness leads to the loss of an understanding of law as anything other than a man-made construct. “In accordance with this, it does not conceive of law as a given higher thing, as the law of the great institution, which as one and the same passes through the ages, albeit understood in constant advancement; but merely as a self-made thing, as the will of the then-living generation” (§1 below).

The crying need of the times, then as now, Stahl sees in the restoration of both of these principles together in a harmonious unity. “The task of the times is therefore not the ongoing onesided advance of humanity and the rights of man, but the restoration of the fear of *God* as the energetic

principle in both hearts and public institutions, while in it and through it preserving humanity and the rights of man. This is the union of the truth of former times with contem-

porary times" (*Private Law*, p. 41). That is what inspires his entire philosophy of the State, and what gives it its enduring quality.

# THE DOCTRINE OF LAW AND THE STATE ON THE BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN WORLD-VIEW (BOOK IV)

[*Rechts-und Staatslehre auf der Grundlage Christlicher Weltanschauung*]

by *Friedrich Julius Stahl*

“THE PHILOSOPHY OF LAW” (Division II)  
[“*Die Philosophie des Rechts*”]

Translated by *Ruben Alvarado*

## INTRODUCTION: OF THE DOCTRINE OF STATE IN GENERAL

### §1. *Concept of the Ethical Kingdom*

THE doctrine of the State as put forward in this book is grounded in the concept of the *ethical kingdom*: self-conscious, indivisible rule in accordance with ethical-intellectual motives, over conscious, freely obedient beings, which thereby also spiritually unites them. Accordingly it is rule of a personal character in every aspect, a *kingdom of personality*.

The notion of the ethical kingdom upon which we establish the doctrine of the State is the supreme ethical concept. It inheres in all relations and exists under all circumstances of the human condition; it is the general and absolute purpose (*τέλος*) of this condition. It therefore belongs to the religious, the moral, and the legal sphere all at the same time. The kingdom of God, which the Christian religion promises to us in the beyond, is its completed realisation. Here it is the supreme personality, God, who rules men in accordance with his perfect holiness and wisdom and in perfect freedom, that is, fulfilling inwardly in the same way as maintaining and ordering outwardly, that they be one spirit and one will with him, and therefore with

each other (Book I, §27). However, even on earth the moral world (the inner life and the free action of men) is an ethical kingdom, even when not visibly manifesting itself as such. For the real power of God effectuates in us regard [*Ansehen*] for the moral commandment, and, to the degree that it is in any way obeyed, the commandment's fulfilment. It effectuates in peoples and times the specific ethical manner of viewing things, the natural consequences of sins and vice, the inkling of Nemesis in the life of men and in the history of the peoples. It is not so that people in absolute isolation, with each person closed off in his innermost being, obey or infringe an impersonal ethical law, a dead rule. It is a bond over them, binding them to the common ruling power, which encompasses everything everywhere, but there first should become apparent. Ethics nowhere exists as mere law and a fulfilling individual; it exists everywhere as conscious common demand and as compliance in accordance with a common purpose; it exists everywhere as a kingdom.

The civil order therefore is likewise an ethical kingdom. Here as well there is rule established over men, rule of a

personal character, i.e. conscious of itself and with control over its actions, with a real power over them; here the rule of a real natural personality is replaced by the organised institution (the State organism); and the perfect or at least ordered natural condition for it is to have its innermost centre likewise in a natural personality (the monarchy). Here as well it is rule of ethically understood purposes, and here as well men are freely to obey, while the ethical rational order, which stands over them, is likewise their true essence and will and only realises itself through them and in them; they are to be united under it, through compliance with this order and its spirit. That an artificial institution erected by men and not a higher personality (God) exercises rule is certainly an entirely different kind, a much lower stage, of the ethical kingdom—hence, it is ruled in accordance with faulty human insight and custom [*Sitte*]; it is a lower stage of the ethical kingdom, in that the ruling real power and the law are not inseparably one but can be split apart, and in that the subjects' inward filling with the spirit of law and order, which is the requirement, in reality scarcely exists.

But the concept of the ethical kingdom and those general characteristics of it are the same here as there. Its concept is our most general and inward perception because it everywhere is the purpose established by God for the ethical world. We accordingly derive the norms of the civil order neither from the archetype of the future kingdom of God, nor from the moral world as it exists in the here and now, but from the essence of the ethical kingdom, which in like manner appears both in the here and now and in the beyond, as something general. We do not build upon parallels and analogies from other ethical areas, but on the characteristics which each ethical area contains in itself in accordance with the archetypal law of the ethical world.

This concept of the ethical kingdom provides the deeper (philosophical) foundation and guarantee for the political order and for political freedom, in that it counts among its characteristics the need for an authority elevated over men, that is, a claim to obedience and respect owed not merely to the laws but to a real power outside of them, the government (State power; the principle of legitimacy in contrast to popular sovereignty); and at the same time the need for an ethically reasonable [*sittlich verständigen*] content which likewise forms the restriction on this authority, that is, the need for laws of the State that, being passed down through history, stand over prince and people and can only be changed in accordance with their own requirements (constitutional principle in the true sense); and finally the recognition of the nation (the subjects) as an ethical community, therefore as independent, freely obeying, and subjected to the laws only as the expression and obligation of their own ethical essence (Book III, §10), from which those laws originally arise through custom and tradition, and to which, in later ongoing development, by means of the consent of the representative body, those laws are put to the test (representative principle in the true sense). Derivation from the will of the people, be it individuals, be it the collective whole, be it their arbitrary or their rational will, does not attain to a simple elevated real authority and is therefore always revolutionary in its innermost ground, whether harsher or milder, revealed or hidden. Derivation from the acquired rights of a ruler or from the necessity of unified leadership or from the divine establishment of rule (when one adheres to this alone) does not procure the independence and (independent) entitlement of

the people. Only the perspective of the ethical kingdom provides the eternal order of the State, containing all its principles and elements in harmonious unity. When in reality this is difficult to generate—because governments in actual power do not easily elevate the people to independence, and the people in actual power do not easily allow the elevation of princely majesty; actually, given the untrustworthiness of men, each staves off the yielding of something of their power as if it were a sort of State of emergency—nevertheless, it unshakably remains the ethical-political archetype and standard of judgement and action. In particular, this is the obligation and purpose in accordance with the Christian appreciation of life, while the idea of the ethical kingdom in all its stages suits the Christian world-view, and only it. The true Christian appreciation of life corresponds neither to the revolutionary doctrine of the old Scottish Puritans and English Independents, nor to the doctrine of absolute power and unconditional obedience as represented by the adherents of the Stuarts (Filmer et al.), nor to the political indifference of the older German Pietism. It can lack neither the regard of the given ruling authority, nor the development of political freedom and entitlement of the people under this regard, nor inward ethical-legal lawfulness and necessity.

Understandably, Kant's and Fichte's overarching ethical [*ethischer*] concept of the ethical [*sittlichen*] world-order is a different one from this concept of the ethical kingdom. For them it is a rule, a law, that the personalities are to follow, not a personality (or some other real power) that encompasses and unifies all of them. Such a power can at most (as Kant in fact postulates) only externally supervene in order to ensure the fulfilment of the laws and restore their violation, a judge; it is not itself (God or the ruling authority as the case may be) and its rule (its permeation in men and their union in it) which is the essence and fulfilment of all mores. The matter is the same with the concept of the absolute c.q. [*bez.*] objective Spirit which in the philosophy of Hegel takes the place of our concept of the ethical kingdom. It also differs, in that it is not a living union of many personalities with and in the one supreme personality (God—king—governing authorities), but the subsuming of the same in the Substance (the concept, the idea, the world spirit). Of course, this is not, as with Kant and Fichte, a bare rule (an ideal) but rather is to be a reality; nevertheless, even assuming this, it is at any rate an impersonal functioning power, unconscious of itself and therefore acting not out of awareness but in accordance with a bare rule (dialectic). This is not the place to demonstrate that such a concept regarding the eternal relations of men leads to despair. In terms of politics, it leads only to the formal authorisation (the dotting of the i) of that which is logically self-derived, with the personality of the prince allowed no material influence; this therefore, despite all resisting efforts of well-meaning persons, leads not to an original real authority (prince—legitimate republican government) as such, but only to the recognition of an impersonal Reason, the “power of the idea,” over the people. In theory, such is certainly better than the (subjective rationalistic) doctrine of Rousseau, which allows only the will of individuals or of the multitude to be the ethical power on earth. In practice, however, it has the same effect. For the idea as such is neither authentically published in some way, nor does it have a power; in this case as well, therefore, it is human consciousness, the people, who themselves construct

the idea and establish and rule its governmental authorities in accordance with it, rather than having them over it and allowing them to rule over it. It is inevitable that Hegel's monarchical or much rather governmental standpoint sinks back into the democratic standpoint of the newer school. For the monarchical power and the governmental power in general as taught by Hegel is itself only the result of laws of thought (dialectic), that is, a power that nowhere wills in a personal, self-conscious manner, as it does in me (in the individual [*dem Individuum*]), over which, therefore, I (the individual [*das Individuum*]) or above all the multitude of those in whom the Spirit has come to consciousness, the people, also have the supreme judgement and judicial authority. In the same manner in the area of morals the followers of Hegel have substituted genius for the ethical law, which for Hegel had an objectivity. In this manner all higher ethical order dissolves finally into the so-called self-consciousness or free spirit, that is, in the thought and will of men, which then loses all content, but in impudent capriciousness only destroys what it finds. It must, however, be recognised that this conception of Hegel's, in that it postulates both an objective power and a subjective appropriation and fulfilment as distinct and nevertheless unified aspects, scientifically prepared the way to establish a truer standpoint (that of the personal world cause) from the true insight [*Erkenntniß*].

The newer school of thought [*Bildung*], as it confronts us in the great multitudes, in the era in its totality, has appropriated essential aspects of the ethical kingdom (freedom, self-action of peoples and individuals, the law as the all-permeating necessity of public life in contrast to arbitrary rule), but in exchange has forfeited the first and foremost of those aspects, the given higher real authority, the ruling authority, for and over the people, in which it is to become politically unified. It therefore everywhere revolves around two abstract concepts, freedom and law, and cannot consider it to be possible that not everything will have been exhausted therein; it had no clue that the most essential thing was lacking to it, the original ruler and the original collective purpose of rule by which alone the multitude becomes a kingdom. In accordance with this, it does not conceive of law as a given higher thing, as the law of the great institution, which as one and the same passes through the ages, albeit understood in constant advancement; but merely as a self-made thing, as the will of the then-living generation. Thus is the truth mixed in with the error of public opinion. On the other hand, the few who maintain this aspect of authority in living consciousness have the habit partly of maintaining it in such one-sidedness that they yield or at any rate subordinate that other principle, the more so as the general manner of its assertion scandalises them in the highest degree, as it ought to. From this stems their aversion to all that is constitutional, to political freedom. That concept in its entire amplitude is therefore the true proper middle way, that is, the articulated higher view in which the motives of the combating parties together find their genuine satisfaction.<sup>1</sup>

1. When I here and in the following combat the standpoints of the parties, I in no way deny that which the writers of these parties apart from this have achieved which is true and good in certain results. Even less do I find myself in opposition to those who apart from any ethical-philosophical standpoint—simply the general sense of the good and right in the background—exclusively apply the perspective of external result, experience, history as standard. This treatment will of course always have its great shortcoming, while such a standpoint, in the same

The concept of the ethical kingdom is distinguished from that of the *ethical organism* in the same way that kingdom and organism are distinguished in all cases. The organism contains determinate, various members which mutually supplement each other, of which none have an independent existence, all of which in fact are required for the organism to exist (head, rump, two arms, legs, etc.). The kingdom, on the other hand, contains an unlimited quantity of equal independent existences, which neither mutually presuppose each other nor are required for this concept the way they are in the case of the organism, but stand under a higher rule. In this sense we speak of natural kingdoms. The plant kingdom is a plant kingdom even when this or that specimen, in fact this or that kind or genus, is lacking, and the one plant does not require the other.

We however call a kingdom the embodiment of selfsame natural constructions [*Naturgebilde*], in that here as well a higher ruling spirit is taken up in all these existences, thereby ruling them; because all rule is the absorption of the thought and will of the ruler in the being of the ruled. We must consider the divine Spirit to be active in the moments of creation in a manner such that his thoughts are incorporated in matter in a systematically advancing, mutually adapted manner, such that matter is filled with those thoughts, in order truly to recognise that Nature comprises kingdoms and is itself a kingdom.

It is the same with ethical relations. For example, marriage is an ethical organism. The rule of the State, when it is not, as in despotisms, a mere personality, is an ethical organism, in that personality everywhere can only be replaced by some such. Prince, estate, judiciary, the orders of officialdom supplement each other; State rule is not entire when one or the other is lacking, and, where they are not lacking, it is complete in itself.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the State itself, i.e. the mass of men in its ordered rule, is not an

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way as a rudder, cannot lack investigation, and therefore always will include such philosophical grounds of determination [*Bestimmungsgründe*], only less investigated and conscious. On the other hand, however, it has the advantage of an impartiality in the treatment of results which someone of general scientific viewpoints, be they proper and clear as you like, does not entirely preserve. Both methods of treatment are therefore necessary and suitable mutually to purify each other.

2. That State rule is an organism in no way leads to the conception that it must have the same or analogous organs as the human body, such as the parallels drawn by Bluntschli in his book *Psychological Studies on State and Church*. The many unacceptable results need not hold as a refutation of a great scientific conception; but it certainly is scientifically certain (a priori) that such a parallel cannot exist; for when the State has equally in common with the human body that both organisms are instrumental facilities, it is still obvious that the instrumental facility serving the purposes of an individual life (facilities for breathing, eating, procreation) must be something other than the facility for the rule of a number of independent personalities (facilities to maintain justice, to develop a joint power, to promote common mores, etc.). Even if, therefore, the doctrine of that adventurous philosophy of the sixteen basic organs of the human body were more than a simple game, for all that it does not follow that the State must have the corresponding organs—on the contrary, it follows that it cannot have them. As untenable as this new doctrine of State is, to that degree it is rich in detail in instructions and apt results; even so, this is not the consequence of those notions but of the personal insight of this capable writer and statesman. It is similar to how in earlier times often superior and mentally excellent men for a time attempted with an adept to obtain, and actually also obtained, some real gold in that adept's wonderful laboratory, but only that which he had given in the first place, not that which the charlatan prepared.

organism but an ethical kingdom. Though millions be added to it, it does not require any of these particular individuals in order to be a State; all are ruled by the same power and order and are thusly united in it, and the union of these collective individuals under this order is the purpose of the State.

On the other hand, however, the concept of the ethical kingdom likewise is to be distinguished from the *municipality* [*der Gemeinde*]. In the municipality the higher rule stems from the will of the united persons, while in the ethical kingdom it stems from a power and authority prior to and over them. Thus, the Christian congregation [*Gemeinde*] (even considered as the collective congregation of all living Christians) recognises as such no other law and regard than the will and the conviction of the collective members in their unity. By contrast, the kingdom of God derives its law and regard from God himself, and the Christian church, which also is an ethical kingdom and as such is to be distinguished from the collective congregation (even when comprising the same persons), derives a law and regard from the God-established institutions and the constitution with its leaders [*deren Obern*] as decreed in history. The jurisdiction to forgive sins is not granted to the congregation (not even the collective congregation) but to the church in this sense; the congregation elects its pastor but the pastor does not derive his authorisation through the congregation (persons cannot grant such) but through the church, through the pre-existing ecclesiastical ruling authorities and offices which the current generation did not give, thus through the institution which stands over the congregation of the collective living members. Even terminologically, the congregation is composed of persons while the church, i.e. the house of the Lord (*κυριακόν*), is something institutional [*Anstaltliches*] over them. It is the same in the area of politics. The civil community rules itself (self-government); its constitution is therefore also republican in accordance with its nature (self-elected ruling authorities, etc.). By contrast, the nation is to be a State and thus an ethical kingdom. It is therefore usually governed by a given higher authority, a king, and itself, i.e. the nation, is only allowed the free appropriation of the laws.

Should one grant this concept of the ethical kingdom, in particular also the given real authority which is the primary aspect of it, one must then also grant the entire political conception as carried out in the remainder of this work. Rousseau's entire book is nothing more than the implementation of the concept of the "general (human) will" as the principle of public life. Mine is nothing other than the implementation of the concept of the ethical kingdom as an order and power over men, who nevertheless belong to it as free self-acting members.

## §2. *Dimensions of the State*

The doctrine of the State comprises a spectrum of relations in which the entire task of the State is fulfilled only when they are taken together: to wit, the State in itself, the mutual relation between States, and the elements and smaller spheres under the State. Each of these relations has its characteristic concepts and providential purpose (*τέλος*), but they all finally flow into the one concept of the ethical kingdom.

By the State we understand firstly the closed association of a large number of persons under a supreme independent (sovereign) power. Its providential purpose is rule for the

*totality* of human collective conditions and common purposes. For this rule, the human community is ordained an institution by which it exercises the power over individuals as one will and acting subject, as a consciousness identical with it. The State is therefore in its innermost essence a personification of human community. To this end, it is however also essential that this ruling will be rooted in a mental certainty, an individuality (Book I, §9), in order for its rule to flow from an ethically rational, in itself unified view of life. This is why the State is the task of the people and not of mankind in its entirety. By virtue of the unity of its descent or its history, and by virtue of its organisational development and the connectedness of its activities, this unity of consciousness and appreciation of life, both in general terms and specifically with regard to the common condition, exists in the people. Only the people therefore have the energy of common consciousness and the pervasion of its conditions that are needed to constitute a State capable of acting as true personality.

Collective mankind has no business ruling life as a subject, but it does have the task, as a community of peoples, of embracing and supporting as basis the rule exercised by the people (the State). This is the *law of nations* [*Völkerrecht*] and *diplomacy*. The providential purpose of the community of nations is the conservation of the peoples and States in their existence and their rights, and consequently the care for general interests which make up the shared basis of the condition of individual peoples, such as e.g. the freedom of the seas, world trade, and finally, in the case of higher development, even the maintenance to a certain degree of generally recognised political principles, which governments are to lay at the foundation of each State.

World history starts from the condition of the most extreme division and animosity among the peoples, the consequence of the confusion of human consciousness. First the Christian deliverance of humanity restored the possibility of a bond of inner conviction among the peoples. From there outward, there is an approximation in the community of nations to a "kingdom" (rule of a personal character) over the *individual States* in terms of form and content. In terms of form, in that instead of isolated negotiations between individual participating nations, a constitution-like, all-encompassing bond is more and more to be produced, by which the affairs of the peoples are being ordered as *one* undivided association of nations; in terms of content, in that more and more unity of political appreciation is to be generated among the States. Should this latter become complete—which on earth will not occur—then humanity instead of the peoples would have the vocation to be a State. But that would mean the end of world history.

The mediaeval emperorship was an anticipation of this situation, which is why it existed more in the idea than in reality. On the other hand, it is an undeniable truth that the collectivity of the peoples has the vocation to support the most basic foundations of ethical political order when they are lacking on the part of a specific people. This was the intention of the Holy Alliance. It would be one-sided to look for this foundation purely and simply in monarchical power. An intervention establishing the monarch in his full power but which does not help the people against the dissolution of reaction or to secure truly founded rights and the restoration of a lawful condition cannot engender ethical veneration and satisfy the public consciousness. It therefore is only an

ephemeral external restoration, without establishing the fundamental attitude which alone is capable of durably securing the restoration. When the powers of Europe, or Germany as the case may be, step in as a higher authority to protect the ruling authorities of a country against its subjects, they thereby assume the obligations of higher authority, to preserve law and justice and even quarter and pardon, and to facilitate a return of calm, while on the other hand the government which in this manner is supported by foreign help has to that degree forfeited its right to entire independence. Great difficulties at any rate accompany such maintenance of justice and order against the contemporary revolutionary movement, which is aimed not at certain individual rights but against the ruling authorities and the entire legal order. But that does not relieve the duty. Accordingly, *nonintervention as a principle* is erroneous; but intervention should only occur in rare cases. The actual, regular vocation of the community of nations is therefore only the ordering of international relations.

Outside of the community for the totality of life purposes, which is the State, the people also develops communities for *particular* purposes, firstly *local communities* (municipalities), then *vocational communities* (estates). As their purpose in the final analysis is merely a component of that total purpose, so are the elements and members of the State, but in accordance with their specific nature and their own interests they are separate from the State; they are not mere appendages of the State, but are their own institutions with an independent position in the State. As such, they must also have a rule of personal character, to be constituted as a single, conscious acting subject—this is the municipality and the *vocational community* (*corporation*), or when, in the case of landownership, relations of superiority and dependency exist and are legally exercised—*manorialism*. These smaller communities, to the degree that they serve the mutual satisfaction of needs and not the purpose of collective rule in accordance with higher concepts, comprise the sphere of “*society*” in distinction to the State in the strict sense or the sphere of politics.

Accordingly, the ethical kingdom which men are to construct has its centre and final fulfilment in the State, that is, the individual cohesive association, but it derives its full subject matter and content from the life and work of the smaller spheres, municipalities and estates, and it is supported and borne, and for certain of its highest tasks even supplemented, by the mutual security and reciprocity of the peoples.

Correspondingly, the doctrine of *society* and of the *community of States* is essential to the *doctrine of State*. It encompasses the strictly *political*, the *social*, and the *international spheres*, while only all three together in inseparable unity are the State in accordance with its entire full significance.

The sphere of the State in this extent is juridically expressed as the sphere of *public law* according to its secular side, thus in exclusion of the Church. For these are the two great institutions for the rule and education of the human race, the one according to the earthly, the other to the eternal purpose, State and church, which we include under the concept of public law as opposed to private law as the sphere of the fulfilment of individual existence (Book II, §45). The State exhausts the sphere of secular public law; municipality and estate are elements of the State; the law of nations is a relation among States.

### §3. *The State as Personality*

From the discussion thus far we may therefore derive the *legal type* of the State, or, what is the same thing, the type of public law, both in itself and in distinction to that of private law, and valid for the Church as well to the degree that it exists as an external, legally-ordered institution.

Public law comprises all human communities, all human rulerships for the fulfilment of human common existence; private law comprises all relations for the satisfaction and fulfilment of individual existence. Public law rests on the concept of the ethical kingdom, in the same way that private law rests on the concept of personality, and in all its institutions it has a double principle of development, just as does the latter (Book III, §1), namely *first* the *providential purpose* (*τέλος*) of the concerned institution, that is, the material and spiritual tasks of common life, and *second* the *personal character of rule*, as we have discussed it. It [i.e. the ethical kingdom—RCA] is the general type of public law, just as the personal character of life is that of private law.

The characteristics of public law thus are:

1. *Power* (*imperium*), to which the members are subordinated; this is not a power of the ruled which is transferred by them, as is *associational power* [*Gesellschaftsgewalt*], nor is it a power for the personal satisfaction of the ruled, as is *domestic power* (*potestas*), but rather power inhering in the institution itself and serving to fulfill its requirements. This concrete factual foundation and meaning of power distinguishes public law from private law. Should one conceive the power exercised in public legal institutions, namely in the State, as mere associational power or as patrimonial power, in either case the concept of public law is eliminated, leaving only private law.

2. The ordered coherence of men according to specific positions, and therefore the arrangement within the institution, which is the subject of rule—the *constitution*.

3. The range of necessary purposes and ordered tasks to achieve those purposes—the *administration*. This legal necessity of purposes and tasks likewise distinguishes public legal institutions from private ones, and the true public principle from the patrimonial.

That peculiar character which is the principle of development of public law (§2), that of the *personality of rule*, is realised through these characteristics. It therefore permeates all the institutions of public law. The State, the municipality and corporation (even the Church as external institution) have as one of their essential traits, that with regard to rule they are personalities. This trait is not to be confused with the concept of the *legal person*. Much rather, one may characterise it as the concept of the *political person* in contrast to the legal person. The legal person is a figure of private law and only entails the capacity to be a bearer of assets [*Vermögenssubjekt*], while the political person is public and entails the capacity to be the subject of action and rule. The State, for example, in that it adjudicates, rules, etc., is not a legal person but has a personality in a much higher sense, such as is lacking in e.g. a foundation.

The question at issue, as to whether the State is to be considered a moral person, whether the monarchical State is a person separate from the prince and is the actual subject of power, is to be decided accordingly. The State is in no way a moral person in the usual legal sense; only the fisc is that. The latter is most certainly separate from the prince; the prince can in this respect turn around and form a moral

person from his income (tax register), distinguished from himself as well as from the treasury. By contrast, the State is a person in the sense given here; as such, it is to be distinguished from the prince, while yet other organs outside of the prince together constitute this artificial person; but it is never to be separated from the prince and recognised as an independent subject apart from him, because its personality has its centre in the prince and hence could not exist without him. When, for example, the prince issues a legal sentence or, in a constitution with estates, passes a law without the approval of the estates, this would be no act of State but merely of the prince (actually, only of the person who is the prince); this manifests the distinction between State and prince and the justification that it be asserted. However, the estates cannot do anything without the prince, nor can the judge enforce anything in the face of his obstruction; the State therefore can factually and legally execute no act without the prince, and is nowhere a personality apart from the prince.<sup>3</sup>

In consequence of these considerations, the essence of the State and all institutions of public law consists not in substance (impersonal necessity) acting through it as a higher power over personalities, as in Hegel's conception, but quite the opposite, in the community itself becoming a personality. The former conception does nothing less than contradict the character of the State. It would only answer to a condition in which no concentrated acting power (*imperium*) existed but in which collective persons of themselves followed a higher rule. In reality, the entire shape of the ethical world confirms the personality perspective and refutes the pantheistic perspective (Book I, §§6 and 7). *C&S*

3. Maurenbrecher's book *The German Princes and Sovereignty* throughout confuses the legal personality and the political personality of the State, and confuses the distinction of the State and the prince with its separation from the prince.

## KUYPER FOUNDATION FILM MAKING PROJECT

THE KUYPER FOUNDATION will be making a series of documentary films to be shown as part of multimedia road-show presentations and also for wider distribution in DVD format. The purpose of this project is to make the message of the Kuyper Foundation accessible to a wider audience than the readership of the journal.

In order to realise this project we need to purchase the necessary equipment. The current funding of the Kuyper Foundation enables us to publish the journal, organise conferences, publish books from time to time and run a large capacity web site. Some of the funding for this project will be made available by the savings we shall make by distributing the journal on the internet in PDF format in future instead of printing and posting the journal. However, we need to raise additional funding for this film project.

We have already been promised a certain amount of money for some of the equipment we need, but we need to raise a further £10,000 of initial funding to get the project off the ground.

This is an important new project for the future of the Kuyper Foundation. Please consider giving to help fund this project. Information on how to give to the Kuyper Foundation can be found on page 64.

If you want further information on the project or wish to discuss helping to fund the project please contact the Director, Stephen C. Perks, at any of the addresses or phone numbers below:

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# MOTHER STATE OR MOTHER CHURCH?

by Robin Phillips

*“The maternal state not only feeds its children, but nurtures, educates, comforts, and disciplines them, providing all they need for their security. This appears to be a mildly insulting way to treat adults, but it is really a great crime because it transforms the state from being a gift of God, given to protect us against violence, into an idol. It supplies us with all blessings, and we look to it for all our needs. Once we sink to that level, as Lewis says, there is no point in telling state officials to mind their own business. ‘Our whole lives are their business.’ The maternalism of the state is that of the bad parent who wants his children dependent on him forever. That is an evil impulse. The good parent prepares his children for independence, trains them to make responsible decisions, knows that he harms them by not helping them to break loose. The parental state thrives on dependency. When the dependents [sic] free themselves, it loses power. It is, therefore, parasitic on the very persons whom it turns into parasites. Thus, the state and its dependents march symbiotically to destruction.”—Herbert Schlossberg<sup>1</sup>*

In my previous essay I explored the origins of left-wing totalitarianism. I suggested that the impulse to control all aspects of society has led the contemporary liberal to a vision of government that is simultaneously antithetic to the values of classical liberalism and the logical corollary of that tradition.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this essay will be to build on that thesis by suggesting that one of the ways liberal totalitarianism has manifested itself is through the State assuming a maternal aspect. I will propose that a contributing factor in the rise of the maternal State has been the Church’s abandoning its maternal role, effectively creating a vacuum which government has rushed to fill. I shall be suggesting that empiricist epistemology played a significant role in this process, not least by introducing a spirit/matter dualism that has plagued Christian worship ever since the Enlightenment. I will conclude by suggesting that in order for Christians to present a credible challenge to inflated statecraft, we must reject this dualism and recover a maternal ecclesiology.

## *The Maternal State*

The maternal State is a government that assumes the function of mother. The maternal State is there to nurture us, to train us, to instruct us, to be guardian of our posses-

sions, to be our tutor in the way of virtue and, like a good mother, to make sure we share our belongings with our brothers and sisters.

The confusion between statecraft and motherhood is an ancient one. When Diocletian published his Edict of 301, mandating the persecution of Christians and destroying the few remaining liberties of the old Roman republic, he justified it by referring to himself and his associates as “the watchful parents of the whole human race.” Contemporary governments are increasingly following the pattern of Diocletian by acting, not simply as the guardians of law and order, but as mother to their citizens. I would like consider five overlapping areas where this is the case.

## *Government’s Maternal Eye*

Part of a mother’s vocation involves educating her children in the path of virtue (Pr. 1:8–9) and nourishing their bodies in growth. When government assumes the role of mother, the State begins to have a constant eye on our education, an eye on our virtue, an eye on our growth and an eye on the “all-round development of the human personality . . .”<sup>3</sup> Our lives become their business because, like a good mother, they have assumed responsibility for our growth and training. As C.S. Lewis remarked,

1. Schlossberg, *Idols For Destruction* (Crossway Books, 1993), p. 183.  
2. “The Degeneration of Liberalism,” *Christianity & Society*, Vol. 17 No. 2 (Winter 2007), available online at [http://www.kuyper.org/main/uploads/volume\\_17\\_no\\_2.pdf](http://www.kuyper.org/main/uploads/volume_17_no_2.pdf).

3. “In essence, communism is identical to humanism since it presupposes the all-round development of the human personality in a

The modern State exists not to protect our rights but to do us good or make us good—anyway, to do something to us or to make us something. Hence the new name “leaders” for those who were once “rulers.” We are less their subjects than their wards, pupils, or domestic animals. There is nothing left of which we can say to them, “Mind your own business.” Our whole lives *are* their business.<sup>4</sup>

The French Revolution is one of the prime modern examples of a State assuming responsibility for the private lives of its citizens under the guise of promoting virtue. During the Revolution’s “Reign of Terror,” Robespierre justified the use of terror by appealing to the need for both private and public virtue.<sup>5</sup> While no one would dispute the fact that virtue is necessary in a society, when government assumes responsibility for its cultivation, the result is more likely to be terror than virtue.

#### *Government’s Maternal Hand*

The incessant eagerness of the law-maker to act as parents to citizens is expressed in Abraham Lincoln’s words that “the legitimate object of government” is only “to do for a community of people, whatever they need to have done, but can not do, *at all*, or can not, *so well do*, for themselves . . .”<sup>6</sup> The presupposition behind this idea is that the State, like a good mother, must offer a helping hand wherever the citizens are incapable or in need. Otto von Bismarck, the great German Chancellor of the nineteenth century, suggested similarly when he asserted that government must act “in fulfilment of the workers’ right to look to the State where their own good will can achieve nothing more.”<sup>7</sup>

Contemporary examples of this same tendency are readily available.<sup>8</sup> On 15 March, 2007, the UK government published *Every Parent Matters*,<sup>9</sup> outlining a myriad of areas where the government intends to start partnering with parents in the rearing of children. As Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for Health, explained the new policies, “We want to create conditions where more parents can engage as partners in their children’s learning and development, from birth, through the school years and as young people make the transition to adulthood.”<sup>10</sup> In a similar vein, a report from the Institute for Public Policy Research has recently urged that Christening services be replaced by “birth ceremonies” in which the parents of children and the State agree to “work in partnership” to raise children.<sup>11</sup>

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perfectly organized society.” Georgi Shakhnazarov, *The Coming World Order* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), p. 273.

4. C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, “Is Progress Possible?” in *The Collected Works of C. S. Lewis* (New York: Inspirational Press, 1933), p. 514.

5. Maximilien Robespierre, “Justification of the Use of Terror,” available online at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/robespierre-terror.html>.

6. *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy P. Basler, vol. 2 (Rutgers University Press, 1953).

7. Quoted in P. J. O’Brien, *Forward with Roosevelt* (Chicago: John C. Winston Co., 1936), p. 84.

8. See John Laughland, *The Tainted Source: The Undemocratic Origins of the European Idea* (Little, Brown and Company, 1997) p. 4.

9. The government has made the document available at <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=11184>

10. Letter from Alan Johnson. *Ibid.*

11. Hal G.P. Colebatch’s, ‘Britain’s Escalating War on Christianity,’ *The American Spectator*, 11/8/2007, available online at [http://www.spectator.org/dsp\\_article.asp?art\\_id=12285](http://www.spectator.org/dsp_article.asp?art_id=12285)

#### *Government’s Maternal Ownership*

A good mother will determine what objects her children are allowed to possess and how they are allowed to use them. If a brother is using a stick to hurt his little sister, the mother has the right—indeed the duty—to step in and remove the instrument. This makes sense only because it is understood that a child’s ownership is provisional and can be overruled at any given time by parental interference. This not only protects the child from potentially harmful objects, but helps them to learn to be responsible with their possessions, including sharing them with other siblings when appropriate. All ownership proceeds from the parent in so far as the child owns nothing that the parent has not given or allowed.

In following the maternal paradigm, the modern State has no scruples about exercising ownership over all the land and the fullness thereof. One of the ways it does this by redistributing wealth and dictating how citizens can utilize their property. A. P. Lerner was typical when he defended governmental interference with the economy on the grounds that it was “a form of guardianship . . . to prevent foolish spending.”<sup>12</sup>

Not only does Mother State believe she has a right to plunder the profits of individuals (effectively forcing us to share our toys with our siblings), but she also views herself as possessing ownership of money in the collective, having the right to control and manipulate the economy, interest rates, cash flow, etc. At the risk of over simplification, that is the whole point of the American Federal Reserve: to regulate the economy through manipulation of interest rates.

Unconsciously, many in the West have been oriented to think that everything belongs to the government by default and what is ours is only that which the government has graciously allowed us to keep. However, a citizen population presupposes citizen ownership, seeing that a citizen who cannot engage in free trade and ownership is not properly a citizen at all but bears the same relation to the State that a slave bears to his master or a dependent child to his mother. Karl Marx was wiser than most when he recognised this relationship between property and family. Marx claimed that because the family is based on capital and private property, a successful attack on private property would necessarily also involve an attack on the family. The family, he and Engels wrote, “will vanish with the vanishing of capital.”<sup>13</sup> One of the methods communism used to ensure the vanishing of the family was State control of education.<sup>14</sup> Marx realised that destroying the family was central to destroying private property, and destroying private property was essential to destroying the family.<sup>15</sup> When the family was

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12. Abba P. Lerner, *The Economics of Control* (New York: Macmillan, 1944), p. 52.

13. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Penguin Classics, 1848) chapter 2.

14. “The bourgeois clap-trap about the family and education, about the hallowed co-relation of parents and child, becomes all the more disgusting, the more, by the action of Modern Industry, all the family ties among the proletarians are torn asunder, and their children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labour.” (*Communist Manifesto*, chapter 2)

15. In Scripture there is also a link between family and private property. Both are honoured and protected by the Ten Commandments. Rushdoony writes that “According to the Bible, the family is more than a spiritual unity; it is a material unity, firmly grounded in property and economic realities. Similarly, private property is not merely a neutral material thing for the Bible; it is essentially linked to

destroyed it would be replaced by the family of the State. Communism was as much about a new form of motherhood as it was about economic theory.

Marx's ideas about private property were hardly novel. According to many of his Enlightenment predecessors, the advent of private property represented a kind of fall of man. As J. L. Talmon observed,

Not only avowed Communists . . . but also Rousseau, Diderot and Helvetius were agreed that "all these evils are the first effect of property and of the array of evils inseparable from the inequality to which it gave birth." Diderot contrasted the "esprit de propriété" with the "esprit de communauté." He admonished the Legislator to combat the former and to foster the latter, if his aim were to make man's personal will identical with the general will. Rousseau's eloquent passage on the first man who enclosed a plot of land with a fence, deceived his neighbours into the belief in the legality of his act, and thus became the author of all the wars, rivalries, social evils and demoralization in the world, is not more radical than Morelly's and Mably's obsessive insistence that property is the root cause of all that has gone wrong in history.<sup>16</sup>

#### *Watch Your Grammar*

It is mother that gives us language. A good mother will correct the grammar of her children in order that they may learn to properly speak their native language. With the advent of "political correctness," this is exactly what government has begun to attempt, imposing her own grammar on the populace. But political correctness involves more than merely a preference for certain idioms: building on the assumption that there is a correlation between language and virtue, the canons of political correctness tell us how to conform to the prevailing archetype of the good citizen. As such, the demand for political correctness approximates a mother's demand for virtue in her children.

In political correctness we find a misplaced type of sympathy resembling maternal affection morphed into neurosis. This comes across quite powerfully in Anthony Browne's treatment of the phenomenon in his little booklet *The Retreat of Reason: Political Correctness and the Corruption of Public Debate in Modern Britain*.<sup>17</sup> Browne suggests that PC is a kind of cultural Marxism. In its classical form, Marxism used economics as a single factor explanation for all history, suggesting that society is determined by ownership of means of production. Marxism thus sought to redistribute wealth. Political correctness does this, not with economics, but with culture, arguing that history and society are determined by which groups have power over other groups. These groups are defined in terms of race, sex, ethnicity, etc. PC then tries to distribute power from the powerful to the powerless.

The ideology of political correctness—which, unlike Marxism, is rarely thought through in any systematised form, but only felt—enables its advocates to categorise

certain groups as victims in need of protection from criticism. For example, homosexuals, Muslims, ethnic minorities and the developing world are all victims and must therefore be protected from criticism. PC attempts to redistribute power so as to fall on the side of these groups. Like a mother punishing the tattle tail, a politically correct government will censure those who criticise its favoured children.

#### *Government's Maternal Food*

When the State tries to fulfil the vocation of parent, its first job is to feed us. God designed the world so that children expect sustenance from their mothers. We are wired in such a way that we follow the person with the food and we perceive such a person or institution in a paternal light.

#### *Government's Maternal Responsibility*

A good parent assumes responsibility for fixing problems that exist in the home and the family. Consequently, a child's problem is never just the child's problem: it is also the mother's problem. The similarity between this aspect of motherhood and the contemporary conception of statecraft hardly needs pointing out. We live in an age where the prevailing assumption is that it is the government's responsibility to fix all problems in society. William Buckley described this tendency well. "If there is crime in the street, it is because government does not provide enough day care. If there is unemployment in the steel mills, it is because the government is using too much steel making submarines. If there is a growing number of broken homes, it is because government has not passed the Equal Rights Amendment."<sup>18</sup> A State that assumes maternity over its citizens feels compelled to keep a careful watch over the education, money, speech and even thoughts of its citizens.<sup>19</sup> Political scientist Andrew Hacker defended government's role in taking responsibility over all the activities of its citizens on the grounds that:

If government is to govern it must be able to tell people they must stop doing things they are now doing; it must be able to curtail private activities and privileges so that society will be more orderly. Leadership is meaningless unless citizens are prepared to follow: to sacrifice individual pleasures and agree to redistributions in which they may be losers. To be a nation, in short, a society must have a citizenry willing to surrender a substantial portion of its freedom to public authority.<sup>20</sup>

#### *Government's Maternal Compassion*

As a good mother shows compassion to her children, especially when they are ailing, so the maternal State offers its own compassion to the masses. However, because it is not

God's spiritual realities, His law, and the family. The property and family are everywhere closely linked together by the Bible. Every attack therefore on private property is an attack on the family, and every attack on the family is also an attack on private property." [Rushdoony, *Law & Liberty*, p. 68]

16. J. L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (New York: The Norton Library, 1970) p. 51.

17. Anthony Browne, *The Retreat of Reason: Political Correctness and the Corruption of Public Debate in Modern Britain* (London: Civitas: Institute for the Study of Civil Society, 2006). See my review of the book at <http://robinphillips.blogspot.com/2007/02/retreat-of-reason.html>.

18. William Buckley, "For the Democrats, Government is a God" *The Atlanta Journal* (July 23, 1984), 9A.

19. On thought control, see Phillips, "The Degeneration of Liberalism" *op. cit.*; Anthony Browne, *ibid.*; "Moral Climate Change and Freedom of Speech," speech in the House of Lords, February 9, 2006, by the Bishop of Durham, Dr N. T. Wright, available online at [www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright\\_HOL\\_Moral\\_Climate.htm](http://www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright_HOL_Moral_Climate.htm); Tammy Bruce, *The New Thought Police: Inside the Left's Assault on Free Speech and Free Minds* (Crown Publications, 2003).

20. Andrew Hacker, *The End of the American Era* (New York: Atheneum, 1970).

government's job to act as mother, compassion from the State is always a prelude to tyranny. The beneficent State naturally morphs into a malignant State. C. S. Lewis described this well when he wrote that:

Of all tyrannies, a tyranny exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. It may be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busy-bodies. The robber baron's cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated; but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end, for they do so with the approval of their own conscience.<sup>21</sup>

#### *Biblical Critique of Maternal Statecraft*

I have explored a number of areas in which the modern State assumes the role of mother. Before moving further it is important to stress what this does not mean. It does not mean that lawmakers are self-consciously thinking in terms of the maternal paradigm when they construct policy. A conceptual paradigm, like a worldview or demon possession, can quite easily operate in the background without the agent ever being cognisant of the fact.

Just as the impulse to be a faithful dog is ennobling in a dog but demeaning when exhibited by a man, so the mothering instinct is nurturing in a mother but tyrannical when assumed by government. Despite the tendency to tyranny, however, it is not by its effects but by the starting point that this pattern of government must ultimately be assessed. The starting point is a rejection of the biblical teaching on the role of government.

According to Scripture, earthly rulers have the God-appointed task to bring God's order to God's world against the day when he will take power and rule directly.<sup>22</sup> This is brought out in Romans 13:1–7 where Paul specifies that the job of the State is to restrain evil. The State achieves this through wielding the sword to punish evil-doers and collecting revenues necessary to this end. This enables the nation to avoid anarchy and to achieve social stability. In a condition of anarchy it is normally the rich and powerful who triumph at the expense of the weak. The institution of statecraft protects the weak by punishing those who would take away my property or stop me buying and selling. On a larger scale, if another country tries to invade our land, the government defends our property and trade in the collective.

Under this scheme of things, government is there to preserve, not to create, an independent social order. It is not to be salt and light, but the sword. It is there to allow people to get on with their lives similar to the way a fence allows sheep to peacefully graze. While it does not have a mandate to change the nation for the better, the State has been given the job of using force to protect law and order and, in so doing, preserve what already exists. When properly functioning, therefore, government enables citizens to lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity (1 Tim. 2:2). C. S. Lewis makes this point in *Mere Christianity*:

It is easy to think the State has a lot of different objects—military, political, economic, and what not. But in a way things are much simpler than that. The State exists simply to promote and to protect the ordinary happiness of human beings in this life. A husband and wife chatting over a fire, a couple of friends having a game of darts in a pub, a man reading a book in his own room or digging in his own garden—that is what the State is there for. And unless they are helping to increase and prolong and protect such moments, all the laws, parliaments, armies, courts, police, economics, etc., are simply a waste of time.<sup>23</sup>

When we consider the vocation of the Church, we find that the reverse is the case. The Church, not the State, is God's instrument for bringing life and positive change to the world. The images used in Scripture to describe the role of the Church bear this out: the Church is to be the city on a hill (Mt. 5:14), a light to the nations (Mt. 5:14) and God's means for bringing salt or flavour to the world (Mt. 5:13). Whereas the civil magistrate is mandated to bear the sword against those who practice evil (Rom. 13:4), the Church is not authorized to use force against threats to law and order (Rom. 12:9). Rather, the Church is called to be proactive in bringing good to society (Mt. 28:18–19; Rom. 12:21; 2 Cor. 5:18–19; Col. 1:19–23), as epitomised in our Lord's prayer, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." (Mt. 6:10).

It should be clear by now that the Church and State have opposite goals.<sup>24</sup> While the former is instituted to cultivate virtue and maturity on the earth, and is equipped to do this with the gospel, the latter is instituted to maintain law on the earth and is equipped to do this with the sword (*i.e.* coercive force). While the function of the Church and the State are opposite in this respect, they have complementary ends that should work together like two blades in a pair of scissors: when the Church promotes social good it discourages evil from flourishing; when the State punishes crime it encourages good to flourish.

Just as we saw that the State frequently abandons its God-prescribed vocation, so the Church is often tempted to abandon its spiritual weapons and take up the carnal weapons of statecraft. Thus, instead of promoting redemption in the world through the spiritual resources Christ has provided, many Christians have the tendency to adopt the world's mindset, which says that the solution to any problem is a policy. According to this way of thinking, as soon as enough Christians are elected and as soon as enough godly laws are passed, then the national neurosis can be rectified. Implicit behind such thinking is the salvation through statecraft ideology that Jesus had to continually confront during his earthly ministry. Because many Jews in Jesus' day saw the kingdom of God in externals only, they expected the Messiah to bring social revolution. Like the Israelites during the time of Gideon, they believed that God was going to fix the earth by first fixing the world's systems.

Although the Church cannot fix the world through the power of politics, she has been given tools for bringing

21. C. S. Lewis, "The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment" in *God in the Dock* (*op. cit.*, p. 499). See also R. Andrew Newman, "Stay Out of Our Wardrobe! The libertarian Narnia state," 2006, at <http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/newman200601030820.asp>.

22. Space forbids the full discussion that this question warrants, and I must simply summarise the fuller argument that could be made. For further study, see Gary DeMar's three volume series *God and Government* (Atlanta, GE: American Vision, 1997).

23. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (Fontana Books, 1952), p. 166.

24. For more on the different roles of Church and the State, including the biblical doctrine of the separation of Church and State, see my lecture notes on the biblical philosophy of government, available online at <http://robinphillips.blogspot.com/2008/01/lecture-on-biblical-philosophy-of.html>. See James Cary's articles on the three governments at [http://jamescary.blogspot.com/2008/01/confusion-of-family-church-and-state\\_10.html](http://jamescary.blogspot.com/2008/01/confusion-of-family-church-and-state_10.html)

change into the world. Those tools are word and sacrament, the law and the testimony.

While it is true that government must be evangelised as must every other area of culture, the best a truly Christianised government could do is to fulfill its God-appointed goal of restraining evil. Changing hearts must be left up to the Church. As Douglas Jones puts it in *Angels in the Architecture*,

The restoration of the nations is not, in any important sense, a political process. Rather, the process is one of baptism and catechism. The means given for the conversion of the heathen were the waters of baptism and the words of instruction. When the lessons have been learned, there will of course be some political consequences. But they will be minimal for the simple reason that the state itself, in a nation that has come to repentance, will also be minimal . . . Our problems are spiritual, and the solutions are the Word and sacraments. The charge was not “go ye, and elect right-of-center congresspersons.” Now certainly the gospel has an effect on all of culture, as it should. But results are not causes; apples are not roots.<sup>25</sup>

### *The Maternal Church*

There are many correct ways to organise the Church’s vocation into a single organising principle, and one of these is certainly the motif of motherhood.<sup>26</sup> The relation of the Church to God’s people is similar to the relation between a mother and her children, a relation which the Head of the Church movingly evoked (Lk. 13:34). The Church, like a good mother, takes responsibility for teaching her children (Rom. 12:7) and equipping them for good works (2 Tim. 3:16–17) and helping them when they are sick (James 5:14). The Church, like a good mother, has a mandate to provide materially for her children (Rom. 12:8, 13; 2 Cor. 8, 9), even redistributing wealth among her offspring (2 Cor. 8:14–15) so that none go without. Through the institution of baptism the Church, like a good mother, washes her children. The Church, like a good mother, provides accountability (Gal. 2:1–2; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 2:15; James 5:19–20), discipline (1 Cor. 5:1–13; 1 Tim. 5:20) and has genuine authority (2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 2:15; Heb. 13:7, 17). The Church, as a good mother, gently draws us to our Father.

The Church acts as mother to the degree that she is central to all of life. Without mother Church, life would disintegrate. The entire life of the Christian should revolve around Church just as the entire life of a young child revolves around mother. Douglas Jones describes this aspect of the Church in his essay “Mother Kirk.” “The Church should be so central in our thinking that without her life would collapse. She should play prominently in our understanding of the past, the present, and the future. She—not the state or the family or the individual—should be first on our lips when we discuss evangelism and social change and the good life. We should turn to the Church first for doctrinal nourishment and practical raiment.”<sup>27</sup>

25. Douglas Jones, “And Babylons Fall” in *Angels in the Architecture: A Protestant Vision For Middle Earth* (Moscow ID: 1998). See also Peter Leithart, *The Kingdom and the Power: Rediscovering the Centrality of the Church* (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 1993).

26. This works on the principle that any motif of the Bible can be used as a single organising motif. We may gain insight by using any number of different themes as the most basic organising motif of any given passage. See Vern Poythress’ book *Symphonic Theology*, chapter 7, point 8 and 9, available online at [http://www.fra.e-poythress.org/Poythress\\_books/Symphonic\\_Theology/bst7.htm](http://www.fra.e-poythress.org/Poythress_books/Symphonic_Theology/bst7.htm).

At the heart of the Church is the institution of the Eucharist. Here the Church, like a good mother, nourishes us with her food. I have already alluded to the principle that human beings have an instinct to follow the person who provides food. It was after Jesus fed the crowds that they were ready to follow him and make him king (Jn 6:1–15). We expect food from our parents and that is why we pray to our Father in heaven, “give us this day our daily bread” (Mt. 6:11). That is not something we should pray to the State because the State is not our parent. But when the State feeds us, we unconsciously begin to think of it in a parental light, which itself orients us to look more favourably on its augmented power. As Schlossberg notes, “A class that is able to distribute life’s blessings exercises a godlike power.”<sup>28</sup>

God’s answer to the maternal State is the maternal Church.

It will be useful to briefly review the ground we have covered so far. I have suggested that it is a frequent tendency of sinful governments to overstep their circumscribed sphere by assuming the role of national mother. My biblical critique of this tendency involved the notion that the Church and state have been given different jobs by God. I suggested that while the Church has a proactive role in changing society for good, the State has a negative role in restraining external threats to law and order. I moved from there to suggest that the maternal metaphor, while being inappropriate for the State, is a fitting way to describe the function of the Church. The following section will build on this foundation by considering the role that empiricist epistemology and its offspring, namely matter-spirit dualism, has played in removing the mantle of motherhood from Church and bestowing it on the State. To the extent that the question before us (“what is the philosophical pedigree to maternal statecraft?”) is an historical question, there are a multiplicity of equally correct ways to proceed, seeing that every historical event is the product of a network of causal antecedents. Therefore, as I follow a certain thread of cause and effects, the reader should keep this in mind that there are dozens of similar threads with which the same route might be charted. This is an important qualification lest it be assumed that I am claiming more than I am. Just as the metaphor of mother was only one among many that I might have chosen to describe the Church (with each yielding its own unique field of insights), so the historical sequence I am about to chart is one among a myriad of sequences leading up to the neurosis of the maternal State. With that, we are now in a position to examine the role that Enlightenment empiricism has played in giving us the maternal State.

### *Empiricism*

Empiricism is part of the branch of philosophy known as epistemology. Epistemology is the study or science of *knowing*. Epistemological questions, therefore, are questions about knowledge.

Empiricism is one kind of epistemological system. Empiricism asserts that the only legitimate means for acquiring knowledge is through the five senses.

At first this doesn’t seem such a very strange thing to say. After all, it is difficult to imagine what we could know if we

27. Douglas Jones, “Mother Kirk” in *Angels in the Architecture*, *ibid.*

28. Schlossberg, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

were deprived of our sense of smell, touch, taste, and perhaps most importantly, our sense of sight and hearing. But, of course, nobody would deny that the five senses play a crucial part in bringing knowledge to our minds. That is not the issue. The real question is: are the senses the *only* means by which knowledge is acquired? If yes, then it follows that those things which are necessarily beyond the scope of sense perception—such as God, the soul, angels, heaven and hell, etc.—are necessarily outside the scope of objective knowledge. Empiricism also involves the denial that any of our ideas are innate or *a priori*.<sup>29</sup>

Though the tension between the empirical method and abstract speculation has always been at the heart of the Western philosophical tradition, going back to controversies between Plato and Aristotle and then finding renewed expression in the debates between the mediaeval Nomists and Realists, the radical empiricism of the Enlightenment owes its roots to Francis Bacon (1561–1626).

#### *Bacon and the Divided Field of Knowledge*

Bacon believed that if the empirical method could be properly adopted, then science would flourish, enabling man to regain that mastery over nature which he had lost at the fall of Adam. Bacon's vision of scientific progress was utopian in so far as he believed that science—as embodied in the concrete methodology of empiricism—would herald a new age of mankind and progress.

Bacon's thinking was in reaction to the Western philosophical tradition of the mediaeval scholastics, with their emphasis on deductive proofs and *a priori* categories of logic. The legacy of such abstract, non-empirical thinking, Bacon believed, held the West back from the scientific revolution that lay at the door.

Not only did Bacon teach that knowledge through concrete observation was the way of the future and progress but he also preached that this was the only truly "humble" way. To vainly presume our minds capable of discovering any truth through abstract reasoning was symptomatic of the worst type of intellectual pride.

The implications of Bacon's divided field went beyond simply a polarisation between deduction and induction or between the experimental method vs. deductive reasoning. It affected the more practical categories of science vs. religion, reason vs. faith, nature vs. theology etc. This is because the principles on which religion, faith and theology depended were outside the realm of empirical observation (or so Bacon assumed). According to Bacon, each of these realms operated according to a different set of rules. As Tarnis put it, summarising Bacon's thought, "Each realm had its own laws and its own appropriate method . . . Kept rightly separate, both theology and science could better flourish . . ." <sup>30</sup>

Because belief in God belonged in the non-empirical category, it followed necessarily—once you accepted the empiricist starting point—that it is impossible to infer anything about God from the natural world. (A walk round the pond with Coleridge and Wordsworth would have been torture for Bacon.) Thus, Bacon wrote that "Nothing of

God's nature and essence is to be found through the study of this world. There is no divine efficiency in its movement or divine form in its structure. It possesses no divine causation, divine motivation or any attributes of divinity. It is formed matter acting through varieties of locomotion inherent within itself and nothing more."<sup>31</sup>

Bacon was followed by others who advocated this rift between religious truth vs. normal truth and knowledge vs. faith. For example, Benedict De Spinoza (1632–77) taught that the purpose of Scripture and religion is to give a simple moral message, as epitomised in the injunction "Love your neighbour," but is quite distinct from what he called "natural truth." In his *Theological-Political Treatise*, Spinoza was very concerned to show that faith is something separate from philosophy and that "philosophy and religion, reason and faith, inhabit two distinct and exclusive spheres, and neither should tread in the domain of the other."<sup>32</sup>

#### *Empiricism and Rationalism*

During the seventeenth century, thinkers continued to develop the empiricist concept with an increasing degree of philosophical sophistication. On the other side of the coin, there continued to be thinkers who followed in the scholastic, Aristotelian tradition against which empiricism was a reaction. These were known as rationalists. The goal of the rationalist was to attain certainty through abstraction rather than observation. Where the empiricist began by opening his eyes to the world around him, the rationalist began by defining his terms and stating the first principles or axioms from which to reason. The paradigm for the rationalist was not science but geometry, yet at the same time they used rationalistic principles as the basis for learning about the natural world (a method which, if they were not careful, could lead to an unhelpful imposition of conceptual categories onto material nature).

Descartes was the prime example of a rationalist. He started by doubting everything, including the elements of perception. He was then able to deduce his own existence, since he must first exist in order to doubt (hence, his famous *Cogito ergo sum*—"I think therefore I am") From there Descartes gradually reasoned his way to a belief in a perfect God, the material universe and other truths.

The rationalist method and the empiricist method were, in one sense, diametrically opposed. The rationalists affirmed the existence of metaphysical realities such as God and the soul, both of which were thought to be logical necessities, while the empiricists were scathing at the idea of objective knowledge of anything invisible. Yet, in many ways, both ideologies were two sides of the same coin. Both camps began with man's mind as the starting point, believing it was possible for the intellect to autonomously attain certainty about reality; both camps strongly reacted against external forms of authority; both camps rebelled against what they perceived to be an irrational, unthinking past, and both camps championed a constricted, lopsided criteria for knowledge which ultimately reinforced the widening divide of Bacon.

29. For further discussion about this debate, see my article "The Degeneration of Liberalism," *op. cit.*

30. Richard Tarnis, (Pimlico, 1991) p. 274.

31. Cited by Rietkerk, *The Future Great Planet Earth* (Nivedit Good Books, 1989), p. 11.

32. Steven M. Nadler, *A Companion to Early Modern Philosophy* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), p. 239.

*The Rift Widens*

It was both these streams of thought that ran into the eighteenth century Enlightenment. The Enlightenment inherited a complex mesh of ideas, many of which were contradictory, but which contributed to a whole network of intuitions. The result was a kind of philosophical soup that could be constantly amended but which was rarely adequately assessed. Thus it was that the method of empiricism could be more loudly advanced during the eighteenth century while still retaining an emphasis on selected aspects of the rationalist method, such as reasoning from first principles and the assumption that there are *a priori* normatives of human nature. Similarly, we find Enlightenment writers like Hume and Diderot pushing abstract metaphysics firmly into the distance of a non-scientific past, but resurrecting them on certain select occasions in order to construct an argument for deism or to attack a specific tenet of Christian doctrine.

Contradictions notwithstanding, it was the empiricist outlook that came to dominate the intellectual landscape of the eighteenth century, as epitomised by the Lockean dictum, “*Nihil est in intellectu quod non antea fuerit in sensu*,” (“there is nothing in the intellect that was not previously in the senses”). One of the factors contributing to the domination of Empiricism was its confluence with a materialistic metaphysic. In a world where the only reality is that of material forces, it follows that our knowledge must come through the purely physical means of sense observation. Yet just as empiricism was the logical consequence of materialism, so the reverse is also true: materialism logically follows from empiricism. If the only kind of knowledge is that which we can attain through physical observation (empiricism), then that which is beyond the scope of the physical world can never come under the category of knowledge (materialism, more or less). Therefore, since belief in such non-physical entities as the human soul, God, angels, heaven and hell, cannot be the subject of empirical observation, they must have arisen instead out of superstition, ignorance and lack of true knowledge.

With this outlook came a gradual, but eventually pervasive, acceptance of empiricism’s natural corollary, Bacon’s divided epistemology. This comes across in the seventeen volumes of the *Encyclopédie* assembled by Diderot.<sup>33</sup> At the heart of this work is the recurring idea that the only reliable knowledge is that which comes through “particular observation,” as Diderot put it. This led to a pronounced scorn of

33. The *Encyclopédie* can be described as a paradigm of Enlightenment thought. It consists of seventeen volumes, put together in France under the supervision of Diderot, during the years of 1751 and 1772. This *Encyclopédie* attempted to catalogue the whole of human knowledge. It was a noble undertaking with its aim to create “a universal and rational dictionary . . . to bring together the knowledge scattered over the surface of the earth,” as Diderot wrote of it. The *Encyclopédie* has almost become synonymous with the Enlightenment, for it offered more than what we think of an encyclopaedia offering. Not only did it give the latest facts about everything under the sun, it was full of “enlightened” interpretation. Put another way, it was rather like a massive editorial on all aspects of life. So controversial were many of the viewpoints that the writers were frequently in trouble with the censor. Indeed, Diderot even had to spend some time in prison as a result of his more controversial opinions. Nevertheless, the message of the *encyclopaedists* did get out. Their message was that we should view reality in a whole new way, with man rather than God being the centre. The quotations I am using are taken from extracts of the *Encyclopédie* from *The Enlightenment: Texts, I*, edited by Simon Eliot and Keith Whitlock (Milton Keynes: The Open University, 1992).

metaphysics. This scorn confronted the reader on the frontispiece of the work where there is a visual depiction of, among other things, a female personification of Truth, Metaphysics, Reason, Theology and Philosophy. Significantly, truth is adorned with a veil which Reason and Philosophy are lifting off, which is a clear statement about the role reason and philosophy play in illuminating the truth for us. But what is Metaphysics doing? “Proud Metaphysics,” to quote from the “explication” that accompanied the frontispiece, “tries to divine her [Truth’s] presence rather than to see her. Theology turns her back and waits for light from on high.”

The implied disjunction here between reason and theology, and similarly between truth and metaphysics, is indicative of Bacon’s divided epistemology. The fact that theology turns her back on truth to await light from on high suggests the schism between religious truth and normal truth that would quickly widen as the eighteenth century progressed. We see a further disjunction between thought (abstraction) and sight (induction/observation) implied by the picture of Reason and Philosophy removing the veil to *look* at Truth, while Metaphysics turns away to *think* about Truth.<sup>34</sup>

These bifurcations implicated a further series of dualities. If—as empiricism taught—any knowledge not acquired through the medium of the senses was outside the limits of objective, publicly accessible knowledge, then matters of religion, metaphysics and spirituality must be subjective and private. Religious ideas were thus a personal kind of truth that, by its very nature, need not have any relation to the outside world of fact (more on that in a minute).

Prior to these developments, thinkers had generally tried to achieve integration between these two spheres. The Enlightenment, following in the steps of Francis Bacon, said not only that such integration was unobtainable, but that to even seek it was a massive category confusion. Factual coherence need not be antecedent to religious belief since such belief is a personal, private, autonomous affair, freed from the constriction of objective fixity.

*Lessing and the Three Rings*

Gotthold Lessing (1729–81) was an important figure in the German Enlightenment. Lessing is probably best remembered for his play, *Nathan the Wise*, and the message of religious tolerance that it preaches. However, beneath the message of tolerance is another more subtle message which relates to the concept of truth and faith. To fully appreciate the significance of this, however, some background information about Lessing will be helpful.

In 1774, Lessing published the first of six extracts, collectively referred to as *Fragments of an Anonymous Author*. These extracts were taken from an enormous manuscript written by the lately deceased Hermann Reimarus (1694–1768).

34. To this might be added many other dualities that were popularised at the time of the Enlightenment. Bishop Tom Wright has written that the splitting apart of history and faith, facts and values, religion and politics, nature and supernatural, liberal and conservative, can all be traced back to the eighteenth century. The consequence is that “each of those categories now carries with it, in the minds of millions of people around the world, an implicit opposition to its twin, so that we are left with the great difficulty of even conceiving of a world in which they belong to one another as part of a single indivisible whole.” N. T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus* (SPCK, 2000), p. 9.

Reimarus had not published this work while alive because of the hugely controversial nature of its content. The book, an outright attack on the Bible, suggests that Jesus was an imprudent Jewish agitator whose messianic dreams came to nothing, that the disciples faked the resurrection for political purposes, and so on. Not surprisingly, when Lessing began publishing sections of Reimarus' work, the Lutheran clergy were scandalised. A fierce debate ensued between Lessing and a few Lutheran pastors, in particularly the pastor Johann Goeze. In the course of 1778, Lessing wrote eleven diatribes to attack Goeze's views. While Goeze upheld the inerrancy of Scripture which Reimarus had attacked, Lessing argued for a separation of the spirit of the Bible from the letter of the Bible. In this way, Lessing hoped to clear away the mud in order that the "true Christianity" of the Bible might flourish, disengaged from the inessential and damaging doctrines also found in Scripture.

For all Lessing's high-minded ambitions, the debate with Goeze turned into little more than a mud-slinging match, with the famous champion of tolerance accusing Goeze of everything from hypocrisy to barbarity. Scandalised, Goeze approached the Duke of Brunswick who ordered that all Lessing's future works be submitted to the censor. The result of this restriction was that Lessing simply began to promote his ideas through more subtle, innocuous means. Thus it was that in 1779 Lessing published his most famous work, *Nathan the Wise*.

Because *Nathan the Wise* takes place in Jerusalem at the time of the crusades, Lessing is able to have interplay between all three of the main religions: Christianity, Judaism and Islam. The portion of the play that is most famous, as well as most significant, is a parable that the wise Nathan tells to the Sultan. The Islamic Sultan had asked the Jewish Nathan to tell him which religion was the true one. Suspicious of the Sultan's motives, Nathan answers with the parable of the three rings.

In this parable, there was once a rich man who possessed a magic ring. This ring had secret power which caused the owner of the ring to gain favour in the sight of God and humankind. Now the owner of this ring took precautions to leave the ring in his family, ensuring that it was faithfully passed on from generation to generation, from son to son. Finally, the ring reached a man who had three sons, each of which he loved alike. As the father drew near his death, he was in a quandary as to which son to leave the ring to since he had promised the ring, in turn, to each.

As a solution, the father secretly contacted a craftsman who made two identical replicas of the ring. Not being able to distinguish the original, the father left each son with one of the three rings. Of course, when the father died, disputes immediately began to arise between the sons, each of whom believed he possessed the genuine ring.

At this point, Nathan pauses the story to say that just as it was impossible to distinguish which was the correct ring, so we cannot trust ourselves to distinguish the grounds on which the different religions rest.

The story continues with each of the three sons believing their ring to be the true one since each had received it directly from the hand of the father. In the end the brothers take their problem before a judge. The judge enjoins the brothers that what is more important than knowing the truth about their rings, is the motivation and inspiration each will achieve through *believing* that their ring is the genuine one.

Thus ends the parable that Nathan used to answer the Sultan's question, namely, which religion is the correct one. The important thing is not what is true but what you *believe*.

There are many things we could say in response to this tale. We might point out that in actual fact the religion of Islam, and even Judaism, is quite distinguishable from Christianity. Or we might say that since one of the rings actually *was* the correct ring, it follows that two of the brothers would have spent their life believing a false proposition. However, such observations miss the whole point Lessing was trying to convey. His point is that truth doesn't matter. There is something far more important than questions of truth and falsehood in the narrow, letter-of-the-law sense. Stop trying to defend what you believe is true, he seems to be saying to us, and instead concentrate on letting your belief motivate and inspire you. There is no need for factual coherence to be antecedent to religious belief as it must be with scientific truth; rather, the nature of religious belief is such that it can exist on its own, without needing to appeal to historical grounds. In fact, Lessing saw the very attempt of Christians to defend the historical veracity of their faith as intolerant since it failed to recognise that all the major religions, if rightly understood, were equally valuable routes to God.

Lessing's parable illustrates the Enlightenment commitment to relegating religious belief to the realm of the subjective, private and unverifiable. This idea began gradually to affect popular thinking from the eighteenth century forward, even among those who had never heard of empiricism. This divided epistemology invited people to view religion and the worship of God as a personal matter—a solitary experience between the individual and God that had little relevance to the objective world. What you believe is up to you, and whatever you do, don't let that infringe on public reality. To seek objective verification about a matter of faith was now almost to commit a category mistake, since the "truth" of religion had now become a personal truth discontinuous from the fixity of the external world of science, history and public life. Nancy Pearcey well described this aspect of secularism: "Religion is no longer considered the source of serious truth claims that could potentially conflict with public agendas. The private realm has been reduced to an 'innocuous play area,' says Peter Berger, where religion is acceptable for people who need that kind of crutch—but where it won't upset any important applecarts in the larger world of politics and economics."<sup>35</sup>

#### *The Rise of Secularism*

Postmodernists may be exaggerating when they claim that power games always lie behind the history of human ideas. Nevertheless there is some truth to the claim. Certainly when we consider the epistemological debates of the eighteenth century, questions of political and social power were never far off. By the time Europe reached the eighteenth century, it was weary from years—indeed centuries—of religious conflict. Whether it was because of Protestants persecuting Catholics or Catholics persecuting Protestants or Anglicans persecuting Puritans or Calvinists persecuting

35. Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), p. 68. See also Peter Berger, *Facing Up to Modernity: Excursions in Society, Politics, and Religion* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), p. 18.

Anabaptists, the secular intelligencia of Europe perceived religion to be antithetical to social peace, harmony and justice. The reigns of civil power had to somehow be wrested out of the hands of the Church and given to a thoroughly secularised government. Empiricism gave this project the legitimisation it needed. After all, if religion—by virtue of being a non-empirically derived belief—was a personal and private matter and nothing more, then it had no place in the public square. If religion was confined to what occurred between someone's right ear and their left ear, then there is no point in fighting anymore about those beliefs. And, of course, there is also no point in letting religion have a voice in the public square.

Thus arose the division between religion and politics that has been a truism ever since. In fact, the contemporary notion of the "State" arose out of this ideological matrix. N. T. Wright tells us how "the word 'state' in the way we use it today is basically an Enlightenment invention, designed at least in part to be precisely the sort of self-operating system, free from religious influence, never mind control, that the world had not seen before."<sup>36</sup>

Diderot advocated a disjunction between the State and religion on just such grounds. "Whenever civil power supports religion or seeks its support, the progress of reason must necessarily be retarded"<sup>37</sup> wrote Diderot, joining the general chorus which said that religion should occupy itself exclusively with the internal landscape of the individual rather than the sphere of the objective world. To achieve this goal, a reduction of Christianity was required. Not only was it necessary to conceive faith in fideistic terms (i.e. blind faith completely divorced from objective knowledge), but the sharp and craggy message of Jesus was reconstructed in terms of timeless platitudes. This enabled Jesus to be seen as a great moral teacher whose example might be brought forward to champion humanitarianism and condemn religious hypocrisy, but whose relevance in the public, objective world of truth was either limited or non-existent. The exclusivist truth claims of Christian theology were replaced by a "faith" that was common to all religions, underpinned by a vague pseudo-inspirational rhetoric of brotherly love.

The corollary of reducing religion to a personal and private affair, divorced from the concerns of the objective, external world, was that now humans could run the world however they liked without being accountable to the Trinitarian God. As N. T. Wright recently pointed out in a lecture presented at Asbury Theological Seminary, kicking God upstairs like that always was a way for humans to claim power over the world. Naturally, when humans seek to augment their power base, they will favour political models such as the maternal paradigm discussed above. And there is a certain consistency to that. After all, if ultimate power does not rest with God, then it is hard to argue why it should not rest with the State. If God is an absentee Father, then there is a power vacuum which Mother State will rush to fill.

Thus emerged the idea of secularism. Originally secularism was not about getting rid of faith so much as simply making sure that it remained in its place (i.e. a personal and private affair). This is where many Christians often misunderstand the real threat that secularism poses. As David Wells puts it,

It is axiomatic that secularism strips life of the divine, but it is important to see that it does so by relocating the divine in that part of life which is private. Viewing the process from one angle, one can quite validly say that secular humanism is irreligious in its effects; from another angle, it is equally valid to say that it allows for a cohabitation with religion under certain circumstances. Those who have become alarmed by its first aspect, attacking 'secular humanism' for its irreligion in the public sphere, may sometimes have done us a disservice by failing to acknowledge its other aspect, its effect in the private sphere, its religiousness.<sup>38</sup>

Secularism effectively privatised Christianity as "secularian," while secular philosophies like materialism and naturalism were put forth as 'objective' and 'neutral,' and therefore the only perspectives suitable for the public sphere . . . Faith is often reduced to a separate add-on for personal and private life—on the order of a private indulgence, like a weakness for chocolates—and not an appropriate topic in the public arena."<sup>39</sup> This created a hitherto unprecedented gap between the sacred and the secular spheres, with religion having increasingly less relevance to everyday life in the real world. It is unprecedented because, as Irving Kristol noted, "religion that is a merely private affair has been, until our time, unknown in the annals of mankind . . . Such religion quickly diminishes into an indoor pleasure, a kind of hobby of one or more individuals, like reading a book or watching television."<sup>40</sup> Lesslie Newbigin made the same point in his book *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*: "The sharp line which modern Western culture has drawn between religious affairs and secular affairs is itself one of the most significant peculiarities of our culture, and would be incomprehensible to the vast majority of people."<sup>41</sup>

In his survey of the Western mind, Tarnis speaks of the "double-truth universe" that followed the advent of secularism: "Thus arose the psychological necessity of a double-truth universe. Reason and faith came to be seen as pertaining to different realms, with Christian philosophers and scientists, and the larger educated Christian public, perceiving no genuine integration between the scientific reality and the religious reality."<sup>42</sup>

The sure sign that secularism is fully entrenched in society is when we are precluded from even asking whether a particular religious belief is true or false since it is a universally accepted axiom that faith is completely outside the realm of rational discourse. In such a society, the real crime of the Christian is not what he happens to believe, but that he claims objectivity for his beliefs in the first place. As David Wells points out: "Critics of Christian faith used to set themselves in opposition to it on the grounds that this or that tenet was unbelievable. Today, postmodern critics oppose Christianity not because of its particulars, but simply because it claims to be *true*."<sup>43</sup>

38. David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 79.

39. Nancy Pearcey, *op. cit.*, pp. 98–99.

40. Irving Kristol, "The Welfare State's Spiritual Crisis," *The Wall Street Journal* 229, no. 23 (February 3, 1997), A6.

41. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), p. 172.

42. Tarnis, *op. cit.*, p. 302.

43. David Wells, *Losing Our Virtue* (Leicestershire, England, Intervarsity Press, 1998), p. 19. The American edition is published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

36. Wright, *ibid.*

37. From his *Encyclopédie* article "Pyrrhonian Philosophy."

*The Christian Response*

The Enlightenment would doubtless have been able to exercise the long-term effect that it did had it not been for the fact that most Christians were caught off guard by the new ideas. While rejecting the Enlightenment's conclusions, few Christian thinkers took the challenge of offering a rational critique of the assumptions on which those conclusions were derived, notably the divided epistemology. Like the Romantics in the nineteenth century, serious Christians at the time of the Enlightenment tended to emphasise the importance of religious truth, while still unconsciously accepting the epistemological package which kept that truth subjective and private. The Church tended to react to the new wave of secular philosophy by taking refuge in an emotional, devotional kind of Christianity that did not require any intellectual underpinning and, as such, fit nicely into the divided paradigm.

On the surface, Christianity seemed to spread in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Movements sprung up all over the place, including the Quakers and Methodists in England, the Great Awakening in America, Jansenism in France, Pietism in Germany, etc.. However, beneath the apparent progress Christianity was making, there was an underlying, usually unconscious, acceptance of the divided epistemology. This is because these movements tended to emphasise the personal, emotional and inspirational aspects of faith often at the expense of the objective, public elements. In his article, "The Pietistic Roots of Evangelicalism Today," Ranald Macaulay shows that these pietistic evangelical movements led to an almost exclusive emphasis on saving souls while the domains of culture, society, politics, art and philosophy were left firmly in the hands of the secularists.<sup>44</sup> The Enlightenment's compartmentalisation of the sacred and the secular, together with their definition of which belonged in which box, seemed to be winning the day. Christianity was fast ceasing to function as a religion in the classic sense of being a totalising system that structured the whole of one's life, but was instead becoming, at best, a system of strong personal piety and, at worst, a personal worship hobby. Further, as faith became analogous to a personal, inward experience, anti-intellectualism followed as surely as water runs downhill.

As time progressed, these strains only heightened, culminating in the strident anti-intellectual evangelicalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Evangelists like Dwight Moody began to appear on the scene who boasted about not having any theology ("My theology! I didn't know I had any"<sup>45</sup>) or Billy Sunday who declared he didn't "know any more about theology than a jack-rabbit knew about ping pong."<sup>46</sup>

The "double-truth universe" bequeathed by the Enlightenment found renewed impetus in the increasing polarisation between earth and heaven that was so characteristic of twentieth century piety. If religion is about our personal and private experiences with God, then true piety

consists in having our minds fixed on heavenly realities instead of earthly concerns.<sup>47</sup> In practice this meant getting as many people into heaven as possible. Once you were "saved"—that is, once your ticket to a happy afterlife was secured—Christian living was thought to involve little more than living by a pedestrian code of personal pietism. No longer was the Bible seen as giving us a worldview that structured the whole of public reality. It became instead a privatised faith that, as Roszak put it, was "socially irrelevant even if privately engaging."<sup>48</sup> It is hardly surprising that around this same time (late nineteenth/early twentieth century) hymnology began to be increasingly "feminised," with the singing of robust psalms and hymns replaced by subjective sentiments ("he lives within my heart" or "now I am happy all the day" or "precious memories of everything Jesus has done for me").<sup>49</sup>

Religion, like nature, abhors a vacuum. Thus it was that as the Church became diluted by anti-intellectualism, feminisation, pietism and cultural anorexia, it retreated from the academic pursuits. One of the effects of this was that the Church was unprepared to combat the influx of liberal theology and deconstructionism that began to pour into England and America in the early twentieth century. Next to an intellectually impotent Church, secular philosophy and liberal theology essentially had a free ride, and it was only when this began to infiltrate the Church that Christian pastors and teachers began to sit up and take notice. As a consequence, in the early twentieth century, three Christians wrote a twelve volume work titled *The Fundamentals*. The Christians who affirmed the doctrines in this book soon came to be known as fundamentalists, a term which has subsequently come to carry pejorative connotations. As fundamentalism began to be a badge to distinguish true "Bible-believing-Christians," the emphasis came to rest more on *what* you believed rather than *why* you should believe it. The notion of "faith," long since subjectivised, deteriorated further to become an approximation for anti-intellectualism, to the point where the word is now practically useless. All the while, the Church was becoming more and more insular, deliberately isolating itself from the concerns of culture, which was viewed as innately secular.

47. This is reflected in many popular definitions of salvation. I recently picked up a leaflet from a local Church which outlines the "Ten Great Doctrines of the Bible." Significantly, none of the ten doctrines listed made any reference to the resurrection body, and the doctrine of salvation was defined as entirely relating to heaven: "Salvation deals with the afterlife, heaven, hell, and whether or not it is safe to die." The doctrine of man, on the other hand, had nothing to do with our bodies outside the context of disproving evolution. The doctrine of "Future Things" made no mention of the earth's promised renewal, but dealt instead with "the end of the world, and eternity." This is a good example of the upstairs/downstairs type of thinking that permeates contemporary evangelicalism, where what is invisible and non-physical is implicitly seen as more spiritual. See also radio broadcaster Tony Alamo's article "The Art of Spiritual Communication," available online at [http://www.alamoministries.com/content/english/Gospel\\_literature/The\\_Art\\_of\\_Spiritual\\_Communication.html](http://www.alamoministries.com/content/english/Gospel_literature/The_Art_of_Spiritual_Communication.html). Pastor Alamo asserts "The way we communicate with the material world is with our bodies. The way we communicate with the spiritual world is with our spirit."

48. Theodore Roszak, *Where the Wasteland Ends* (New York: Doubleday, 1973), p. 449.

49. See Douglas Wilson's "Manifesto on Psalms and Hymns" in *Cantus Christi* (Moscow: Canon Press, 2002). On the gradual feminisation of American culture, see Ann Douglas' book *The Feminisation of American Culture* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1977).

44. See Ranald Macaulay's article, "The Pietistic Roots of Evangelicalism Today," in *A Collection of Thirteen Lectures by L'Abri Authors*, (Greatham: L'Abri Fellowship), 1991.

45. Cited by Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Vintage, 1962) p. 108.

46. Cited by William G McLoughlin, *Billy Sunday Was His Real Name* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 123.

Wherever there was a residue of robust Christian thinking, this tended to be a specialist domain, detached from the concerns of the mainstream evangelical movement.<sup>50</sup>

This kept the secularists happy, since religion was keeping within the sphere circumscribed to it by the Enlightenment's divided epistemology, and it kept Christians happy since they were then let off the hook of having to engage with the increasingly hostile physical and intellectual culture.

It will be useful to pause and briefly recap the ground we have covered so far. We have seen that the philosophy of Empiricism led to a divided field of truth. On one side of the divide were those truths that could be known through empirical observation, while on the other side of the divide were ideas derived by other means. Since religious ideas were thought to belong within the later category, it followed that religious truth was personal and private, existing in a different sphere to that of normal objective phenomena. We saw that the Church generally accepted this basic polarity, redrafting faith in subjective and individualistic categories. Our discussion so far has focused primarily on the anti-intellectual and isolationist tendencies resulting from this epistemological duality. It is now time to turn our attention to another consequence: matter-spirit dualism. This, in turn, will play into the topic of this paper, which is the clash between the maternal State and the maternal Church.

#### *Matter-Spirit Dualism*

It does not take a prophet to tell that once you introduce a separation between beliefs about the material province and beliefs about the spiritual province, with the former being objective (because empirically verifiable) and the latter being subjective (because allegedly not empirically verifiable), the next step will be a separation between matter itself and spirit itself.

Unlike anti-intellectualism, which was a distinctly religious reaction to Enlightenment secularism, the upstairs-downstairs partition between spirit and matter (or equally between nature and supernature) was characteristic of *both* secular and Christian thought following the Enlightenment. From the perspective of Enlightenment Deism, God was impersonal, having set the world in motion but then having abandoned it to its own devices. Since the God of deism has no active part to play in the world after the initial act of creation, matter can exist independently of spirit in the same way that a watch can run independently of the person who originally wound it up. Matter thus becomes "dead." What a thing is—whether it be a star, a tree or a human person—is reduced to what that thing is made out of. This radical materialism has no use for ritual or sacrament, both of which work on the assumption that there is more to matter than

meets the eye. As such, one of the key aspects of modernity has been a revolt against ritual.<sup>51</sup>

Christian theology unknowingly colluded with the deism of the Enlightenment. We have a God who creates the world as well as a set of laws for its operation, occasionally intervening through the acts we call miracles, but whose presence is essentially the property of the "upstairs" region of the supernatural.<sup>52</sup> The latent Gnosticism within such a dualism is reflected in the pervasive assumption within evangelicalism that one's internal salvific relationship to God operates independently to the physical world and external means. In such a schema, the relation between matter and spirit is accidental at best.

To this we might add the pedigree left by the Reformation and the pessimistic view of matter that permeated some of the Reformers' work.<sup>53</sup> Calvin, for example, says, "And when Christ commended his spirit to the Father [Luke 23:46] and Stephen his to Christ [Acts 7:59] they mean only that when the soul is freed from the prison house of the body, God is its perpetual guardian . . . It is of course true that while men are tied to earth more than they should be they grow dull . . ." <sup>54</sup> Elsewhere Calvin refers to "this earthly prison of the body . . ." <sup>55</sup> The latent Gnosticism in such a position also led Calvin to suggest that Galatianism was found wherever there is an emphasis on ritual.<sup>56</sup>

The practical consequences of this outlook are legion, affecting the Church in areas as diverse as how we view the sacraments to the décor (or lack thereof) in our Churches. Where the external-physical is of little or no importance compared to matters of the heart, there is no need for our churches to be beautified. We prepare our hearts for worship but not our walls.

Significant as well has been the effect that matter-spirit dualism has had on Christian theology. Instead of a fully orbited biblical theology structured around the story of the world's redemption, as outworked in the visible space-time universe, the emphasis is placed on systematic treatments of abstract doctrines. Redemption history is seen as valuable to the extent that it illustrates particular doctrines or as the

51. See Peter J. Leithart, *Against Christianity* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003), chapter 3.

52. In his essay "The Empty Universe," C. S. Lewis suggests that in rejecting paganism, we threw the baby out with the bathwater. Lewis traces the progression by which the universe was first perceived to be animating with life, will and positive qualities (the days when "every tree is a nymph and every planet a god") to the present condition where nature is completely disenchanting. The rich, genial universe is "emptied out" and reduced to depersonalised matter or even less. C. S. Lewis, "The Empty Universe" in *Present Concerns: Ethical Essays* (London: Fount Paperbacks, 1986).

53. To be fair to the Reformers, many of them were simply echoing the bias against the physical world inherited from the early Christian fathers. See Brian Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision* (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), chapter 7.

54. Calvin's *Institutes* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960, Battled translation), Ixv.2. See Stephen Perks comments in "Is There an Afterlife? The Intermediate State Reconsidered" in *Christianity and Society* Vol IX, No. 3, July 1999.

55. *Institutes*, Book III. Vii.5.

56. See Peter Leithart's comments about Calvin, *op. cit.*, pp. 79–80. "There is a circular relationship between modernity's aversion to ritual and the Church's. The Reformation interpreted the progress of history as a movement from ritual to non-ritual, and this shaped a bias against ritual in the consciousness of the early modern Europe. This anti-ritual consciousness, radicalised and secularised, reinvaded the Church from which it had arisen." *Ibid*, p. 80.

50. See David Wells, *No Place For Truth or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993); David Wells, *Losing Our Virtue: Why the Church Must Recover its Moral Vision* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998). It should be kept in mind that the generalisations I am making are just that: generalisations. A generalisation does not have to describe all the members of a class distributively in order to be valid. "Generalizations are legitimate if they honestly describe an overall pattern. Generalizations are consequently *not* refuted through particular and individual counter examples . . . What we should ask from a generalization is whether it is honest and fair, not whether it is true in any given instances." Douglas Wilson, *Her Hand in Marriage* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1997), p.10.

mechanism whereby God gets us to our ultimate destination (which is heaven, not the renewed earth of Rom. 8:18–24). The rationalism of the former and the semi-gnosticism of the latter both do homage to the great legacy of matter-spirit dualism, namely a discomfort for things earthly.

The striking example of matter-spirit dualism applied to theology has to be dispensationalism. By making a distinction between the *physical* promises to Israel in the old covenant and the *spiritual* promises to the Church in the new, dispensationalism has done more to entrench the evangelical community in matter-spirit dualism than any other idea.

Dispensationalism comes in many varieties, all involving the idea that God's dealings with man can be divided up into different compartments.<sup>57</sup> Dispensationalism is over and against the Reformed view of covenantal continuity, which sees all God's dealings with man as being a single work with various administrations. It follows from the Reformed view that the Trinitarian God has only ever had one people, to whom he relates through a covenant of grace administered in successive phases. The people of God in the Old Testament are the same people of God that we find in the New Testament.<sup>58</sup> This subverts the dualism between physical-public-corporate-old-covenant vs. spiritual-private-individual-new-covenant that has slotted in nicely to the post-Enlightenment assumptions of modern evangelicalism. Over and against this the Reformed covenantal paradigm has argued that the physical is spiritual and the spiritual is physical because there is no intrinsic distinction between the two.

In emphasizing the discontinuity of God's purposes, dispensationalists find themselves without a sense of story. The history of God's dealings with man do not form a continuous metanarrative because scripture is viewed as many isolated bits and pieces. Yet because the sense of storytelling remains a uniquely human impulse, dispensationalists have a psychological need to create new pseudo-stories for themselves, such as their end-times mythology.<sup>59</sup> One of the reasons dispensationalists are so obsessed with the "end times" is because that is the only place where they get a sense of story, even though it is a pessimistic story with a tragic ending.

Dispensationalism has also contributed to the post-Enlightenment sense of cultural retreat. It is not hard to see why this is the case. Dispensationalism, at least in its premillennial variety, affirms that unbelief and apostasy will

increase, the gospel will be preached to all nations unsuccessfully, the Church will eventually lose influence, fail its mission and become corrupt. To make matters worse, at some point the anti-Christ will appear in the temple of Jerusalem, and he will become ruler of the world and persecute Jews and Christians. He will try to put the mark of the beast on everyone's foreheads, and many Christians will be deceived into letting him do this. Then, when no one expects it, the so called "rapture" will happen,<sup>60</sup> in which Christians will go to heaven while the rest of the world endures a seven year period of tribulation.<sup>61</sup> God eventually pours out his wrath on the earth until the battle of Armageddon, when Jesus comes back physically to the earth and then the millennium finally gets underway. When that happens, the Jewish temple will be physically rebuilt and the sacrificial system will be reinstated.<sup>62</sup>

Such prospects not only fail to provide an incentive for Christian cultural involvement, but in presenting the present physical earth as beyond God's saving power, it solidifies the assumption that earthly culture is "secular" in the true Enlightenment sense. Because everything will get worse and worse, all we can do is watch impotently as the devil wins. In fact, if we are consistent (which thankfully few dispensationalists are) we should even *hope* that things get worse since that signals Christ's imminent return. As one person said to me, "I hope Iran creates worldwide disaster by letting off a nuclear bomb soon because maybe then the Lord will come back." Thus, for the consistent dispensational premillennialist, the purpose of the Christian's mission is essentially negative rather than affirmative: the best we can hope to do is avoid the mark of the beast, keep ourselves from the corruption and apostasy that will take over the world and the Church, and bide our time until the rapture.

The negativism of the dispensational premillennialist paradigm breeds an anti-intellectualism which slots nicely into the sphere circumscribed to religion by the epistemology of the Enlightenment project.<sup>63</sup> It does so by promoting a simplistic "just-the-simple-biblical-truth" kind of populism. The result is hermeneutical anti-intellectualism manifested in an irresponsibly literalistic method for interpreting apocalyptic literature. The dispensational premillennialist belief that the Church and culture are beyond reform this side of

57. Dispensationalism originated in the 1820s in Ireland from the teachings of John Nelson Darby, who founded the Plymouth Brethren. As his movement expanded, Darby visited the United States and Canada seven times between 1859 and 1874. His teachings were not very well received in America and Canada, in particular his strong antagonism to the institutional Church and his pessimism about modern society. However, his systematic unfolding of prophetic events, soon known as dispensationalism, did make a lasting impact. Many evangelical leaders of the late nineteenth century jumped on the dispensationalist bandwagon, including Dwight Moody and A. J. Gordon. From there dispensationalism took off through four main avenues: the Bible conference movement, Bible colleges, the Scofield Reference Bible (published in 1909) and the Dallas Theological Seminary (founded in 1924). At some point dispensationalism combined itself with premillennialism, so that now the two normally go together, as in Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* and Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins' popular *Left Behind* flicks.

58. See Douglas Wilson's book *Standing on the Promises* (Moscow ID: Canon Press, 1997), chapter 4.

59. I am using mythology in its technical not its pejorative sense.

60. See N. T. Wright's short deconstruction of the rapture, "Bible Review, August 2001," reprinted at [http://www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright\\_BR\\_Farewell\\_Rapture.htm](http://www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright_BR_Farewell_Rapture.htm).

61. In the older historic non-dispensational premillennialism, the Church went through the tribulation.

62. This again represents a difference between the older historic non-dispensational premillennialism which affirmed that the sacrificial system and the physical temple were done away with. Perhaps the most crucial difference between historic premillennialism and the new dispensational variety is that, according to the latter, it is not until the millennium that Christ's kingdom becomes a present reality, while all other eschatologies, including historic premillennialism, teach that Christ's kingdom is a present reality now even though it hasn't yet been consummated.

63. When making this point before I have run into the objection that I am falsely implying that all dispensationalists are anti-intellectual and culturally anorexic. Such an objection is based on a blatant *non sequitur*. One can acknowledge that (A) there is a conceptual link between the theology of dispensationalism and anti-intellectualism, and (B) there is sociological evidence for this connection when we consider the history of nineteenth and twentieth century evangelicalism; without necessarily implying (C) that every dispensationalist is anti-intellectual.

the rapture also breeds an isolationism, at least for those who live consistently with this eschatological paradigm. Thus, many evangelicals who hold to this view intentionally withdraw from the world and practise an insular private Christianity that has little relevance to the public arena. Though they may be involved in the political right (especially in America), their vision is necessarily truncated precisely because they do not, and indeed cannot, have a long-term vision for the Church and culture. As Os Guinness explains it,

... the dispensational movement reinforces anti-intellectualism by its general indifference to serious engagement with culture. Put simply, it is a form of the earlier false polarization and shrunken pietism reinforced by a distracting preoccupation with the end times . . . Dispensationalists at the popular level tend to overlook creation as they emphasize salvation . . . [exchanging] the visible present for the invisible future, and the normal and everyday for the dramatic and the apocalyptic.

Little wonder that popular dispensationalism has cultural consequences. When the house is on fire, life is worth more than books and precious objects. When the end times are on the slipway, such cultural pursuits as art and music are frivolous. Where earlier Christians fell into dualism by placing the spiritual above the secular, contemplation above actions, “full-time Christian service” above ordinary life, and “soul saving” above study, many dispensationalists have followed the course of “end times” events with the consuming fascination of a betting man at a race track. In doing so they have virtually turned their backs on the world in which they live.<sup>64</sup>

It will be useful at this point to emphasise what I am not saying. I am not claiming that the matter/spirit dualism of the Enlightenment functions the same way as the matter/spirit dualism of dispensationalism. Though there are areas of significant overlap between the two, it should go without saying that there are also significant areas of discontinuity. It also needs to be emphasised—since some have misunderstood me on this point—that I am not claiming that the matter/spirit dualism of the Enlightenment caused dispensationalism. It is certainly possible that as the Enlightenment approach to matter seeped into Western consciousness, that it was one of the factors leading to popular reception of the dispensational paradigm. However, for the purposes of this paper, I am not prepared to go further than simply claiming that dispensationalism functions as a good example of matter/spirit dualism. Comparably, saying that fire engines and roses are both instances of the colour red does not necessarily imply that fire engines and roses are the same shade of red nor that the former is the cause of the latter.

To summarise the ground we have just covered, after exploring the divided epistemology implicated by the empiricist project, I suggested that one of the effects of that duality is a bifurcation between matter and spirit. We touched briefly on the matter-spirit dichotomy within the secular philosophy of Deism before looking at theological formulations which take a similar reductionist approach to matter. This was illustrated in aspects of the reform reaction against Rome, anti-sacramentalism, the preference for systematic theology over biblical theology, and finally

64. Os Guinness, *Fit Bodies Fat Minds: Why Evangelicals Don't Think and What To Do About It* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994) p. 66f.

dispensationalism. We will now go on to explore how matter-spirit dualism has affected the Church's role as mother.

### *The De-Mothering of the Church*

Central to the Church's role as mother is that she feeds us. The maternal Church is eucharistic. The importance of a mother feeding her children is not simply that she is nourishing her offspring and keeping them alive, but that she is also instructing them: she is teaching her children who is the source of life. Through the eucharist, we are taught to view the church as the source of life.

The eucharist, and indeed all the sacraments, have become especially troubling among evangelicals for whom the matter/spirit dichotomy is the uber-presupposition. Since the modern evangelical finds it offensive that God's grace would be mediated through physical means or instruments (even as classical Gnosticism found it offensive that God would be incarnated in flesh), so the sacraments are reduced to being a symbol for what goes on inside the individual. The “physical manifestations” are simply epiphenomena of a relationship that can be fully defined apart from those physical manifestations.<sup>65</sup> The Protestant tendency to separate spirit from matter means that the eucharist is merely an appendix to the word, a disguised sermon or an approximation for our own spiritual interiority instead of a rite that objectively conveys grace. The kind of radical Protestantism ends up doing to the sacraments what Schoenberg tried to do to music. For Schoenberg (1874–1951) the tangible sounds of music became swallowed up in the abstract idea behind the music. As Jeremy Begbie put it, “Schoenberg believed that music's sensory pleasure—how beautiful it sounds to the ear—is irrelevant to the question of artistic significance . . . Music should be concerned chiefly with the creation and development of artistic ideas; the pleasure it affords should be primarily intellectual.”<sup>66</sup>

In a similar way, radical Protestantism believes that the physicality of the sacraments is irrelevant to the question of spiritual significance, maintaining that the sacraments should be concerned chiefly with the buttressing of our intellectual assent to the propositions of faith or our psychological “heart-felt” relationship with the object of our faith, while having little or no value outside these ego-centric categories.<sup>67</sup>

65. I am indebted to Derrick Olliff, whose “American P.I.E.” series helped me to formulate some of these thoughts. See <http://beatenbrains.blogspot.com/2006/09/american-pie-i.html>. “Flowing from the spiritual-physical dichotomy, salvation refers to what happens to individuals only. There is almost never any meaningful focus on God's salvation and restoration of the created order as a whole or the consequences of such. Nature (the created order) and grace/salvation are distinct and one doesn't have much to do with the other. So while the temporary and weak old covenant may have had some “fleshy accoutrements, this baggage was discarded in favour of the much more ‘spiritual’ and much less physical new covenant.”

66. Jeremy S. Begbie, ‘Music in God's World,’ *Books & Culture*, September/October 2007 available online at <http://www.christianity-today.com/bc/2007/005/10.28.html>

67. Further, as Olliff points out, this pietistic paradigm presupposes maturity. “Only a non-mentally handicapped adolescent or adult can have the kind of unmediated, ‘heartfelt’ relationship with God that characterizes pietism. And since the sacraments are viewed as testimonies or reminders of that relationship, they only belong to those who are mentally mature.” *Ibid.*

This feeds on the assumption that “the created order isn’t really important because secondary, mediating causes are at best unnecessary and are often problematic.”<sup>68</sup> This is the error that B. B. Warfield makes in his book *The Plan of Salvation*. He asserts that “precisely what evangelical religion means is immediate dependence of the soul on God and on God alone for salvation” and is critical of any theology that “separates the soul from direct contact with and immediate dependence upon God the Holy Spirit . . .”<sup>69</sup> Warfield stands in continuity with other thinkers of the Reformed tradition, most notably Zwingli. In his opposition to Roman Catholicism, Zwingli threw the baby out with the bathwater, suggesting (as summarised by Jeffrey Meyers) that “If God was to have all the glory in our salvation, then nothing could be attributed to any human rite or material instrumentality.”<sup>70</sup>

Central to the Church’s role as mother is that she exists in a visible, tangible, physical and public sense just as our mothers are visible, tangible, physical and public beings. Yet after each person’s personal relationship to God has been divorced from all external means, it is hard to understand the Church as having any significance beyond simply God’s mechanism for bringing more solitary souls to himself or an opportunity for our personal relationship with God to be recharged or else a stopgap in the gaping parenthesis between the age of earth and the age of heaven. While Church is beneficial, according to this schema, it is not necessary, since a personal relationship with Jesus has been effectively severed from his body and from the ministry and sacraments she provides.

Since the Church is physical,<sup>71</sup> we will never be able to appreciate her significance, let alone draw on her riches, so long as our thinking is plagued by the matter-spirit dualism that has become a truism since the Enlightenment. Instead of thinking of matter as dead and spirit as living, we must learn to have the more holistic worldview of the Bible, where the earth is literally animated by the spirit of divinity.<sup>72</sup>

68. *Ibid.*

69. B. B. Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1915), 66.

70. Jeffrey J. Meyers, *The Lord’s Service: The Grace of Covenant Renewal Worship* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003), p. 290. See Meyers’ discussion of Calvin’s response to the Zwinglian doctrine, *op. cit.*, pp. 290–291.

71. See Jeffrey J. Meyers, *ibid.*, chapter 15.

72. Without lapsing into animism, we must recognise that the Bible does not present the earth as an autonomous system that God simply created to get on with its own thing, apart from when he occasionally chooses to interfere. Rather, the earth is God’s very footstool. (Is. 66:1). When the earth thunders, we are hearing God’s voice (Job 37:2–5; 40:9; Ps. 18:13; 77:17–18; 104:7). When we see lightening, we are watching God’s arrows (Ps. 18:14; Zech. 9:14). It is God who sends man the snow and the rain (Job 37:6; Mt. 5:45.) and who feeds the young ravens when they call upon him (Ps. 147:9; Lk. 12:24). It is God who blasts his nostrils to uncover the foundations of the world (Ps. 18:15). The earth quakes and smokes when God is angry (Ps. 18:7). The firmament and all the stars declare God’s glory (Ps. 19:1). Furthermore, we are told that the whole Creation groans in eager expectation for the day when God will renew the earth (Rom. 8:18–22). In that day, we are told that the heavens will rejoice, the earth will be glad and the sea and all its fullness will roar, the field and all that is in it will be joyful, the trees and the woods will rejoice and clap their hands before the Lord, while the mountains and the whole earth break forth into singing (Ps. 96:11–12; Is. 44:23; 55:12). With our post-Enlightenment presuppositions, we are uncomfortable with this kind of language, and quick to dismiss it as metaphorical.

Although space prohibits the author from engaging in any exegetical work on the subject, suffice to say that Scripture makes no hard or absolute demarcation between inner and outer, the spiritual and the physical.<sup>73</sup> It should be clear by now that this integrated understanding of our world is central to a recovery of biblical ecclesiology without which it will be impossible to offer a credible challenge to maternal statecraft.

### *Challenging the Mother State*

When we appreciate the visibility and physicality of the Church, it immediately becomes a rival to the kinds of socio-political structures considered in the first part of this essay. The rival to maternal statecraft is not an invisible non-physical Church, nor is it individuals exploring their own spiritual interiority. The natural rival to bloated government is the announcement that new creation has burst forth in the midst of our physical world—a new creation which is social, temporal, political, earthly and physical.<sup>74</sup> Instead, as Peter Leithart laments,

We have made the Church strange and alien to the world, as if she were of a completely different order than the institutions of common social and political life. Paradoxically, the result of this estrangement has been to reshape the Church into the image of the world . . .

The Church can cut across the grain of existing human social and cultural life only if she bears some likeness to existing societies. If she is a completely different sort of thing, then societies and nations and empires can go on their merry way ignoring the Church, or, equally deadly, find some murky alleyway to push her into.

But if the Church is God’s society among human societies, a heavenly city invading the earthly city then a territorial conflict is inevitable.<sup>75</sup>

Central to the Church’s role as mother is that she constantly tells us stories, just as a good mother tells and

73. “Scripture makes no hard or absolute demarcation between inner and outer. When people eat and drink, Scripture says their ‘souls’ are refreshed (e.g. 1 Sam. 30:12), and exterior discipline of our children purges foolishness from their hearts (Pr. 22:15). So, outer events invade the inner life. And, inner things come to outer expression, for out of the thoughts of the heart come murders, adulteries, and other evils (Mk 7:20–23). The mere fact that the Bible often names the ‘inner’ man by reference to bodily organs (heart, kidneys, liver) is a hint that Scripture does not sharply distinguish inner spiritual from outer physical realities; even the ‘inner’ man is conceived physically, not as an unbodied, ghostly self. Scripture thus teaches a complex interplay of inner/outer in human existence, a duality within unified human being” (Peter Leithart, *Against Christianity*, *op. cit.*, p. 77).

74. Jesus never said that his kingdom is not of this world, as a careful look at the Greek in John 18:36 reveals. The RSV translates John 18:36 closest to the original: “My kingdom is not *from* this world.” Christ’s kingdom is certainly *of* and *for* this world, but it does not arise out of or (from) this earth. It comes from heaven to the earth. That is why Jesus taught us to pray, “thy kingdom come on earth . . . as it is in heaven” (Mt. 6:10). The phrase “kingdom of heaven” in the gospels has this same underpinning, referring to the rule of heaven (that is, of God), being brought to bear in the present space-time world. (See N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, throughout). This draws on the theological backdrop of passages like Daniel 7: 26–27 and is the same crowning vision we find in Rev. 11:15, where we are told that “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ . . .” See my article “Political Christianity” at <http://www.christianvoice.org.uk/Articles/Political%20Christianity.pdf>

75. Peter Leithart, *Against Christianity*, *op. cit.*, pp. 17–18.

retells her children stories even before they understand what the stories mean. Through story telling, the Church imparts to her children the Christian metanarrative—that grand story that begins at Creation and ends at new creation. This story is told in word, symbol, sacrament and ritual. Through such means, the Church constantly reminds us who we are in the story and where we have come from in the story and where we are going in the story, just as a good mother helps her child develop a sense of identity in relation to the larger world. In short, the maternal Church provides her people with a metanarrative with which to structure the whole of their lives.

A meta-narrative is an over-arching story or thought structure that lends meaning and context to the particulars of experience, normally group experience. Human societies always gravitate towards meta-narratives. For example, many pagan cultures revolve around the metanarrative of harvest. The harvest gods, and all the stories that surrounded them and which were told year after year in word, symbol and sacrifice, gave cohesion to primitive societies. Or a meta-narrative can be an ideology, like the way in which the elevation of the working class became a meta-narrative in the communist State, or the way in which National Socialism and Fascism provided a framework in which to organise Nazi Germany. Both Marxism and Fascism told stories about history that enabled the participants to mark an X and say “We are here.” This gave eschatological significance to the struggle of the proletariat in the case of Marxism or the struggle of the Arian race in the case of Fascism. In ancient Athens the Homeric epics were the people’s meta-narrative, since their whole society was, in some sense, structured around the mythology derived from those texts. In modern times, when Darwinism came along it was more than just a theory: it was a story, a grand story about life’s unceasing struggle to survive. Evolution provided its own answer to the question “Where are we?” by answering the question of where we came from and where we are going. During the time of the Enlightenment, a new meta-narrative was formed in which rational thought allied to scientific reasoning was thought to lead toward an inevitable progression for mankind. This meta-narrative was utopian and created a sense of optimism about where we are in the story of human progress which survived well into the twentieth century until the world wars, and finally Vietnam, brought the optimism of that secular metanarrative crashing down with a bang. Postmodernism, like post-Enlightenment pietistic evangelical individualism, tries to ignore metanarratives by fracturing them into a myriad of mini-narratives that each one of us is personally writing. In the case of postmodernism, the new metanarrative is that there are no metanarratives and postmodernism, so ironically like its precursors, has its own pantheon of symbols with which to tell this story.

In the Bible, the meta-narrative for the Jews as well as the early Christians was the story of God’s kingdom. They told and retold a story about history that God had told them and which enabled the participants to mark an X and say “We are here in redemption history.” Modern dispensational premillennial evangelical theology has its own twist on this story, ending with the antichrist, the rapture and finally Armageddon. That story places great emphasis on where we are in the story, and it will always be the second to last chapter, that period known as the “End Times” which is forever just about to end. The external means of symbol,

sacrament and ritual play little part in this story, having been killed off by matter-spirit dualism, which says that since the real stuff is what happens in the mind and not in matter (the assumption being that because matter and spirit are distinguishable that they must be divisible), it follows that symbol, sacrament and ritual are only approximations for that higher reality. As such they are unnecessary at best and a practical hindrance to true spirituality at worst.

Central to the Church’s role as mother is that she gives us a language for communicating with our Father, even as our earthly mothers taught us to speak by giving us language to imitate. This means that creeds and liturgy can play an important part in maternal ecclesiology. This goes against the grain of the spirit/matter dualism of the Enlightenment, which has manifested itself in an approach to prayer and worship that is distinctly anti-liturgical and an approach to theology that is anti-creedal. Because the individual’s internal state and not any physical means is the nexus of the Christian life, prayer must proceed directly out of the reservoir of the individual’s own thoughts and feelings in order to be authentic, just as theology must proceed from “just me and the Bible.” Prayers that are composed at any time other than the present, and by anyone other than myself, like theology that is taken on the authority of Church tradition, are greeted with a degree of suspicion at best, and viewed as completely invalid at worst.<sup>76</sup> Modern evangelicalism attempts to achieve a ritual-less Church, equating liturgy with formalism and formalism with vanity. However, since routine is necessary to avoid chaos, new taboos are inevitably created, not least the taboo against ritual, which only means that informality becomes the new ritual. Paradoxically, spontaneity is pursued with ritualistic tenacity.

It should not be overlooked that motherhood is innately ritualistic. Early life is characterised by the rhythms our mother establishes. Initially, this is simply the rhythm of feeding, sleeping and eating. Very soon new rhythms are given. Language is introduced through the rhythms of nursery rhymes and song. Food is introduced through the recurring rhythms of mealtime. Life is sustained through the recurring rhythms of exercise and sleep while life is celebrated through the recurring events of festivals and feasts, particularly birthdays. This mimics the recurring rhythms that lie at the heart of the universe: days and nights, seasons and years. All life revolves around rhythm and ritual because it lies at the heart of what it means to be human in general and to be mother in particular.

The maternal State recognises these truths where modern evangelicalism has not. The State has given us its own rhythms with which to structure our lives; the State has given us its own meta-narratives; the State has provided its own sacramental feast. In short, as the Church has ceased to be viewed as mother, it has created a vacuum that is being filled by the maternal State. Sometimes this can be seen in obvious ways. In America, evangelicals who would never dream of making the sign of the cross will put their hands on their hearts every morning to say the, so called, “Pledge of Allegiance” with liturgical devotion. Similarly, modern evangelicals who have long ceased to tell the story of redemption through the yearly cycle of Church holidays—and who have a natural antipathy to Advent, Epiphany, Lent, and

76. See N. T. Wright, *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense* (SPCK, 2006), pp. 164–167.

Pentecost (but not Easter and Christmas as if their secularisation has legitimised them)—will celebrate Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, Veterans and Independence Day with almost religious regularity. In place of the rejected church year, these holidays become public festivals of a new civic order. Or again, how many evangelical Christians, having no sense of the biblical metanarrative, tell the story of liberal democracy as their own, operating in what Leithart calls “Eusebian mode,” treating America as the culmination of redemptive history?<sup>77</sup> Or again, those for whom religion has been individualised find corporate, covenantal identity living out the drama of what it means to be American.<sup>78</sup> We may also note with irony that when the egalitarianism levelling began sweeping through the twentieth century Church,<sup>79</sup> it was the priestcraft of political bureaucrats that became the new hierarchy—a trend which survives to this day despite the pervasive cynicism that the average person feels towards the political institutions in general and our political leaders in particular. These are still the ones we look to for security and they are the ones who offer intercession and make sacrifices. As Ellul put it in his book *New Demons*: “It is not the state which enslaves us, not even a centralized police state. It is its sacral transfiguration . . . which makes us direct our worship to this conglomeration of offices.”<sup>80</sup>

In a myriad of implicit ways, liberals and conservatives alike tell the story of progress in terms of statecraft. It is the State, like a good mother, that is there to nurture human civilisation to progress. Liberals and conservatives disagree on both the definition of progress as well as the means for attaining it, but they are still working within the same basic paradigm. This is why politicians increasingly need to be good story-tellers, claiming to come from traditions that are bringing civic maturity. In countless ways we are urged to trust them, like we trust our mothers, and to structure our lives around the benefits they bring and the obligations they demand.

In one sense this is an understandable heresy to commit. By its very nature government is physical and earthly and, as

77. Leithart, *Against Christianity*, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

78. This sense of patriotism to a more or less distinct national identity has not been a regular feature in Britain for a number of years, although there have been recent attempts to change that. See “Brown speech promotes Britishness,” BBC News, Saturday, 14 January 2006, available online at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/4611682.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4611682.stm). See also ‘Britain rediscovered’ by Neal Ascherson, *Prospect Magazine*, Issue 109, April 2005, available online at [http://www.prospect-magazine.co.uk/article\\_details.php?id=6832](http://www.prospect-magazine.co.uk/article_details.php?id=6832).

79. See Os Guinness *Fit Bodies Fat Minds*, section on Populism.

80. Jacques Ellul, *The New Demons* (Seabury Press: 1975).

such, offers a substitute for religion after the matter/spirit dualism of Enlightenment empiricism has emptied religion of its sacramental centre. Government offers to satisfy that innate human need no longer provided by the Church: the need for a communal centre, that need for ritual, rhythm, a sense of story, and a story with eschatological progress. As such, the modern State has become a symbol for the aspirations of humanity. With its humanitarian ethic, its national glory and its sense of endless (and therefore eschatological) progress, it has a religious significance parodying the vocation of the Church. At the heart of this statist religion is the supper Mother State provides her votaries, known variously as welfare, entitlements, State benefits or family credit.

In short, God’s answer to the maternal State is the maternal Church. The State makes but a wicked step-mother and that is why all attempts to reform the world through reforming politics are doomed to failure from the start. What the world needs, and what each of us need, is true motherhood. God’s solution to the maternal tyranny of the State is for us to run to mother, to be nourished at her breasts, to listen to her stories, to repeat her words and rhymes, to obey her voice and to be brought to maturity by her loving hand and her nourishing food. The Church as mother is gentle, lovingly bringing her children to maturity over thousands of years.<sup>81</sup> The State as mother is tyrannical, harsh, impatient to achieve perfection immediately. The Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all (Gal. 4:26).

Then I wondered what woman this could be to quote such wise words of Holy Scripture; and I implored her, in the name of God, before she left me, to tell me who she was that taught me so kindly.

“I am the Holy Church,” she replied. “You should recognise me, for I received you when you were a child, and first taught you the Faith. You came to me with godparents, who pledged you to love and obey me all your life.”

Then I fell on my knees and besought her mercy, begging her to take pity on me and pray for my sins; and I asked her to teach me plainly how to believe in Christ and the will of Him who created me. “Teach me no more about earthly treasure, O Lady who men call Holy, but tell me one thing: How may I save my soul?”

—Langland, from *Piers Plowman*<sup>82</sup>

81. “She may not be able to rejoice at the moment, with all the diapers and infant screams, but she will in the future. She is patient, She knows the frame of her children. Only a tyrannical mother would expect instant maturity and perfection. They have so much to learn and she is gentle.” *Angels in the Architecture*, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

82. Langland, from *Piers Plowman*, trans J. F. Goodridge (Penguin), p. 34.

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

by Theodore P. Letis

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# GNOSTICISM IN THE CINEMA

by T. E. Wilder

MANY cultural streams of the modern era have been called gnostic: anarchism and revolutionary doctrines as an attack on an imprisoning social order, a faith in techniques of knowledge that reveal the hidden truths of the world (e.g. Freudian psychoanalysis), esotericism, including an increasingly specialised science that seems esoteric to all but a few in the field of study, and a widespread feeling of distrust of the received authorities. If we look widely enough the term seems to be applied to anything and everything. Principally this is because the factors just mentioned are so formative of the modern era that something smacking of gnosticism does seem to turn up everywhere. But a term that means everything means nothing. Then, there is simple mistaken analysis. For example, an influential interpreter of culture Eric Voegelin (1901–1985) confused gnosticism and hermeticism. Both are esoteric, but hermeticism is world affirming; while it sees a duality between the material world and an ideal or heavenly one, it looks for the keys to connect the two in order to better dominate the material side. We also have to be aware of the abuses of easy labelling. For interpreters of cultural phenomena gnosticism is a handy term for all those new influences that cause a mysterious disturbance to one's comfortable sense of the fitness of familiar things. In polemics "gnostic" is the ready term of thoughtless dismissal. The man I have seen use it the most to condemn opposing views is also the man most often dismissed as a gnostic by his own critics.

This state of confusion is best remedied by an examination of specific examples of cultural gnosticism. By a review of two fairly recent and popular films and of two older ones that have attained the status of film classics, I hope to achieve three things: to make clear the basic ideas of gnosticism and their appeal, to distinguish how modern gnosticism differs from the ancient kind, and to show, through the example of film, the ubiquity of these ideas in culture today.

## *Two popular gnostic films*

Modern gnosticism is more a cultural mood than a formalised religion. It is a way of experiencing and responding to the human condition. Two films made close together in both time (1998–1999) and place (Australia) give clear expression to this gnostic mood. In the second of these, *The Matrix*, the initial film of a trilogy, the gnosticism is self-advertising and so is often noted in commentary on the film. What has been missed in this commentary is how *The Matrix* expresses the modern variety of gnosticism, which differs

from the ancient form. The earlier film, *Dark City*, however, not only is a better movie but also a clearer gnostic vision.

In *Dark City*, written and directed by Alex Proyas, human experimental subjects are kept in an artificial city. Their memories have been wiped and new memories are implanted to create such individual identities and purposes as the experiments require. These experiments, as is the city itself, are controlled by aliens attempting to understand human individuality and purpose. The human subjects have no idea that they are in an experiment, or that their identities are regularly re-created by modifying their memories. A man, John Murdock, has or acquires the ability like that of the aliens of direct mental control of the machinery that produces the environment of the city. But for that ability to be used to make a difference he must first learn that his supposed self-knowledge is a delusion implanted to control him, and he must learn his true nature and condition. Only then can he take control of the city and make it serve human, not alien, purposes.

*The Matrix*, by Andy and Larry Wachowski, is named after the computer-generated integrated neural network that ties together all the people in the world and conveys to them a completely illusory computer generated experience. In this case it is man's own creation, artificial intelligence, which instead of serving him has created a world of robotics that has rebelled against man, taken control of the world and reduced man to an energy source, living in pods and being fed false experience. Some few gifted people somehow have the power to free themselves and then in turn save others, delivering man from entrapment in a delusion imposed on him to make him serve the purposes of others. In this mission they are opposed by security programmes operating within the context of the Matrix itself that are known as Agents. Operating outside the matrix are some free people who travel in hoverships, fight against robots and invade the Matrix. The ship in the story is commanded by a man named Morpheus (a symbolic name: the god of sleep).

These films are not science fiction adventure stories, but rather they advertise their own nature as visionary tales calling for human self-liberation from delusion.

Both films start their principal action in hotel rooms, suggesting that the characters are visitors, not at home in the world. In *Dark City* the film opens with the principal character, John Murdock, waking up in a bath. The film critic Roger Ebert, in the commentary track on the DVD release, mentions the discovery by film buffs that the room number is 614, and that John 6:14 reads, "When the people saw the

signs that he had done, they said, This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world.” *The Matrix* picks up on this use of door number codes. The number on the hotel room door at the movie opening is 303. The room contains the character Trinity. (This room is also used for the film’s climactic scene.) We next meet Thomas Anderson, who goes by the name Neo, inside apartment 101 and the film revolves around the question of whether he is The One, who was predicted to come to save humanity from the neural network in which it is trapped. Knowing that the door numbers are significant, and also that *The Matrix* delights in quotations from other films, we notice that 101 is a reference to the first gospel, Matthew, and also the text beginning at 10:1 within that gospel:

And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

The reference to casting out the unclean spirits, i.e. the Agents, is clear as well as the appearance of brothers Tank and Dozer, the “real children of Zion” (born outside the Matrix) in Morpheus’s crew, and also the important role of another crew member as a traitor and Judas figure. Thomas Anderson, as both the saviour (the son of man, from the Greek noun root *andros-*, man) and as doubting Thomas, has trouble believing in himself.

As for room 303, the third gospel, Luke, has no thirtieth chapter, but Luke 3:3 speaks of the appearance of John who goes ahead to proclaim the one who is coming, and the Trinity character in the movie seeks out and believes in Thomas Anderson as The One.

On Morpheus’s ship, the Nebuchadnezzar, there is a plaque designating it as Mark III, No. 11, made in 2069. Mark 3:11 states: “And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, You are the Son of God.” Nebuchadnezzar was the king who while out walking on the roof of his palace said: “Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?” and as punishment for his arrogance lost his reason and lived like a beast for “seven periods of time” to learn humility before God. Similarly, Morpheus says that with the creation of artificial intelligence “all of mankind was united in celebration. We marvelled at our own magnificence as we gave birth to AI,” but humanity was imprisoned in the delusion of the Matrix—lost their reason—by the race of machines deriving from AI.

Finally, from the date 2069, the twentieth book in the Bible (in the common Protestant arrangement), Proverbs, chapter 6 verse 9 reads: “How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?” Not only is sleep a common metaphor in gnostic literature for the human condition, but when we first meet Thomas Anderson in the film he is asleep. The first words addressed to him are: “Wake up, Neo.” (Neo means new, reflecting the gnostic appropriation of the Christian new birth idea.) Neo is then told to “follow the white rabbit.” This is not only a clue within the film narrative, but refers to Alice in Wonderland, which recurs as a symbol of being caught in a

mad world. But it also is a reference to the Jefferson Airplane song *White Rabbit* which uses Alice in Wonderland as a metaphor for mind-altering drug experiences. “One pill makes you larger, And one pill makes you small.” The trail of the white rabbit leads Neo to the situation where he actually has to choose between taking two pills. Metaphor loops back to narrative.

In short, the makers of *The Matrix* trowel on the symbolism thickly, using not only numerical codes but visual imagery, the names of the characters and quotations from film and other pop media to advertise the film as having a religious message.

These movies are an expression of a particular form of gnosticism, modern gnosticism. The term “gnosticism” itself is frequently misused. Because the meaning of the Greek word behind it is “knowledge”, any religious view which holds people to the responsible use of reason is falsely called gnostic, especially by experience focused preachers, and their ilk. We noted earlier that gnosticism also is sometimes confused with hermeticism. But gnosticism designates a definite diagnosis of the human predicament, its cause, and the solution.

#### *Varieties of gnosticism and similar beliefs*

For ancient gnosticism the universe consisted of a transcendent being, who somehow gave rise to further beings, and to the material world that these lower beings in turn created. The creation of the material world was never intended by the transcendent god, nor did the lower beings who made it understand the good above them, and so the creation turned out evil. Somehow something from the transcendent god became trapped in the material creation, and this divine element is man’s inner self or spirit, which is alienated from its true home while trapped in material existence.

Salvation for the gnostic is to awaken the inner self to its true nature and enable it to return to the divine source. Both the awakening and the return require knowledge, or in Greek *gnosis*, hence the name *gnosticism*.

Gnosticism, however, involves several implausibilities or conceptual difficulties. The first of these is how being originating from the good could end up evil. This is accounted for in three ways. First, there is emanation. The good god did not create the world, nor command its creation, nor perhaps even know about it at first. This was done at several removes. The good god gives rise to lower beings, who in turn produce others, who do not have direct experience of the transcendent god. The number of intermediate spheres of being between the god and the world might be three, or seven, or even 360, depending on how elaborate and esoteric is the variety of gnosticism that posits them. Other than some thinning out of being, there is no change of quality that would explain evil, so this explanation seems to be mainly obfuscation. This idea that evil is some sort of lack of being persisted for along time in Western thought, though today it seems to be confined to Thomists.

The second explanation of the origin of the evil creation is through some corruption of the immediate creator powers who are under the influence of ignorance, jealousy (if they become aware of a greater being above them and want to demonstrate their own independent power by creation) or passion. But this elevates the problem of the origin of evil

from the material world to the one above it that made it, and the evil there also has an origin that must be explained.

The final type of explanation is mythology, usually involving sexual metaphors with abstractions such as Wisdom, Thought and the like being personified and described as consorting with each other and giving rise to further beings. Because mythology substitutes narrative for theoretical description, it somewhat relieves the pressure to produce a rational explanation.

The second implausibility of gnosticism is that it is difficult to account for how parts of the good become trapped in the material world, the point farthest from the transcendent god. Here the explanation tends to be wholly mythological, when the transcendent god somehow involves himself with a lower creature and imparts divine life to it, and then the creators of the material world bind this divine life to the material order out of malice.

The third implausibility is how this divine life is able to return to its divine source by means of receiving some information. Here is where a saviour figure plays a role. This saviour does one or two things. First he descends to the material world and awakens the divine being, informing it of its true nature and place in the transcendent realm. Secondly, the saviour may also serve as a model exemplifying how this divine nature is to ascend back to the god.

The problem here is that this divine nature is our inner selves, something more inward than the soul itself. Informed of his true divine identity the gnostic may be awakened to his trapped and alienated condition, but how does he leave the material behind and ascend back to god as an actual individual? And if the divine is trapped in matter, how does the knowledge that it is trapped release the trap?

This is where gnosticism found an essential idea in Christianity. Christianity taught that by spiritual union with the Christ one is reborn as a new creature. Here was the idea of a decisive break with the old order of being through a rebirth that the gnostic yearned for. The gnostic then looked at the Christian gospels as a mythological literature of which he knew the inner hidden meaning, that of a saviour from beyond the world who comes, gives secret knowledge to those able to receive it, shows how to leave behind the material nature, and imparts the ability through a new birth that is appropriated inwardly.

The final implausibility is something like the problem of Buddhism. Just what is this spirit that is to escape back to the divine and be saved? Anything that is definite and identifiable is an accretion from a lower realm and is to be left behind during the ascent back to the divine. In what sense, then, is it I who am saved in the end? Once the divine spark is free, is there any me left?

This gnostic message was taught through a variety of myths and parables that clothed gnostic ideas in a gripping and persuasive literary form. What a gnostic movie must do is replace the role of mythology in the ancient world with an analogous narrative of entrapment, enlightenment and rescue. We no longer live in the ancient world, however, and the gnostic universe cannot seem real to us, so modern gnosticism must take a new form. But there is a transitional stage that came first in popular culture, and that is existentialism.

The two things are very similar. Han Jonas in his major study of gnosticism tells us: "When, many years ago, I turned to the study of Gnosticism, I found that the viewpoints, the optics as it were, which I had acquired in the school of

Heidegger, enabled me to see aspects of gnostic thought that had been missed before. And I was increasingly struck by the familiarity of the seemingly utterly strange."<sup>1</sup>

With the rise of the modern point of view, something of the ancient sense of abandonment in the world had come back. Like the gnostic living in the Roman Empire, modern man feels that the world around him is not friendly to him. Not asking to be born, he has been thrust into an existence in a mechanical universe that has no values, interests or goals. It is indifferent to what man may want, nor does it confer any meaning to man's choices or achievements. Impersonal physics only guarantees that such achievements will be obliterated, whether in the short or long term. Thus an existentialist such as Sartre would describe man as a "useless passion," for man does have all the longings for purpose, affirmation and cosmic value that the Christian era promised; it is just that there can be no external basis for them.

For the existentialist all man has is his freedom to do with as he likes during his short existence. But to invent some transcendent god who affirms man is for the existentialist "bad faith" and, inconsistently, the one great sin that can be committed. (Why shouldn't people deceive themselves, after all, if it makes them feel better? Why can't they use their freedom that way as much as any other?)

In existentialism, however, there is also a big difference from gnosticism.

There is no overlooking one cardinal difference between the gnostic and the existential dualism: Gnostic man is thrown into an antagonistic, anti-divine, and therefore anti-human nature, modern man into an indifferent one. Only the latter case represents the absolute vacuum, the really bottomless pit. In the gnostic conception the hostile, the demonic, is still anthropomorphic, familiar even in its foreignness, and the content itself gives direction to existence . . . Not even this antagonistic quality is granted to the indifferent nature of modern science, and from that nature no direction at all can be elicited.<sup>2</sup>

The gnostic despaired of this world that imprisoned and hated him, but he thought that there was an escape. He thought that he himself was a bit of divine being, and that the world hated him just because it recognised him as greater than it. He could despise the physical world and plan to escape from it to return to his own proper home. For the existentialist the experience of being in the world feels like the gnostic's experience of being abandoned, ground down, frustrated and trapped. But there is no divine source that he fell from and can go back to, and there are no imprisoning demonic powers to fight, only the indifferent universe and man in it with his absurd passions.

This makes modern nihilism infinitely more radical and more desperate than gnostic nihilism ever could be for all its panic terror of the world and its defiant contempt of its laws. That nature does not care, one way or the other, is the true abyss. That only man cares, in his finitude facing nothing but death, alone with his contingency and the objective meaninglessness of his projecting meanings, is a truly unprecedented situation.<sup>3</sup>

Not that existentialists were consistent; that they were

1. Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963, Second Edition,) p. 320. 2. *Ibid.*, p. 338f.  
3. *Ibid.*, p. 339. 4. *Ibid.*, p. 339.

often Nazis or communists shows their inability to avoid what they called “bad faith.” Why? “Gnostic dualism, fantastic as it was, was at least self-consistent. The idea of a demonic nature against which the self is pitted, makes sense. But what about an indifferent nature which nevertheless contains in its midst that to which its own being does make a difference?”<sup>4</sup>

Few can completely resign themselves to this. The others require a programme that promises a greater fulfilment. Some impulses along these lines have been evident for more than 200 years. Marxism, for example, proposed to take hold of the world and remake it as a Utopia fit for man. In doing so it showed both the destructive hatred of the world that inspires the gnostic combined with a similar desire to reach the static utopian rest. But as a modern movement, it had to achieve both the destruction and the recreation in the same physical world, which is the only reality, resulting in a continuous process of simultaneous building and destruction of the same thing, which went nowhere.

We can now understand modern gnosticism. It is like existentialism, but with an even more heightened religious awareness and sense of man’s frustration over the lack of the place in the cosmos he would like to occupy. But the modern gnostic will not accept the existentialist’s resignation to a forlorn freedom. Instead he wants to reform the universe into something worthy of himself. Because of the inconsistencies of the existentialists there is not in practice a firm boundary between existentialism and modern gnosticism. National Socialism was another attempt at a modern gnostic programme. Since those days the gnostic impulse has often been expressed in science fiction and in critical theory. It is in literature and now in film that we can examine experiments in these perspectives, without going through the millions of fatalities that the political gnostic programmes incur.

Gnosticism, ancient and modern, has a social context. It is a religion for the middle class, urban people with enough leisure for a hobby religion, but attracting few true intellectuals. It appeals to people who are in a large alienating society, which they feel is run by others in the interests of others, and in which they do not feel themselves to be genuine participants. In the ancient world this mood came about when the *polis*, the city State in which the citizens exercised power face to face with peers with known interests, was replaced by empire. In the modern world the context is the society run by bureaucrats and professional politicians who spout ideology and catch phrases and never campaign for office in terms of their true intentions. (One could say analogous things of the big institutions of religion, commerce and even education.)

Gnosticism also has a style. There is an interest in the esoteric, and a tendency to embellishment and overcomplication, along with an inventiveness that constantly produces new versions and rival sects. We have seen some of that in *The Matrix* where many hints, symbols with multiple references, and images are used that only would be noticed by someone going over the film looking for them. In other words, they don’t function in a normal cinematic viewing of the film, but are there for a type of film hobbyist who searches them out. This is part of the gnostic aesthetic. (Arthur C. Clarke remarked: “If you understand *2001* on the first viewing, we will have failed.”)

The burst of gnostic cinema in recent years shows that

we are at a moment when such parables speak to the popular mind (just as in the preceding two decades the wholesale takeover of many university literature departments by Nazi literary theorists, i.e. deconstructionists, shows the appeal of modern gnosticism to the academic mind).

Because *Dark City* is a much better movie at the visionary level than *The Matrix* (even if *The Matrix* excels as an adventure thriller) it will be our example of how the modern gnostic myth works. When John Murdock awakens in a bath in a hotel room with his memory erased he does not know who he is or why he is there. In fact he is part of a new phase in the experiment by the aliens to learn the relationship between memory and individuality. They were to have given him the memories of a serial killer (via an injection) and want to know whether he will consequently behave as a serial killer. But somehow John Murdock has become resistant, and wakes up while the memory imprint is incomplete.

This reflects a key gnostic question. If the real self is divine, and from beyond this world, then the identity of that self cannot consist of events or facts of existence in this world or memories of them. The aliens, who are dying out from some collective *ennui*, are searching for what Dr. Scheber, the aliens’ human assistant, calls “the soul” which is individual identity. The aliens, who have a collective memory, think the key is in memory or the use of memory.

But all these memories were extracted and collected by the aliens when the first human subjects were brought into the experiment, and have been swapped around, inserted and deleted ever since. The memories do not, in the *Dark City*, belong to any character in particular. In fact, they give a deceptive identity to whoever has them, and are part of the imprisonment in the experiment.

A police detective has been hunting Murdock, but when Murdock, free from many of the false memories and with help from Dr. Scheber, begins to realise his true situation as part of an experiment, he persuades the detective to join him in his search for the truth.

John Murdock’s search is also a process of learning what sort of truth to search for. He has to learn to give up the search for the missing memories, as they were never his, and do not tell who he is. First, he proves to himself that he is not a serial killer: “I have lost my mind, but whoever I am, I’m still me, and I’m not a killer.”

But is that because the memories of a serial killer were never implanted in him? The aliens, in order to hunt for Murdock in the city, implant one of their members with the memories that were to have been given to Murdock. This alien does become the serial killer that Murdock was projected to be. The identity of the aliens, then, does consist in their memories. They have no soul. In gnostic terms, the demonic powers who control this world are of it and they do not have that portion of divinity which man, with his origin beyond this world, does possess.

At one point John and the police detective interrogate Dr. Scheber.

“You say they brought us here. From where?”

Dr. Schreber: “I’m sorry. I don’t remember. None of us remember that. What we once were. What we might have been. Somewhere else . . .”

“There is nothing else, John. There is nothing beyond this city. The only place home exists is in your head.”

Here we have the two parts of gnosticism. In the first

statement the fact that man was taken from his true home and imprisoned in an alien world by hostile powers mirrors what the ancient gnostics believed about man's forgotten divine origin. For the ancient gnostic this is real, and salvation is a return to this origin. For the modern gnostic, this is not real, in that there is no god or world beyond this one, but human experience nevertheless feels as though this were true.

The second statement is what the modern existentialist and gnostic believes in contrast to the ancient gnostic who believed in escape. But the modern gnostic instead believes in taking hold of the situation and creating a world worthy of man.

In the film the aliens control everything by a telepathic link to huge machines that create the physical reality of the Dark City. This process they call "tuning." "Somehow" John Murdock also has developed the ability to tune. He takes control of the machines from the aliens.

Dr. Schreber wonders what he will do with this power.

Dr. Schreber: "What are you going to do now, John?"  
 "I'm going to fix things. You told me I had the power, didn't you? I can make these machines do anything I want. Make this world anything I want it to be. Just so long as I concentrate hard enough."

Murdock sets about remoulding the city in a way that serves human purposes. It is no longer a dark city but a city of light.

Murdock also has a final encounter with one of the aliens who also wants to know what he will do with his power. Murdock tells the aliens why he thinks they failed. "Do you want to know what it is about us that makes us human? Well, you are not going to find it in here [points to forehead]. You went looking in the wrong place." There is, then, a secret to humanity: the soul. But it is not found in the memories—the facts of personal history. What is the secret?

Since the film is a gnostic parable we can revisit within the film the four implausibilities we noticed in gnosticism.

How can being that originated from the good, as some extension or generation from that good being, become evil? In the movie this is not a problem, if one is prepared to accept the existence of aliens. They appear in the universe with their own purposes and there is no intelligent source beyond them. As with modern gnosticism, there is no divine origin or primordial innocence that we or they fell from. What is a problem is the sense we have that things are not right with the world. Why do we feel like prisoners? The film does not have to explain this, it need only show the characters discovering these feelings. But how does modern gnosticism identify what is this good that man needs since it has no previous existence or defining norm? Why is it salvation that we need, and not drugs or therapy? What form of life should the salvation take? Is it to live a varied but brief life in which each gives according to his ability and receives according to his need? Is it to take a place as part of a master race? Perhaps nothing less than immortality will do, but then, with what should that immortal life occupy itself? The film does have to face the question, What sort of world should John Murdock create for a people who don't know their past or place of origin, and will have to find some sort of purpose for themselves?

At one point in the film, one of the aliens finds John's wife Emma and tells her:

— We will give you some more pretty things soon, Anna.

— I'm not Anna.

— You will be soon. Yes.

How is what Murdock is able to do through his control of the machines essentially different from giving the people of Dark City some more pretty things? The film merely ends with the suggestion that Murdock is not inclined to impose his will on the others.

The second gnostic problem is how, after a distinction of good and evil came into existence, some part of the good entered and became trapped in the evil, that is, how evil became a problem for the good that is primordial and greater than evil. It not a cinematic problem. In the movie we sympathise with the humans, not the aliens, because we are human, and the film is constructed to promote that identification. In this way the the film borrows from ancient gnosticism whose "demonic, is still anthropomorphic, familiar even in its foreignness," as Hans Jonas indicated. Its narrative, however, fits modern gnosticism where there are not separate moments of the origin of evil and a subsequent mixing of good and evil. For modern gnosticism, problem two folds into problem one. With no original separation of being into good and evil they were not subsequently remixed. It is a problem of distinction. As there is no dualistic past, with distinct origins, how are alternatives today to be separated into good or evil except arbitrarily, particularly as not everyone wants the same thing? There is only the world as it is onto which we project our desires.

The third problem, of how man suddenly awakens and finds the power to save himself, is the great dramatic flaw in *Dark City*. Somehow John Murdock is able to wake up and interrupt the implantation of memories. Somehow he also has the ability to tune. This is also a real problem for modern gnosticism. Reality is deceptive, and deep interpretation is needed to get at the truth. If we are caught in economic determination, all thought and action is conditioned by our relation to the means of production but somehow one man, Karl Marx, broke free of that conditioning and was able to see objectively. If we are caught in psychological determinism, we are conditioned by suppressed desires but somehow one man, Sigmund Freud, broke free of the conditioning and could find the objective truth about the mind. Or perhaps we are conditioned reflexes responding to pain and reward, except for B. F. Skinner, who somehow knows objectively. What is more, the saviour, like John Murdock, must go much further than finding true knowledge. It is not enough to resist the conditioning, he must tune. He must bring in the new world worthy of man. But how, outside a movie, is that done? What is worthy of man anyway?

Finally, there is the problem of the identity of the part to be saved, and of how what is saved is really that I that is trapped in the evil situation. Here the film, being only a film, can play around with interesting ideas. It can suggest that individual identity lies in something other than memories. John is still himself even if he loses his mind, and he still loves Emma even if she has become Anna and thinks she is meeting him for the first time. It does not have to resolve what "the soul" really is.

For modern gnosticism as a world view with a programme of action the problem is acute. Should, as Marxism suggests, the individual be sacrificed for the sake of the future of the species? Is man as such worthwhile, or only superior

specimens, or is it certain excellencies, stored up and passed on, such as cultural achievement and not the individuals who made them that must be treasured? Whose cultural achievements? Hey, hey, ho, ho, does western culture got to go, as Jesse Jackson demanded in his campaign against the universities? Or will mankind not be saved until every individual is Superman? If we are to believe the movies, even Superman struggles with problems of identity and purpose as we do. For the past century many have supposed themselves to have answers and have imposed their answers in a very bloody fashion.

*Two classic films: 2001: A space odyssey and Solaris*

Of all the great “message” films, Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A space odyssey* had the greatest immediate impact, and already in production forty years ago (released in 1968) it continues to be discussed and admired. Often mentioned for its breakthroughs in production technique and visual brilliance, the film probably deserves even greater credit for other achievements.

As the film opens we are immediately aware that this film is a break with our viewing experience. Kubrick had a story to tell that spanned four million years and hundreds of millions of miles of space. To convey this he imposed on the cinematic expectations of his audience. The screen is kept black for an uncomfortably long time before the MGM logo briefly appears. There is another long wait for the titles to start. There is no dialogue for the first half hour. When we do get dialogue it is of a dull, banal, bureaucratic type that offended the early critics of the film.

The visuals carry the message and the dialogue is secondary. (Before becoming a film director Kubrick was a still photographer for *Look*, where the picture had to tell the story.) The role of the dialogue is analogous to the place of establishing shots of a typical film; the dialogue sets up and gives context to the visuals. That is not to say that sound is not important. The music, which everyone remembers from the film, clearly matters. But so do the effects that might seem incidental such as breathing sounds.

The very slow pace of the whole movie does three things. It conveys the sense of vast time and vast space in which the events of the film play out. It also intensifies the effect of the high visual and low dialogue presentation, as the audience is forced to pay attention to the pictorial and sound elements that are held for a long time with no verbal upstaging. Finally there is a sort of unease experienced by the viewer whose every expectation of the proper pace of a film is violated and who, trained to equate delay with suspense, consequently strains his attention for some clue about the big thing that he feels must soon happen. Just as the viewer in the theatre is disturbed by how the movie progresses in a way that he does not understand but feels wrong to him, so humanity in the movie is being manipulated by an intelligence beyond it. It takes a daring director to try to do this. Without the unprecedented eye candy that Kubrick’s new production effects offered he could not have succeeded.

Music and drama move at different paces. This is the great weakness of opera where the two tempos constantly subvert each other. Film solves this primarily by subordinating music to drama: music becomes background, or “effects.” There are moments in film where the pace of music can be accommodated by the ability to use the camera to record

interesting visual progressions at the pace of music in a way that does not make the audience feel that one art is being sacrificed to the other. There can be “ballet” episodes as well, in which the subjects (actors, vehicles, etc.) or else of the camera itself can move at a musical pace through a movie set that is potentially as large as the world and not limited by a proscenium arch. This linking of image and music occurs extensively and to great effect in *2001*. We should not see this, however, as a marriage of music and picture because other sections of film unite the slow image to silence or to what one might regard as incidental sound effects in other films (such as breathing in a space suit).

Andrei Tarkovsky’s *Solaris* also moves at a slow pace, though not nearly so much as *2001*. For one thing it does not have the spectacular visuals to hold the audience, for another its different story does not need it. Even so, its beginning is slow enough to make the audience wonder, especially as it seems completely unlike what one would expect as the content of a science fiction movie.

There are some clear and systematic contrasts between the two films, especially at the beginning. Andrei Tarkovsky saw *2001* at the British embassy, and is said to have found it to be a sterile utopian vision and remarked that he wanted to make his movie as different from it as he could. This, however, is not the explanation for most of the differences between the films. They arise from a fundamentally different conception that Tarkovsky wanted to embody in his film, an approach that had already caused him to depart extensively from the novel by Stanislaw Lem that his script was based on.

His remarks do raise the question of whether he understood the substance of Kubrick’s film as a gnostic call for man to remake himself free from nature in order to achieve his destiny. (I am not claiming that Kubrick’s films as a whole should be considered gnostic tracts. But on this topic of ultimate human origins and destiny it is hard to see how he could make a modern film and have it be anything other than gnostic if he wanted to avoid a corny science fiction vision of progress, or not create a western in space, as most directors end up doing.) This could be termed “sterile utopianism,” but so could the wildly rapid and immaculate technological progress projected by *2001*.

Tarkovsky broke with Lem’s novel by placing much of the action on earth. The entire novel takes place at the distant planet Solaris where there is a space station whereas Tarkovsky’s script initially placed two-thirds of the film on earth, although he was forced to recede from the plan somewhat. Nevertheless *Solaris* opens with an extended sequence of scenes in which Kris Kelvin, the major character, wanders through lush landscapes and around the shores of a pond located in the neighbourhood of the old-fashioned rural house where his father lives.

Tarkovsky, a great Bible reader, opens with his man in the garden. But it is no Eden where man is in harmony with his world. Kelvin seems distant and disengaged. (The actor, Donatas Banionis, came from the stage and required a plot so that he could understand his motivation and “act.” He was very uncomfortable when Tarkovsky would only tell him to walk around and look at things, but this produced the effect Tarkovsky was after.) He is alienated from his world, and as we will see from other people and from himself. He is carrying a metal box, which we later learn has filmed records of his past, especially his childhood. These represent the parts of his life that he cannot come to terms with—

relationships with people who are lost to him—which is symbolised by their being sealed in the metal box. The problem in the garden, then, is a problem with man himself.

Kubrick's *2001* opens millions of years in the past, in a desert, where a group of apes, no longer in a jungle home, is subsisting off the scant vegetation for which they compete with vegetarian species such as tapers, and from insects. These are not today's ape species but something like the *Australopithecus* which anthropologists locate in Africa. This, then, is the ape ancestor of man in the harsh environment in which he learned to hunt and walk upright. Nature is not generous to these apes. Their life is hard and precarious; nor is their status among the species high. Nature's favourite is the carnivore, the beautiful, lithe leopard, who preys equally on the apes as on vegetarians like zebras. Kubrick shows the leopard attacking and killing an ape who is helpless to defend himself, as well as guarding prey and surveying the landscape with mysterious starlight eyes.

At this point something alien enters the solar system and deposits next to the apes a smooth black monolith that begins to influence their development. This is a clear gnostic element. Something from beyond nature falls into the order of nature and begins to act contrary to nature's order and purpose. The effect on the apes is that they discover the uses of tools as weapons, and this raises them to the level of predator, a power that challenges nature's order.

Tarkovsky's animals are all domestic. In the garden setting Kelvin is greeted by the family dog with which he shows a rapport. In the house there are caged birds. Enjoying the freedom of the grounds is a beautiful horse. The horse in particular is used to foreshadow the structure of the film. We meet the horse in two contexts. One is the natural setting walking through meadows where he evokes our appreciation for his beauty. But the astronaut Berton comes to visit and brings along his son. We see the boy running in fear from the garage where he thinks he saw a monster. As the camera enters the garage the horse and his shadow (shot from a low angle) loom like something out of a nightmare. We are presented with the horse in nature as a beautiful thing but the horse located outside of his natural context becomes a menacing figure. This is what Tarkovsky is going to do with his characters and is the reason why he must begin with a long prologue on earth before showing the special challenges that appear at Solaris.

The theme of man and his tools is central to *2001*. (There is a website <http://www.kubrick2001.com/> with a Flash presentation that explains this very well.) Man's mastery of tools allows him to control nature to his advantage. But just at the point when man begins to venture out into the solar system his mastery begins to break down. This is shown in the movie two ways. One is that man in space becomes infant-like, losing control over his tools, having to learn to walk again, eating baby food and even needing potty training. (The web site shows the scenes that make this point.) But also man's major tools become anthropomorphic. Because of his own unsuitability for space he must give to the tools he makes from the materials of nature his own characteristics of mobility, direction, and even intelligence that are necessary for the machines to fill in for him.

The ultimate case of man replacing himself with his own tools in order to function in space is HAL the intelligent computer, which usurps the place of man, taking over control of the mission to Jupiter, and tries to kill off the men,

who are no use to HAL and can only be rivals and threats. The sequel to *2001*, made without Kubrick, suggests that this was caused by human error—and moral failure—introducing a contradiction into the programming of the innocent computer HAL, but in *2001* itself there is no external cause excusing HAL. As part of nature HAL malfunctions and this malfunction makes him a threat to man.

At this point it becomes clear that man's conflict with nature still exists, only now man must fight nature as it is manifested in the tools man makes from nature. But the tools are necessary. Without them the natural side of man, his body, cannot work or even exist outside the context of the natural world where nature made man's ape ancestor.

Man's predicament, then, is the gnostic one. He is part of nature and trapped in nature. Yet he is also something from Beyond, for it was the alien monolith that gave him that desire and perhaps the ability to transcend nature, become the dominant actor in the world and even displace nature's chosen favourite the predator beast. But this aspiration in man leads him on to escape this world and explore the cosmos. In doing so he directly confronts the fact that nature is a prison that he carries with him.

But just at this point man encounters the second monolith. This one is discovered on the moon but it also discovers him. It detects that he is now on his way to achieve his destiny and sends a signal to another sentinel/relay monolith out by Jupiter. This shows that the alien intelligence has anticipated man's predicament. The signal to Jupiter is, in part, a stimulus to man to pursue his quest and to do so away from the location of his place in the natural order. Just as in the gnostic cosmology one must escape through a sequence of spheres leaving behind the various aspects of the material at each level and overcoming each sphere's demon guardian, so man quests to the space station, then the moon, then beyond to Jupiter. Along the way he must battle the sentinel monsters (HAL) of nature that keep him in prison.

For the gnostic mythology to be complete man needs a saviour from beyond. The role of the saviour is to enlighten him to the fact that his body is a trap, that his true origin is from beyond this world and that salvation is to return to the beyond. Further, the role of the saviour is to show the way. This is what takes place in the final "psychedelic" section of *2001*.

*Solyaris* is not preoccupied by tools but with cultural artifacts. Painting, sculpture, and books are stacked all around. This is true of the house on earth where we find Kris Kelvin prior to his departure for Solaris, but when he reaches the space station at Solaris there is a library stuffed with similar objects and the occupants of the station immediately clutter up their sterile geometric rooms with similar items. Kelvin carries his metal box of films with him as much as he can. These objects, though, are simply there; no one seems to connect to them.

The problem at Solaris is that, while there do not seem to be life forms as such on the planet, the planet itself, or its ocean, seems to be conscious. The planet does not respond to the human presence with more than some mimetic imagery drawn from a pilot who crashes in the ocean, and despite a prolonged study by scientists in an orbiting space station no progress is being made to open up further understanding. The form of intelligence that the planet or ocean has remains mysterious, and for its part the planet has no

analogy to human life as that of individuals beings in a world environment.

Kris Kelvin, a psychologist, is sent to Solaris to make a final decision on whether the scientific mission can serve any further purpose or whether it should be terminated. On his arrival he finds three startling facts. The station is in a very Soviet state of dilapidation and dysfunction, and no one seems concerned with normal maintenance and duties. (We have to at least wonder whether the unnatural, alienating world of life on a space station is a metaphor for socialism.) Secondly, one of the three resident scientists has committed suicide, leaving a somewhat enigmatic video as his final testament to Kelvin. Finally, someone else besides the scientists is on the station but one scientist refuses to explain anything about this to Kelvin and the other locks himself in his lab and won't even see him.

It turns out that one of the scientists, grown frustrated with the lack of progress in "Solyaristics", illegally began to bombard the planet's conscious ocean with X-rays. At this point the planet caused humanoids, physically strong and nearly indestructible, to appear on the station. The humanoids were drawn from the memories or imaginations of the scientists. Attempts to kill them only succeeded temporarily as the damage was repaired and the humanoids returned. Each humanoid is particularly attached to one of the scientists from whose mind its identity was drawn. They are imperfectly designed, as Solaris does not know the features that happen not to be in the scientist's consciousness. The humanoids seem to function as observers on behalf of the planet (without being conscious of this) and the planet seems to learn from them in order to make better models. Finally, these humanoids' own self-identity is drawn from the scientists' ideas of the people the humanoids represent and their behaviour is often troublesome and even hostile to the respective scientists.

Except for the scientist who committed suicide, who says enigmatically that the problem is not one of madness but of conscience, the two remaining scientists view these humanoids as simply physical phenomena to be experimented on via dissection or any other available laboratory analysis.

On his first night on the station Kelvin gets his own humanoid, who resembles his wife who died by suicide, and Kelvin, having been kept in the dark about what to expect, tries to get rid of her by loading her into a shuttle rocket. The next night a replacement shows up with some improvements based on what the first one had learned. Kelvin decides to call the humanoids "visitors" and treat them as such.

Kelvin uses the films that he brought in his metal box to help his visitor understand more of the person that she thinks she is. She begins to become more human. This is also the first case where the cultural artifacts are actually used for something rather than being carried about or lined up on shelves. The scientists hold a birthday party in the library, which has an orderly arrangement of art, and Kelvin's "wife" is drawn to this and seems to make the transition to humanity.

In contrast to the library, the living quarters are full of drawings, photographs and the like, but stuck up all over in a disorganised mess. We never get to see whether it is the scientists or the visitors who are responsible for this. Perhaps like the replicants in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* the visitors have a need to surround themselves with objects that give a tangible support to their implanted identities, or it may be a

need, felt by all on the station, to create a sort of world to live in, an intentional contrast by Tarkovsky to the "sterile utopianism" he saw in *2001*.

The station scientists have some schemes to finally solve their problems as they see them. One is to encode the brain waves of one of them (they pick Kelvin for this) in X-rays and broadcast a full brain scan to the planet to see whether they can at last get communication through to it. The other is a disintegration machine that can totally vaporize the visitors.

Following the transmission of his brain scan Kelvin goes into a fever and delirium (it is not clear whether or not this is an anticipated side effect of the brain scan). The station scientists take advantage of this state to talk to his visitor, who is despondent, into submitting to their vaporization device. Like the horse in the garage man in space is a monster. When Kelvin recovers she is gone and the scientists are pleased with themselves. The visitors never return. The ocean, though, has become very active in response to the X-ray broadcast of the brain scan. It extrudes an island on which can be seen a copy of the country house and grounds where the film started. Kelvin again visits the grounds, which have an eerie stillness (the lucky result of a drop in temperature that froze the pond's surface on the last day of location filming), and he also finds his father in the house and is able to experience a reconciliation that he could never reach with him on earth

But how did Kelvin get down to the planet?

We have no hint that the planet engages in transporting people. We are not sure, in fact, how literally to take this last sequence. The imagery of the reconciliation on the island is from Rembrandt's *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, which is in The Hermitage in St. Petersburg. This surely is a deliberate response to *2001* which ends with the astronaut Dave reaching out toward the monolith with the gesture of Adam toward God on the Sistine Chapel ceiling. (Both conclusions take place in the same ambiguous "Is this really happening, and where?" context.) The point remains, however. The planet now "gets it." Human beings are part of an environment. They live in a world, and outside of the environment they are made for they are not going to resolve their problems.

*2001* ends on just the opposite idea. The Star Child is reborn in the void of space. He is the consciousness of man freed of the limitations of his body imposed by his terrestrial origin. He has escaped from nature which is the only way to defeat nature. *2001*, then, is a completely gnostic film. Man arose because of the intervention of the alien intelligence in nature. This is analogous to the divine spark of ancient gnosticism which is trapped in man and is the only thing of real value in him. In the end this spark must be freed from matter, for this is what salvation is. The triumph of the superman, announced by the repeated theme of Richard Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra*, is not only moral but material. His freedom is achieved when a saviour from beyond this natural order enters into it to show man the truth and the way out. This is the function of the sentinel monoliths on the moon and near Jupiter.

Of course this is "science fiction" so there never was an interference by aliens with ancient apes nor are there monoliths awaiting us today. Modern gnosticism can only use fleeting film mythologies to awaken man to his need and call for him to invent a salvation for himself. But what this way forward is no one has yet imagined. *Solyaris* reminds us that this call is a siren's song. Man is part of nature and the

attempt to go out of nature only compounds his alienation and makes it impossible for him to engage his solvable problems.

Tarkovsky's *Solyaris*, then, is not simply a non-gnostic film but functions as a critique of gnosticism. The pursuit of gnostic salvation schemes, that is, the hope of solving man's problems by arranging his escape from the nature, the environment or the social order that gnosticism blames for his problems, only makes things worse. Gnostic salvation really makes monsters. Man becomes worse and in new ways while cutting himself off from any genuine salvation.

But neither is *Solyaris* a tract for some type of environmentalism. If leaving nature does not solve man's problems, but makes them unsolvable, putting man in nature does not resolve them either. Man in the garden was already alienated. He acquired his problems there as we see in the long first part of the film. If *Solyaris* does not tell us what man's salvation is it rules out both the gnostic answer and the romantic back to nature thinking so prevalent at the time these films were produced.

Comparing *The Matrix* and *Dark City* with *2001* we find in the newer films an emphasis on rebellion coming to the foreground in distinction from the almost passive role given to man in *2001*. These are not culturally new elements, however; we have endured two hundred years of revolutionary movements and the 1960s when *2001* was made was a high point of revolutionary enthusiasm.

There is another option for a gnostic movie that is not represented in these films. That is to take the emphasis off creating a new world, as Murdock does in *Dark City*, and focus on the destruction of the imprisoning order, from which act some new better order arises like a phoenix. This idea of creative destruction is not new for it was present in the nineteenth-century Russian nihilists, for example, who held that one should seek to destroy everything because if something is truly good it would survive the cataclysm. Some of this feeling seems to be alive among the mobs of anarchists who riot at all the meetings of the World Trade Organisation. In this gnostic option the problem of working through to a new order worthy of man is evaded simply by assuming that it will arise spontaneously from the good that remains after the evil has been destroyed. Films of this time are not common (but perhaps *V for Vendetta* should be seen as one).

There seem to be two reasons. One is that the theme of destruction has already been appropriated by the nuclear apocalypse and similar anti-utopian movies, in which it is

associated not with gnostic liberation but with what are often called Mad Max societies after the Australian movies of that name. Thus the genre has already been claimed by an ideology. Films of this type were used to scare people about nuclear war in order to promote disarmament and capitulation to Soviet nuclear blackmail. They have also been put into the service of environmentalism.

The other reason for the absence of creative destruction gnostic films is the problem of showing what comes after. Any society born from the ashes of the old would seem headed for a recapitulation of what came before. No one knows how to envision the alternative. Practically speaking the filmmaker either would have to end with his characters walking off into a new dawn, with their future course not defined, or resort to some back to nature romanticism which some part of the audience will accept. This brings us back to our point: representations of gnostic salvation never transcend the level of mythology.

Does this sterility of modern gnosticism suggest anything about future cultural directions? One possibility is for there to be an attempt to recapture an ancient gnostic vision where the mythology was believed, that is, it was taken as a genuine meta-narrative, the basic truth about reality. Against this we must admit the difficulty of bringing back a belief that is really and truly dead. A culture infused with gnosticism may be constrained to merely recycle the gnostic salvation scheme under new guises that temporarily obfuscate its futile unreal character. What really feeds gnosticism, though, is not the coherence of its analysis but its confirmation of the feeling that something is desperately wrong with the world.

The doctrine that the world is seriously deranged is a teaching of Christianity as well. It is the starting point of evangelism. But Christianity's explanation of the problem is not that of gnosticism. For Christianity it is not the case that innocent man, or at least his innocent inner self, has been imprisoned by alien hostile forces but rather that man's condition is the moral fault of man himself and that this corruption and culpability continue to adhere to man's nature and cannot be cast off as a mere adhesions from the material order.

This explanation is offensive to man. Nor does man approve of Christianity's doctrine of salvation, which teaches that information or an example to follow is no good in itself because man cannot contribute to his own salvation but must accept it from outside himself. He prefers the dead end delusions of gnosticism. C&S

## 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, Mrs M. Hopson, Tregate castle, Llanrothal, Monmouth, NP25 5QL.

# Book Reviews

## THE IMAGINATIVE WHIG: REASSESSING THE LIFE OF EDMUND BURKE

EDITED BY IAN CROWE

University of Missouri Press, 2005, 247 pages including indices, ISBN 0-8262-1557-2, \$44.95

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REVIEWED BY STEPHEN HAYHOW

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WITH the appearance of *La Revolution* a new upheaval was under way. But many did not see the significance nor the dangers associated with the revolution,—in fact too many welcomed it as an expression of man achieving the liberty which is his right. But there were a few men in England who stood entrenched against the revolution, and one of those was Edmund Burke. Moreover, he saw clearly the larger consequences—Edmund Burke was a clear voice in warning Britain’s leaders of the evil of the revolution and where it would lead.

Gathered in the ‘Turks’ Head (a public house’s name that is surely not allowed today) a large, eccentric, man is sat with his friends—he is the centre of the conversation, rocking, and turning on his chair. That man was Samuel Johnson:

Now we who know Burke, know that he will be one of the first men in the country. “He is an extraordinary man” he later decided. His stream of mind is perpetual. Take up whatever topic you please, he is ready to meet you . . . Burke, Sir, is such a man that if you met him for the first time in the street when there was a shower of cannon bullets & you and he ran up a stair to take shelter he’d talk to you in such a manner that when you came down you’d say “This is an extraordinary man.”

This was not the only praise accorded to him. He was variously described as “the supreme writer of his century.” Thomas Babington Macauley called him “the greatest man since Milton.” Matthew Arnold believed him a master of prose. Lord Acton concluded, “Systems of scientific thought have been built up by famous scholars on fragments that fell from his table. Great literary fortunes have been made by men who traded on the hundredth part of him.” Burke lived in an age of polymaths—those who had a broad knowledge of a lot of things. And even amongst such men he was exceptional.

He wrote on politics, but he also wrote a treatise on beauty. He was a politician (he wrote *A Vindication of Natural Society*), a great orator, and one who was not afraid to espouse an unpopular cause.

Burke was born on January 12, 1729, in Dublin, Ireland.

He was the son of a Protestant lawyer and a Catholic mother. As the son of a prosperous attorney and, after an early education at home, Burke became a boarder at the school run by a Quaker, Abraham Shackleton, at Ballitore in the Blackwater Valley. Burke then proceeded to university at Trinity College, Dublin, “a bastion of the Anglican Church of Ireland.” After that he went to train in Law at the Middle Temple, London, in order to qualify for the Bar, but legal practice was less attractive to him than the broader perspective which had captured his attention early in life. In 1756 Burke began to lodge with an Irish doctor, Christopher Nugent, and in spring of 1757 he married Nugent’s daughter, Jane. They were happily married for 40 years—and the marriage issued in two sons, Richard and Christopher, both born in 1758. Christopher died in infancy as was common in those days.

At age 27 years, Burke produced his first work, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), a year after *A Vindication of Natural Society* (1756). The thrust of Burke’s *Vindication* was that man is not man until he is civilised. His identity is somewhat dependent upon his integration to culture and society. The *Vindication of Natural Society* was written as a parody, in reply to a work by Lord Bolingbroke. Bolingbroke had argued that man does not need doctrines or the Christian Church, but only requires his own instinct and “natural religion.”

The next year he published *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, which was more a work of philosophy. His work was a rejection of the abstract.

Burke’s education and gifts were exercised between 1758 and 1765 when he was the principal “conductor” of the new Annual Register. Then after six years as private secretary to William Gerard Hamilton, Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, in 1765, Burke became private secretary to the Marquis of Rockingham, who himself had just become First Lord of the Treasury. This was also the year when Burke was elected to the House of Commons, as the member of Bristol. He remained there, with a brief intermission in the Autumn of 1780, for nearly twenty-nine years, retiring in the Summer of 1794. But he only briefly held government office twice for a few months in 1782 and 1783.

Aged 68 years, he died on 9th July 1797, at his home in Beaconsfield, and was buried at St. Mary and All Saints Church, Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire.

*The Imaginative Whig* is a set of essays exploring different facets of the life, faith and influence of Edmund Burke. They explore Burke’s religion, his conservatism, the French and American Revolutions, natural law and human rights.

One key thread in this book is Burke's religion and his Christianity. Ian Crowe summarises:

One of the key components of "Burke's overarching imagination" was "an implicit acceptance of the centrality of religion in understanding the development of civil society; an epistemology that places the rational faculty alongside, or even a little below, the human senses and passions, and consequently, while never collapsing into complete skepticism, acknowledges the inevitable incompleteness of human knowledge; the centrality of moral and political education; an appreciation of the significance of the routine and the ordinary in the transmission of wisdom, and of the overlap between public and private duty (p. 13).

Burke thus stood against the twin tides of Hume's skepticism, on the one hand, and Bishop Berkeley's idealism on the other.

According to the fashion of his age, Burke did refer to "Providence," rather than to "God." Also references to Jesus are sparse. But it is this faith in Providence that marks out Burke's philosophy and telling of history from that of his Enlightenment contemporaries. F. P. Lock, in his essay *Burke and Religion*, writes:

Burke was unwilling to interpret history, anymore than human psychology, in purely human or natural terms. As is clear from the "Philosophical Enquiry" as well as from his "abridgement," Burke held strongly to the view of divine inscrutability: "his wisdom is not our wisdom, nor our ways his ways." He belonged to a generation that could still see "science" (in the sense of a more exact knowledge about the universe) as the ally of religion in explicating the wonders of creation and the Creator. His heart and a world governed by an intelligent and intelligible purpose, and his intellect furnished him with evidence for one in the providential march of history (p 25).

As far as the establishment of the Christian faith was concerned, Burke sought for latitude and toleration of non-established Churches and denominations, whilst defending the need for an establishment. By confession he was a Protestant. This comes out strongly in his work on the French Revolution. The Church ought to be one of the fortifications against the rise of revolutions.

In some ways we are too far from the strong confession of the Lordship of Christ the King and a confession of the primary authority of the Bible as the Word of God, than we would desire to see. However, the general providence of God, divine meaning and purpose and Creation are the key truths that shaped Burke's life and philosophy. In some ways he had to speak to the language of his times, after all he was standing against the high tide of the Enlightenment.

Nevertheless, Burke is a vigorous defender of Christian liberty as against the revolution and its implicit atheism.

We know, and it is our pride to know, that man is by his constitution a religious animal; that atheism is against not only reason but our instincts; and that it cannot prevail long. But if, in the moment of riot, and in the drunken delirium from the hot spirit drawn out of the alembick of hell, which in France is now so furiously boiling, we should uncover our nakedness by throwing off that Christian religion which has hitherto been our boast and comfort, and one great source of civilization amongst us, and among many other nations, we are apprehensive (being well aware that the mind will not endure a void) that some uncouth, pernicious, and degrading superstition, might take place of it.

In other words, the revolution was "throwing off that

Christian religion which has hitherto been our boast and comfort." Everything depended upon the Christian foundations. Hence the Revolution was "the greatest moral earthquake that ever convulsed and shattered this globe of ours" and "the most important crisis that ever existed in the world." *C&S*

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THE LATE GREAT EVANGELICAL CHURCH:  
HOW AN AGE-OLD HERESY IS KILLING THE  
MODERN-DAY CHURCH AND HOW  
IT CAN STILL BE SAVED

BY C. VAUGHN DONER

Oakdown Books, 2007, ISBN-13: 978-0-9700326-9-0,  
ISBN-10: 0-9700326-9-2, 305 pages including notes,  
bibliography and index

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REVIEWED BY BRUCE DAYMAN

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HERE is a book that shows the influence of Gnosticism on the evangelical Church. This age-old heresy was driven underground and pronounced heretical by the early Church; however, it has made inroads back into the Church throughout history. In particular, it has so penetrated the evangelical Church that the author has all but read its eulogy. It is not the product of armchair observations. The book is the result of thirty years of first-hand experience and ten years of serious research from a man who was effectively involved in its highest levels of evangelical activism. In spite of the prognosis, Doner is optimistic about the future of the faith.

The problem set forth is the imminent implosion of evangelicalism. It is the largest religious force in America (32% of Christians) yet its impact on culture is minimal at best. While Church growth is happening in 28% of evangelical Churches it is mainly through recycled members from other Churches (p. 15). New converts represent only 1% of that growth. While tens of millions of dollars are invested into mobilising evangelicals, ministry to the poor and needy, fighting injustice or discipling neighbourhoods is a frustrating enterprise. Where is the fruit? With this problem in mind Doner attempts to unravel the maze of erroneous belief systems that has produced only lethargy and ambivalence in the evangelical Church. What he has discovered has caused him to conclude that evangelicalism has become "a distinctly modern American religion" (p. 16).

The author is not alone in his analysis.

In the second chapter, bolstering his analysis that evangelicalism has turned into something unrecognisable by the same Protestant Reformers that gave rise to evangelicalism, the author outlines the impact of the New Age as a Trojan Horse. He reveals the historic roots of the New Age in Gnosticism which basically confused the Creator/creature distinction through many methods of self-deification. Gnosticism, like its New Age descendent, was a multifaceted movement. Its hydra-headed manifestations made it difficult for early Church leaders to define and isolate it. Its transitional nature was anti-Church, anti-creedal, anti-liturgical, and anti-historical and committed to each individual's "inner light." It is this highly individualised, subjective

framework that defines the New Age and increasingly evangelicalism. It is representational of the nation of America.

Chapter three analyses the historical link between Platonism and Gnosticism. In particular, the dualism that portrays spirit as good and noble and matter as evil, which is part and parcel of a Platonised Christian system (p. 34). Praying, church-going and mystical practices are considered good but physical enjoyments are considered “carnal.” Spiritual callings such as Church occupations or ministries are looked upon with dignity while other callings are worldly and inferior.

In order to escape the physical world many in the early Church joined the monastic movement. “The goal—from Origen to the Gnostics, from monasticism to pietism, and from today’s rapture obsession to Evangelicalism’s ‘alien pilgrimage’ shibboleth—was to escape the physical world (and our responsibility for it) while the AWOL Christian cloisters himself away puzzling on deity . . .” (p. 35).

The lengths people go to in order to escape this world ultimately focus on spiritual exercises designed to lead to perfection. This form of spiritual pride, depending on one’s own ability to attain perfection, is the root of Platonic Christianity. It is an intense drive to overcome human limitations (the creature) in order to attain oneness with God. Responsible stewardship in gratefulness to God’s grace is not in the picture. God’s Creation cannot be appreciated for what it is. This quest for mystical union with God is present in much of what passes for “that old time religion” (p. 39). The author spends much of the chapter on historical examples from Clement, Philo, Origen, Plotinus, Mani, the Bogomils, and the Cathars. The importance of Meister Eckhart’s influence on John Tauler, a source for much Anabaptist belief is telling.

Chapter four examines the rise of Pietism, particularly the influence of Madam Guyon on John Wesley. While Doner acknowledges the good that has come from Pietism, it is the religious individualism, emotionalism and anti-intellectualism he takes issue with in these pages.

Chapter five looks at the tragically reductionist understanding of Christ’s death that is endemic amongst evangelicals. In effect, they have shrunk the Gospel and Christ’s sovereignty. The result is an impotent Church. Neo-Platonism has robbed the Reformation emphasis of reforming culture to concentrate on perfecting one’s own spiritual status. As with the Gnostics, the Old Testament and God’s law are ignored, instead, claiming it has been superseded by the “gospel.” This has neutered Christianity by over-spiritualising the Scriptures and divorcing Christianity from any real concern for this present world by dismissing God’s law. Instead of restoring Creation, evangelicals choose to escape it.

Chapter six moves the discussion to American soil and the influence of Charles Finney and Dwight Moody. These men dismissed Church tradition in favour of their own spiritual experience, i.e., revivalism. Along with dispensationalism (a la Scofield) which compartmentalises Scripture, it has produced the same effect as the Gnostic Marcion. This paved the way for fundamentalism.

In chapter seven, Doner chronicles the rise of humanism. Liberal modernists who imbibed Enlightenment philosophy in the form of higher criticism further weakened evangelical cultural dominance. The narrowed concern for personal piety and individual conversion replaced the dominion

mandate and evangelicals found themselves marginalised. Premillennial despair about the future became a self-fulfilling prophecy. All that could be done was to circle the wagons. This was done by further reducing the faith to five basic fundamentals of the faith. In essence, reductionistic again, it truncated the gospel. Fundamentalism obscured or ignored many of the most vital facets of the faith. It was a concession to the liberals and furthered the decline of biblical literacy leaving the Church defenseless against all manner of cultic teaching. The charismatic movement added to the dilemma by laying down few parameters on interpreting Scripture other than “hearing from the Holy Spirit.” This is pursued further in chapter eight which deals with gutting the Great Commission. What this anti-worldly (chapter nine), reductionistic, individualistic mindset has produced is part-time Christians (chapter ten). The double-mindedness evident today can be seen in Christian business professionals who go to church on Sunday but live like pagans the rest of the week. Church-related activities are “spiritual.” Prayer meetings, Bible studies and witnessing have become disconnected from “the world” and become like therapy so that we may endure until we get to heaven.

Idolising the subjective (Chapter 11) draws the analogy between Gnosticism and current evangelical belief. Religious authority has been relocated from an objective location such as the Bible or the Church to an internal feeling or to human personalities. Laughing revivals, revelation knowledge, and cult-like personalities, such as Benny Hinn and E. W. Kenyon, have now become the new standard. These are promoted by the elite in whom spiritual power is perceived by followers as God at work. They provide the deeper life secrets from spiritual warfare to wealth accumulation. Esoteric knowledge of God’s hidden will instead of stewardship, service and discipleship has seduced millions (Chapter 12). It has become a form of magic as evidenced in word of faith, name it and claim it nonsense. Channeling the power of the Holy Spirit is in vogue and manifests as revelation of special and unprecedented wisdom.

The new trinity is me, myself and I. Doner documents the evolution of evangelical individualism. Having accepted the basic presuppositions of the Enlightenment, the new American religion of self-reliance and bootstrap belief became dominant. There was no need for learning theology or submitting to learned Bible scholars. Instead, instinct and private opinion filled the vacuum. The Bible was now open to the subjective interpretation of the masses. The result has been a splintering of the Church into over twenty-five thousand denominations with new ones popping up regularly. Much of this is laid at the feet of Anabaptists and Pietists who eschewed all authority and tradition. A New Age juggernaut has now become the proverbial camel with its nose in the tent (Chapter thirteen).

Doing your own thing is the result of believing in no creed but Christ, no confession but the Bible (Chapter fourteen). Severing Scripture from its historic moorings has left a debacle. The Church has been profoundly debilitated from serving the community. Little accountability, fuzzy boundaries, and a theological deficit have severely damaged the evangelical witness.

Chapter fifteen poses the question: “What do you get when you fuse Pietism’s unbridled individualism, New Age devotion to self-interest, and one of the world’s most advanced industrial societies?” The answer is “people con-

sumed with consuming.” The good life has become an inalienable right by the boomer generation, a series of happy endings. People are obsessed with their “felt needs.” We have become preoccupied with ourselves and self-righteously so. Add to the mix perfectionism in morals. Perfectionism, again, reduces the gospel to a few do’s and don’ts. This creates a vacuum into which God’s holy call to love, serve and steward is filled with spiritual self-fulfillment, economic survival, consumerism or career fulfillment. So we become numb, apathetic, ambivalent, uninvolved and disengaged from most of life’s issues. Chapter sixteen concludes with the result: a bitter harvest. Chapter seventeen concludes with a number of recommendations for correcting this destructive course.

While I have some reservations about the recommendations Doner proposes, I am in wholehearted agreement with what he has written in this book. Evangelicalism is in deep trouble. I question whether it can be saved. Some of the things being proposed by those who would agree with the

premise of this book are not too encouraging. In fact, I see nothing that has convinced me that there will be any real change in the near future.

Still Doner has written a book that needed to be written. It is a slap in the face to evangelicals, another wake up call in the same vein as Francis Schaeffer. Yet it is done with compassion and sincere concern. He speaks from a long first-hand experience within the upper echelons of evangelical leadership. This book needs to be read by those same leaders. However I am skeptical whether or not they would sacrifice their personal investment in the movement and rock the boat.

Yet there are a growing number of writers who are joining the parade of those disenchanted with evangelicalism. The movement will continue to take hits from those who have sacrificed their lives within it only to become disillusioned with its Gnostic elements. Evangelicalism has truly become the American Religion, something that is wholly new. It is no longer Christianity. *C&S*

# BOOK NOTICES

THE following books have been received for review. If you would like to review a book please send an e-mail requesting the book you would like to review along with your address (books will be allotted on a first come first served basis). Reviews should interact with the material in the book, not merely describe the contents, and should ideally be between 3000 and 7000 words (though we will accept shorter reviews and run longer reviews as review articles). Please include all publisher information. Reviews should be completed within a year of receiving the book.

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

William J. Baker, *Playing with God: Religion and Modern Sport* (Harvard University Press, 2007), hardback, 322 pages.

G. K. Beale and D. A. S. Carson, Editors, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Apollos/Baker, 2007), hardback, 1239 pages.

Joel R. Beeke and Randall J. Pederson, *Meet the Puritans: with a guide to modern reprints* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2006), hardback, 896 pages.

J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ* (Oxford, 2007), hardback, 218 pages.

John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford University Press, 2005), hardback, 604 pages.

Francis J. Bremer, *John Winthrop: America’s Forgotten Founding Father* (Oxford University Press, 2003), paperback, 478 pages.

Julia Bush, *Women Against the Vote: Female Anti-Suffragism in Britain* (Oxford, 2007), hardback, 340 pages.

Stephen Clark, Editor, *Tales of Two Cities: Christianity and Politics* (Leicester: IVP, 2005), paperback, 294 pages.

April DeConick, *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas: A History of the Gospel and its Growth* (London and New York: T. and T. Clark, 2006), paperback, 290 pages.

Graham Cray, *Disciples and Citizens: A Vision for Distinctive Living* (IVP, 2007), paperback, 190 pages.

Gordon Dampbell, Thomas N. Corns, John K. Hale and Fiona J. Tweedie, *Milton and the Manuscript of De Doctrina Christiana* (Oxford, 2007), hardback, 180 pages.

Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall SJ, Gerald O’Collins SJ, (Editors), *The Redemption: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on Christ as Redeemer* (Oxford, 2006), paperback, 351 pages.

David d’Avray, *Medieval Marriage: Symbolism and Society* (Oxford, 2005), paperback, 322 pages.

William Doan and Terry Giles, *Prophets, Performance, and Power: Performance Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (London and New York: T. and T. Clark, 2005), paperback, 194 pages.

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

William Easterly, *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's efforts to aid the rest have done so much ill and so little good* (Oxford, 2006), hardback, 380 pages.

Jonathan Edmondson, Steve Mason & James Rivers, Editors, *Flavius Josephus & Flavian Rome* (Oxford University Press, 2005), hardback, 400 pages.

Paul M. Elliott, *Christianity and Neo-Liberalism: The Spiritual Crisis in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and Beyond* (The Trinity Foundation, 2005), paperback, 479 pages.

Kenneth L. Gentry, *Thine is the Kingdom: Studies in the Postmillennial Hope* (Vallecito, California: Chalcedon, 2003), paperback 264 pages.

Paul Gosselin, *Fuite de l'Absolu*, Vol. I (Samizdat, 2006), paperback, 489 pages. This is a French language book.

Petrus Gräbe, *New Covenant, New Community: The Significance of Biblical and Patristic Covenant Theology for Contemporary Understanding* (Paternoster Press, 2006), paperback, 254 pages.

Crawford Gribben, *God's Irishmen: Theological Debates in Cromwellian Ireland* (Oxford, 2007), hardback, 284 pages.

Mogens Herman Hansen, *Polis: An Introduction to the Ancient Greek City-State* (Oxford, 2006), hardback, 237 pages.

Richard S. Hess, *Israelite Religions: An Archaeological and Biblical Survey* (Oxford, 2007), hardback, 432 pages.

J. L. Houlden, *Jesus: A Question of Identity* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006), paperback, 136 pages.

Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (Oxford, 2006), hardback, 252 pages.

Karen L. King, *The Secret Revelation of John* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), hardback, 397 pages.

Ursula King and Tina Beatie, editors, *Gender, Religion and Diversity: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (London & New York: Continuum, 2005), paperback, 269 pages.

David W. Kling, *The Bible in History: How the Texts Have Shaped the Times* (Oxford University press, 2004), hardback, 389 pages.

Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 242 pages.

Wesley A. Kort, *C. S. Lewis Then and Now* (Oxford University Press, 2001), paperback, 194 pages.

Angela M. Lahr, *Millennial Dreams and Apocalyptic Nightmares: The Cold War Origins of Political Evangelicalism* (Oxford, 2007), hardback, 281 pages.

## AUTHORITY NOT MAJORITY

### THE LIFE AND TIMES OF FRIEDRICH JULIUS STAHL

by RUBEN ALVARADO

134 pages • [www.wordbridge.net](http://www.wordbridge.net)

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Virtually unknown apart from specialist scholars, Friedrich Julius Stahl was a leading German philosopher, professor of constitutional law, and statesman in nineteenth century Germany. His Christian political philosophy both impacted practical politics in a time of upheaval in Germany (around and after 1848), and influenced anti-revolutionary thinkers of subsequent generations. His work is a monument to a Germany that was overwhelmed and subsumed by the Bismarck revolution, which substituted Realpolitik for Christian tradition. His biography in English is long overdue. Stahl followed in the footsteps of Edmund Burke in England and Friedrich Carl von Savigny in Germany. He was a leading opponent of the French Revolution and its influence on politics, law, religion, and indeed society as a whole. Nevertheless, he sought to appropriate those elements of Revolution doctrine, such as constitutionalism and civil rights, which served to advance the social order, making him a true conservative rather than a mere reactionary. Furthermore, he sought to maintain the Christian basis of the social order by recognizing Christianity as the pillar of national as well as personal existence even while according political rights to non-Christians. For him, the church must be recognized as the public ministry of ethics; otherwise, the nation itself would lose its moorings in absolute values, leaving itself wide open to a renewed paganism. And, as this biography of his demonstrates, it was the abandonment of this Christian conviction by Otto von Bismarck which opened the door to the conscienceless power-state which Germany became. This biography is the first ever to appear in English of this important figure in the history of political thought. It accompanies the multi-volume translation of Stahl's magnum opus, the *Philosophy of Law*.

## Book Notices—(cont.)

Hetty Lalleman, *Celebrating the Law* (Paternoster Press, 2004), paperback, 151 pages.

J. L. Lightfoot, *The Sibylline Oracles, with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on the First and Second Books* (Oxford, 2007), hardback, 613 pages.

William Loader, *The Septuagint, Sexuality, and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2004), paperback, 162 pages.

Morwenna Ludlow, *Gregory of Nyssa, ancient and [post]modern* (Oxford, 2007), hardback, 314 pages.

George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: New Edition* (Oxford University Press, Second Edition, 2006), paperback, 351 pages.

A. T. B. McGowan, editor, Forward by John M. Frane, *Always Reforming: Explorations in Systematic Theology* (Leicester: Apollos/InterVarsity Press, 2006), paperback, 365 pages.

A. T. B. McGowan, *The Divine Spiritation of Scripture* (IVP Apollos, 2007), paperback, 229 pages.

Steven L. McKenzie, *How to Read the Bible* (Oxford University Press, 2005), hardback, 207 pages.

Elizabeth de Michelis, *A History of Modern Yoga* (London and New York: Continuum, 2005), paperback, 282 pages.

Ashley Null, *Thomas Cranmer's Doctrine of Repentance: Reweaving the Power to Love* (Oxford, 2000), paperback, 298 pages.

Ronald L. Numbers, *Science and Christianity in Pulpit and Pew* (Oxford, 2007), paperback, 198 pages.

Nigel Oakley, *Engaging Politics? The Tensions of Christian Political Involvement* (Paternoster, 2007), paperback, 204 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.

Anthony Pagden, *World at War: The 2,500-Year Struggle between East and West* (Oxford, 2008), hardback, 548 pages.

Mark Gregory Pegg, *A Most Holy War: The Ambigensian Crusade and the Battle for Christendom* (Oxford, 2008), hardback, 253 pages.

Andrew Perriman, *The Coming of the Son of Man: New Testament Eschatology for an Emerging Church* (Paternoster Press, 2005), paperback, 272 pages.

Richard Liong-Seng Phua, *Idolatry and Authority: A Study of 1 Corinthians 8:1 to 11:1 in the Light of the Jewish Diaspora / Library of New Testament Studies 299* (London and New York: T. and T. Clark, 2003), hardback, 236 pages.

John Piper, *The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright* (IVP, 2008), paperback, 239 pages.

Frank Prochaska, *Christianity & Social Service in Modern Britain: The Disinherited Spirit* (Oxford University Press, 2006), hardback, 216 pages.

Peter Rowley-Conwy, *From Genesis to Prehistory: The Archaeological Three Age System and its Contested Reception in Denmark, Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2007), hardback, 362 pages.

Lamin Sanneh, *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity* (Oxford, 2008), hardback, 362 pages.

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

Roger Scruton, *Death-Devoted Heart: Sex and the Sacred in Wagner's Tristan and Isolde* (Oxford University Press, 2004), hardback, 231 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.

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

Robert Song, *Christianity & Liberal Society* (Oxford University Press, [1997] 2006), 250 pages.

Ronald H. Stone, *Prophetic Realism: Beyond Militarism and Pacifism in an Age of Terror* (London and New York: T. and T. Clark, 2005), hardback 192 pages.

Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Oxford World Classic, 2007 [1899]), paperback, 263 pages.

Guy Prentiss Waters, *Justification and the New Perspective on Paul: A Review and Response* (Prebyterian and Reformed, 2004), paperback, 274 pages.

David L. Weaver and William H. Willimon, *Vital Christianity: Spirituality, Justice, and Christian Practice* (London and New York: Continuum, 2005), paperback, 248 pages.

L. L. Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ: A Study of 1 Corinthians 1-4 in the Cosmic-Philosophic Tradition / Journal for the Study of the New Testament Series 293* (London and New York: T. and T. Clark, 2005), paperback, 322 pages.

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