

A Monthly Report Dealing with the Relationship of Christian Faith to the World

Issues of Life

Founder's Foreword

Faith and Works 2
By Rev. R. J. Rushdoony

From the President's Desk

Forcing "The Truth" 4
By Rev. Mark R. Rushdoony

Education for the Kingdom of God

Manners 6
By Ronald Kirk

A Week in Beijing 8
By Samuel L. Blumenfeld

The Other "Three P's" of Politics 11
By John E. Stoos

Our Own House Out of Order Racial Oppression and Its Defenders 13
By Rod D. Martin

Movies, Storytelling and Apologetics Part 2 16
By Brian Godawa

Atwood vs. Atavism? The Handmaid's Tale and Its Flagrant Misrepresentation of the Christian Right 19
By Michael Wagner

When the Problem Isn't the Problem 22
By William Blankschaen

The Sun Always Rises 25
By David P. Henreckson

Christian Economics: A Foundation in Law (Part 4) 27
By Ian Hodge, Ph.D.

Receiving the *Chalcedon Report*: The *Report* will be sent to those who request it. At least once a year we ask that you return a response card if you wish to remain on the mailing list. Contributors are kept on our mailing list. Suggested Donation: \$30 per year will cover only printing and mailing costs (\$35 Canada, \$45 foreign — U.S. funds only). Tax-deductible contributions may be made out to Chalcedon and mailed to P.O. Box 158, Vallecito, CA 95251 USA.

Chalcedon may want to contact its readers quickly by means of e-mail. If you have an e-mail address, please send an e-mail message including your full postal address to our office: chaloffi@goldrush.com.

Chalcedon Staff:

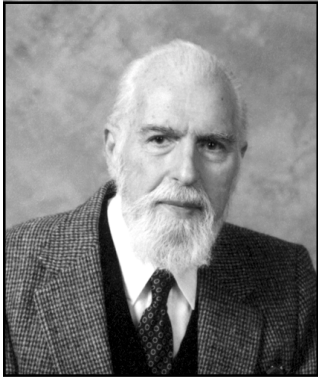
Rev. R. J. Rushdoony (1916-2001) was the founder of Chalcedon and a leading theologian, church/state expert, and author of numerous works on the application of Biblical Law to society.

Rev. Mark R. Rushdoony is president of Chalcedon and Ross House Books. He is also editor and chief of the Chalcedon Report and Chalcedon's other publications.

Susan Burns is Chalcedon's executive assistant and managing editor of the *Chalcedon Report* and Chalcedon's other publications.

Ronald Kirk is engaged in research and development promoting Chalcedon's work to the Christian education market.

**Rebecca Rouse is Chalcedon's Circulation and Data Manager.
Contact her at (209) 736-4365 ext. 10 or chaloffi@goldrush.com**



Faith and Works

By Rev. R. J. Rushdoony

Reprinted from Hebrew, James & Jude ©Doroty Rushdoony 2001, pages 164-165

James 2:14-26

- ¹⁴What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?
- ¹⁵If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,
- ¹⁶And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?
- ¹⁷Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.
- ¹⁸Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.
- ¹⁹Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.
- ²⁰But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?
- ²¹Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?
- ²²Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?
- ²³And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed upon him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.
- ²⁴Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.
- ²⁵Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?
- ²⁶For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Theology vs. Life

This may well be the most controversial text in all the Bible. Many avoid James' epistle because they will not face up to this text.

We need to recognize that much can be separated in analysis that cannot be separated in life. We can and of necessity do analyze the human respiratory system and the circulatory system separately, but neither can exist without the other. *Faith* in theology is tied to the doctrine of salvation, and works to sanctification, but, just as breathing is necessary for the life of the heart, so too are works to a living faith.

This is why James can say, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (v. 24). Those who would separate faith and works can only do so theologically, and they should do so, but in life the two are inseparable. To take a theological distinction and assume that in life what is an otherwise valid and necessary difference is a radical separation of one from the other is to confuse dissection with life.

James confronts us with this fact: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works, can faith save him?" (v. 14) Can a man live with a heart only, and not lungs?

James then uses a very practical illustration of the interconnection of faith and works. Given the need for charity in the Jerusalem Christian synagogue, and like churches elsewhere, his example is both blunt and real. If a fellow believer is naked and hungry, and if we simply say, "Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled," or, "we will pray for you," and nothing more, what good is all this? Such a professed faith, having no works, is dead. It is dead because faith cannot stand alone: it manifests itself in works (vv. 15-17).

James is *not* anti-theology; what he is against is the separation of theology from life, the reduction of faith to easy-believism, and the negation of action as the expression of faith. Neither valid faith nor valid works can be separated one from another. How can any man demonstrate a valid faith without works? Faith is shown by works (v. 18).

Easy Believism

Simple belief saves no man. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble" (v. 19). A more blunt and telling statement of the case cannot be imagined. Those in hell, beginning with the very devils, believe that God is; the knowledge makes them tremble, *but it does not save them*.

"But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (v. 20) Such a man is called *vain* by James. The word is *kenos*, meaning empty,

foolish, senseless, purposeless; it is highly uncomplimentary. James does not dignify the position as one of valid dissent: it is a fool's opinion.

Then, in vv. 21-24, James turns to Abraham, the covenant father, revered alike by Jews and Christians. He says without qualification that Abraham was "justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar" (v. 21). The reality of Abraham's faith was manifested in his readiness to obey God, even to binding Isaac to the altar (*Gen. 22:9*). God waited until Abraham's faith was shown by his works before He delivered Isaac.

James continues, "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect" (v. 22). Literally, James says, "faith worked with his works." Faith became works, a realization of itself. Faith expressed itself, or revealed itself, in works. There is an essential connection between the two.

This, James says, is what the Scripture means when it says, "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God" (v. 23).

It is in 2 Chronicles 20:7 that Abraham is called God's "friend for ever." In Genesis 15:6, we are told that Abraham "believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness." Paul cites this verse in Romans 4:3 and Galatians 3:6. Paul uses the text to criticize the idea of salvation through works, James to call attention to the emptiness of faith without works. It was Paul who, in Romans 3:31, said, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: we establish the law." Above all, our Lord in Matthew 7:16-23 makes totally clear that "Ye shall know them by their fruits," *i.e.*, by their works.

It is plain, James insists, that a man is justified by his works, not by faith only (v. 24). Works manifest the reality of a man's faith, so that his justification is shown to be real by his works, not by his faith only.

James then gives another illustration, Rahab. The account in Joshua makes obvious the terror of the people of Jericho. They knew what God had done to other peoples, so they believed that the Hebrews' God was working to destroy their enemies. Only Rahab *acted* on that faith; her works alone showed the reality of her faith. Hence, James says, she was *justified* by her works, *i.e.*, her justification was manifested in her works.

Very clear in all that James has to say is that both faith and works have reference to God and to His law. The Council of Trent related faith to assent to the church, and too many Protestant groups have in practice tended to do the same. Both faith and works must be seen as essentially a trust in and obedience to God and His inscriptured Word.

James concludes with another blunt statement: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (v. 26). James does not say it is *weak*, but rather that it is *dead*. Here again, as in the Sermon on the Mount, and all the gospels and epistles, we are told how to "judge righteous judgment" (*Jn. 7:24*). There are many who follow ancient Greek thinking to say that we cannot know a man's heart and therefore cannot judge him, whereas our Lord says plainly, "by their fruits ye shall know them" (*Mt. 7:20*). Works are faith in action, faith made manifest.

The *Chalcedon Report*, published monthly by Chalcedon, a tax-exempt Christian foundation, is sent to all who request it. All editorial correspondence should be sent to the managing editor, P.O. Box 569, Cedar Bluff, VA 24609-0569. Laser-print hard copy and electronic disk submissions firmly encouraged. All submissions subject to editorial revision. Email: chalcedon@netscope.net. The editors are not responsible for the return of unsolicited manuscripts, which become the property of Chalcedon unless other arrangements are made. Opinions expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of Chalcedon. **It provides a forum for views in accord with a relevant, active, historic Christianity, though those views may on occasion differ somewhat from Chalcedon's and from each other.** Chalcedon depends on the contributions of its readers, and all gifts to Chalcedon are tax-deductible. ©2002 Chalcedon. All rights reserved. Permission to reprint granted on written request only. Editorial Board: Rev. Mark R. Rushdoony, President/Editor-in-Chief; C.L. "Smoky" Stover, Sec/Treas; Walter Lindsay, Assistant Editor; Susan Burns, Managing Editor and Executive Assistant. Chalcedon, P.O. Box 158, Vallecito, CA 95251. Telephone Circulation (8 a.m. - 4 p.m., Pacific) (209)736-4365 or Fax (209)736-0536; email: chaloffi@goldrush.com; www.chalcedon.edu; Circulation: Rebecca Rouse.

Cover design by Chris Ortiz / The Creation Group. Call (919)570-8142.

Inside design by Tamma Evans / The Typesetter. Call (972)270-8107 or email: thetypesetter@earthlink.net



Forcing “The Truth”

By Rev. Mark R. Rushdoony

Last month I heard a group of candidates for our rural county's Board of Supervisors give brief campaign speeches at a public forum. One candidate, in appealing to the environmentalist opposition to logging, said that we should not let timber companies think they can cut down trees “just because they own the land.” More recently, I heard a radio show's discussion of a recent court trend to make a parent's child visitation privileges dependent on the parent's giving up smoking. It would not be difficult to list many other instances where self-righteousness resorts to a forced imposition of a particular opinion on others.

Conflict

We live in a culture that is in conflict. Our conflicts arise because we have lost the common Christian faith that once defined truth, morals, and their application to individuals and society. Because we cannot agree on a single source of truth that is authoritative because it is transcendent, we are left with a society of men who all seek to be as gods, determining good and evil for themselves (*Gen. 3:5*). Every man who so plays god has his own concept of truth and a moral ethic which flows from it.

The conflict over truth that we see between men may also be detected within most men's thinking. Few are as consistent in their thinking as they would like to believe. In a world in rebellion against God, we must not expect a coherent alternative. Rebellion against God's reality produces confusion, if not schizophrenia.

Man is by God's decree inclined to both work and dominion. Man needs to see his efforts, however, as purposeful; he needs a basis for his activity. Man thus needs to extend his concept of truth as the basis and justification of his activity. Many men will, of course, react to this conflict of ideas by withdrawal. They are, perhaps, also playing god, but they are more content to limit their divine realm to their own lives or personal circumstances. They may withdraw into more introspective Eastern philosophies, renounce religion altogether, or make it a purely private aspect

of their existences. They may become self-absorbed in materialism or the pursuit of pleasure.

Alternatively, men try to extend their ideas of truth and morality. This is done by either persuasion or force. Persuasion may be referenced to love, peace, or tolerance. Force is the way of judicial action, the political process, and war; it is the trend towards statist answers.

When there is a conflict of ideologies, persuasion has its limitations. There will never be agreement among disharmonious ideas. At best, some ideas will gain a relatively wider following than others. Even among such a following, ideas change and consensus shifts. Many popular ideas and large, well-funded, political and religious organizations have come and gone in the last half-century alone.

With the inherent limitations of persuasion, love, and toleration come a strong tendency toward force. This can be subtle or even well intentioned. Men who play god obviously believe they have something to offer all lesser deities. Thus education becomes indoctrination, peaceful demonstration turns to intimidation by threat of violence, legitimate mouth pieces become propaganda machines, statesmanship becomes a vicious effort to gain and hold the seat of power, and political correctness is enacted as legislation. With the failure of persuasion, force becomes legitimate. If some idea must prevail, if some idea must be the unifying force of an institution or a political system, there will be those who rush to legislate their ideology, their master plan, as foundational and binding. When it comes right down to it, force is easier than persuasion. It should not surprise us, then, that in a culture without religious unity, the power of government is steadily on the rise.

Peace

Since the War on Terrorism began, we have heard numerous references to the “Peace of Islam.” This peace is said to come to a culture that has submitted, or been submitted, to Islam. It is victorious Islam that then denies all other faiths their freedom. Force

has not been a last resort to Islam; it has always been its primary means of expanding and maintaining its domain. Being largely an external rather than a faith-based religion, Islam can use external means (*i.e.*, force) without doing injustice to its nature. While there have been instances of forced conversions in Christian history (the brief period of the Latin American Conquistadors, for instance), they have been, unlike Islam, atypical.

The peace of God is the conversion (not coercion) of men to Christianity. Unlike Islam, this is an inward submission, a ceasing from moral rebellion. As converted men recognize God as their Creator, Lord, Sustainer, and Judge, they see Him as their Lawgiver and Source of Truth. They see all of life in moral terms.

There is force involved in the Christian gospel. That powerful force is not, however, one under man's control. The force behind the Christian Faith is the power of the Holy Spirit and the absoluteness of God's eternal will. If man under God will cease his desire to play-act at being his own god, he can see his role as being faithful in obedience. Force is something that Scripture reserves for suppressing evildoers; it cannot be used to spread His kingdom. This is not to say that lawful avenues of influence, such as legislation, are forbidden to Christians; we ought to use every lawful and moral means to speak the truth of God.

When it comes to conflicting ideologies, we must see the problem as essentially religious, not political. Our answer must, therefore, be centered on conversion rather than compulsion.

Important Joint Announcement: Chalcedon and Center for Cultural Leadership

Chalcedon is pleased to announce that its executive vice president, P. Andrew Sandlin, has resigned to assume the full-time presidency of the Center for Cultural Leadership (CCL). Andrew is particularly grateful for the opportunity to have ministered at Chalcedon these seven and a half years, and Chalcedon is equally appreciative of his service.

The trustees of Chalcedon wish him and the Center God's richest blessings, and the trustees of CCL are grateful for Chalcedon's ministry, influence and support. It is the fervent hope and prayer of Chalcedon, as well as the Center, that both organizations will continue to be used mightily of God for the building of His Kingdom.

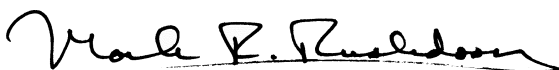
CCL is a tax-exempt, religious-educational foundation committed to educating and equipping Christians to reclaim our culture for Jesus Christ.

You may contact the Center for Cultural Leadership, and gain additional information, at:

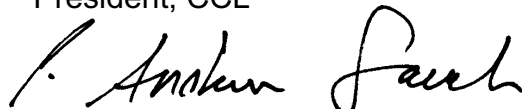
Center for Cultural Leadership
P.O. Box 70
La Grange, CA 95329
christianculture.com
sandlin@saber.net
Phone 209-852-2080

Mark R. Rushdoony will serve as Editor and Susan Burns will continue as Managing Editor of the *Chalcedon Report*.

Mark R. Rushdoony
President, Chalcedon



P. Andrew Sandlin
President, CCL





Manners

By Ronald Kirk

As a social norm, “manners” carry a bad reputation. When someone mentions the word *manners*, we may instantly think of self-absorbed snobs who use their pretentious and formal manners as a weapon designed to vanquish supposed inferiors. Such social guerilla warfare has long been the ideal for many to measure all common social conduct.

In the great Christian novel *Ben Hur*, the character of the adult Roman Messala returns to his home in Judea after a period of education in the Eternal City. In a reunion with his childhood best friend, Messala sarcastically insults leading character Judah Ben Hur, according to the rigor of noble Roman etiquette.¹ Similarly, in Walter Scott’s Christian romantic/historic novel *Ivanhoe* the noble Norman hosts made the manners of their Saxon guests “the subject of sarcastic observation,” while “the untaught Saxons unwittingly transgressed several of the arbitrary rules established for the regulation of society.” Moreover, “it was well known that a man may with more impunity be guilty of an actual breach either of real good breeding or of good morals, than appear ignorant of the most minute point of fashionable etiquette.”² Such hypocritical pomposity was a favorite target of Charles Dickens in virtually all of his stories, and rightly so. Even in these negative literary examples, a better, clearly superior morality and etiquette are implied to exist.

A Balanced View

In reaction, however, anti-manners have now replaced high manners, as dictated by the Hollywood, social-trend-setting elite. With these poor examples, it is now easy to discard manners as superficial or worse, as against the weightier requirements of Scripture. Yet, we ought to be careful of drawing rash conclusions, tantamount to throwing the soup out with the chicken bones. God did not intend His plumb line for a pendulum. Indeed, manners rightfully seen clearly reflect the weightier commands of the Scriptures, including the commandment of Christ to love our neighbors as ourselves.

More pointedly, we observe several examples of good manners in history and literature. Note how young George Washington produced his *Rules of Civility*, which bore on character, and moral and polite conduct. Washington’s character, conduct, and accomplishments were renowned in his age, such that Americans have long revered him. The connection between Washington’s upbringing in moral manners and his lasting reputation ought to be obvious. Comments from *Rules*, such as “Associate yourself with persons of good character. It is better to be alone than in bad company,” illustrate their Biblical base (*1 Cor. 15:33*).

In her *Little House* book series, Laura Ingalls Wilder presents an elevated example of Christian manners in the home of a latter nineteenth-century family. For example, five-year-old Laura in *Little House in the Big Woods* knows it is wicked to cry selfishly or to be envious of her sister. Interestingly, the fine manners of the Ingalls’ home are commonly set against the increasing incivility and roughness of the age in which Laura grew up. These books form a textbook of manners and morals remarkably approximating Biblical ideals, though signs of secularization in the home were also beginning to appear.

As late as the 1940s, manners were not yet entirely divorced from their Biblical roots. Emily Post opens her opus volume *Etiquette* with a discussion of the term’s true meaning. Attempting to distance herself from mere formality and rigid rules in manners, she asks, “What is the purpose of this rule? Does it help to make life pleasanter? Does it make the social machinery run more smoothly? Does it add to beauty? Is it essential to the code of good taste or to ethics? If it serves any of these purposes, it is a rule to be cherished.”³ Regarding good taste she says, “Good taste is necessarily helpful! It must be the suitable thing, the comfortable thing, the useful thing for the occasion, the place, the time, or it is not in good taste.” (Christians would recognize that the experience of true *beauty* is a blessing from God corresponding to a peoples’ responding to His gift of grace [*Phil. 4:8*].) With respect to men, Miss Post says, “[T]he code of the

gentleman ... is an immutable law of etiquette... Decency means not merely propriety of speech and conduct, but honesty and trustworthiness in every obligation. Integrity includes not only honesty but a delicacy of motive and of fairness in judging the motives of others." Finally, "Etiquette is most deeply concerned with every phase of ethical impulse or judgment and with every choice or expression of taste, since what one is, is of far greater importance than what one appears to be."

Love in Action

Rev. Rushdoony declared that love is law in action.⁴ In this sense, self-government and ordinary relational practices — manners — truly constitute the first sphere of civil government. Where the individual is constrained to do what is right in his conscience, and aided by the Holy Spirit by faith, little coercive government is required and the people are generally free. It is important not to presume upon one's neighbor in his property or person, particularly in absence of a previous relationship which might grant some degree of imposition.

Clearly, as we seek to establish a more Biblical view of human conduct, we must set priorities. In Christian love, kindness, making another comfortable, and providing a beautiful setting are all part of Christian love toward one's neighbor. However, morality and ethical conduct according to the commands of Christ are fundamentally far more important. With respect to the higher expression of the Faith found in Christian liberty (*2 Cor. 3:17*), self-restraint in manners is essential. No common liberty is long possible in an essentially selfish society.

Conversely, a society where people generally do good to each other is one of the most important foundational elements for a successful gospel mission. With such salt and light, godly influence may work to prepare the soil of the people's hearts to receive the Good Seed of the Word of God.

Modern secular education theory requires peer socialization. This is the blind leading the blind, where all fall into a pit. Much better is a home that

teaches and practices careful conduct toward one another in life's ordinary activities. If one can learn to love his neighbor, in practice, when that neighbor happens to be his brother or sister, or husband or wife, where it is so terribly easy to be lax in our social conduct, how much more skillful will be the practice of love toward one's neighbor outside the home. Indeed, I have often observed this to be so.


Training our children and ourselves to have good manners, then, is a worthwhile and even imperative Christian endeavor. In an age where examples of good Christian manners may be difficult to find, the traditional manners we practice tends to be the institutionalized result of our sinful disposition. The combined benefit of scriptural and Christian historical and literary insight offer a theoretical and practical set of instructions for a manner of life able to revive Christian civility, gospel influence, and a foundation for the free institutions needed to propagate the kingdom of God.

¹ Lew Wallace, *Ben Hur, A Tale of the Christ* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1922), Book Second, Chapter II.

² Sir Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe* (New York: A.L. Burt, no date), p. 174.

³ Emily Post, *Etiquette* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1945), p. 1.

⁴ Rousas John Rushdoony, *Law and Society* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1986), p. x.



**Covenant
Reformed
Church**

Meeting in Knoxville, Tennessee
Applying the Crown Rights of
Jesus Christ to all of Life.
For information please call
(865) 681-4519
A Reformed Congregation
For The Glory of God!

June 21-23
Covenant Reformed Church
Knoxville, Tennessee

*Join us for a special weekend
seminar and worship.*

Special Guest Speaker: Monte Wilson

Call (865) 982-2617
for more information and directions.



A Week in Beijing

By Samuel L. Blumenfeld

I was recently invited by an Australian-Chinese entrepreneur in Beijing, China, to provide expertise on how best to teach the Chinese to read and speak English. His company had already put an English phonics program in over a hundred elementary schools, and was interested in a program for adults. He had heard about me (it's a small world!), and thus, before I knew it, I was winging my way to Beijing via Air Canada, which had the best fare.

It took six hours to get from Boston to Vancouver, and ten hours from Vancouver to Beijing. And it was daylight all the way. I had left Boston at 7 a.m. and got to Beijing at mid-afternoon — on the next day, having crossed the date line.

China Today

The Beijing airport is a huge modern structure built of glass, marble, chrome, and steel — an impressive entry to the Chinese capital, fit for the thousands who will arrive for the Olympics in 2008. My suitcase had been checked through from Boston to Beijing. But first I had to pass through border control. While waiting in line I looked up at the People's Republic seal, prominently displayed in red on a huge wall with an electronic board giving instructions in Chinese and English. Some of the English words were misspelled. That happens when the Chinese try to write English without the help of an English speaking person.

My host and a colleague, both of whom spoke perfect English, met me at baggage claim and took me by Jeep Cherokee, to a small, newly built, American-style hotel in Beijing, with all the conveniences you'd find in the States. The ride from the airport alone produced a bit of a shock. In every direction, as far as the eye could see, high-rise apartment buildings were sprouting up like mushrooms. The large number of cars, trucks, and buses on the roads surprised me. This was clearly a boom town, and I could see in an instant why China's rate of economic growth is so high.

That evening I had my first real Chinese meal, buffet style, in a very upscale restaurant. I ate a bit of

everything, and it was all quite good. The tastes were a little strange, but then in China they use spices that are not usually found in American Chinese dishes. And so, my first day in China was surprisingly perfect.

Actually, I had been somewhat apprehensive about going to China. I had no idea what to expect. I took Sudafed, Vitamin C, American candy bars, trail mix, and tissues, just in case. But the hotel provided a nice box of tissues. In fact, during that entire week I never felt better physically, my sinuses were remarkably clear, and I slept quite well. I didn't catch a thing and hadn't the slightest hint of indigestion. I did drink bottled water, which many Chinese also drink. The only problem was some slight eye irritation caused by some sort of cleaning disinfectant used by the maid.

Teaching English to the Chinese

My second day in China, I visited my host's office where I had a discussion with his staff. We all agreed that intensive phonics was the best way to teach the Chinese English. The teaching program they were using was an Australian adaptation of Romalda Spalding's reading program, in which children are taught to memorize about 75 English phonograms and a number of spelling rules. This was a six-year program that produced fluent English readers and speakers.

Believe it or not, most schools in China teach English by the whole-word method. Children associate words with pictures. While the children can memorize a good number of words, they cannot advance toward fluency without phonics. We have 600,000 words in English. The Chinese have only 50,000. They have to memorize about 3,000 characters before they can read a newspaper. No easy task.

My host had wanted me to observe how children were taught by the two methods, and so he arranged for me and his translator to visit a large K-6 public school in Beijing. We were greeted by very friendly first-grade teachers and students. The children sat at

desks in rows. The teacher was the focus of attention, and she taught everyone the same thing. The children responded beautifully. They were eager and attentive. They enjoyed what they were learning. And judging from their reaction to an American in their classroom, they were happy and delighted by my presence.

Chinese children are quite acquainted with alphabet letters. Many of them wear jackets with American words on their backs. Also, they learn Roman letters when they are taught pinyin, an alphabetic way of writing Chinese words and characters, and they are taught the pinyin spelling of all the characters they learn. Yet, pinyin has not replaced the characters as the way to read in China. If it had, Americans would be able to read Chinese before understanding it.

The children in this first-grade class had started learning English by the Spalding method at the beginning of the semester, had memorized all of the phonograms and spelling rules, and were now learning to read two-syllable words. They learned that every syllable had to have a vowel. The teacher used an overhead projector to write words with an “le” ending, such as lit-tle, ta-ble, ap-ple, mid-dle, etc. They recited the words in unison. And when she questioned individual students, they stood up and answered correctly. It was obvious that after completing this six-year program, these children would be able to read any English word they encountered.

We then sat in back of a fourth-grade class where the teacher was using a whole-word method of teaching English. She held up cards with words, on the back of which were pictures. The words were: fruit, candy, coffee, jacket, bread, juice, milk, animal. The children recited the words in unison as she flashed the cards. Then she called on individual students to identify a word on a card. Most of them got it on the first try. She then put the words in sentences, such as: I like jacket. I like animal. I don't like jacket. The teacher, not being herself fluent in English, did not realize that the sentences required articles or plurals, which do not exist in Chinese. Obviously, this method would seriously limit how many words the children could learn in English.

My host had been trying to convince the curriculum makers to use the phonics method. But the whole-word method was quite entrenched in Chinese schools, and it was an uphill battle to get phonics into these schools.

During the exercise break, I was able to watch from a second story window a school yard full of students, about 500, go through their exercise movements to music. It was quite a sight as all the

students performed a rather complex set of movements using arms, legs, and bodies. I asked my Chinese translator how many of these children were on Ritalin. What was Ritalin, he asked. Apparently he had never heard of Ritalin or ADD or ADHD. The idea of drugging children so that they could learn seemed completely incomprehensible to him.

The next morning we drove to Tangshan, a city some two hours away by car from Beijing, to visit a school where I could observe children learning to read English by phonics, and also to see how children were taught to read Chinese. The first was a third-grade class of 43 students taught by a young male teacher. He was quite competent, but his accent was too Chinese. The Spalding phonograms were posted on the wall.

The second phonics class was conducted by a female teacher who taught the children that “big” was pronounced “beeg.” Yet she was able to pronounce “him,” with a short “i”, correctly. What was obviously needed were teachers of English from English-speaking countries. But then how many of them would be able to speak Chinese?

I was curious to find out how Chinese children were taught to read their own language. So we were able to sit in the back of a first-grade class and observe. The teacher first taught the children to recite a short poem in Chinese. Then she began to teach each character, or word, separately, using the board to write the character with its pinyin spelling over it so that they could read the word in its two forms. Each character represented a one-syllable word: gu, xing, zuo, shi, tai. She then taught the word meanings.

Since I did not see much of pinyin writing in newspapers or signs, I wondered why it was so underused. Why weren't books written in pinyin instead of characters? The answer is probably that character writing is such an old tradition in China and so much a part of the culture that changing over to an entirely Romanized writing system would encounter great resistance. The characters are instantly recognizable as meanings, while pinyin requires a sounding out process before meaning is extracted.

The ride to and from Tangshan was on a super highway, much like an American interstate, with toll-booths and an occasional gas station. The highway signs were in Chinese and English. The passing lane is known as the “Overtaking lane,” the travel lanes are “Carriage Ways,” and the breakdown lane is “Parking Lane No Driving” or “Emergency Parking Strip.” There were other quaint signs: “Rear Collision Lane,” “Keep Space,” “Do Not Drive

Tiredly," "Subsidence Section Slow Down," "The Subsidence Was Not."

On Saturday, my hosts took me to the Great Wall at Badaling, one of the entry points to the wall. Located some 50 kilometers from Beijing, the place was bustling with cars and tourist buses, souvenir stalls, restaurants, and inns. We had lunch at a Kentucky Fried Chicken place before making the climb. It was a sunny but windy day, and quite cold, but I and my companions were able to make it up the wall for about a fifth of a mile. It's a tough uphill climb, but the view is spectacular.

Reflections

So what do I think of China now that I've been to Beijing for a week? I enjoyed myself immensely. I did not see any trappings of a police state. No soldiers. No guards. Complete freedom of movement for motorists. Virtually no symbols of communist rule anywhere except on large government buildings near Tiananmen Square. Beijing is becoming Americanized, with McDonald's, KFC, Pizza Hut, Subway, Pepsi, Coca-Cola, Sprite, Crest toothpaste, Johnson

& Johnson Baby Soap, Motorola, Buick. Even *Cosmo* has a Chinese edition.

I watched 65 channels of television in my hotel room. You see everything except political debate. Lots of young, well-groomed newscasters reporting the news straight without propaganda. There is even one channel completely in English. English has become the second language in China because it is the international language of business and commerce. Capitalism has replaced communist ideology with a vengeance. The government calls it market socialism, but you don't see much socialism. Of course, I was only in two cities and for only one week.

There is a philosophical vacuum there, waiting to be filled by something. The American fast food restaurants project a philosophy of cleanliness and wholesomeness. The service is with a smile, the food is good, and the average Chinese loves it. But it is hardly enough. It is the young people who will make China's future. But one thing is certain, the Chinese leadership is determined to make China into the world's biggest consumer economy. That is why they wanted entry into the World Trade Organization. Considering the turmoil in the Middle East, the terror scare in the United States and Europe, Beijing is a surprising oasis of peace and safety.

China is undergoing a new cultural revolution in which economic freedom is a major force. With Americanization taking place, it is hard to believe that there can possibly be a war between our two countries. With the new younger generation brought up in the spirit of enterprise and openness to Western culture, one can only hope that it will change the political system as easily as it is changing its culture.

Samuel L. Blumenfeld is the author of eight books on education, including NEA: Trojan Horse in American Education, How to Tutor, Alpha-Phonics: A Primer for Beginning Readers, and Homeschooling: A Parents Guide to Teaching Children. All of these book are available on Amazon.com or by calling 208-322-4440. Mr. Blumenfeld can be reached at slblu@netway.com.



Matchmaking For Reformed Singles

Schlissel Family Service

has become

Weinbaum Family Service

**1863 East 27th Street
Brooklyn, NY 11229-2530**

Phone: 718-951-8560

Email:

ReformedMatchmaker@yahoo.com

RateSavers EXPRESS

Overnight Air Express | Next Afternoon | Next Day

For Less



Adrian David Heath

adrianheath@yahoo.com

P.O. Box 131921

The Woodlands, TX 77393

Phone: 832.615.3002

Fax: 832.615.3002

Authorized Reseller of Airborne Express | Dodson Group Affiliate

The Other “Three P’s” of Politics

“For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?” (Luke 14:28)

By John E. Stoos



I always enjoy speaking to youth groups regarding the importance of political involvement for Christians. I often encourage them to consider the “Three P’s” of politics to ensure that their work is effective. Before diving in, perhaps I should say a word about why I do not include a couple of “P’s” popular in Christian circles, prayer and providence.

A local church recently held a voter information night to review the initiatives and candidate positions for the California primary. A very pleasant Christian woman interrupted us to stress that prayer was the most important thing for Christians to do. Now how does one disagree with that and still sound like a good Christian? Well, I don’t disagree, but I did wonder why she felt it had to be discussed that night. The book of Nehemiah has made a great impact on my life, and for Nehemiah prayer was not something that he put on a list of things to do; it was his way of life. He truly demonstrated the command to “pray without ceasing.” The other obvious “P” is providence: We must understand that God is ultimately in control of all things, even in the political realm. (Study *Ps. 2; Dan. 2 and 4; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:1-8.*)

So let me say up front, I am assuming a proper understanding of prayer and providence should preface all actions taken by Christ’s disciples. We would expect our pastors and elders to begin all their board meetings in prayer and have an attitude of trusting God. We would be quite shocked if they then packed up and went home without doing the business of the church. We hope that parents pray and trust God for the walk of their children daily, or hourly, but would be shocked if they failed to train them in the way they should go. And, of course, it would be quite silly to see a family ask for God’s blessing over a meal and then fail to actually eat that meal.

Perhaps it is only in politics that Christians would even consider the concept of praying and trusting God about the situation, and then do nothing practical about what is going on! Sadly, this is how many approach the nasty business of politics, and why I began sharing the “Three P’s” of politics with

the young people. If Christians do not apply these concepts and engage in the real work of politics, then our culture will surely fail, just as our churches and families would fail if all they did was pray and trust God for the outcome.

Now let me briefly share my “Three P’s” of politics: the Why, the Where, and the What, if you will, of effective political involvement that, Lord willing, will make your efforts more effective and save you a lot of frustration. Christians should know that politics, involvement in our civil government, is a high calling, just like dealing with the governmental realms of family or church. Even the Apostle Paul took time from his busy schedule to participate when it was appropriate (*Ac. 16:35-39*). The challenge is to make sure that your work is Principled, Properly Positioned, and Productive.

The Principles

The first “P” is principles. It is a bitter disappointment when Christians put time and effort into a particular candidate only to have him let them down once he is in office. In a fallen world, this can always happen, but it will happen much less often if we pay more attention to principles rather than personalities and funding. There is no better place to start than where our Lord ended in the Sermon on the Mount: What foundation you build upon makes all the difference in the world (*Mt. 7:24-27*). You can work to elect a great looking candidate, but if his politics are constructed on a worldview of sand, he will not survive the storms of serving in public office. Before you commit your time and talent to particular candidates, you should ask them some basic questions: Do they understand the Biblical principles upon which our nation was founded? Have they read *The Theme is Freedom* by M. Stanton Evans or similar books? Do they subscribe to serious magazines or journals like the *Chalcedon Report*? Can they explain why our War for Independence was radically different from the humanist revolution that took place at about the same time in France? The bottom line is that our focus should be on giving our time and talent to candidates who are principled and to causes that reflect Biblical principles.

Properly Positioned

The second “P” is being properly positioned, making sure that you pick your battles well. Just as with parents rearing children or elders governing a church, the real work of politics often comes down to picking your battles. For example, do we accept the fact that we live in a country that functions with a two-party system and work within one of those parties, or do we only work for third party candidates who are most often shut out of the process, but who better reflect our views? Do we always try to “play” in the important high-profile races like presidential or gubernatorial, or do we recognize that electing a principled person to the city council might one day position them to run for higher office? As Christians we should pick our battles where there is a reasonable chance of victory and where victory will advance our cause in some way (see *Lk. 14:25-35*). If you live in a liberal city, you may not want to start picking battles involving social issues until you have built some political structure and alliances around more populist issues like ending some unfair tax on families.

These first two “P’s” are *not* in conflict, and I am not talking about choosing between the lesser of two “evils.” They work together to make sure that you are picking the right battle to best advance candidates and issues without compromising your principles. Defeating an enemy can often be as important as helping a real friend, and sometimes we get to do both.

Productivity

The final “P” is to be productive, to make sure we do the real work of politics. As Christians, we

seem to enjoy encouraging others to charge up hills that are impossible to take, but at the same time seem unwilling to spend a little real time or money doing something that could really make a difference. We are very quick to sign a petition demanding that *Roe v. Wade* be overturned tomorrow, but if someone in the congregation announces that he is running for city council, how many people actually give even a small contribution for his campaign? In politics, as with most other important areas of life, there is just no substitute for plain hard work. If you have a principled candidate who is well positioned to win a particular office, then he must have the resources to wage a campaign: That means money, time, and talent. It means people actually writing some checks, walking a few precincts, or making a few phone calls.

Now you know all the secrets that I have been sharing with our young people. It is exciting to see many of them coming out of home schools and good Christian schools wanting to make a difference in all areas of life, including the political scene here in the United States. I hope a few more adults will study the “Three P’s of Politics” so we can help them along the way.

John E. Stoos is a political consultant living in Sacramento, California with his wife Linda. They have six children and soon fourteen grandchildren. John is also host of the radio talk show “Dialog” on KFIA, AM710 in Sacramento, which airs weekdays from 5-7 pm. You can reach him at (916) 451-5660 or stoos@pacbell.net.

ATTENTION CHALCEDON READERS

WE RECEIVE MANY MORE ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS THAN WE CAN PUBLISH IN THE CHALCEDON REPORT. WE POST A NUMBER OF THESE ARTICLES ON OUR WEB SITE, AT CHALCEDON.EDU. WE COVER A WIDE ARRAY OF TOPICS, FROM THEOLOGY TO PASTORAL AND CHURCH CONCERNS TO WOMEN'S AND YOUTH ISSUES TO SOCIAL AND POLITICAL MATTERS AND RELEVANT LETTERS TO THE EDITOR. YOU CAN ALSO DONATE TO CHALCEDON ON OUR WEB SITE, AND ORDER OUR PUBLICATIONS. WE THINK YOU'LL REALLY ENJOY OUR SITE. WHY NOT MAKE IT YOUR HOME PAGE?

Our Own House Out of Order

Racial Oppression and Its Defenders

By Rod D. Martin 28 March 2002[©]



Let us start at the start: I am a Southerner, and an Arkansan. I am proud of my heritage. I am glad we celebrate Robert E. Lee's birthday. As an attorney and a student of history, it is my professional opinion not only that states may secede, but that the Constitution would never have been ratified had it been suggested they might not. I prefer my own region of the country to any other on Earth, I honor the patriots in my own family who died for The Lost Cause, and my accent is thick enough to make George Wallace blush.

But I can't stand racism. And neither can our Lord.

Instantly some will cry "Political Correctness!" But this is nothing of the sort. Others will assume I'm speaking of the so-called "Christian Identity" crowd and other barely-disguised neo-Klansmen. I am not. They are nothing but terrorists without the guts (or maybe the opportunity) to pull the trigger, so far beyond the pale of orthodox Christianity as not to be worthy of discussion.

No, I'm talking about our own house out of order, the camp of the Reformed.

In the name of preserving our heritage — particularly in the South and in South Africa — many today embrace virtually *all* that has gone before, so long as our forebears did it. We hear defenses of apartheid on the (exceedingly dubious) ground that it was "meant" to separate men by confession (thus actually promoting freedom of association) rather than establish an almost Hindu caste system based explicitly, legally on race. We hear many other arguments as well, not the least of which is that the evils of the African National Congress (ANC) — communism, terrorism, and a thousand other very real horrors — justify the wickedness of those confessional Calvinists whom they supplanted.

Closer to home, an increasingly vocal number of our brethren are not content to praise only the virtues of the antebellum South. Rather than applying the discernment God commands, they join the bandwagon of the reactionaries: If a liberal opposes it, they must support it, with a knee-jerk certainty as

predictable as a *Washington Post* editorial. They wax eloquent about the humane nature of Southern slavery, about the handful of blacks who owned slaves (and the large number of African blacks who sold them), about the equally tiny group who fought for Southern Independence. Some embrace the old pre-war arguments for slavery¹ (and instantly dismiss any Biblical scholarship — especially Gary North's groundbreaking work² — contending that the New Covenant has abolished it). They ignore the effect this has on their witness. They ignore the effect this has on the church's evangelism. They ignore the message they pass down to their covenant children.

But we cannot ignore it. Racism is antithetical to the very idea of the gospel, and not merely because it is offensive. It is evil. God despises it. And if there is a lesson to be learned from our forebears, it is that those nations which have practiced it, those Calvinist utopias which supposedly should have seen the blessings of Deuteronomy 28, have in fact seen its curses: they have been wiped from the face of the Sovereign God's Earth.

Why Is Racism Evil?

Why is racism evil? However many reasons there may be (and there are many), the core reason is very simple: Racism lies about the gospel.

In his outstanding book *Reforming Marriage*, Douglas Wilson well illustrates this idea in the context of families. Commenting on Ephesians 5, he notes that "husbands, in their role as head, provide a picture of Christ and the church. Every marriage, everywhere in the world, is a picture of Christ and the church. Because of sin and rebellion, many of these pictures are slanderous lies concerning Christ. *But a husband can never stop talking about Christ and the church*" [emphasis in the original].

Whatever a husband does that is inconsistent with the character of Christ is necessarily a lie, implicitly or explicitly, about the Lord. Thus, when husbands act sinfully, they deceive their wives and families about the Lord, with far-reaching results no man can

know. This certainly violates the Ninth Commandment (and it may violate some or all of the others as well); but this is not fundamentally a Ninth Commandment issue. For a Christian husband, this is primarily about taking the Lord's name in vain.

Just so, this is exactly what the South and South Africa (and Puritan Massachusetts) did with regard to race.

These ostensibly Calvinist, Christian commonwealths, through their racial policies and attitudes, did far more than separate the races. The blacks (and others) they were dealing with only came into contact with the gospel by means of the whites they met, and those whites by and large were racists.

The gospel, though, is anything *but* racist; it denies *any* racial distinction, putting the Gentile and the Jew on the same footing, abolishing any thought of a salvation based on blood, and establishing a covenant centered on a spiritual rebirth made possible by grace alone, through faith alone, in the sacrificial work of Christ alone. Rich, poor, black, white, Jew, Gentile, covenant child or converted pagan, there is no difference; and we come to the Lord in that hope.

Racism practiced by Christians denies all of this, no matter what weasel words proceed from their lips. The "Christian" racist is speaking with a forked tongue: He claims that the faithful Gentile is the true son of Abraham; but in reality, he is the Pharisee refusing to sit with the publican, the Judaizer seeking to circumcise the Gentile convert. Worse still, he says that the convert may *not* be circumcised, because one clearly cannot change his race.

But in the kingdom, there is no race, or nation, or any division of flesh. Christ has united all His people in the spirit. And those who say otherwise, whether explicitly or implicitly, like the wayward husband, take His name in vain.

Question 113 of the Westminster Larger Catechism explains the connection between these concepts:

Q: What are the sins forbidden in the third commandment?

A: The sins forbidden in the third commandment are, the not using of God's name as is required;... misinterpreting, misapplying, or any way perverting the Word, or any part of it, to ... the maintaining of false doctrines;... anywise opposing of God's truth, grace, and ways;... being ... a shame to it, by unconformable, unwise, unfruitful, and offensive walking....

Clearly, "taking the Lord's name in vain" is a great deal more than "cussing." It is (among other things)

any perversion of the Word, and particularly any misrepresentation of God's truth. Needless to say, the more serious that truth, the more serious the offense; and nothing is more serious than the nature of the gospel itself.

That seriousness becomes all too clear in WCF Question 114, which predicts for us God's response:

Q: What reasons are annexed to the third commandment?

A: [B]ecause he is the Lord and our God, therefore his name is not to be profaned, or any way abused by us; especially because he will be so far from acquitting and sparing the transgressors of this commandment, as that he will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgment, albeit many such escape the censures and punishments of men.

It is for this reason that God especially hated the sin of His people in the South and in South Africa. They were building entire civilizations based on a lie about Him, about His Son, and about His sacrifice and saving grace; moreover, they were doing it quite explicitly in His Name. God destroyed each of these civilizations from the Earth; no one who affirms sovereignty may avoid that. Yet ever-greater numbers seek to avoid the common, sinful thread.

When Will We Ever Learn?

God hates the lies we tell about His transcendent work when we practice racism, particularly in His Name. It's long past time we learn the lesson: He will not abide it in His people.

Never mind that the largely-Christian South was Constitutionally correct in every particular, that the Unitarian North was Constitutionally incorrect in every particular, and that the Southern states had every legal right to secede. Despite all of this, it is virtually inescapable to conclude that the South came under God's judgment. Given that, if this is so, God's judgment involved its utter and total destruction, politically, economically, and culturally. God's opposition to the South's sins must have been pretty extreme.³

Likewise, though those exact same states were right in the 1950s and 1960s about their Constitutional rights *vis-a-vis* the federal government (bloated with power and constitutionally unrecognizable), Jim Crow was nevertheless evil. And just as God destroyed the South a hundred years before at the hands of a Northern oppressor, and just as God destroyed the southern kingdom of Judah two and a

half millennia before at the hands of a Babylonian oppressor, God eviscerated the South's (and everyone else's) Constitutional rights in consequence of the South's abuse of that freedom.

Likewise, white, largely-Calvinist South Africa — whose systematic oppression of its non-whites was much greater than the South's in the 1950s, but much less than the South's in the 1850s — seems clearly to have received a dose of the same medicine that God's been dishing out to His wayward people for several thousand years now (but, mercifully for us, too late for its new pro-Soviet rulers to hand it over to the Evil Empire).

If we believe in predictable, historical sanctions for nations, if we affirm Deuteronomy 28, we simply cannot ignore these things. Until Christians — and particularly Calvinists — get over their adulterous love affair with racism, they might as well forget taking dominion. God will keep frustrating their efforts, splitting their denominations, and destroying their political entities until they get their own house in order.

This is, by the way, far from their only sin. But it's pretty clear from the past 140 years of history that it's pretty high on God's list.

Rod D. Martin is Founder and Chairman of Vanguard PAC (www.theVanguard.org). A former policy director to Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee and Sturgis Fellow at Cambridge University, he is a Fellow of the Kuyper Institute for Political Studies, a writer and attorney from Little Rock, Arkansas, and a once-and-future candidate for U.S. House of Representatives. He can be contacted at Rod.Martin@theVanguard.org

¹ It is not within the scope of this article to debate the Biblical legality of slavery. Though I do contend that slavery has been abolished, the South's race-slavery was a rather unique — indeed, “peculiar” — institution, and my argument pertains here to the racial aspect of it, as also to other manifestations of racism such as the African slave trade, Jim Crow laws, apartheid, and Klan activity; and (from the other direction) “reverse discrimination” as well, whether the relatively mild quota programs in the United States or the authoritarian thuggery of Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe. That all said, I also maintain (with Scripture) that even were slavery lawful, it would not necessarily be profitable. Never mind the economic foolishness of it; the effect of slavery on its participants — both slaves and masters — is so generally wretched that a progressively-sanctified church should abhor it, just as it hates polygamy (which, like slavery, is not *explicitly* abolished) and divorce.

² In his utterly unique economic commentaries on the Pentateuch, North both describes the operation of the

Bible's slave laws in a detail and with a mastery few (if any) have ever approached, and also demonstrates conclusively that Christ has abolished slavery in the New Covenant era. See primarily Gary North, *Tools of Dominion: The Case Laws of Exodus* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990), ch. 4 for a discussion of the Biblical theology of slavery; and ch. 5 (particularly pp. 228-247) for an understanding of Biblical (as opposed to 19th century Unitarian) abolition. For further information see North, *Leviticus: An Economic Commentary* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1994), ch. 31; as well as North's forthcoming *Subordination and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on I Timothy*, specifically that section of Appendix C concerning “The Slave Family in the Antebellum South,” commenting on which the author raises the very good question: “Offer me biblical reasons why God would bother to preserve any Christian society that has this view of the family.”

³ In a recent article concerning the (im)propriety of pronouncing God's judgment in current events (and particularly with regard to the events of September 11, 2001), I wrote that “[M]en who don't want to look foolish don't call the game in the first quarter.” I am by no means retracting this position, quite the contrary. What I am saying is that after the passage of a great deal of time, an event so large as the utter destruction of a nation not only may but must be examined in the light of Scripture. Indeed, if Biblical conclusions may not be drawn this long after Appomattox, with regard to the utter annihilation of the mostly-Christian Southern civilization — a nation which was legally in the right on virtually every major point except this one — the idea of “predictable covenantal sanctions” is meaningless.

IMPORTANT!

Chalcedon is now pleased to offer on-site education and applied Christian worldview training seminar programs for home educators, school professionals, church ministers, businessmen, political activists and all those who desire the vision and skills to apply strategic, Biblical Christianity to their educational and Kingdom endeavors. Contact Ronald Kirk at ronaldwkirk@goldrush.com or the Chalcedon office for information.



Movies, Storytelling and Apologetics

Part 2

By *Brian Godawa*

In part one of this series, I examined the nature of storytelling and mythology in the movies. We saw that movies are a persuasive influence because they meet the holistic need — body, mind, and emotions — for man to find significance and meaning in life. Movies, as stories, incarnate values and worldviews much in the same way that ancient myths did for people in the past. Through drama, they model for us how life ought or ought not be lived and bring meaningful connections to life's experiences. In this article, I want to illustrate one way that this is achieved through the very structure of storytelling itself.

Linear Narrative

The dominant story structure that most Hollywood movies follow is the three-act structure. These three acts correspond to the Western notion of beginning, middle, and end in a story. Although Aristotle popularized this tripartite division in his *Poetics*, around 300 B.C., God is actually the origin of this teleological (purpose-driven) concept of story. God wrote through Moses a story of His own that defied the ultimate impersonal chaos of the pagan mythologies all around him with an orderly personal Author of history (*Logos*). He contradicted the cyclical nature of surrounding heathen histories with a linear narrative toward an ultimate goal. It is Judeo-Christianity that is the ultimate metaphysical foundation of beginning (creation), middle (redemption), and end (heaven).

Christianity alone provides the justification for the very narrative aspect of all storytelling. Author Daniel Taylor comments on the legacy of Western culture's Biblical heritage of living in a narratable world. In order to tell a story with plot and characters that are not in utter chaos, one must already believe that reality is explainable, and:

That belief depends on a number of supporting beliefs: that reality is at least in part knowable; that there are meaningful connections between

events; that actions have consequences; that humans do most things by choice, not by irresistible compulsion; that we are therefore responsible; and so on.¹

This precondition for the intelligibility of narrative storytelling is, in itself, an apologetic for the truth of Christianity. The fact that movies have plots with morals or themes intended by the filmmakers simply reinforces that the universe has meaning and purpose to it, unlike the ultimate randomness at the heart of atheism or the illusory reality of Eastern metaphysics. If an atheist would want to make a movie that comported with his atheism, he would have to show a series of random events without any true connection or plot, or even a beginning, middle, and end. He would in short, make a movie that no one would want to see because of its absurdity. Even "postmodern" movies like *Pulp Fiction* and *Memento*, that use a non-linear narration, only make sense as playing off the traditional linearity.

The Hero's Journey

In part one of this series, I explained the hero's journey as expressed in mythology throughout history. This is another standard paradigm of story structure that most of Hollywood follows in its storytelling. Let's take a brief look at some elements of the hero's journey and illustrate them from the recent Oscar winner, *A Beautiful Mind*, in order to see how persuasion is accomplished through the storytelling used in movies. Because of space constraints, I'll list just five elements of the hero's journey: 1) The hero's goal, 2) The hero's flaw, 3) The apparent defeat, 4) The self-revelation, and 5) The resolution.

The Hero's Goal

Every movie has a protagonist or hero; the main character whose story is being told. By the end of act one (the first quarter of the movie), we are introduced to the hero's goal. This is something the hero

wants and he wants it badly. It could be as simple as stopping a villain in his crime, like most action movies, or more complex, like Frodo's need in *Lord of the Rings*, to destroy the one Ring in Mount Doom. But the important thing is why the hero wants what he wants. The hero of *A Beautiful Mind* is mathematician John Nash. Early on in the story he tells his roommate that he wants to find a truly original idea, because that's "the only way he'll ever matter in life." The story shows him obsessively in pursuit of this idea because he wants to find significance in his life, and he thinks he'll find it through recognition for a great achievement. Along the way, he falls in love and marries.

The Hero's Flaw

The hero's flaw is related to why he wants what he wants. The flaw is usually something in the hero's past that haunts him and keeps him from achieving his goal until he addresses this need. He sees the world in a way that is not right, a way that he must eventually change by the end of the movie. This is what is meant by the character arc. The hero changes his view of the world in some way by confronting his flaw and he travels on that arc to a new view. In *A Beautiful Mind*, Nash is a socially inept nerd. He cannot relate well to people because he is so obsessed with integers. Eventually, we learn that this flaw expresses itself in schizophrenia. He becomes paranoid and delusive, imagining people who are not there, and cannot tell the difference between reality and his delusion.

The Apparent Defeat

The middle of the movie consists of the hero trying to achieve his goal and facing obstacles that arise from the villain (antagonist) as well as his own internal flaw. The key word here is obstacles. As the hero overcomes each obstacle, eventually near the end of the movie it will appear that he will never achieve his goal. He's tried all possible ways to win, but it looks like he will never achieve his goal. This is the *apparent defeat*. In *A Beautiful Mind*, this is the point where Nash realizes that the drugs he takes to repress his schizophrenic symptoms also repress his mathematical genius. He cannot achieve his dream of the original idea if he takes drugs, and he will be institutionalized with delusional psychosis if he doesn't take his drugs.

The Self-Revelation

Closely related to the apparent defeat is the hero's self-revelation. This is when he realizes that what he has wanted all along, the "why" of his goal, is not

what he really *needs*. He has sought the wrong thing and must make a choice, gain new strength, and finally confront his own inner flaw. In *A Beautiful Mind*, Nash finally realizes that he can tell the difference between reality and delusion because one of his imaginary people that he sees never gets old. He explains this to his wife and asks for her help.

The Resolution

The resolution is the finale of the story. It is when the hero either reaps the benefits of his character arc or not, depending on whether he made the right choice. If he makes the wrong choice, then it is a tragedy. If he makes the right choice, then it is a happy ending. In *A Beautiful Mind*, Nash asks his wife to help him and support him without drugs and he will just ignore those hallucinatory people in order to keep doing his work. Because of her support, he is able to do so and continues to work on his math in later years. Nash ends up receiving the Nobel Prize for a truly original idea of his from his youth. He achieves the recognition he wanted to make a difference, but only with the love of his wife.

Theme

The purpose of the hero's journey is the theme. The theme is the moral that the hero learns by going through his journey. As we see him make right or wrong choices and receive the resultant consequences, we see what the filmmakers are telling us is the moral we are to learn. In *A Beautiful Mind*, when Nash receives his Nobel, he gives the credit to his wife in the audience and concludes, "It is only in the mysterious equations of love that any logic is to be found." The theme of *A Beautiful Mind* is that reality and redemption are knowable ultimately in the heart, not in the mind. He searched for recognition to achieve his significance, but ultimately found real significance in love.

Story Structure and Redemption

The story structure of the hero's journey follows the same basic structure as a personal testimony of salvation in the Christian's life. Acts 26:2-9 shows the Apostle Paul giving his testimony to King Agrippa. Paul describes how he wanted to attain the hope of the promise made by God to the forefathers (goal) by persecuting Christians in self-righteousness (flaw). The Christian church grew faster than he could keep up with (obstacles), until Paul came down the Damascus road, where God blinded him to stop him (apparent defeat). Paul sees his self-righteousness (self-revelation), and changes (character arc), and ends up on trial for the very

thing he once fought against (resolution). He may be in physical chains, but he is spiritually free from sin (theme).

Just as a Christian testimony is a means of persuading others by telling the story of redemption in one's life, so a movie proposes redemption through its own story of the hero's journey. Of course, not all alleged redemption is Christian redemption. Many movies promise redemption through self-enlightenment, self-actualization, or self-righteousness. But as we watch movies, we should realize that storytelling is not merely entertainment, but a medium through which worldviews are persuasively communicated. Rather than running from Hollywood, more Christians should try to be salt and light by making movies that incarnate the Christian worldview. We

serve the God Who created story itself and our storytelling reflects His glory through such aspects as beginnings, middles, and ends, linear narrative, the hero's journey, and redemption.

Brian Godawa is a screenwriter living in southern California. He wrote the script for the feature film To End All Wars, starring Kiefer Sutherland and Robert Carlyle. He is the author of the book Hollywood Worldviews: Watching Movies With Wisdom and Discernment (Intervarsity Press), and speaks at various churches on How To Watch Movies and other movie topics. His website is www.godawa.com.

¹Daniel Taylor, *The Healing Power of Stories: Creating Yourself Through the Stories of Your Life* (Dublin, Ireland: Gill and Macmillan, 1996), p. 140.



The Third Annual West-Coast Christian Worldview Conference

Speakers:

Rev. Joseph Morecraft, Douglas Phillips, Brian Godawa, James Nickel, and more!

Topics:

A practical method of interpreting Scripture for all Christians, Building Families That Will Stand, a Christian view of mathematics and science, including their Christian histories, Christian history of law, Entertainment and the Christian worldview, and so much more!

Where:

The campus of Bethany Bible College in Scotts Valley, Calif.

When:

August 5th-10th, 2002

Why: We are in operation to provide a solid Biblical foundation for Christian youth, seeking above all to give them a Biblical worldview. This world and life view will help them combat false doctrines, vain philosophies, and Satan's wiles in high schools, universities, and life after school. Don't lose your children to pagan college professors, give them the boldness and strength to conquer their lives for Christ. Present your children with the great and holy gift of Ephesians 4:14!

Check our Web-Site for more information! www.wcwc.ws

You can also Call us: (408) 866-5607, ask for Zachariah.

E-Mail is preferred: RousasWgnr@aol.com

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things which is the head, even Christ." Ephesians 4:14.

Atwood vs. Atavism?

The Handmaid's Tale and Its Flagrant Misrepresentation of the Christian Right

By Michael Wagner



Totalitarianism

George Orwell's book *1984*, first published in 1949, has had a notable impact in English-speaking countries. Attempts by governments to limit the flow of politically relevant information, for example, are commonly referred to as "Orwellian." Orwell contributed to the widespread belief that totalitarianism stifles humanity and makes life unbearable. Thus his book has had a positive impact. Some citizens, at least, are more leery of their governments, and more watchful of possible infringements of their freedom. Orwell's fictional account of totalitarian society has had a real-world political impact, to some degree bolstering a healthy libertarian distrust of expansionist government.

One of Canada's most famous authors, Margaret Atwood, has more recently written a book in the same genre as Orwell. *The Handmaid's Tale*, first published in 1985, is also a fictional account of a totalitarian society, and it is intended to induce fear of a contemporary political movement: the Christian Right. The totalitarian society that Atwood describes is supposed to be what the United States would be like after the Christian Right seizes power. As she portrays it, a society under the political control of the Christian Right would be sinister, oppressive, and extremely hypocritical.

If *The Handmaid's Tale* would wallow in the obscurity of most modern fiction it would not be worthy of notice. However, it is not an obscure work. Instead, it has won awards including Canada's most prestigious award for fiction, the Governor General's Award, as well as the Los Angeles Times' Best Fiction Award. And according to Mary Ellen Snodgrass in *Cliff Notes on the Handmaid's Tale* (New York, 1994), more than one million paperback copies have been sold in the United States alone (p. 8). Although written by a Canadian, this book is well known in the United States, and is apparently used in some American universities. Thus it cannot be ignored. It's likely that many people in both the United States and Canada have had their view of the Christian Right influenced

by this book. Unfortunately, Atwood's representation of the Christian Right is so warped that readers of her book receive an incredibly inaccurate impression of the movement.

In Atwood's story, after taking control of the United States (or at least a significant portion thereof), the Christian Right changes the name of the country to "Gilead." Leaders of this new society whose wives are unable to conceive are issued handmaids to bear their children. The book is written from the perspective of one of these handmaids, Offred, basically a glorified sex-slave. Offred describes her own oppression as well as the oppression of other women and some unfortunate men.

Atwood's Dystopia

Is it just paranoia to see a likeness between Atwood's oppressors and the Christian Right? Not at all. While there is plenty of evidence within the book itself, the secondary literature makes the point especially clear. A master's thesis by Carol Juneau, "Through the Eyes of the Handmaid: A Dystopic Perspective on Fundamentalism in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*" (University of Houston Clear Lake, 1997), notes the purpose of the book, namely, to "posit fundamentalism as a distorted ideology producing a totalitarian and terrifying dystopia" (p. 2). Juneau writes that Atwood creates a fictional society that "carries the ideals of activist fundamentalist theology to extremes, for the purpose of confronting the dangers of a government which imposes upon its subjects a moral absolutism derived from a sacred text" (p. 1). Writing in the early 1980s, Atwood was concerned about the political success of the Christian Right, and this book is her warning about what would occur if conservative Christians achieved political power. As Snodgrass puts it, Atwood "observed the rise of the U.S. political right in the 1980s and compared the Moral Majority's grass-roots menace to the phenomenon of Hitler" (p. 10). The society she describes, however, is entirely different from what the Christian Right seeks to attain.

The book's protagonist, Offred, is expected to bear children for one of Gilead's leaders known as "the Commander." The Commander's barren wife had been involved in televangelism before the Christian Right came to power. She was then known as Serena Joy and she would sing on the *Growing Souls Gospel Hour* (p. 18). Later she became a spokesperson for the Christian Right: "Her speeches were about the sanctity of the home, about how women should stay home" (p. 50). This is a scary idea for a feminist like Atwood. "Really she was a little frightening. She was in earnest" (p. 50). Snodgrass states that, "Serena Joy is a composite drawn from Mirabel Morgan, Tammy Faye Bakker, and Phyllis Schlafly; she is the true turncoat against women and must live with her futile hope for a return to traditional womanhood" (p. 75).

Atwood's Totalitarians

Here is the picture: The evil totalitarians who have seized power were, before the creation of Gilead, involved in televangelism, and believed in the traditional role of wife and mother. They also opposed abortion. Atwood's heroine says they carried signs saying, "Let them bleed," apparently referring to women who had abortions (p. 208). The bad guys also opposed universal daycare (p. 242), and spoke favorably about "traditional values" (p. 354). Clearly, then, the target of Atwood's attack is the Christian Right. In her view, people who support the traditional family and oppose abortion are the totalitarians of the future.

Like other totalitarian movements, Atwood's Christian Right seizes power through violence. In short, "they shot the President and machine-gunned the Congress and the army declared a state of emergency" (p. 200). After that, "they suspended the Constitution" (p. 200). Subsequently these newly empowered Christian Right politicians abolish Fourth of July Independence Day celebrations (p. 229). Anyone familiar with the American Religious Right, and its fawning admiration of the US Constitution, will rightly see this as bizarre.

After violently overthrowing the US Government, the Christian Right swiftly moves against its opponents. People who demonstrated against the new regime would be shot by the police or the army (p. 207). The families of those who rebelled would also be punished (p. 357). Some opponents of the regime are sent to "the Colonies" where they do forced labor. The lucky ones are involved in agriculture, the unlucky ones get stuck cleaning up toxic waste and radiation spills (pp. 287-288). Later, opponents of the regime were killed by "salvagings" or "Participation"

ceremonies where handmaids were encouraged "to tear a man apart with their bare hands" (p. 353). Afterwards, the bodies of the people executed in this manner are publicly displayed (p. 36). Some opponents of the new regime are tortured (p. 104).

In Atwood's portrayal the Christian Right is, of course, racist. Jewish people are expelled from Gilead. At least they were treated with some respect. "Because they were declared Sons of Jacob and therefore special, they were given a choice. They could convert, or immigrate to Israel. A lot of them emigrated, if you can believe the news" (p. 231). Furthermore, the new regime implements other "racist policies" and, in fact, "racist fears provided some of the emotional fuel that allowed the Gilead takeover to succeed as well as it did" (p. 351). In other words, racism provides some of the "emotional fuel" for the Christian Right.

But the main crime of the Christian Right is its oppression of women. As mentioned earlier, the central character of the story is a "handmaid." The handmaids were women who were coercively "recruited for reproductive purposes and allocated to those who both required such services and could lay claim to them through their position in the elite" (p. 349). The Gilead regime thus instituted the kind of "polygamy practised both in early Old Testament times and in the former State of Utah in the nineteenth century" (p. 350). The handmaids were given new names reflecting their ownership by particular men. For example, the protagonist Offred's name means, literally, "of Fred" because she was Fred's sex-slave (p. 351). Handmaids were not allowed to have friends (p. 326). They were simply "two-legged wombs" (p. 157).

But it wasn't just the handmaids who were oppressed; basically all women suffered. Women were not allowed to own property (p. 206) or have paying jobs (p. 204). All infertility was blamed on women: "There is no such thing as a sterile man any more, not officially. There are only women who are fruitful and women who are barren, that's the law" (p. 68). Most women were also forbidden from writing (p. 44). Feminists are referred to as "Unwomen" (pp. 137-138). In sum, this Christian Right regime treats women as less than fully human, making them tools of men.

The Christian regime of Gilead is, most of all, hypocritical. Although smoking and swearing are forbidden, Serena Joy smokes and swears (p. 234). And the hypocrisy is widespread, for Atwood states that "Everyone's on the take, one way or another" (p. 209). Babies born with deformities were declared "Unbabies" and it is strongly implied that they are killed (p. 129). It is also strongly implied that old

people are killed (p. 177). This is very strange. The political movement most outspoken against abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia is exposed as hypocritical for implementing infanticide and euthanasia after taking power! So in Atwood's view, if the Christian Right comes to power, deformed babies and old people will be killed! Could it really be that those most committed to the sanctity of innocent life actually support euthanasia? Of course not, but Atwood apparently doesn't want truth to interfere with her malicious attack on the Christian Right. Here we have a committed feminist condemning the Christian Right for supporting infanticide and euthanasia. The truth has been turned on its head.

It can't get much worse than this, but Atwood tries. Christian sexual morality is also turned on its head in Gilead. The handmaids are shown hard-core pornographic movies (p. 137). And the leaders of this Christian regime have their own whorehouse! At night certain leaders of Gilead have sex with prostitutes in a bordello reserved for the elite. One of the participants justifies it this way: "Nature demands variety, for men. It stands to reason, it's part of the procreational strategy. It's nature's plan" (p. 274). These leaders also encourage lesbianism among the prostitutes because "women on women sort of turns them on" (p. 289). So in Atwood's view, a society under the control of the Christian Right would (secretly at least) encourage the grossest sexual immoralities!

If that isn't bad enough, access to the Bible is strictly limited by this new Christian regime. It is only to be available to the elite, and only for certain occasions. "The Bible is kept locked up, the way people once kept tea locked up, so the servants wouldn't steal it. It is an incendiary device: who knows what we'd make of it, if we ever got our hands on it?" (p. 99). And when parts of the Bible were publicly taught, the words were blatantly changed. In one case, the phrase "Blessed are the silent" is claimed to be a passage of Scripture (p. 101). And in another case, one of Karl Marx's slogans, slightly reworded as "From each according to her ability; to each according to his needs," is claimed by these Christian leaders to be in the Bible (p. 135). So Atwood has her Christian "fundamentalist" severely limit people's access to the Bible, and also change the content of the Bible!

Atwood's Dishonesty

The Handmaid's Tale is a deliberate and malicious attack on the Christian Right. It serves a political purpose, namely, creating an irrational fear of the

Christian Right, and thereby strengthening the opposition to conservative Christian involvement in social and political issues. Atwood goes to such lengths to smear the Christian Right that she represents this movement as willing to reverse many of its key tenets upon achieving power. Imagine conservative Christian activists supporting infanticide, euthanasia, prostitution, and removing the Bible from public access! This is the picture presented by Atwood. Strangely, Atwood's deceptive portrayal of the Christian Right tries to discredit the movement by suggesting that deep down many of its adherents actually desire to implement positions that are distinctive to secular humanism in its various forms.

Margaret Atwood is a dedicated feminist. As a prominent and successful fiction writer, she decided to use her considerable talents to encourage opposition to the Christian Right. The Christian Right should not be immune from criticism, but the method she chose — portraying it as nothing more than an extremely hypocritical, neo-fascist power grab — is clearly dishonest. Christians need to be aware of the tactics of their opponents and their opponents' willingness to deliberately misrepresent Christian positions on social and political issues. *The Handmaid's Tale* is an awful book, but one that has been widely praised in the literary community. Rather than a work of fiction in the genre of George Orwell, it could perhaps be more accurately classified as a clever form of disguised political disinformation.

Michael Wagner is a freelance writer living in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. He has a PhD in political science from the University of Alberta. He and his wife are home schooling their six children. He can be reached at nwrc@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca.

Wanted!

Chalcedon-friendly Churches, Home Churches, Bible Studies. Chalcedon wants to develop a list of churches, home churches, and Bible studies sympathetic to our position and objectives so that we can share this information with those of you who call asking for groups in your area. If you would like for your group to be included on our list send the name of the contact person, their email, phone number, the town and state of the group to Susan Burns at chalcedon@netscope.net.



When the Problem Isn't the Problem

By William Blankschaen

Abbot & Costello

"Hey, Lou! What are you doing sitting around?"

"Oh, nothin', Abbott."

"Well, I can see that. While I've been out looking for work, you've been doing nothing!"

"Wait. You got a job?"

"Yes, I did. At a bakery."

"Oh, good. Whatcha' doin' there?"

"I'm loafing."

"You're loafing? That's it? That's your job?"

"Well, sure. And it pays well, too."

"Wait a minute. You're tellin' me you get paid to loaf?!"

"Well, certainly. I wouldn't do it for free."

"Well, I've been loafing all my life and haven't got a nickel!"

"No, you idiot. You have to loaf in the union."

"You mean I have to be part of a union to loaf?!"

"Of course."

"Well, don't tell anyone, but I've been loafin' here all day without the union knowin'!"

And so the chaos continued. Every time Abbot and Costello got together on the silver screen, they routinely embarked on adventures caused by words gone wild. That's what made them funny. Let's face it. We love to laugh at dolts who argue when "they don't even know what they're talking about!" Except when those dolts represent the kingdom of God. Especially when we might be one of them.

If we are honest, we have to confess that often what passes for a problem in the body of Christ really isn't the problem. Not to downplay our many legitimate differences, but a healthy (or unhealthy) dose of our problems stem from a shortage of sound semantics. In short, we often argue because we lack the vocabulary and mental prowess to communicate effectively. We simply don't know what we're talking about!

Chaotic speech is nothing new. We need only look to the Scriptures for numerous examples of this phenomenon. God sent confusion to Babel when man abused the gift of speech, attempting to over-

throw the Author of all words. The Apostle John recorded this account of Lazarus' resurrection and the disciples' misunderstanding:

[Jesus] said to them, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up." Then His disciples said, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well." However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. (Jn. 11:11-14 NKJV)

That wasn't the only time the disciples seemed confused by the words of our Lord. Lest we accuse the Son of God of lacking semantic clarity, we must lay the blame mostly on his disciples' ignorance (they were in training) and lack of effort to understand His words. Occasionally, their misunderstandings created problems such as in the following account, also by John:

Peter, seeing [John], said to Jesus, "But Lord, what about this man?" Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me." Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?" (Jn. 21:21-23 NKJV)

Apparently, some sixty years later, John was still dealing with the fallout of the simple misunderstanding of a few words.

Lest we be tempted to scorn the disciples too energetically, we have the same problem today. Some years ago, I witnessed an intense argument between two men over the meaning of the word *for* in the statement, "Christ died *for* all the world." Certainly, no one should belittle the theological implications of this argument that has divided the body of Christ for centuries. But the curious thing I observed in this particular heated engagement was that, after nearly an hour of arguing, the men finally realized that they were both saying the same thing! The alleged problem really wasn't the problem at all. Their problem

was that they did not define their terms before leaping into the fray. It was all just a simple misunderstanding.

Unfortunately, although we may find it easy to dismiss such vain philippics as “simple misunderstandings,” God does not see it that way. He calls it sin. “Every idle word” must be accounted for at the judgment. One author made the point more potently by referring to the problem as “*idol* words.”¹ For that is what they are. When we use our speech — a gift from God, an evidence of His image, an expression of His creative and sustaining power, a vehicle designed to praise Him — to satisfy our own egotistical drives, we are engaging in nothing less than idolatry.

Once we grasp these misunderstandings for what they are, we begin to see that the nature of the problem is often primarily not semantic, but spiritual. Misunderstandings and arguments are effective tools of Satan to further divide kingdom-builders. If he can't beat 'em, he can at least get 'em really frustrated and ineffective. The Apostle James noted as much when he claimed that such divisions in the church are “earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there” (*Jas. 3:15-16 NKJV*).

James was not the only one to observe Satan's deceitful use of words. William Shakespeare (an apostle in some critic's minds) also observed and captured this pernicious tendency in his macabre masterpiece *Macbeth*. In the opening scene, the Weird Sisters pronounce their Satanic theme, “Fair is foul, and foul is fair,” indicating the destructive chaos to follow. Honest but naïve Banquo sees through Satan's deceptive manipulation of words when he exclaims, “What! Can the Devil speak the truth?”² Indeed, he can and does — when it suits his purposes. The selfish Macbeth is ultimately destroyed by a series of “simple misunderstandings” induced by Satan's chaotic tampering with words.

So how can we avoid this snare of Satan? What can we do to keep our tongues from senseless wrangling that does not honor God or assist His kingdom? Here are a few suggestions that may serve to immunize us against this evil:

Develop a Relationship with the Divine Speaker

This point should be obvious, yet because it is vital to our purpose it must be mentioned. God is the Author of words. He made them to communicate His thoughts to us. He created and sustains the universe by His puissant vocabulary. (*Heb. 1:1-4 NKJV*) Hence, if *our* words are to be effective, they must reflect the clarity of *His* words.

Study His Words

There can be no substitute for examining God's communication to man if we hope to communicate

effectively. An especially helpful study would be that of Christ's communication with His disciples.³ Understanding how He patiently interacted with His ragamuffin band should serve as a model in our dealings with other believers.

Remain Humble

Nothing helps more in a confrontation than a humble spirit, a spirit that is willing to admit error. And nothing is more lethal to the cause of Christ than a person convinced he can do no wrong. If “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” (*Pr. 9:10 NKJV*) we would do well to check our pride at the door of every conversation.

Build Our Vocabulary

If we are to avoid dissension caused by misunderstood words, we must make every attempt to understand words. Simple enough. But doing it requires discipline. We can build our vocabulary in three main ways:

By reading. Reading good books exposes us to words used in a realistic setting. Implied in this statement is the assumption that we would be reading books that actually stretch our vocabulary. (The latest *Harry Potter* simply won't do.) Likewise, words written by authors long deceased in ages veiled by time force us to expand our grasp of language beyond our cultural comfort zone.

By listening. “A wise man will hear and increase learning.” (*Pr. 1:5 NKJV*) Listening is an art best practiced by the silent. In other words, the vocabulary student's ratio of speaking to listening should be heavily in favor of the latter. That is not to say we should never speak, for we are improving our grasp of words precisely so that we can speak effectively. But more arguments are won by first listening studiously, then talking distinctly.

By studying. Studying words is perhaps the most practical bit of advice one could give to improve communication. Understanding the etymology of words — origins, roots, prefixes, suffixes — will enable us to wield our words with both care and accuracy. A daily routine assists in this endeavor. Consider investing in one of the many excellent resources designed to build vocabulary on a daily basis.⁴

Take a logic course. I know what you're thinking. Who has time for that? But when we consider that logic is the art and science of thinking (and we all think occasionally) the question may better be: Who doesn't have time to learn how to think? Most community colleges offer courses in introductory logic that can be audited. If you prefer the self-help method, several good tapes, texts, and workbooks are available to learn in the comfort of your home.⁵ Think about it.

Rely on a dictionary. If all else fails.... Consulting a dictionary is perhaps the easiest of these tips, yet it is often the most neglected step in any discussion. Time and again, speakers and listeners alike never take the time to look up the words they are employing to define their terms. Consequently, they spiral into a morass of mutterings that do not enrich the hearers and do make the speakers seem silly indeed. This quandary can be remedied easily by ensuring convenient access to a dependable dictionary at all times. And learn *how* to use it!

Anyone who still doubts the importance of words need only recall that when God chose to communicate His holy standard of righteousness, He chose words. In fact, the Ten Commandments are often referred to by their literal meaning of the Ten Words. Imagine the chaos that would have ensued if God's vocabulary had been hastily assembled, arrogantly spoken, and poorly constructed. Oh, wait — I guess it would look something like the chaos we have created in the church today.

William Blankschaen holds a Bachelors in English and History and is presently pursuing a Masters in

Theological Studies at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Blessed with a wife and two daughters, he writes Christ-honoring fiction and challenging essays as he teaches at Cornerstone Christian Academy near Cleveland, Ohio. He welcomes comments at WBBlinkschaen@cs.com.

- ¹ Tripp, Paul David. *War of Words: Getting to the Heart of Our Communication Struggles*. Available through Christian Counseling & Education Foundation, Glenside, PA (www.ccef.org).
- ² Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. Act I Scene 3.
- ³ Fortunately, A.B. Bruce recorded an invaluable study on this very topic in 1871. It has been republished in a format conducive to daily studies. Bruce, A.B. *The Training of the Twelve: Timeless Principles for Leadership Development* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications), 1971.
- ⁴ I have found the *Word Smart* tomes published by the Princeton Review to be effective and user-friendly, although every major bookstore offers multitudinous volumes to assist in this endeavor.
- ⁵ A classic and brief work is *Logic* by Gordon Clark, especially helpful when accompanied by his recorded lectures and more recent workbook by Elihu Carranza, although other able resources also exist.

Chalcedon classifieds

TEACHERS NEEDED for Christianity and culture seminars nation wide. Strong financial incentive. Send name & mail address: mtra@mcg.net or 952-472-5202 web www.mcg.net/mtra.

BIBLICAL JOURNALISM. The World Journalism Institute is a division of God's World Publications and offers a number of journalism credit courses throughout the year in New York City, Washington, DC, Asheville, NC. Check us out at www.worldji.com. We may be right for you.

A GOLD MINE...and it is free! Engaging audio lectures in Bible, theology, and church history. www.brucewore.com.

REFORMATION INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE AND THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY. Distance learning college and seminary for the seriously reformed. 772-571-8833 or www.REFORMATION.EDU

SINGLE MEN AND WOMEN and young families wanted for 3 yr. apprenticeship program. Learn how to start, own, and operate your own Christian school. Salary, housing, and medical benefits while learning. Free tuition toward undergraduate or graduate degree. Contact Dr. Ellsworth McIntyre, Grace Community Schools, 4405 Outer Dr. Naples, FL 34112. Phone: (941) 455-9900 or email: revmac@mindspring.com.

CREATE FAMILY WEALTH In a ground floor opportunity with a revolutionary roof top mounted wind power technology. I am currently seeking top quality people to add to my leadership/sales team. www.dealersneeded.com/freepower.

DOMINION RESOURCES closeout: titles from Ross House, P & R, Sprinkle Pub. has materials including McGuffey Readers, CLA, Vic Lockman, etc. 100's of titles. 50% off + shipping. Request list from jdjacob@aol.com.

WE'RE INTERESTED in finding an in HOME CHURCH in the Phoenix West Valley. Please contact Tom with information @ 623/566-9851.

DOMINION INC 500 CO.
Solve environmental probs.
reps & mgrs to run business from home
\$1,000-7,000/m Pt/Ft
Products sell themselves
Help yourself & missions
www.Deu818.com
24/7 info 888-277-7120
Miss'y Geoff Donnan
No-toll 877-598-2577

SOUTHERN WISCONSIN & NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Covenant Community Reformed Church: Reformed, Confessional, Theonomic. Home School Support. Serving God by equipping the saints for ministry. Meetings near Janesville, Wisconsin and Freeport, Illinois. Contact Pastor Dan Gibson: (608) 756-8159, or RFORM2@aol.com.

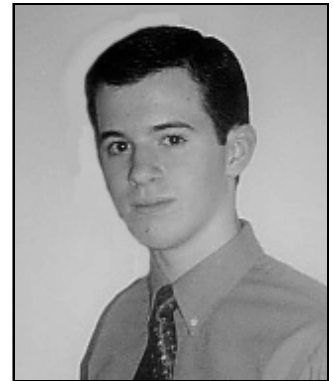
EAST CENTRAL FLORIDA Ref. Presb. church-plant that is confessional, theonomic, missionary minded, home-school supportive located in Indian River County, Florida (meet in Fellsmere). Currently have three committed families, seeking more to build solid reformed church in area. Contact Pastor Geoff Donnan (772)571-8030. Reformation@compuserve.com.

REFORMATION CHURCH - OPC Reformed preaching, All of the Word for all of life S. Denver, CO 303-520-8814.

WE RECEIVE more article submissions than we can publish in the CHALCEDON REPORT. We many of these articles on our web site, at chalcedon.edu. We cover various topics, from theology to pastoral and church concerns, women's and youth issues to social and political matters and relevant letters to the editor. You can also order our publications.

The Sun Always Rises

By David P. Henreckson



After Darkness, Light

The motto of the Protestant Reformation was *post tenebras lux*, a Latin phrase which means, “after darkness, light.” Indeed, it seems as if Providence engineered it so that all of history operates in this pattern. Just as the late medieval period was home to quite a few dark heretics and heresies, so it also birthed the light of the great Reformers and their Reformation. While we should detest any medieval heresies, we must also recognize that there was something inherent in that cultural setting that ensured the rapid growth of Protestant doctrine. Darkness cannot last forever, and, when it appears, it only invites the resurrection of light. The beauty of a sunrise is often only realized if there is a preceding darkness.

So it is with culture and redemption. We all have our idealistic dreams of how a restored Christian culture would look. However, the fact that this is twenty-first century America, a land steeped in a new form of barbarism, should not make us despair if we have faith in the Redeemer of the world. That the world is over its head in a sea of sin should only make us hold our breath to see what plan God has implemented to save it, and how He will display His power for all humanity to behold. After the fullness of time, that plan *was* set in motion. The Son of God came to earth in human form, and the rulers of the age shook in terror.

It would be an inexcusable mistake to assume that the course of history remained unaltered after this redemption of Christ. Albert Wolters wrote in his concise book, *Creation Regained*, that the redemption of Christ is “cosmic in the sense that it restores the whole creation.” During the ages prior to the Incarnation, the light of redemption was contained to a tiny strip of land along the Mediterranean Sea. The nation of Israel was relatively small in size and, although during David’s and Solomon’s reigns it had achieved great power and prosperity, its history was generally marked by sorrow, persecution, and, often, unfaithfulness to God. Yet, God promised that our age — the New Covenant — would be different. Creation as a whole would indeed be Creation Regained.

In Jeremiah 31, the New Covenant is described as an age in which Israel would never forget its Lord (*v. 32*),

an age in which the law of God would be written on the heart (*v. 33*), and an age in which the knowledge of the Lord would be universal (*v. 34*). The sun had risen and would never set. It is this image of expansion and universality that characterizes the whole of New Testament Scripture. Whereas before the tiny remnant of Israel was the recipient of salvation, now, as we have seen, *the world* is saved (*Jn. 3:17*).

Defining The “World”

So now the inevitable question arises: How do we define “world”? Being good American individualists, we might be tempted to say that it is defined as every single *person* who lives on the third planet from the sun. Therefore, the salvation of the world would mean that all individuals who live during the New Covenant are saved — the position also known as *universalism*. Yet, we know from other Scripture passages that this is blatantly untrue. So in order to avoid this heresy, we do a back-step and argue that when Christ said He came to save the world, “save” didn’t really mean “save” — only a *chance* at salvation. The problem with these explanations is that they both operate on supposition of individualism — *i.e.*, that everything revolves around individual self, and not the covenantal assembly. In effect, they presuppose that the Bible is founded on Enlightenment thinking.

Yet Scripture is primarily a great redemptive history, beginning with the account of Eden and progressing to the end of time. If we fail to take this into account, we will inevitably fall into whatever faddish worldview currently holds sway. We must view our culture through a redemptive and covenantal lens. We should look to see how “the world” has been defined throughout redemptive history. If we do so, we will find that the “world” has fallen into misery because of the curse. We find that the created “world” groans for redemption (*Rom. 8:22*). In the New Covenant, we see the realization of the salvation of the “world” — that is, the created order.

It must be noted that this view of the world as spiritual Creation does not dissolve all visible and individual realities into a thin vapor. *The effects of the world’s salvation are quite real.* In 2 Corinthians 3,

Paul teaches us that prior to the New Covenant, the glory of God and His salvation were “veiled.” The glory was present, but not seen in its fullness. Yet now the veil is taken away (*vv. 14-16*). How can the unveiled glory of God not make its presence known?

The New Covenant Age

To bring this matter down to a practical and historical level, it is this age of the New Covenant that has seen the greatest progress in cultural knowledge and excellence. To a significant extent, this progress has been spurred onward by Christendom. Of course, God’s common grace allows even the heathen to increase their cultural knowledge for the good of the elect. Yet it is a plain fact of history that those regions touched by the truths of heaven are the same regions touched by cultural greatness. Heaven called the tribes of Britannia, Caledonia, Germania, and Gaul and they answered with repentance. They laid aside their gods of the forest to embrace the God of the world. And having received their inheritance as co-heirs of Christ, they were free to labor in His garden. And up grew the harvest of culture.

The very nature of redemption forces salvation to extend throughout the earth — it cannot be stopped. But its extension is not only in breadth, but in depth. That is, as the gospel of our Lord spreads throughout the world conquering pagan tribes, it also must penetrate paganism to its very root. Culture based on paganism must be transformed into culture based on the Word of God. If a pagan

tribe is skilled in the crafting of wooden idols, their skill must be transformed into the crafting of magnificent cathedrals. If a pagan is known for his fierce shrieks when he rushes to battle, his voice must be trained to sing the praises of God.

It would be an insult to God’s power to say that His redemption is not as effective as the curse wrought by the serpent. It would be contradicting the Word of God to hold that the victory of the second Adam was not as comprehensive as the defeat of the first (Rom. 5:12-21). As the hymn says,

*No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found.*

Through one man death reigned, not only in the soul, but in all of life. So also through one Man life was once more given to all. If sin touches the realms of art, government, and literature, cannot Christ’s redemption do so as well? In His resurrection, Christ showed that He had power over death, and also power to give lasting life. If, as one social commentator said, ours is a culture of death, then we, as Christ’s ambassadors, represent the culture of life. We can have faith that just as the sun always rises, so our labors will not be in vain. The dawn of redemption will come.

David P. Henreckson is managing editor of New Christendom Journal (www.newchristendom.com). He can be reached at dph@caledonianfire.org



Attention High School and College Age Young Adults:

The second annual Great Lakes Worldview Conference will be held on the campus of Reformed Bible College (Grand Rapids, MI) July 18-20, 2002. Cost is \$150 (room, board, tuition) \$135 if registration is paid in full prior to July 1.

Speakers this year are:

Rev. Steve Schlissel speaking on “Biblical Manhood & Womanhood” and Dr. Leonard Payton speaking on “Music & the 21st Century Church”

The conference is designed to train you to be discerning and thinking, and prepare you to handle the intellectual warfare of a culture increasingly hostile to Christianity.

Brochures with more information and a registration form are available from Rev. Paul T. Murphy duttonch@iserv.net, (616) 698-7467

Christian Economics: A Foundation in Law (Part 4)

By Ian Hodge, Ph.D.



In this four-part series of economics from a Christian perspective, I have been using the Westminster Larger Catechism's explanation of the Eighth Commandment to illustrate an older view of how the Ten Commandments were interpreted and understood. We saw broad-ranging implications for economics in the Catechism's explanation of both the positive and negative sides of the requirement, "Thou shalt not steal." Our contemporary political systems would undergo significant change if they took even just a small part of the Eighth Commandment and applied it to government policy. We would see, for example, dramatic changes to taxation laws, monetary policy, and social welfare, among other things.

The Case Laws

By using the Larger Catechism to explain the Commandments of God, it is evident that R.J. Rushdoony's important study, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, follows, in principle, an older view of Christianity. The framers of the Larger Catechism had no hesitation in drawing their detailed analysis from what are described as the "case laws" of the Old Testament. The requirement to keep just weights and measures is drawn from Leviticus 19:35-36, and readily seen as an explanation of the commandment prohibiting theft. We can steal by failing to keep accurate weights and measures. Also, it is clear that the framers of the Larger Catechism understood that restitution was a part of the Eighth Commandment. Thus, in Q. 141, it is listed as a duty of the commandment to return goods to their proper owners. Restitution, however, carried with it not just the requirement to return goods to their rightful owners, but the way in which such restitution should take place was prescribed. Exodus 22:1-7 provides several examples of *how* restitution is to be made, in some instances up to 500% value of the stolen goods.

In some circles, today there is an argument based on the Westminster Confession that is used to deny the judicial aspects of the law in contemporary legislation. Some readers of Chapter XIX

of the Confession believe that the framers of the Westminster documents believed that *all* the judicial laws of the Old Testament are put aside in the New Testament era. Such a reading of the Confession makes a contradiction of the Larger Catechism, where it is plain that when it suited, the members of the Westminster Assembly took liberally from the judicial laws of the Old Testament and said they apply even today. In Chapter XIX the writers say that only the "sundry judicial laws" have expired, yet their concept of "expired" is qualified by the inclusion that the *general equity* of the laws remain. What does this mean, say, in the case of Exodus 22:1-7?

General Equity

First of all we must ask ourselves, "What is the 'general equity' of these requirements?" Does "general equity" include the idea of restitution? Yes, because the framers of the Catechism were prepared to include this in their exposition of the Eighth Commandment. Does the general equity idea include the idea of making restitution at up to 500%? Yes, because it is evident that the Catechism is not there to provide a new interpretation of the Commandments. It is also important to ask whether the principle of restitution can be isolated from the more specific principle of "restitution at 500%." There is no evidence to suggest that the Westminster Assembly was attempting to use the phrase "general equity" to water down, minimize, or abolish the judicial laws.

Unfortunately, we are not left with a clear statement on what is meant by the word "sundry," as in "sundry judicial laws." Does sundry mean all judicial laws, or does sundry mean *some* judicial laws? Our reading of the Larger Catechism indicates that the Westminster Assembly was attempting to indicate some judicial laws, those they designated "sundry." What these are, we have to guess to some extent. But it certainly does not mean *all* judicial laws. In fact, the word "sundry" does not lend itself to this kind of

interpretation. Sundries are various different small items grouped together because they are not important enough to be considered separately.

What the framers of the Westminster documents were attempting to do was to provide relevance to the Commandments by saying that an application of the *principles* of the case laws is mandatory. Thus, it may no longer be necessary for a thief to repay five oxen for the one he stole. But if the “general equity” provision remains, then it can be argued that in Israel an ox was an important instrument in generating a livelihood for farmers and this is the “general equity” provision. To steal an ox would be the equivalent in the seventeenth century (the time when the Westminster documents were prepared) of stealing a horse (which had replaced the ox as the preferred farming animal). In the twentieth century it would equate to stealing a farmer’s tractor. The “general equity” provision of restitution at 500% remains, but is no longer applied to oxen.

Natural Law

Is there a “natural” law that enables men and women in the New Testament era to understand how right laws are to be developed and applied? Not if we keep the first three chapters of Genesis in view. Here it is specifically indicated that God the Creator makes the rules, and that the essence of sin is for man to be his own law-maker (*Gen. 3:5*). Natural law theorists, including those in Christian circles who advocate this idea, are merely perpetuating the serpent’s challenge to Eve: eat of the fruit and you will be “like God”, knowing (*i.e.*, determining) good and evil, making up the rules of life for yourself.

We have come a long way since the seventeenth century when the Westminster Assembly met and formulated its understanding of the Ten Commandments. Contemporary Christianity is not enamoured by the Catechism’s understanding of the Eighth Commandment. Even Reformed Christians who proclaim allegiance to the Westminster Confession of Faith do not necessarily endorse the Catechism’s explanation of the Eighth Commandment; and they attempt to use Chapter XIX as their rationale for doing so. If words have any meaning, then the “sundry judicial laws” are a small group of the judicial laws of which only the “general equity” remains. The Assembly either used the word “sundry” in an attempt to be a little vague, or else it expected readers to understand the phrase because of some common understanding.

It is evident from the Assembly’s own use of the case laws in its development of the Larger Catechism that it believes many of the judicial laws of Israel are

applicable today. The Westminster Divines made no commitment to natural law theory or to the notion that somehow mankind could discover, without the aid of divine revelation, the way God wants us to live.

In the realm of economics, much of which today is tied up with contemporary politics, this leaves us with a secure basis in the Bible for developing a godly economic system that also allows us to critique contemporary culture in the light of God’s revelation. There is evidence to suggest that such a critique, in every nation in the world, is long overdue. Argentina’s recent economic malaise, the untold financial damage to countless thousands whose wealth was dissipated by government policy, is just one example. Another example is Japan’s use of debt to expand its economic fortunes. Proudly offering 100-year mortgages to home buyers (according to one report) eventually brought the nation to its present state where, after a dozen years, its stock market remains in the doldrums.

The necessity for Christian economics based squarely on the Ten Commandments as the moral foundation for economic theory remains. This includes relying on the case laws of the Old Testament to inform us of how God wants us to be economists (literally, house managers). The laborers are few, but God, in His own time, will raise godly men and women who will stand for economic reform that creates justice and equity for all.

Ian Hodge, AmusA, Ph.D., AIMM, is Director of International Business Consulting for the Business Reform Foundation (www.business-reform.com) a ministry that teaches how to apply the Bible to business and provides consulting services based on biblical principles. When he is not business consulting, Ian enjoys exercising a ministry in music with his family (www.musicreform.com). He can be contacted at ianh@business-reform.com and is available for speaking and music engagements.

