

CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIETY

THE BIENNIAL JOURNAL OF THE KUYPER FOUNDATION

VOL. XIX, No. 1

SUMMER 2009

Nurturing Masculinity

The Kerygma of the Kingdom

*Revelation and Prophethood in
the Koran and the Bible*

The Prophet Joseph in the Koran

*The Three Levels of Government in
the New Testament Church*

Is Beauty in the Eye of the Beholder?

Baptism, Continuity and Individualism

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EDITOR

STEPHEN C. PERKS

CONTRIBUTORS

STEPHEN PERKS is the Director of The Kuyper Foundation.

DOUGLAS WILSON is pastor of Community Evangelical Fellowship, Moscow, Idaho, USA.

ANDREW SANDLIN is president of the Center for Cultural Leadership, California, USA.

CHRISTINE SCHIRRMACHER is the Head of the Islamic Institute of the German Evangelical Alliance and teaches Islamic Studies at Martin Bucer Theological Seminary.

THOMAS SCHIRRMACHER is Professor of Systematic Theology at, and President of, Martin Bucer Theological Seminary in Germany.

MICHAEL W. KELLEY is a graduate of Biola University and Westminster Theological Seminary and holds a doctorate in philosophy from Duquesne University.

ROBIN PHILLIPS is an author and researcher living in Post Falls, Idaho.

DEREK CARLSEN is a Zimbabwean pastor, missionary and author living in the USA.

BRUCE DAYMAN has pastored, taught theology, administered a Christian school, and currently lives in British Columbia.

DOUG BAKER is a theologian, literary critic and author.

STEPHEN HAYHOW works in mobile communications and was ordained in the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the USA.

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	2
FEATURES	
NURTURING MASCULINITY by Douglas Wilson	3
THE KERYGMA OF THE KINGDOM by Andrew Sandlin	5
REVELATION AND PROPHETHOOD IN THE KORAN AND THE BIBLE by Christine Schirrmacher	8
THE PROPHET JOSEPH IN THE KORAN: AN EXAMPLE FOR MUHAMMAD by Christine Schirrmacher	15
THE THREE LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH by Thomas Schirrmacher	18
THE IMPULSE OF POWER—cont. by Michael W. Kelley	32
IS BEAUTY IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER? by Robin Phillips	44
BAPTISM, CONTINUITY AND INDIVIDUALISM by Derek Carlsen	50
SOME THOUGHTS ON THE USE OF MUSIC IN CHURCH by Stephen C. Perks	54
BOOK REVIEWS	
Ruben Alvarado, <i>The Life and Times of Friedrich Julius Stahl</i> Reviewed by Thomas Schirrmacher	58
Brian Watts, <i>What Do You Learn in School?</i> Reviewed by Bruce Dayman	60
Wesley A. Kort, <i>C. S. Lewis: Then and Now</i> Reviewed by Doug P. Baker	61
Gordon Campbell <i>et al.</i> , <i>Milton and the Manuscripts of De Doctrina Christiana</i> Reviewed by Stephen Hayhow	62
Mark Hill, <i>Ecclesiastical Law</i> Reviewed by Stephen Perks	63

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Editorial office: *Christianity & Society*,
P. O. Box 2, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 4ZD, England
TEL. (01823) 665909 • EMAIL: info@kuyper.org
WORLD WIDE WEB: www.kuyper.org

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EDITORIAL

Christianity & Society at Lulu.com

AFTER the last issue of *Christianity & Society* (VOL. XVIII, No 2) was made available on Lulu.com I ordered a copy to make sure everything was working properly, as I had done with previous issues. The copy I ordered printed correctly and was delivered. After a few weeks, however, I received a notice from Lulu.com that their printers could not print the PDF file that I had submitted. I tried to correct the problem according to the Lulu.com web site problem solving instructions but apparently this did not work, and I was told that it was still not possible to order Vol. XVIII, No. 2. To cut a long story short, after repeated attempts to modify the file in the way required I had no success and had to go through the deletion process and recreate the whole project again. Apparently, Lulu.com uses a lot of different printers and not all of them have up to date equipment that can print from a modern PDF file created by Acrobat. In order to provide a file that all their printers can use the file has to be made compatible with Acrobat version 4 (I think the current version is Acrobat 9). However, it took me some time to find out from Lulu.com what the problem was and even longer to find out how to go about correcting it. As a result of this lengthy process, VOL. XVIII, No. 2, was not available on Lulu.com for some time. All the previous issues were available, since they were created using a different programme and were automatically created in Acrobat version 4 (this shows that upgrading computer programmes does not always solve problems and can create other problems as well). The new files have now been uploaded and I have ordered and received copies of all issues of *Christianity & Society* currently on the Lulu.com site (including VOL. XVIII, No. 2). All issues from VOL. XVII, No. 1 onwards are now available again on the Lulu.com web site.

I apologise for any inconvenience or problems that readers who wish to order a copy from the Lulu.com site may have had since the publication of the last issue. You should no

longer have any problems ordering from Lulu.com. If you do have any problems please inform me via the “Contact us” form on our web site.

The good news is that the price of ordering a copy from Lulu.com has gone down from over £3.00 to £2.68. This is the production cost, which excludes postage. The Kuyper Foundation puts no mark-up on this production cost and therefore we make no profit from selling the journal on line via Lulu.com. The cost of postage depends on where those ordering it are located. The PDF files for the journal can still be downloaded free of charge from the journal page of our web site: www.kuyper.org.

KUYPER FOUNDATION FELLOWSHIP WEEKEND
BRUNEL MANOR, FRIDAY 24 TO MONDAY 27 JULY 2009

If you intend to come to the Kuyper Foundation Fellowship Weekend at Brunel Manor please send off your booking form as soon as possible. There are still places left but the longer you wait the less places we have available and the less choice we have in allocating rooms at Brunel. The speaker for the weekend is Michael Kelley, and the subject matter will be “The Cultural Mission of the Church.” There will be the usual Saturday night soiree with live music and a Sunday morning service. Stephen Hayhow will be preaching on the Sunday morning. A booking form can be downloaded from our web site. See the display advertisement on page 4.

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In the last issue of *Christianity & Society* I recommended a new web site called *The Gospel Truth Podcast*. There are more Gospel Truth podcasts available from this web site now, including an excellent one on education, which follows a somewhat different format from the others. If you are thinking about how to educate your children, e.g. whether to send them to school or to educate them at home, please visit this web site and listen to the podcast on education. These podcasts are free of charge, very informative and good fun to listen to.—SCP

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NURTURING MASCULINITY

by Douglas Wilson[†]

WHEN a culture disintegrates, it is not as simple as something getting old and falling apart. If an old building begins to collapse, we can all see why. But when *cultures* begin to fail, one invariable aspect of this process is the fact that signs of health will begin to be viewed with alarm, and every new symptom of the reigning diseases will be greeted with shouts of joy. In no area is this more evident than in the West's attitude toward masculinity. No society can be healthy without it, but now our secular elites flee from it as though it were a pox. And as boys keep getting born into our midst (and *they* don't know what century they are entering), we have to keep dealing with wave after wave of testosterone that has not yet received the memo. We isolate it, we try to shame it, we direct it elsewhere, and in the early years we use lots and lots of drugs on it.

It would be nice to able to say that the Church has resisted these assaults on masculinity, but sadly the Church has even been a leader in this particular form of unbelief. Egalitarianism—the root of all this trouble—has taken deep root in the Church. One of the reasons we have so much trouble on issues like women's ordination is because we have been insisting that the model of piety to be followed by our male ministers be overwhelmingly feminine. And men are not very good at that—women would be far better at it, in fact. So if your ideal minister is an empathetic woman, wouldn't a woman do a better job? Until we abandon our false notions of what constitutes piety, that is not an easy question to answer.

Those who try to address this problem will often blunder in how they do so, and they will say something crude about it in a typical masculine way. But whether they blunder or not, they will always be *accused* of having done so, and will be treated as though they had.

The need of the hour is for Christian parents to bring up their boys to be genuine *men*, and for the Church to help equip such parents to undertake that task and not back down from it. But in order to do this, what are we shooting for? What does it look like? We have exiled true masculinity from respected positions in our culture for quite some time, and if it returns to our midst, we might not be a position to recognise it. While having talks with your great-grandfather should be some help, the best thing we can do is return to Scripture for a sense of what God wants men to be like.

In this, I want to follow Bill Mouser's quite helpful exposition of the biblical teaching on the nature of masculinity. It

is important for us to set the standard scripturally because while men are capable of living up to high expectations, they are also capable of living *down* to false expectations. We should want to make sure that every expectation is ordered and established by the sure word of Scripture—settled on the foundations of grace.

The first thing to consider is the cultural mandate as we find it in Genesis. Genesis is the book of beginnings, too often neglected by Christians. Here we see the beginning of the world, obviously, but also the beginning of marriage, of rest, of music, and for our purposes here the beginning of *masculine vocation*. The word *vocation* comes from the Latin *voco*, meaning "I call." A man's vocation is his *calling* under God. And his son's calling is from God, and so on, to a thousand generations.

"Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth'" (Gen. 1:28).

"So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs" (Gen. 9:1-3).

These commands from God have historically been called *the cultural mandate*. Before the Fall, God expressly gave dominion to mankind over all Creation. This is seen in the passage from the first chapter of Genesis. But God reiterates this charge to Noah—and while I do not wish to belabour the obvious, Noah lived after the Fall, and this mandate is given immediately after a stupendous judgment on *sin*. The presence of sin obviously does not lift or remove the cultural mandate. Moreover, the language of the mandate assumes that generations downstream will continue to operate in terms of the mandate.

Consider the words of Psalm 8. Contrary to the modern assumption, man is not an intruder on this planet. Mankind is not the world's cancer. We are stewards; the world and all it contains was entrusted to us. The author of the book of Hebrews takes this passage from the Psalms and he applies it to *mankind in Christ*. Consider his application of the psalm. The authoritative mandate remains in force for *impotent* man—but that impotence is removed in Christ (Heb. 2:5-10). The psalmist tells us that man had this authority in principle, and the author of Hebrews tells us that we do not yet see it in reality, except to the extent that we see Christ in that position. This means that the Great Commission is really

[†]Douglas Wilson is pastor of Community Evangelical Fellowship, Moscow, Idaho, USA, and editor of *Credenda/Agenda* magazine. He is also the author of *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning*, *Standing on the Promises*, *Reforming Marriage*, and a number of other books.

the cultural mandate being given yet again, only this time with the promise of the Spirit to make sure this particular vocation is fulfilled.

Now God gave this cultural mandate to Adam, and to Eve as his helper. Adam obviously could not multiply without her help and he could not fulfil any other aspect of the mandate without her help. But with that help, he was called to be her head and leader. When men learn how to assume this station, they are being restored to their position of masculine vocation. That vocation, following Mouser, has five aspects.

Masculinity is that which gladly and sacrificially assumes responsibility under the calling of God. Men are created by God to be lords, husbandmen, saviours, sages, and the glory of God. In order to be lords, boys must learn to be adventurous and visionary. In order to be husbandmen, boys must learn to be patient, careful and hard-working. God has built the desire to be saviours into men, and so boys must learn to be strong, sacrificial, courageous and good. It is false to assume that “bookishness” is not masculine—only some lopsided forms of it are. In order to be sages, boys must learn to be teachable, studious, and thoughtful. And in order to grow up into what Paul calls the glory of God, boys must learn to be representative, responsible, and holy.

I said earlier that a diseased society reacts away from the very signs of health that it so desperately needs. Instead of encouraging boys to be adventurous and visionary, we want to wrap them up in cotton batting so that no one ever gets hurt. We are busy pursuing a risk-averse society, and so climbing trees and anything that reminds us of climbing trees is out. Instead of instilling a patient work ethic in our boys, the patience a farmer must have, we assume that boys cannot be anything but irresponsible and lazy, and so we don't expect any serious work out of them until they are out of college—and it is hit or miss with many of them even after that. Instead of nurturing the inborn desire that boys have

to slay the dragon and smite the enemy we try to keep play weapons far away from them. Instead of teaching them to fight nobly, we pretend that fighting is unnecessary, which means that if they ever have to fight as men, they will be singularly unprepared for the task. Anything you need to do as a man, you need to learn how to do as a boy. Instead of honouring the scholar/athlete, or the warrior/scholar, we assume that academic pursuits are for pencil necks with coke-bottle-bottom glasses. And instead of encouraging our sons to grow up into the image of Christ, fully expressing the glory of God, we require of them a false-humility—the kind that apologises for breathing and taking up room. “Every beat of my heart extends the lifespan of my carbon footprint, and whatever am I to do?”

There are two applications in all this for men and their wives to consider as they bring up their sons. The first is that we are all part of this mandate. God's call to each man includes his vocation. What he does is not just a detached “job,” (Eph. 2:8–10 with special emphasis on verse 10). We must tear down the wall between our faith in Christ and confess the sin of parceling up the world. We must also confess the desire to have some of the parcels to be *Christless*. Christ is Lord, and has been given a name above every name. He is the Lord of all—and can we think he is not Lord of this occupation, or that profession? *Think again* (Phil. 2:9–11; 1 Pet. 3:22; Heb. 12:2; Eph. 1:19–21).

And second, recognise that this mandate is to *masculine vocation*. Our wives, of course, are essential to this process—we cannot do without their help (1 Cor. 11:9). But it is *help*. Essential to the fulfilment of a masculine vocation is *masculinity*. It is here that the modern evangelical church falls so short. Far from answering the sin of the world, at this point, we are often ahead of the world in this sin. Men, you are called to serve and love God in all that you do, and to do so *as men*. And essential to this task is the training of your boys to do and be the same. *C&S*

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THE KERYGMA OF THE KINGDOM

by Andrew Sandlin

The basileia is the great divine work of salvation in its fulfillment and consummation in Christ; the ekklesia is the people elected and called by God and sharing in the bliss of the basileia. Logically the basileia ranks first, and not the ekklesia. The former, therefore, has a much more comprehensive content.

—Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*¹

WHAT IS THE *Kerygma*?

Kerygma is an important word in Christianity. It is the Greek word that has been enlisted for its theological significance. It describes the earliest message of the primitive Christian Faith. The *kerygma* is the initial apostolic preaching about Jesus Christ. This is the first message that the apostles announced after Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven.²

The *kerygma* is so significant because it communicates what the earliest followers of Jesus thought about him and his ministry. It is the news that they disseminated in the ancient Near East relating to the person of Jesus Christ. What was this news? It is a cluster of momentous, historical events that if one believes, his life will change forever—notably that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, that he died for the human race on the Cross, that he rose the third day from the dead in great victory, that he is returning from heaven in resplendent glory, and that whoever trusts in him with a repentant, obedient faith will be granted eternal life by the grace of God.

This announcement centres on two main past³ events—the death⁴ and resurrection⁵ of Jesus Christ. These events, according to the apostles, were necessary because of the massive plight of humanity that they are calculated to reverse—man's sin. Jesus died on the Cross as our sacrifice, paying the penalty for man's sin (1 Cor. 5:7; Eph. 5:2; 1 Pet. 3:18), and He rose from the dead to liberate us from the power of that sin (Rom. 6:1–13; 1 Pet. 3:21).

The heart of the *kerygma* is the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Cross and the empty tomb. This is the primitive apostolic message that we are called to perpetuate and preach today.

WHAT IS THE KINGDOM?

This *kerygma* must be set in the larger context of the Kingdom of God, the *basilea*, which literally denotes “rule” or “reign.” It is not so much a realm over which a king reigns, as it is the reign itself.⁶ We might say that the kingdom is wherever the king is.

Jesus centred his earthly ministry on the Kingdom of God. He states this fact quite explicitly from the very beginning (Mt. 4:17–23). This kingdom is the fulfillment of the Old Testament (Mt. 3:1–3). Jehovah had reigned over the earth since its creation, of course (Ps. 93, e.g.), and he was in a special sense the King of Israel (1 Sam. 8:1–9); but when Jesus arrived, he claimed to fulfill the prophecies of Messiah, Jehovah's unique representative in the earth and King of the Jews. He embodied Jehovah's mediatory reign in the world. This is why Jesus asserts that His Father bestowed on him a kingdom (Lk. 22:29). It is also why Paul writes that at the end of history, Jesus will restore his kingdom to the Father, to whom the Son will then submit himself (1 Cor. 15:23–28). The Kingdom of God in the interadvental age is the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. God grants his earthly rule to his Son Jesus. As we move progressively through the pages of the New Testament, we discover that this rule was not to be limited to the Jews. In Acts 2, for example, Peter declares in his Pentecostal sermon that the same Jesus whom the Jews had crucified had been resurrected and had ascended to David's throne in heaven. In other words, David's throne in Jerusalem had been transported to heaven, from which Jesus now reigns. When the Jews listening to Peter's sermon inquired what they should do, Peter responded that if they repented and trusted in Jesus and were baptised, they would be saved. The promise, he went on to say, was to them and their children, as well to those “afar off.” This latter expression refers to believing Gentiles.

Even the Old Testament had predicted this universal reign. In Romans 15:12 Paul cites Isaiah that Jesus “will rise [from the dead] to reign over the Gentiles.”

The *kerygma* is the heart of the Gospel, the Good News of salvation to all who believe (Rom. 3:22).

1. Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962), p. 354.

2. U. Becker and D. Müller, “Proclamation, Preach, Kerygma,” in Colin Brown, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978, 1986), Vol. 3, pp. 44–48.

3. The future event, the Second Advent, which is the culmination of the first two, is vital also, but is beyond the scope of this essay.

4. P. T. Forsyth, *The Cruciality of the Cross* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 1997).

5. Richard Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1978, 1987).

6. George E. Ladd, *Crucial Questions About the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), pp. 77–81.

This relationship between the *kerygma* and the *basilea* implies that the gospel is not an end in itself but subsists in order to extend the reign of God in the earth. The Kingdom is the reign of God in the earth by means of Jesus Christ, and the *kerygma* is the message that re-orient sinners so that they are restored to a proper relationship to the King.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE *Kerygma* OF THE KINGDOM

Several implications relevant for the Church today spring from this understanding of the *Kerygma* and the Kingdom. I will state them in negative form and elaborate on each.

First, *soteriology* is not the central theme of the Christian message. Soteriology is that branch of theology that addresses salvation, especially the salvation of the individual. It is a crucial branch of theology, because the message of the gospel is addressed first to individuals, and the gospel of Jesus Christ is man's only hope of salvation. There will be no salvation apart from that gospel. Soteriology summarises the biblical teaching regarding this individual salvation. As heirs of the Protestant Reformation, we hold to a distinctive soteriology—*solus Christus* (or *solo Christo*), *sola gratia*, and *sola fide*—we affirm that salvation is found only in Jesus Christ, not in the Church; that this salvation is solely by the grace of God, not by man's meriting salvation in cooperation with God; and that justification is by faith alone, not by both faith and works (human merit or achievement before God).⁷

It was critical for the Reformation to stress these biblical truths to counter certain errors that had crept into the Western Church.

Heirs of this tradition must be careful, however, not to allow the leading concerns of the Reformation to shape the way they read the Bible.⁸ The Bible, not our distinctives and confessions of faith, is pre-eminent (here we meet another Reformation “sola”—*sola Scriptura*, the Bible alone). And the Bible does not teach that individual soteriology is the overarching theme of the faith or of the Bible. The great theme of the Bible is the glory of God manifested in heaven and on earth by means of God's Kingdom. Soteriology is an indispensable segment of that Kingdom, but it does not exhaust that Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is much bigger than your salvation or mine, and God's plans for the world are larger than individual soteriology.

Within the last 150 years or so in the West, both the *kerygma* and the Kingdom have been essentially reduced to “how to get to heaven when you die.” This is not the message of Jesus or the early apostles.⁹ Their message was the extension of God's earthly reign (“the Kingdom”), to which the gospel of Jesus makes an indispensable contribution. But if you heard many Western Christians only in the last few generations, you might get the idea that the Bible is chiefly about saving a few souls from the earth and getting them to heaven when they die. If this is the main message of the Bible, God wasted a lot of ink, because the Bible addresses many

more topics than soteriology, and it depicts some of those topics as no less significant than getting sinners to trust Jesus so they can get to heaven. But since our era is increasingly man-centred, men want a God whose principal concern is their own salvation and not his own glory. He will not oblige them. The underlying theme of all that we read in the Bible is the glory of God as it comes to the fore in his Kingdom in human history. Doxology, not soteriology, comes first.

Second, *sinners cannot be saved unless they surrender to the lordship (kingship) of Jesus Christ*. We are saved by grace, but we are not saved without submission. This fact is clear from Jesus' statement that all those who do not take up their cross and follow him will lose their soul (that is, their life, Mt. 16:24–28). It is also evident from Jesus' promise to Zacchaeus, that God saved him when this tax collector pledged to restore all stolen property (Lk. 19:7–10). Moreover, Jesus told the wealthy young ruler that if he were not willing to surrender all that he has to follow Him, the man could not inherit eternal life (Lk. 18:18–23). If we do not bow the knee to King Jesus, we cannot be saved.

As a result, there can be no salvation without repentance. God does not merely save us in our sins; he saves us *from* our sins (Rom. 6–8).

Years ago in Mississippi I knew a preacher. He understood repentance. One day he was telling the gospel to a young lady. She was a sinner who needed to get saved. For one thing, she was living with a young man and committing fornication. My friend told her that God would save her if she would repent and trust in Jesus. She said, “I can trust in Jesus, but I just can't give up sleeping with my boyfriend.”

He replied to her, “Then you cannot get saved. God only saves people who repent of their sins.”

And my friend was right.

God will save all who come to him in faith, but we must come to him on *his* terms, not our terms. Too many people act as though God is the great cosmic genie—existing to give them what they want, to make life better for them, to assist them in their self-improvement. They are in a tight jam with money or their job or their parents or children or the police or in their “relationships,” and they need God to give them a quick fix, so they fly to Jesus with their problems. But Jesus saves *repentant* sinners, not sinners who want an existential quick fix.

To say we are saved totally by grace is not to say God requires nothing of us in salvation. You must lose your life in Jesus if you are to be saved—that is, you must die to yourself. Jesus says this plainly, so there's no use denying it. *If you are not ready to give up your life, you are not ready to get saved.*

Recently I was re-reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer's classic *The Cost of Discipleship*. Bonhoeffer was a German Lutheran pastor in the 1930s. He was a brilliant young theologian. Karl Barth called his first doctoral dissertation (which he completed when he was 24 years old) a “theological miracle.” Bonhoeffer was implicated in several attempts to assassinate Hitler (Bonhoeffer, you see, was not one of those preachers who believed that faith only applied in the Church; he knew that if Jesus is Lord, he is Lord of all the earth.) He was executed in April 1945 for his complicity against Hitler, just three weeks before the city was liberated by the Allies.

In his book he talks about “cheap grace.” He means by this expression that grace was costly to Jesus, but that too many Christians think they can act any way they want, since salvation is by God's grace. Grace is cheap—“free for

7. Donald G. Bloesch, *Jesus Christ* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1997), pp. 175–180.

8. Ned B. Stonehouse, “The Infallibility of Scripture and Evangelical Progress,” in Ronald Youngblood, ed., *Evangelicals and Inerrancy* (Nashville: Nelson, 1984), 24.

9. John G. Stackhouse, “A Bigger—and Smaller—View of Mission,” *Books & Culture*, May/June 2007, 26.

all.” We do not value it since it did not cost us anything. We tend to value something that costs us a lot, but we tend not to value something that does not cost us dearly. Jesus’ death did not cost us anything, so we can easily cheapen that grace by which we receive the benefits of that death.

But this idea is a destructive evil. Bonhoeffer wrote, “The word of cheap grace has been the ruin of more Christians than any commandment of works.”¹⁰ And he is right.

I heard Professor John Franke of Biblical Seminary relate once something that a new Christian friend had told him. “Being a Christian costs you *nothing* since Jesus did all the work of salvation for you. But being a Christian costs you *everything*, since when you come to Jesus, you lose your life for him.” This is just what Jesus said in John 12:25–26. If you refuse to lose your life for Jesus—if you insist on doing things your way and not God’s way—you cannot be saved. Grace is free, but it is not cheap.

Jesus died, and we follow in him in death—not a martyr’s death (though we may have to do that, too), but death to ourselves. That’s what it means to be saved, to be a follower of Jesus.

There is no salvation without surrender to the kingship of Jesus Christ.

Third, *the Church is not God’s chief concern in the earth*. The fact that this assertion would be controversial shows how far the church has drifted from the Bible.¹¹ Jesus spoke again and again about the kingdom, but only twice about the Church (by which he could simply have meant his followers in a generic sense, and not an institution¹²). By the Church, the Bible denotes the *ekklesia*, the people of God in a particular locale under the oversight of leaders (1 Pet. 5:1–5).¹³ The Bible teaches that Jesus shed his blood for this Church (Acts 20:28) and that he rules in the Church (Eph. 1:18–23). It is tempting to presume that the Church is a sort of idealised body known only to God, but this is not how the Bible uses the term. When we say the Church, we denote God’s people in a specific location, not an “invisible” Church; not a human institution as such; and not (worse yet) a denomination, of which the Bible knows nothing. Rather, the denotation of *ekklesia* in the Bible is: God’s collective, localised body covenanted together and with Jesus under his authority.

Tragically, in Christian history the Church has often been identified with the Kingdom of God. This is the position of the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁴ It is also the view of the Westminster Confession of Faith (ch. 25, no. 2). But it is not the view of the Bible. It is almost self-evident from the pages of the New Testament that the Kingdom is the reign of God and the Church is an *aspect* of that reign (e.g. 1 Cor. 15:24, 50).

This means that Christian schools and businesses and

politics and music and pro-life and family and campus and cultural and mercy ministries and so on are (or should be) within the Kingdom of God, even though they are not specifically the Church—that is, they are not the specific community assembling under Jesus’ lordship (though the individuals engaging in these activities are often part of the Church). The Church is the assembly of the faithful, and they act as the Church when they act faithfully wherever they are; but the Kingdom is the sphere of Jesus Christ’s rule, and the Church is only one crucial aspect of it.¹⁵

The Kingdom, not the Church, is the big issue. “The mission of the church is to herald the coming kingdom of God, but the Church must never mistake itself for the kingdom . . .”¹⁶

Fourth, *no man or human institution may arrogate to itself the claims of Jesus as rightful King*. Man likes to play God. This was the original sin of Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1–6). In Babel man tried to erect a tower up to God (Gen. 11:1–9). Because man is a sinner, he cannot accept that God is God and that he is *not* God. God rules man by his love and justice, but man wishes to control and tyrannise his fellow man.

This happens in the family. Oriental cultures tend to worship ancestors; this is pagan practice. In contemporary Christian circles, we have the “patriarchy” movement, which rightly stresses the father’s leadership in the family, but too often it makes the Christian father the final earthly arbiter of family life. It is legalistic. Its proponents sometimes claim that birth control is sin, that Sunday school is sin, that sending daughters off to college is sin. In some quarters, women are to be seen and not heard. The husband becomes “God’s representative” (a tyrant) in the home.

Today, also, there is a prominent tendency to return to “high-church” public worship patterns. It is asserted or implied that salvation is dispensed at the hands of priests or elders in baptism or the Eucharist. Even some Protestants declare that organisational union with the Church (in water baptism) effects a sort of saving union with Jesus Christ. All of these ecclesial views compromise the Creator-creature distinction and invite an impoverishment of the gospel. The Church is not the extension of the incarnation of Jesus, and any ecclesiology that merges soteriology with it is on an idolatrous track.

While family and the Church are legitimate, divinely established institutions, beware of any theology that confounds divine authority with human authority, that situates the dispensing of eternal salvation in the hands of man, or that tries to monopolise the work of God in the earth.

Fifth, and finally, *God’s objective is not merely to save elect sinners but to redeem all of life and society and culture—the entire world*. Paul writes that Jesus will rule in the present age until he subordinates all enemies except death itself (1 Cor. 15:20–28). The writer of Hebrews states that all things have been placed under the Lord’s authority (Heb. 2:5–9). The sweep of redemption is as comprehensive as the sweep of sin.¹⁷ God is redeeming all that is sinful (Rom. 8:20–25). The Second Adam is winning back all that the first Adam lost in Eden (Rom. 5:12–21).

10. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: MacMillan, 1937, 1959), p. 59.

11. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), p. 76f.

12. Donald E. Gowan, “Church,” in Gowan, ed., *The Westminster Theological Wordbook of the Bible* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), p. 63.

13. L. Coenen, “Church, Synagogue,” Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975, 1986), Vol. 1, p. 291f.

14. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Washington, D. C.: United States Catholic Conference [*Libreria Editrice Vaticana*], 1994, second edition), pp. 138–143.

15. Donald E. Gowan, “Kingdom of God, Kingdom of Heaven,” in Gowan, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 274–278.

16. Donald G. Bloesch, *Jesus Christ*, p. 243.

17. Cornelius Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1982), p. 133.

The gospel is a regal gospel, and the goal of the gospel is to bring the world under the authority of Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:4–11).

For too long the Church has bought into a dualism—a sacred-secular distinction that sees Church and home life and Bible reading and evangelism (narrowly considered) as “spiritual,” but education and technology and science and politics and economics as “worldly.” This dualism has surrendered vast cultural territories to unbelievers and to secularists. Ironically, many Christians complain about the condition of the culture, yet it has been their own dualistic dereliction that has permitted this de-Christianisation (secularisation) of society.

God is interested not just in the family and Church, but the entire world.

As heirs of the King (Rom. 8:17), we are commanded to call the entire world to be reconciled to God in the person and work of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:19). The Great Commission requires that we preach the gospel, baptise and disciple all the nations for Jesus, to whom all authority in heaven and on earth has been given (Mt. 28:18–20). “When we preach

Christ,” writes Pinnock, “we are not just offering a happiness pill and hell-fire insurance, we are asking people to join in the dominion mandate and come aboard the kingdom train.”¹⁸

This means that, among other things, we should encourage our young people to enter not just the full-time Christian ministry (pastors and missionaries and teachers, which are sorely needed), but also fields such as sales and medicine and technology and music and politics and business professions. There are no “secular” occupations as long as they are surrendered to Jesus Christ.

If God’s objective is to bring the entire world under the authority of King Jesus, then our commission must be to extend that Kingdom far beyond the four walls of the Church. The *kerygma* is the gospel message at the center of the Kingdom, defined as the reign of God in the earth; *but the Kingdom of God is God’s great work in the earth.* C&S

18. Clark H. Pinnock, *Three Keys to Spiritual Renewal* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1985), p. 78.

REVELATION AND PROPHETHOOD IN THE KORAN AND THE BIBLE

by *Christine Schirrmacher*

INTRODUCTION

WHOEVER reads the Koran from beginning to end will realise that much is said about the “prophets.” They play a key role in the concept of revelation in the Koran—and, of course, for Muhammad and his preaching. The Koran, like the Bible, depicts prophets as mortal humans; however, they have a much more significant role for revelation in the Koran than in the Bible. This is true particularly for Muhammad.

The Koran includes many reports of how the prophets preached God’s message to the people. Most of the prophet narratives are based on the reports of the Old Testament, some also on the New Testament. The Koran does not differentiate here among prophets, patriarchs and other people (such as Zacharias in the New Testament).

God commissions a prophet with a message and admonishes him to distance himself from the idolatry of his countrymen. The prophet thus places himself on God’s side, against his unbelieving countrymen. God proves himself to the prophet to be Creator and Lord (as he does to Abraham); He performs a miracle and protects the prophet from the

people’s attacks. The judgment on those who refuse to believe him confirms the prophet’s mission.

The prophet narratives in the Koran—as with most of the other topics—are told mostly in fragments, distributed over many surahs. There are many more implied references than actual reports, as if those listening were already familiar with these other stories (“And when Moses said to his people . . .”). Besides the report on Joseph (surah 12) and the story of Kain and Abel, all of the other prophet stories in the Koran are given only in fragments (more on this subject in the lecture on “Joseph in the Bible and in the Koran”).

We know that Muhammad became acquainted with at least part of the Jewish and Christian writings on the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century A.D. and that he thought at first that he was declaring the same message. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that he took on some of what he heard or that his view of God was also formed by Judeo-Christian ideas. We can assume that he was not aware of the entire Old Testament and New Testament since during his lifetime only parts of the Bible had been translated into Arabic and the church language of the Arabian Christians was Syrian.

PROPHETS WITHOUT HISTORICAL ROOTS

In analysing the prophet stories in the Koran, we will recognise that there is no historical order (chronology) to the events, no dates for the reports, no chronology for the sequence of prophets and no clear beginning and end to a prophet narrative. We will hardly find traces of a family history, a dynasty of kings or rulers or references to the history of a particular nation. The prophet stories are suspended in a vacuum. They seem somewhat sterile and cannot be dated back to any year like 5000 or 1000 or 2000 before the “hijra” (Muhammad’s emigration to Medina) because the Koran makes no reference to the times each prophet lived. The exact dates are insignificant for the Koran. The prophet stories are merely illustrations for Muhammad’s own claim to be a messenger of God. The Koran depicts the prophets in so much detail because they justify and illustrate Muhammad’s mission.

The Bible, however, is a book that mentions names, dates, rulers and kings, places and significant historical events in innumerable places, clearly identifying a point in time for the story being told (current archaeological research confirms more and more of these historical statements in the Bible, e.g. the times of the rule of the Pharaohs in Egypt).

PROPHETS AS TEMPLATES

The Koran was written by one single author (provided that Muhammad is essentially the author of the Koran) and covers a period of only about 22 years (610–632 A.D.). The Koran is concerned with history of humanity and the history of other nations only to the extent that other nations are mentioned as examples—that a prophet preached Islamic monotheism to them and they responded to him in belief or unbelief. Muhammad thus sees the Old Testament prophets as “types” or templates that are interchangeable as people. With these marionettes he establishes and justifies his own life story and his mission as a prophet, which his countrymen did not take seriously for the first 12 years.

Even the prophet as an individual has no meaning for the Koran. While we learn in the Bible about the irascible, anxious character of Moses, for example, or the disobedience and stubbornness of Jonah, and much about the family history of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (conflict, envy, jealousy, injustice, deceit), the prophets in the Koran are people without personalities. The prophet becomes significant only because of the mission he is to fulfill: to call the people to monotheism and to warn them of judgment. (Only very seldom is the prophet’s family mentioned as in the case of Abraham and Noah, but even then only to show that within a prophet’s own family people cling to idolatry and persecute and scoff at him—which is also a reference to Muhammad’s own situation.) The prophets’ message in the Koran almost seems to be like a formula: The Koran very strongly simplifies the stories taken from the Old Testament and the New Testament and gives them one single orientation: the call to Islam, the preaching of monotheism.

Muhammad sees himself in the role of the “one sent from God,” having to endure the jeers of his countrymen and even his family just as many prophets before him. He transfers his own situation onto the prophets before him without detailing the actual events in the past and their

specific history. Muhammad uses the prophet stories to justify his own claim to be “one sent from God.”

PROPHETS AS PREACHERS OF JUDGMENT

The Koran mentions several examples of such “unreasonable” nations that experienced God’s judgment for themselves in an earthquake, for example, or other natural disasters: “So we took each one in his sin; of them was he on whom we sent a hurricane and of them was he who was overtaken by the cry and of them was he who we caused the earth to swallow and of them was he whom we drowned”—29:40, 8:54).

These reports are called “punishment legends.” The number of them increases in the Koran the longer Muhammad must put up with the unbelief and the rejection of his countrymen. God’s intervention in judgment affirms and justifies the prophet: what he warned the people about has happened (cf. for example the story of Noah 7:59–64). Muhammad superimposes this “punishment legend” pattern onto his own situation: he too is ridiculed by the people of Mecca; his warnings of judgments are not taken seriously. But God will send judgment and thus legitimise his claims; his lot is like that of most of the prophets before him (38:17).

The prophet *must* preach the message no matter whether the people believe him, ridicule or persecute him. He preaches verbally (“Read!” or “Recite!”). Nowhere is he commanded to write down his message, as is frequently the case in the Bible.¹

THE KORAN—ORIGINAL REVELATION
BUT NOT A NEW REVELATION

The Koran only confirms the message that has been preached many times before. Muhammad’s message is not new, but rather a repetition of what all the prophets of history have already declared (15:10–13)—namely pure monotheism, Islam. According to the Koran, Adam, Abraham, Moses and Jesus were also preachers of Islam. People (even Jews and Christians) have distorted the message again and again in the course of time, but every prophet sent from God will bring the original revelation again. Only the Koran has remained undistorted to this day. The Koran thus claims to reinterpret and re-evaluate the mission and message of the biblical prophets. Islam sees itself as the “original religion” of humanity that has existed since the beginning and will exist into eternity. All other religions are aberrations and wrong in the end.

The Koran also has a cyclical view of history: The history of humanity is a series, always repeating itself schematically, on the following model:

1. The prophet is commissioned because a nation is engaging in idolatry and has distorted God’s original message
2. This nation mocks and persecutes the prophet
3. He threatens punishment and repeatedly warns them
4. The people refuse to believe
5. The people are again admonished to repent

1. Hans Zirker, *Der Koran: Zugänge und Lesarten* [The Koran: Additions and Versions.] (Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 1999), pp. 94–95.

6. A few of the people repent
7. Judgment breaks forth and the prophet is justified

WHICH PROPHETS ARE MENTIONED IN THE KORAN?

The Koran describes approximately 25 prophets (depending on the count) in detail and mentions about 15 others by name, or refers to them briefly. Most of the prophets originate in the Old and New Testaments; those who know the Bible well will be unfamiliar with only a minority of these because they occur only in the Koran.

The most important biblical prophets in the Koran are:

Adam (Adam)	Harun (Aaron)
Nuh (Noah)	Dawud (David)
Ibrahim (Abraham)	Sulaiman (Solomon)
and his two sons	Ilyas (Elijah)
Isma'il (Ishmael)	Alyasa' (Elisha)
Ishaq (Isaac)	Yunus (Jonah)
Lut (Lot)	Ayyub (Job)
Ya'qub (Jacob)	Zakariya (Zachariah)
Yusuf (Joseph)	Yahya (John)
Musa (Moses)	Isa (Jesus), sent to Israel

Some of the most important prophets, such as Elijah, David, Solomon, Jonah and Job, are mentioned only marginally in the Koran; other great Old Testament prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah or Ezekiel are not mentioned at all in the Koran.

Among the prophets the five great prophets have a special role: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. God made a covenant with them (33:7²).

Extra-biblical prophets in the Koran are: Idris (many Muslim theologians identify Idris with Enoch); Hud; Dhu l-Kifl; Shu'aib (a descendant of Abraham, as some commentators hold, possibly identified with the father-in-law of Moses, Jethro); Salih; Muhammad.

The most important prophets in the Koran (besides Muhammad) are Abraham (Ibrahim), Noah (Nuh), Moses (Musa) and Jesus ('Isa), of which the very most important prophets in the Koran besides Muhammad are indubitably Abraham, Moses and Jesus. Of these, Abraham takes a special distinction as the "Progenitor of Islam."

The Koran also says that God especially honored some individual prophets before others ("Of those messengers some of whom we have caused to excel others... while some of them he exalted above others in degree," 2:253; see also 17:55).

Several of these prophets in the Koran are given special titles: Adam is the "Chosen One of God" (Arabic: *safiy Allah*), Noah the "Prophet of God" (Arabic: *nabi Allah*), Abraham the "Friend of God" (Arabic: *khalil Allah*), Moses "God's Speaker" (Arabic: *kalim Allah*) and Muhammad the "One Sent from God" (Arabic: *rasul Allah*), the "Seal" (Arabic: *khatam*) of the Prophets. Muhammad continues the biblical sequence of the prophets: he is the one that inherits, interprets and corrects the Judeo-Christian tradition and surpasses it in his person and message (3:84). Muhammad expects Jews and

Christians to recognise his mission on the basis of his pre-eminence. In particular by declaring Abraham the founder and purifier of the Ka'ba in Mecca, he made himself the heir of Judaism and Christianity.

PROPHET OR MESSENGER?

The Koran uses two words for "prophet" in Arabic: *nabi* and *rasul*. *Nabi* refers to the prophet, the messenger of God who is sent with a book (Arabic: *naba'a*/II. root = *notify, advise, proclaim*; V. root = *predict, prophesy*) (similar in Hebrew *nabi*: speaker, preacher or called one). *Rasul* is the "One Sent from God" (Arabic: *rasala*/IV. root = *to send, commission*).

Islamic theologians give different figures for the number of prophets there have been in history (numbers such as 1000, 8000³ or even 124,000 are frequently cited). Of these the Koran refers to only nine as Ones Sent from God (Arabic: *rasul*, pl. *rusul*): Noah, Lot, Ishmael, Moses, Shu'aib, Hud, Salih, Jesus and Muhammad.

Muslim theologians do not provide a clear answer whether there is a semantic difference between the two terms, nor does the Koran offer any definitions. Some theologians claim that while a "nabi" is "one sent from God," a "rasul" is commissioned by God with a message, gives a law, but furthermore is also a recipient of godly messages that convey the revelation.⁴

During the period in Mecca, Muhammad seems to have been called a *rasul* and in Medina a *nabi*.⁵ Any difference, if there ever clearly was one, seems to have faded in Islamic literature in the course of time.⁶

THE PROPHET—ONLY A HUMAN

Actually—according to the view of Muslim theologians—the prophet, who preaches God's message to the people, is no different from other people. He is God's creation; he is mortal and has no supernatural abilities. The prophet is something special, however, to the extent that God has communicated a message to him, and this message brings him in contact with the supernatural. He perfectly understands the divine message he is to bring to his people.

THE CALLING AS A PROPHET

The Koran makes only a few references in Muhammad's case—and none at all for the other prophets—about how prophets are called by God (only Folk Islam and the prophet biographies include narratives, but these are legends and miracle stories). Muslim theology assumes that the angel Gabriel conveyed his message to Muhammad in individual

3. Henninger, *Spuren*, p. 35.

4. Hermann Stieglecker mentions this possible differentiation, *Die Glaubenslehren des Islam* [The doctrines of faith of Islam.] (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1962/1983), p. 153. Cf. also the explanation of the two terms by W. Montgomery Watt, Alfons T. Welch, *Der Islam* [Islam] (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1981), I, p. 222–223.

5. Roberto Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets in the Qur'an and Muslim Literature* (Richmond/Surrey: Curzon Press, 2002), p. 75.

6. A. J. Wensinck, "Rasul" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), VIII, p. 454–455; here p. 455.

2. Josef Henninger, *Spuren christlicher Glaubenswahrheiten im Koran* [Traces of Truths of the Christian Faith in the Koran.] (CH-Schöneck/Beckenried, 1951), pp. 35–36.

fragments when Muhammad was about 40 years old, in the month of Ramadan (2:185).

Moreover, it is unclear how the Koran came to exist in its present written form. Islamic theology states that Muhammad could not read or write, therefore the Koran must have been written down by other people (such as his followers, the Caliphs). There is almost a total lack of critical text history and extra-Islamic sources for the history of the Koran (in contrast to the Bible).

Tradition describes the process of communicating the message in different ways: Muhammad himself compared it to a bell's ring. Other reports state that the Holy Spirit put the content of the revelation into Muhammad's heart or spoke to him in a dream or through a face. Still other narratives report that the angel Gabriel appeared to Muhammad as a man. Muhammad is also said to have received instructions in heaven—one time about the number of obligatory prayers, for example, as he was traveling through heaven.⁷ Muhammad himself recalls that he "would often be seized by a fit when receiving a revelation, that foam would come out of his mouth, his head would sink, his face would become pale or glow red; he would cry out like a young camel; the sweat would fall off of him despite the winter weather, etc."⁸

GOD'S COVENANT WITH THE PROPHETS

God makes a covenant with the prophets (33:7), e.g. with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (7:134; 43:149). However, the Koran does not explain what this "covenant" means, nor does it disclose the terms of this covenant. Only in surah 2:40 does God declare that he will also keep his covenant obligation to the people, but without saying what constitutes this covenant. Surah 9:111 describes God's covenant obligation to indicate that he assures Paradise to those believers who fight the "jihad" on God's path.⁹ Surah 3:81 states that God has obligated the prophets to believe the revelations and messengers he sends them. The people are also obligated to keep the covenant with God, i.e. to obey him (faith, good works and prayer) (2:27; 13:20; 57:8).

In contrast, God's covenants with the people in the Bible are made for eternity and with absolute certainty. The person who makes a covenant with God is to serve him faithfully all of his life. The man who makes a covenant with his wife—marries her—is to be faithful to her as long as he lives.

THE LANGUAGE OF REVELATION

There are no prophets in the Koran that bring a new revelation. The message that began with Adam is preached again and again to each nation "in its language." Moses brought the Torah (Arabic: *taurah*), David the Psalms (Arabic: *zabur*), Jesus the gospel (Arabic: *indjil*), Muhammad the Koran. Muhammad was specifically sent to the Arabs, who

had not yet received a message in their language: "And so we have revealed to thee an Arabic Koran . . . that you may warn of the day of gathering" (add: for the final judgment) (42:7; 12:2; 16:103). But if it is a matter of the "language" of the revelation, the Koran does not explain which languages the other messages were rendered in (Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic?) or whether really all peoples have received a revelation (nowhere does the Koran indicate that it is aware of peoples outside of the Arabian Peninsula). This brings nothing to bear for the Koran—all that is important is for the "sending down" (Arabic: *tanzil*) of an Arabian message to be established.

Muhammad includes the Arabian nation among the other recipients of revelations as "People of the Book" (or "People of the Scripture"). As long as he assumed that his message was consistent with the Jewish and Christian revelation and that Jews and Christians would recognise him as a prophet, he placed all these revelation recipients on one level. Later, when Jews and Christians rejected him and claimed that his message was different (e.g. regarding God's son and trinity), he placed the Koran above all other revelations and the Arabs above all other peoples: He came to the conclusion that Jews and Christians had distorted their message and that the Koran was the one true, undistorted message. Only the Koran is an exact copy of God's original revelation kept in heaven, the "Mother of the Book" (Arabic: *umm al-kitab*) (43:4). The Torah and the gospel are thus superseded; the emergence of the Koran has made them worthless.

With this theory of the superiority of the Koran, the Arabic language is also made God's revelation language and thus placed above all other languages. For Muslim theologians the Koran is "inimitable," perfect, unsurpassable; thus it was not translated for many centuries. "God only speaks Arabic," one could say for Islam: the worship of God (pilgrimage, prayer, fasting) is valid before God only in Arabic. Wherever Islam has sent missionaries, it has Arabised the people's language, their names, their native clothing and their customs and disregarded their native culture.

The language of revelation does not play a decisive role in the Bible. The Old Testament was written predominantly in Hebrew; the New Testament in Greek; Jesus spoke Aramaic. Nowhere is there an indication that God prefers a particular language or can reveal himself only in one language. On the contrary: the gospel is to be preached properly and clearly in every language and culture, for in eternity people of all languages, tongues, nations and tribes will gather before God's throne (Rev. 15)—not only people who speak Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic.

THE POSITION OF THE PROPHET BEFORE GOD

God allows the prophets of the Koran—mortal beings who have limitations—to glimpse God's reality to some degree. They receive the certainty that God exists. This sometimes takes place in the Koran in that they request a miracle from God and he fulfils their wish (Abraham, the disciples, Surah 5). Afterwards they can believe in God's great power and are willing to fulfil his command. The prophets are thus in contact with God's world and the world of people: God gives them his message, and they pass it on to the people to whom they are sent.

7. According to Theodor Nöldeke, *Geschichte des Korans* [History of the Koran] (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1909/1981) Part 1, p. 22f. based on Islamic tradition.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 24

9. Understood to be among those who "fight on God's path" are those who died a martyr's death in the struggle for Islam.

THE PROPHETS' MIRACLES:
"MIRACLES OF VERIFICATION"

The prophet is actually a human being and is unable to accomplish anything supernatural. God can allow him to perform a miracle in order to affirm him, however: his "miracle of verification" (Arabic: *mu'dji'za*), to which every prophet is entitled. The Arabic word *mu'dji'za* refers to that which makes the prophet's opponents unable to deny the validity of his mission and silences their objections. This miracle can be a supernatural occurrence or also the ceasing of an otherwise normal event, e.g. water stops flowing.

THE KORAN AS A MIRACLE OF
VERIFICATION FOR MUHAMMAD'S MISSION

As Muhammad failed to be recognised as God's prophet in the first years following 610 A.D. by his Arabic countrymen, the Jews and the Christians, and the threatened judgment had not occurred, he had to defend himself from increasing ridicule and threats in his home city of Mecca.

Muhammad's countrymen demanded that he should perform a miracle like all the earlier prophets had done (20:133). According to the Koran, Muhammad could not and would not perform a miracle. He referred to the Koran as a miracle: for this reason theologians deem the Koran to be Muhammad's "miracle of verification." At first Muhammad's contemporaries did not acknowledge the Koran as a substitute for an authentic miracle (11:13; 10:37–38). Muhammad challenged his contemporaries to create a document similar to the Koran, which they could not do (see 17:88).

Since the revelation itself is the miracle, it is deemed to be inimitable in its language, its logic, its academic nature, its consistency, its reliable prophecies and because of the fact that Muhammad was illiterate. These views are generally recognized.

DISTORTION OF THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHETS?

Although the Koran again and again emphasises that it is the *only* true message, which has not been falsified, it admits at the same time that every prophet—including Muhammad—also received distorted verses. The prophet himself is not aware of that, so he transfers the message to his people, but later has to cancel some verses and to correct others as the Koran testifies: "Never did we send a messenger or a prophet before you, but when he recited (the message), Satan threw some (vanity) into his desire, but Allah will cancel anything (vain) that Satan throws in. And Allah will confirm his signs, for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom" (22:52): That means, Satan (Arabic: *Iblis*) can temporarily add false statements to God's revelation which are finally corrected by God. At the end of the process, revelation is in perfect shape and the absolute truth, but at the moment when the prophet speaks, he can also transfer what Satan has added to God's word.

The Koran mentions some more reasons why a revelation from God can be temporarily falsified, e.g. God made Muhammad forget certain things (2:106, 87:6–7), or he later inspired him with a better revelation (20:114). In the Bible, we do not read of such a later correction of what has been proclaimed to the people as the word of God. If

God commissions his messenger, he then proclaims God's message from the beginning to the end and does not have to take it back.

THE SINLESSNESS OF THE PROPHETS

In Islam, it is generally accepted that a prophet of God is infallible. As a messenger of God he is unable to commit sin; thus all prophets in Islam are considered to be sinless without exception. The Arabic term for sinlessness is *'isma* which literally means "protection" or "preservation" from sin and error. The prophet is protected from sin because God has bestowed his mercy on him. (According to the Bible, no human being can be sinless, no prophet, no patriarch, only the son of God, Jesus Christ.)

It is disputed in Islam whether a prophet can perhaps commit small sins without intention, whether he has the special protection from sin only while he is preaching or in general, and whether the prophet can err when it comes to worldly affairs. It is quite interesting to note that Muslim theology defines prophets as sinless, since the Koran reports on several instances that prophets asked God for forgiveness for their wrongdoings: Adam in surah 7:23; Noah in 11:47; Abraham in 14:41, Moses in 28:16, David in 38:24; Muhammad in 110:3 and 48:2, although in Muhammad's case, the Koran does not mention any concrete sins. Surah 93:7 reports that God led Muhammad on the straight path which he did not follow beforehand (one could indirectly draw the conclusion that Muhammad erred or was mistaken, although this is not explained in further detail). But there are other Koranic verses which tell us that God had to forgive Muhammad (9:43; 94:2). In 48:2 we read that God had to forgive Muhammad his wrongdoing (or faults). Also in Sunni tradition we find some reports which tell us that Muhammad was doing wrong in some instances.¹⁰ We can assume that the doctrine of the sinlessness of the prophets came into existence only in about the tenth century.¹¹ In early Islam it was already emphasised that Muhammad did not take part in the preislamic practises of idolatry while his countrymen venerated the gods and idols in the Ka'ba, the most holy sanctuary in preislamic times, before his calling to become a prophet.¹²

PROPHETS AS MEDIATORS BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

In the Koran, God does not address his people directly, but he conveys his message by the help of a mediator, the angel Gabriel. Gabriel transmits God's message to the prophet (Muslim theology has emphasised that this was especially the case with Muhammad), and the prophet conveys it to the people: "It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him, except by inspiration or from behind a veil, or by the sending of a messenger to reveal, with Allah's permission, what Allah wills, for he is most high, most wise" (42:51).

God transfers his message to the prophet and thus gets in touch with mankind, but there is only indirect contact between God and man. God is hidden to mankind, and even if he

10. Compare Stieglecker, *op. cit.*, p. 477–478.

11. Louis Gardet, *Islam* (Köln: Verlag J. P. Bachem, 1968), p. 68.

12. Stieglecker, *op. cit.*, p. 472f.

sends his revelation, he himself remains in seclusion, he is out of reach for human beings. God could never transcend into the sphere of this world and in any way be closely connected with a prophet, who is a human being, as God and man can never be imagined to be on the same level or only on a level where they could directly communicate to each other. In the Koran, God does not reveal himself, but he sends his message, a book, through a mediator. He does not sacrifice anything of himself by sending the Koran, one could say, as he is not involved “personally” in the process of revelation, whereas the full revelation of the gospel in Jesus Christ cost him all he could sacrifice, his life. That is why sacrificing is a synonym of love in the Bible: if we sacrifice money, time, friendship, hospitality or even our lives for one another, we are following Jesus’ example (“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends” —Jn 15:13).

In the Bible, God has spoken directly and unmistakably to his prophets (“This is what the Lord said to me,”—Jer. 13:1; or “The word came to Jeremiah from the Lord . . .” —Jer. 21:1). God establishes direct communication to his messenger and sometimes to his people. God reveals himself, makes himself known (“I am, who I am” —Ex. 3:13). God has revealed himself in history and “spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son . . . the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (Heb. 1:1–2). In Jesus Christ, God revealed himself, so he could be seen and even touched. Through Jesus Christ, God and man came into the closest contact one could imagine. In Jesus, God speaks to mankind on a human level, he becomes human himself, which meant suffering and death for him. There is no “sending” of a book which contains laws and rules only, no keeping himself in hiding. In the Bible, God offered his son as a sacrifice in order to redeem his flock. The revelation of his will cost him everything possible, as he gave himself for his people.

PROPHETS IN THE LAST JUDGEMENT: INTERCESSORS AND WITNESSES

Most Muslim theologians hold that prophets are honoured by God in a special way. In Paradise, they will be in a higher position than the saints, than martyrs and angels.¹³ They are in a much better position than the “average” believer as they will be preferred by God in the Last Judgement, the “hour” (Arabic: *sa’at*). In like manner, they will be able to prefer others by interceding for them. They may witness against other people, who did not listen to their preaching on earth, so that they will go to hell. Prophets will not be questioned in their graves after their death, as other believers can expect to be.¹⁴ Thus prophets do not have to be afraid of death.

So on the one hand, prophets are privileged, but on the other hand the Koran seems to hint at the possibility of intercession for Muslim believers after their death in the Last Judgement. Some Koran verses mention God as intercessor (39:44; 32:4), other verses seem to neglect that any human being can intercede for others (40:18; 74:48). Despite such negative statements, most Muslims are of the opinion that

Muhammad will intercede for Muslim believers on the Day of Judgement, whereas Folk Islam teaches that also prophets other than Muhammad as well as martyrs and saints can intercede for the believers (not only Abraham or Moses, but also the Caliph ‘Uthman or Muhammad’s grandsons, al-Hasan and al-Husain who are venerated especially in the Shi’a branch of Islam).

When all people are gathered for judgement, a book will be opened which contains all sins and good deeds which have been performed on earth, and the prophets will witness against peoples who had refused to lend their ears to the messengers of God who had warned them of the day of wrath (4:159; 16:89 etc.).

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO BELIEVE IN THE PROPHETS?

To believe in the sending of the prophets is no question of minor importance in Islam, but is one of the five fundamental articles of faith (besides the belief in God and the sending of Muhammad, belief in the angels, belief in the holy books and in the Last Judgement). Also when pronouncing the Muslim creed “There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger,” Muslims daily confess to believe in Muhammad’s prophethood. In other words, the question whether somebody believes in God is inseparably connected with the question whether he accepts the prophethood of Muhammad. There is no faith in God in Islam without accepting Muhammad’s mission. On the other hand, it is no minor offence to insult a prophet in Islam. It is no private matter, but can be threatened or even punished with the death penalty (Pakistan). Nevertheless, for many Muslims the saints play a more important role in their daily life than the prophets.

THE FINALITY OF THE PROPHETS

Muhammad is the last prophet in history, the “seal” of prophets (Arabic: *khatam*). He is thus the end of a long line of prophets and the climax of history which can never be exceeded. Whoever has claimed prophethood for himself after Muhammad (like the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement in India at the beginning of the twentieth century, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad) must be prepared to be declared a heretic.

VENERATION OF THE PROPHETS IN FOLK ISLAM AND MYSTICISM

In Folk Islam, the prophets are held in very high esteem; they are venerated like saints, especially Muhammad, who—besides all theological consideration about Islam being the only true monotheistic religion—is strongly idealised and has acquired some godlike features in the course of history. During ritual prayer, Muslims ask God to bestow his blessings upon Muhammad. In Folk Islam people address their prayers to the prophets, and many miracles have been reported as a result of such prayer to the prophets. Their graves are sanctuaries, their relics are kept in shrines, as they attract many people who try to touch the relics or the grave in order to get some of the “Baraka” (blessing power) of the prophet

13. *Ibid.*, p. 707.

14. Louis Gardet, “Kiyama” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. V, pp. 235–238, here p. 237.

or saint.¹⁵ Muslim tradition contains numerous reports of miracles performed by Muhammad, which began already when his mother was pregnant with him and continued to happen until his death.

Also in mysticism, the veneration of the prophets is very common. Each “Shaikh” or “Pir” (the leader of a mystical order) would try to date his family’s genealogy back to some important person of Islam’s early history and finally to Muhammad himself. Members of mystical circles always venerate Muhammad as the absolute ideal to follow. Sufis often report to have seen Muhammad in their dreams.¹⁶ In Folk Islam and in mysticism, there are many traces of syncretism, which contradict the Islamic idea of monotheism.

In the Bible, it is obvious that prophets are mortal, human beings, who can not hear prayer and are not able to intercede for other people in the Last Judgement.

THE WIVES AND THE COMPANIONS OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD

Even Muhammad’s wives and his companions are of interest in order to understand Islam’s teaching about prophets, since they serve as role models for the believers. They are considered to be ideal examples of an Islamic way of life and conduct. Muhammad’s wives are named the “mothers of the believers.” The way they dressed and their behaviour are examples for all women of the following generations, they must be imitated (33:32). To follow Muhammad’s example (his *sunna*) and the example of his wives and companions is obligatory for any Muslim. That means that the prophet’s “holiness” extends also to his family and his environment. This finds absolutely no parallel in the Bible, where the prophet’s family is not automatically an example merely because the prophet preaches God’s word to Israel. For the Shi’a branch of Islam, the prophethood of Muhammad finds its continuation in the “Imam,” who always has to be a relative of Muhammad.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD FOR ISLAMIC LAW

Muhammad’s decisions, his likings and dislikings, as they are reported in Muslim tradition, play an important role for Muslim law, since his behaviour and his decisions as a prophet of God are considered to be of normative, legislative character for the Muslim *umma* (community).

The *sunna* (customs of Muhammad) does not only give guidelines for all Muslims worldwide, but is also the second source of Islamic law besides the Koran.

As Islamic law (the *Sharia*) is considered not to be an ordinary, man-made law but to be God’s law, Muhammad’s

own conduct of affairs is of legislative character, although he was only a human being.

THE PROPHET JESUS

In the Koran, Jesus calls himself a prophet (19:30–32); he is also named a messenger (4:157), a mortal human being, who has not, according to the Koran, committed any sin, in contrast to Muhammad. Jesus was sent to confirm what was revealed by God beforehand and to correct former revelations (e.g. the Torah and the Zabur, the Psalms) where they have been falsified. Jesus’ role is solely defined as being a prophet like all the other prophets before him, who has to preach Islam, sticks to Islamic law (19:31–32) and announces the coming of Muhammad, even if he is depicted as an example of piety and devotion in the Koran (19:45–46).

PROPHETS IN THE BIBLE

In the Old Testament there are many different aspects when it comes to the role of a prophet of God (often called *nabi* in Hebrew or “man of God”). He preaches the word of God to Israel, but in different times in many different ways. There are prophets who preached only and there are “scripture prophets.” God sent a prophet when Israel turned away from faith in the God of Israel (Ezekiel) or got involved in politics (Isaiah 7). The prophets of the Bible exhort Israel to return to God and warn of the coming judgement. They are aware of some events in the future, and God sometimes performs miracles through them.

In many instances the Bible discusses the question of the “false prophets,” those who prophesy in order to get paid, or those who only proclaim what people like to hear (Mic. 3:5, 11:1; 1 Sam. 9:7; Jer. 5:31; 6:14; 8:11 etc.) The “false prophets” are not sent by God (Jer. 23:21), their visions and dreams are lies (Jer. 14:14), and they will be punished by God (Jer. 23:30–32).

Prophets in the Bible are the authors of the prophetic books from Isaiah to Malachi, but also other persons like Abraham (Gen. 20:7), Moses (Dt. 18:15–18), Aaron (Ex. 7:1), Samuel (1 Sam. 3:20), Nathan (2 Sam. 7:2), Elijah and Elisha, Micah (1 Kings 22:9), Mirjam (Ex. 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Hulda (2 Kings 22:14), Hanna (Lk. 2:36) and John the Baptist (Mt. 3:7–11).

God calls the prophets in many different ways to serve him (Is. 6; Jonah 1:1ff.) and authorises them to proclaim his message. They are servants of God (Jer. 7:25), serving their people but being even more obliged to God and his commission. The prophet discloses sin (Is. 1:2; Jer. 7) and brings it into the daylight, which can have dangerous repercussions for him.

If God brings judgement over Israel—by the Assyrian or Babylonian invasion for example—the prophet suffers with his countrymen because of their sin. He calls his contemporaries to repent (Ezek. 3:19), and reminds Israel of God’s faithfulness in spite of their grave sin and apostasy. When the prophets call their people to faith, they address Israel in the first place, but in a broader sense, their preaching is also a message to the surrounding peoples who can learn of God’s holiness from his dealing with Israel.

Each word given by a prophet may be different. It may be

15. Every Muslim country has its shrines, graves and sanctuaries, although Wahhabi Islam in Saudi-Arabia strongly opposes any worshipping of saints. If one would count all people making a pilgrimage to one of the saints’ graves and sanctuaries, they would be many more than those making the pilgrimage to the Ka’ba in Mecca.

16. Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystische Dimensionen des Islam* [Mystical Dimensions of Islam.] (Köln: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1985), p. 305. Already in the eighth century we witness a specific form of mysticism focussing on Muhammad.

a concrete warning against sin (Nathan). In many instances prophets start their preaching with: “This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel says” (Jer. 28:2). Sometimes the prophets directly address their people, sometimes they speak

in parables. The prophet is inspired by visions and dreams or “the word of the Lord comes to him” (Ezek. 1:3). In the New Testament Jesus is the fulfilment of all Old Testament prophecies. *C&S*

THE PROPHET JOSEPH IN THE KORAN: AN EXAMPLE FOR MUHAMMAD

by *Christine Schirrmacher*

INTRODUCTION

BESIDES the story of Kain and Abel, the story of Joseph is the only narrative of a prophet in the Koran that is reported in one surah for the most part (surah 12). All other prophet stories of the Koran are distributed in bits and pieces of one to five verses over several surahs. By analysing surah 12, we get a clear picture of how Muhammad understood his own role as a prophet and messenger of God and how he made use of biblical texts to serve his purposes and to justify his own sending.

TIME OF REVELATION—TIME IN HISTORY

Like all other narratives of the prophets in the Koran, the story of Joseph is all up in the air. The Koran does not give any hint at a concrete historical date, nor at the name of Joseph’s family (his father and brothers), nor does the Koran allude to the time in history when what is described in Surah 12 happened, whereas the biblical report aims at giving a historical framework for what is reported in the Old and New Testaments in general and also for the following story.

As we can presume, the story of Joseph was “revealed” to Muhammad around his last year in his home city Mecca, just before he emigrated to Medina (622 A.D.), in the “Third Meccan period,” as orientalists specify. At that time Muhammad must have had some knowledge of the prophets of the Old and New Testament as he had come into contact with Jews and Christians on the Arabian Peninsula some years earlier, and he surely still hoped at that point to be accepted by Jews and Christians as a prophet of God. By 622 A.D. the pagan Arabs had already rejected his claim to prophethood and become increasingly hostile towards him, so that he had to flee to the neighbouring city, Medina. In Mecca, Muhammad was confronted with the fact that only very few of his countrymen followed his call and became adherents of Islam. Surah 12 alludes to this background, as God told Joseph in 12:103: “And though you try much, most men will not believe.”

THE COURSE OF THE STORY

The frame of the narrative in the Koran is similar to what we read in the Old Testament. At the beginning, it is emphasised that the Koran was sent down “in Arabic.” As the Koran teaches, God has sent a specific revelation to each people group; the Koran has been sent to the Arabs. Joseph reports to his father that he has seen eleven stars, the sun and the moon bowing down before him in his dreams. Joseph’s father warns him not to pass this on to his brothers, because they would “plot a plot against” him (12:5). But at the same time his father also remarks: “So will your Lord choose you and teach you the interpretation of tales” (12:6): This refers to Joseph’s further role as one who is chosen by God to teach his contemporaries what is hidden from them.

In 12:8 we are informed about the envy of Joseph’s brothers as well as of their desire to get rid of their younger brother (12:9). The brothers ask their father to let Joseph come with them (12:11–12). The father is afraid of Joseph being devoured by a “wolf” (12:13), as if he already had some supernatural knowledge of what may happen. Now Joseph’s brothers throw him down a cistern (12:15) and in the evening, they report to their father that a wolf has killed their brother Joseph (12:17). The reaction of their father could be understood as being rather supernatural: He does not believe what his sons tell him, but still does not mourn for Joseph. He exhorts himself to remain patient and to expect his help to come from God (12:18).

Meanwhile Joseph has been found in the cistern and has been sold to Egypt (12:19–21). But whereas the Bible tells us that Joseph was sold as a slave, the Koran informs us of Joseph’s privileged position: “We established Joseph in the land” (12:21) “and we gave him judgement and knowledge” (12:22). Joseph does not come to Egypt as a slave without rights: his future position of power and influence is announced already. Power, wisdom and knowledge are a reward for Joseph’s piety: “Even so we recompense the good-doers” (12:22).

In the course of the story, it is interesting to note that the Koran informs us of Joseph’s desire to give in to temp-

tation as the wife of his Egyptian master tries to lead him astray (12:24; 12:31). Only because God sent the “proof of his master” (12:24) could he resist (not because of his faith, as the Bible tells us). Joseph’s master then realises that his wife told him a lie (12:28), but nevertheless he calls Joseph a liar (12:29). When some women visiting the wife of Joseph’s master see Joseph, they are overwhelmed by Joseph’s beauty and consider him to be an angel (12:31). Although Joseph’s rejection of the wife of his Egyptian master is evident and her husband understands that she is lying to him, Joseph is nevertheless imprisoned: “Then it seemed good to them . . . that they should imprison him for a while” (12:35). No explanation is given for this decision.

While in prison, Joseph preaches *monotheism* to his fellow prisoners. When they tell him about their dreams, Joseph claims to have the gift of dream interpretation from the very beginning, since God had taught him so (12:37). Later, when Joseph is released from prison, he *demand*s: “Set me over the land’s storehouses, I am a knowing guardian” (12:55).

Then his brothers come to Egypt to buy “provisions” (12:58). Joseph commands them to bring their (younger) brother with them to Egypt (12:59). After they have all returned again, Joseph reveals to one of them who he really is: “I am your brother” (12:69)—but there is no reaction for the moment. When they depart from Egypt, Joseph hides his drinking cup in one of their saddle bags, and when it is found, they are called “robbers” (12:70–76). So the brothers leave one of them as a pledge for their return (12:77–81).

Now Joseph’s father has lost another child and again tries to remain patient (12:83), but *now* grieves so much for Joseph that he becomes blind (12:84). The brothers again set off for Egypt (12:88) where Joseph discloses his identity to all of them. Then the brothers state: “God has indeed preferred you above us” (12:91), and Joseph answers: “No reproach will this day be on you” (12:92), so the brothers return home. Strangely, their father receives back his eyesight in a miraculous way (12:96). The brothers confess their sin to their father (12:97), and Joseph summarises his years in Egypt: “O my Lord, you have given me to rule, and you have taught me the interpretation of tales” (12:101).

The Koran text itself summarises the reported events by stating that God’s revelation is sent down as a warning to mankind, but most of them do not believe that God’s judgement will come quickly upon them (12:104, 106–107).

Surah 12 ends with a second affirmation that the Koran is no fancy idea, or fiction or fantasy, but confirms what has been sent down earlier to mankind as a revelation from God in order to lead the true believers back to the straight path (12:111).

JOSEPH PROCLAIMS ISLAM AND MONOTHEISM

The introduction to surah 12 reads: “We have sent it down as an *Arabic* Koran” (12:2). The Koran understands itself as a revelation from God, specifically sent down to the Arab speaking people, in Arabic. The Koran text corrects and exceeds all former revelations which have been “falsified” by mankind in the course of history.

In comparison to the Bible, the story of Joseph in the Koran is deprived not only of its spiritual aspects, it also indirectly criticises the Christian faith when Joseph emphasises that men are not allowed to associate a partner to God

(12:38; 106), which is the most common reproach of the Koran towards Christians, who believe in the Trinity. Before he dies, Joseph prays that Allah might accept him and let him enter paradise after his death: “O my Lord! . . . You are my protector in this world and in the hereafter. Take my soul as one submitting to your will (as a Muslim) and unite me with the righteous” (12:101).

THE PROPHET JOSEPH AS DEPICTED IN SURAH 12

In the Koran, the story of Joseph is transformed into a “prophet story” which is typical of the Koran (the same could be said for the narratives of Abraham, Moses or Jesus). On the one hand, Muhammad uses the prophets of the Old and New Testaments as role models to justify his claim to be a messenger of God; on the other hand, he only picks those aspects of the prophet stories of the Bible that suit him and explain his own situation, and inserts them into the Koran.

Joseph’s brothers mocked him and looked down on him instead of realising that he was chosen by God, he, the righteous one, the one who had been sent with a message and a mission. But very early on, God let Joseph take a look behind the scenes. He gave him honour, wisdom and a position of prestige in Egypt from the very beginning, as this is the position which an honoured messenger of God deserves to have (Muslim apologists have often emphasised that it is unlikely that Jesus should have died on the cross, because an honoured prophet of God does not deserve such treatment.)

At the end of surah 12, we learn that God had sent other messengers before Joseph (12:109) who had warned the people about associating other Gods with him, lest judgement come upon them (12:107): The story of Joseph is “a confirmation of what is before it, and a distinguishing and a guidance and a mercy to all people who believe” (12:111).

Muhammad regarded himself as some sort of Old Testament prophet who received a revelation from God and was sent to call the unbelieving people to faith in him, while most of them are not willing to listen. Joseph, who was persecuted, chased away by his family, looked down upon him, scoffed at—but then received a position of honour and influence—is a foreshadowing of Muhammad’s own future. Joseph’s story parallels his own desperate plight in Mecca in the first 12 years after he started preaching Islam, as he had to endure persecution by his contemporaries and also by his own family. This pressure put upon him must have been rather hard in the years around the “hidjra” in 622 A.D., when surah 12 was “revealed” to him. But in the same way that the day came when Joseph reached a position of power and his brothers had to submit to him, who was chosen, God will justify Muhammad and prove that his claim to be a prophet was true, as there are unbelieving people who associate other partners to Allah.

Also, Joseph’s brothers who had humiliated and persecuted Joseph, finally have to acknowledge that he is privileged, and one who has been placed before them. In like manner, the many unbelievers among the Arab people of Mecca, who still despised Muhammad and called him a sorcerer, obsessed by demons, will have to accept him and realise that he preached the truth. God will place Muhammad in a position of power one day, as he did with Joseph. As Joseph

did not suffer too much, so Muhammad will not, but he will gain victory soon, because he is chosen by God to preach.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE BIBLICAL AND THE KORAN TEXT

1. In the Bible, from a spiritual point of view, all people involved have much to learn. It is not only Joseph as an individual whom God is dealing with, but his whole family: his father and his brothers are also involved. But besides these, there is also Israel and the “pagan” people of Egypt, who play an important role in the story. Whereas Israel is saved from starvation, God at the same time reaches out to the Egyptians, not only with the gospel of God’s glory and power, which was preached to them by Joseph, but also by “putting Joseph in charge of the whole land of Egypt” (Genesis 41:43). But before this, Joseph, the spoiled son of Jacob, who all his lifetime had been preferred by him over his brothers, has to learn humbleness, faith and forgiveness. Joseph’s brothers have to repent of their envy, their hatred, their deception and their lies. A long time prior to this, father Jacob had cheated his own father Isaac and his brother Esau, and now has to learn how it feels to be deceived himself. One result of God’s dealing with all these people is that the whole of Israel is saved and God’s unlimited power is demonstrated to the Egyptians, while at the same time the individual people come to a better understanding of God’s ethical values.

In the Koran, this dimension is completely missing. Joseph is depicted as a successful, victorious prophet who is aware of God’s hidden agenda from the very beginning. In the end, he receives his reward because he does “not associate a partner” to God. We find no explanation in the text as to why Joseph has to preach monotheism. If we do not draw the line to Muhammad’s own situation in Mecca in 622 A.D., this statement would have no connection to the rest of the story.

2. In the Bible, Israel is saved from starvation, but at the same time, the family of Jacob goes through a process of reconciliation and healing. Nobody has “deserved” it, because all the people involved have sinned, some of them gravely: Joseph by picking at his brothers, Jacob by preferring Joseph as his “special” son, the brothers by selling Joseph to Egypt, by their lies, their deception and their complete lack of mercy towards their father and brother, who had “pleaded with them for his life” to have mercy on him when they had thrown him into the cistern, but they did not listen to him (Gen. 42:21). In the Koran, the good end of the story is a reward for Joseph’s piety (“So we recompense the good-doers,” 12:22), but there is no development of the individuals’ characters. The sin of Joseph’s brothers is mentioned, but it does not seem to be very dramatic, as they ask Joseph for forgiveness (12:91).

3. In the Bible, there is a whole spectrum of human feelings: envy, hatred, fear, guilt, hope, mourning, resignation, shame, pity and finally pleasure. There are strong expressions of despair, when Joseph was thrown into the cistern (Gen. 42:21), feelings of depression when he was imprisoned and forgotten by everyone (Gen. 40:15, 23) and joyful delight when he was finally reunited with his family (Gen. 43:30). In the Koran, we read very little about Joseph’s feelings and the inner emotions of the people involved. The Koranic text

is much more sterile; it follows a fixed pattern, and not only Joseph, but also his father seem to be outlined as types, some sort of actors, who play in a performance on a stage: They are not depicted as individual personalities, and God does not make his “individual” history with them as he does in the Bible.

4. In the Bible it is reported that Joseph runs away from the wife of his master as she tries to lead him into temptation. He resisted because he knew that adultery is a grave sin against God (“How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?” Gen. 39:9). In the Koran, Joseph is only able to resist temptation because God is sending him a “sign” (or proof). There is no hint at Joseph being aware of sinning against God. This fits into Islam’s concept of sin as a trespass against one’s self, not against God, as the Koran states in many surahs.

5. In the Bible, Joseph dreamed of stars and sheaves of grain which bowed down to him, but he does not know what this means nor what would happen in the future. He has no other option than to accept what God bestows on him—and what finally came was quite hard for Joseph to swallow. Potiphar is angry at him because he believes what his wife has told him (Gen. 39:19), so Joseph has to go to prison for several years. He is alone, far from home, forgotten by everyone, no possibility of justifying himself. There seems to be no way to get out of prison and prove that Potiphar’s wife has been lying. Joseph is left with no idea whether or at what point God will change his destiny. He could have become hard and bitter. Nevertheless, he remained faithful and put his trust in God.

In the Koran, Joseph does not really seem to suffer hardship, nor does he have to have faith and trust God for what he cannot see, since God keeps him informed about his plan: He sees “his signs” (or proofs) and knows that God will justify him and help him (12:21, 37, 55). Joseph is not even considered to be guilty of adultery. He is aware of his position all along and he has “knowledge” and “wisdom” (12:21, 37, 55). Although there is some conflict with the wife of his master, it is obvious all along that Joseph has not done anything. He has to go to prison, but there is no need for him to feel desperate, as it is clear from the beginning that he is innocent. He does not need justification, since he does not lose control of the situation at any time.

6. In the Bible, Joseph is depicted as a true personality, a character with weaknesses and strengths. In the Koran, Joseph is only the prototype of a prophet sent to proclaim monotheism and one of the messengers in the cycle of prophets in history (12:109, 112), interchangeable, with no specific characteristics.

7. In the Bible, Joseph has to learn humility. He always points to God as the only one who can interpret dreams and never demands that gift for himself (he denies being able to interpret dreams by himself six times: Gen. 40:8; 41:16, 25, 29, 29, 32). In the Koran, Joseph is self-confident and claims the gift of interpreting dreams for himself, since God had taught him (12:37).

8. In the Bible, the brothers of Joseph are very different after God has dealt with them. In the beginning they are wicked, full of envy, looking for revenge, lying, insidious, without mercy and pity for their father and brother. In the course of the story they realise how it feels to be dependent on other people’s mercy (when they were suspected of theft). They suddenly find themselves in a position where they are

helpless (like Joseph in the cistern); they have to surrender, fulfil all the conditions Joseph has imposed on them, but still they are called robbers. Finally, they have to confess their sins (Gen. 44:16), they repent (Gen. 42:21), ask for forgiveness (Genesis 50:17), surrender and submit themselves (Gen. 50:18), as they realise that they would not find any other way out. In Gen. 44:14 they call themselves “servants”! In the Koran, we only find a pale reflection of all this. The brothers consent to Joseph being in some way “superior” to them (12:91) and they vaguely confess their “sin” (12:97), but there is no visible change in their attitude.

9. In the Bible, Joseph realises how merciful God is in dealing with him as he releases him from prison and gives back to him what he had lost. Seeing that he cannot change his destiny (as he tried to speak up for himself to get out of prison), but that God is in control of everything and has helped him out of perhaps the darkest place in the whole of Egypt, makes him merciful towards other people. So he can forgive his brothers and not take revenge when he had the opportunity. In the Koran, the main intention of Joseph’s mission is to proclaim monotheism (12:38, 40, 106). Aspects like showing mercy or forgiving those who do not deserve it do not seem to be of any importance for the Joseph story in the Koran.

10. In the Bible, the last verses of the account of Joseph belong perhaps to the most touching ones in this story and also in the whole of Scripture: Joseph completely denies the possibility of taking revenge for all he had to endure. His brothers confess that they had wickedly sold him to Egypt, but Joseph tells them three times, that *God* sent him to Egypt, not them: “And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save

lives that *God sent me* ahead of you . . . But *God sent me* ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance . . . So then, *it was not you who sent me here, but God*. He made me father to Pharaoh” (Gen. 45:5–8). After the death of his father, Joseph was moved to tears when he realised that his brothers were still afraid of his wrath. They kneel before him, but Joseph says: “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives . . .” (Gen. 50:20). God brought about insight, repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. He saves his people from death and carries out what brings about salvation for Israel as well as for Egypt.

In the Koran, we completely miss these aspects, which make the story of Joseph in the Bible so precious. How much more shallow reads the last sentence of the Koran: “O my Lord! . . . You are my protector in this world and in the hereafter. Take my soul as one submitting to your will (as a Muslim) and unite me with the righteous” (12:101). Joseph is only one of the long line of predecessors of Muhammad in the course of history, since God has ordained him to be a preacher of Islam. As a prophet, he knows for sure that his victory will come, as an honoured prophet of God does not have to suffer. A messenger of Allah is not left helpless, abandoned and alone, he does not have to learn what God wants to teach him about mercy and forgiveness, because humiliation, disgrace, slander and defeat are not meant for a prophet of God. Joseph is more the “hero” type in Surah 12 than a servant and a tool in God’s hands. Muhammad has cut the biblical Joseph story to the size he needed in order to illustrate his own situation. No wonder there is not much of the biblical report left over. *C&S*

CHURCH GOVERNMENT: THE THREE LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH[†]

by *Thomas Schirrmacher*

(Translated by Cambron Teupe)

THE OFFICES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

ALL New Testament apostles and authors agree that Christ is the absolute Head of the Church, and that no one else can usurp that role. For this reason, he can bear any leadership title: “Bondsman” (Phil. 2:7, as well as in Matthew and in Acts), “Servant” (Rom. 15:8; Lk. 22:27), “Apostle” (Heb. 3:1, cf. Mk. 9:37, Lk. 10:16; Jn. 3:34), “Teacher” (Mt. 23:8,

Jn. 13:13. The Greek term *didaskalos* appears 58 times in the Gospel, the Aramaic *rabbi* 15 times.), “Overseer” or “Bishop” (1 Pet. 2:25), “Shepherd” (1 Pet. 2:25, Heb. 13:20, Jn. 10:11–14), “Chief Shepherd” (1 Pet. 5:4), “Catechet” (Mt. 23:10), “Lord” (appears 100 times in the New Testament), “Master” (7 times in the four Gospels). Above all, Jesus is the highest priest (“High Priest” or “Chief Priest”) of his Church (Heb. 2:17, 4:14–15, 5:10, 6:20, 7:26–27, 8:1, 9:11, 10:21).

Note that Jesus is not only Head of the universal Church, but also of the local congregation, as 1 Cor. 12:14–21 makes clear. His leadership has very practical consequences for

[†] This essay is an abridgement of a chapter in the author’s book *Ethics* (*Ethik*, 2002, third edition, Vol. 5).

the local Church and for its structure (see 1 Pet. 5:1–4, Jn. 13:13–17, Mt. 23:8–12). We find here, by the way, a typical example of apparent inconsistency. All authors agree that Jesus can use any title, but apply different titles in different situations. (We do not know which other titles might have been used, but do not appear in the texts which have been handed down to us.)

In the New Testament, the local Church always originated with the proclamation of the gospel by itinerate believers (either fleeing persecution or simply emigrating), by evangelists, apostles or their assistants. It was the apostles' responsibility to ordain local elders, who then led the congregation under the supervision of leaders responsible for several Churches, while the apostles tried to reach new areas for the gospel (see 1 Thess. 1 and Rom. 15:14–33¹).

The apostle, his colleagues and his successors led the Churches until elders had been appointed, but continued to hold an authoritative position, described as "father" (1 Cor. 4:14–16; 3 Jn. 4). The local Church ruled itself, on the one hand, but was responsible to the apostles and their assistants and successors, on the other. Paul's relationship to the Church in Corinth best demonstrates this principle.

From the very beginning, the government of the local New Testament Church consisted of several elders and deacons elected to office on the basis of their good reputation (Acts 6:3, Tit. 1:5–9, 1 Pet. 5:1–4). For this reason, Paul, Luke and Peter determined and handed down lists of qualifications. Beside a good reputation, spiritual gifts were required. As these cannot be closely conceptualised, we find quite varied and always fragmentary lists, consisting only of examples.² Both Paul and Peter speak of spiritual gifts (1 Pet. 4:10–11), which determine the individual's ministry (1 Cor. 12:4–7). As some are important for leadership ("some . . . apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers"—Eph. 4:11), various offices are named after them ("apostles and elders" for example, in Acts 15:6 and 23, 16:4; or "prophets and teachers" in Acts 13:1–3).

The Scripture does not distinguish between professional and lay ministry. It does, however, describe the appointment to "full-time" service in the sense that proven, gifted Christians were ordained by the spiritual leaders and by the Church to offices and duties which required the individual's complete time and energy. As in the Old Testament³ (1 Cor. 9:13, Lev. 6:16, 26, Lev. 7:6, 31ff., Num. 5:9–10, 18:8–20, 31 [particularly verse 10]; Dt. 18:1–4; cf. the tithe⁴) these New Testament Church workers were paid by the congregation as a matter of course (1 Cor. 9:1–18, particularly verse 14, 1 Tim. 5:17–18, 2 Tim. 2:4, 6). Paul writes very plainly to Timothy (2 Tim. 2:4), "No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him a soldier." It was not the salary, however, which distinguished the professional minister, but the priority he put on that service, which determined the use of his time. According to our contemporary definition, Paul, for example, was only a lay worker as mission leader, because he earned a living

for himself *and* his colleagues (Acts 20:33–35, 1 Thess. 2:9, 1 Cor. 9:12, 2 Cor. 11:5–9, Acts 18:3). His colleagues would therefore be considered "full-time," but it is Paul whom we see as the prototype of a full-time Christian worker.

I believe that we have too few full-time workers in the Church and in mission. In the Old Testament, a whole tribe, the Levites, were appointed to serve God's people full-time. Many were priests, others teachers, musicians or legal advisors. They lived on the tithes. The amount of the tithe, ten percent, demonstrates God's evaluation of the need for full-time workers.

Let's carry the principle of paying the priests and the Levites over into the Church. Is there no contradiction between paying the deacons and elders (pastors) and the general priesthood of all believers? Both Peter and John speak of a priesthood consisting of all Christians: "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation . . ." (1 Pet. 2:9). Jesus has "made us kings and priests . . ." (Rev. 1:6), but this is, as a matter of fact, the renewal of an Old Testament reality, for the Law of Moses had already declared God's people to be a general priesthood. "And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6, See Is. 61:6). The general priesthood of believers in the New Testament no more contradicts the necessity of deacons, pastors, and bishops, than the general priesthood of believing Jews contradicts the necessity of Levites, priests and high priests in the Old. Israel had, as a nation, a priestly ministry to the world, but only a certain group of people carried it out on a professional basis. The same principle is valid in the New Testament.

For this reason, the New Testament emphasises the special position of the offices of Church leadership. In Philippians 1:1, Paul greets "all the saints in Christ Jesus in Philippi" on the one hand, and, on the other hand, particularly the "bishops (or overseers) and deacons." The exhortation to the Church to submit to the full-time workers is very clear: "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17). ". . . and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints—that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labours with us" (1 Cor. 16:15–16). "And we urge you, brethren, to recognise those who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (1 Thess. 5:12–13).

Objecting to its meaning in the Roman Church, John Calvin opposed the use of the term "clergyman," but wrote: "It was in itself, however, a most sacred and salutary institution, that those who wished to devote themselves and their labour to the Church should be brought up under the charge of the bishop; so that no one should minister in the Church, unless he had been previously well trained, unless he had in early life imbibed sound doctrine, unless by stricter discipline he had formed habits of gravity and severer morals, been withdrawn from ordinary business, and accustomed to spiritual cares and studies."⁵ On Ephesians 4:1–16, he added: "By these words he shows that the ministry of men, which God employs in governing the Church, is a principal bond

1. See the commentary on this text in Thomas Schirmacher, *Der Römerbrief* (Hänsler: Neuhausen, 1994), Vol. 2, pp. 291–297.

2. See Thomas Schirmacher, *Ethik*, Chapter 24 (Hänsler: Neuhausen, 1994), Vol. 2, pp. 87–98.

3. See Walter C. Kaiser, "The Current Crisis in Exegesis and the Apostolic Use of Deuteronomy 25:4 in 1 Corinthians 9:9–10," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21 (1978), 1: 3–18.

4. See Thomas Schirmacher, *Ethik*, Vol. 2, pp. 432–441.

5. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994, translated by Henry Beveridge), p. 333 (Book IV, Ch. 4, Section 9).

by which believers are kept together in one body. He also intimates, that the Church cannot be kept safe, unless supported by those guards to which the Lord has been pleased to commit its safety . . .”⁶

Korah’s rebellion is an Old Testament example of wrongly-understood democracy. They “rose up” (or “gathered together”) against Moses (Num. 16:2, 11) by questioning the absolute claims of Moses and of his law on the wrongly understood premise that “*all are holy*” (Num. 16:1–13). The congregation participates in the appointment of the deacons, elders and bishops through the means of election, but we cannot simply disregard the government structure designed by God. John uses Diotrephes, however, as a negative example of a single, tyrannical leader, who wanted to dominate the Church (3 John). Spiritual leadership is, therefore, not licence (see 1 Pet. 5:3: “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock”). As we will see, it is also possible to bring an action against an elder.

The apostolic council, for example, consisted of the full-time leaders of the congregations. “Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter” (Acts 15:6). Still, the “whole church” played a certain role beside the elders and apostles, as well (Acts 15:4, 22). At the end of the first Christian synod, we are told, “Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company . . .” (Acts 15:22).

Here again are two errors to avoid, overrating of the office of spiritual leadership, and underrating it. I believe that the New Testament Church structure consisted of three levels of leadership (deacons, elders, regional conference),⁷ although only two terms are used. Above the deacons were the presbyter or elders—leaders of the local congregation—and over them, those responsible for several Churches, such as Timothy or Titus, who held no “office” specifically defined in Scripture.

The Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran and some Reformed denominations have retained this classic terminology: “The orders are the episcopate, the presbyterate and the diaconate”⁸ (whereby the various confessions interpret the third, supraregional level differently, and I understand this level completely differently than the Churches mentioned above).

I would like to begin with the second level, since this office represents the leadership of the local congregation, and since most denominations agree on most aspects concerning it. Then we will investigate the first level, the diaconate, which is also generally fairly uniform, although we will have to go into a little more detail when we deal with the issue of women deacons. Finally, we will discuss the third level, and investigate the issue of the existence of supraregional authority over the New Testament congregations. This question will take up

the most space because of the wide range of interpretations and practice among the various denominations.

THE SECOND LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT: ELDERS (PASTORS)

The New Testament refers to the second level of leadership in several different ways: “rulers” (Heb. 13:17), “those who are over you” (1 Thess. 5:12), “pastors” (i.e. “shepherds”—(Eph. 4:11), “elders” (Tit. 1:5), and “overseers” or “bishops” (1 Tim. 3:1, Phil. 1:1). The titles “overseers” and “bishops” can be used interchangeably. Acts 20 describes “elders” (20:17) who have been appointed as “overseers” and who, like shepherds, are to take heed for the flock (20:28). 1 Peter 5:1–4 admonishes the elders to “shepherd the flock of God”; the Chief Shepherd is Christ, and Peter a fellow elder. Titus 1:7 speaks of “elders” who are to be appointed, but in verse 5, Paul defines the qualities required of an “overseer.”

The elders were involved in the ministry full-time, not merely in teaching, and usually received a salary. The arguments for paying Church workers in leadership positions are usually formulated with apostles, elders and traveling ministers in view. The elders in the New Testament Church were equivalent to our pastors, but not to laymen who served the Church only in their free time. Scripture draws a parallel to the salary of the priests and the Levites. In 1 Corinthians 9:13–14, the salaries of the priests and Levites are used to justify provision for the elders and apostles (Compare Lev. 6:16, 26; 7:6, 31ff.; Num. 5:9–10; 18:8–20, 31, particularly verse 10; Dt. 18:1–4. Compare the tithe.) In 1 Cor. 9:7–10, Paul refers to Dt. 25:4, “Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.’ Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does he say it altogether for our sakes?” Similarly, in 1 Tim. 5:17–18, he refers to the same text and to Jesus’ words in Matthew 10:10, “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labour in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain’ and ‘the labourer is worthy of his wages.’” According to these statements, not only were the elders (presbyter) to be paid, but anyone primarily involved in ministry was to carry greater responsibility and to receive higher wages.

In the original languages of the Old and New Testaments, the word for “honour” could also refer to a salary or to money, as is obviously the case here (see examples in the singular form: Mt. 27:6, Acts 5:2, 7:16, 1 Cor. 6:20, 7:23; in the plural: Acts 4:34, 19:19). Besides, Scripture repeatedly emphasises that money or goods can and should be employed to express respect. “Honour the Lord with your wealth, with the first-fruits of all your crops” (Pr. 3:9). Paul mentions an offering made to “honour the Lord himself,” (2 Cor. 8:19), and admonishes Timothy to honour true widows by providing them with a pension⁹ (1 Tim. 5:1–2) and relates taxes and customs to the honour due to the State (Romans 13:7).

The classical Presbyterian tradition, to which I belong,

9. Vgl. zur Altersversorgung als Ehrung der Eltern Lektion 15.5. zum 5. Gebot und Lektion 28.4.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 317 (Book IV, Ch. 3, Section 2).

7. I thank Ray R. Sutton for giving me a copy of his unpublished manuscript *Captains and Courts: A Biblical Defense of Episcopal Government*, 96 pp., Philadelphia (PA), 1992. Beside this Reformed-Episcopal study see a Lutheran view on bishops in Karsten Bürgener, *Amt und Abendmahl und was die Bibel dazu sagt* (Selbstverlag: Bremen, 1985).

8. *Codex Iuris Canonici: Codex des kanonischen Rechtes: Lateinisch-deutsche Ausgabe* (Kevelaer: Verlag Butzon and Bercker, 1984), p. 451 (Catholic Canon Law Can. 1009 §1). Of course there are great differences between the view of the nature of office in the Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches that hold to those three offices.

in spite of my criticism, distinguishes between the “teaching elder”—the full time pastors—and the “ruling elder.” I do not believe that this distinction is justified by New Testament teaching, which makes all elders responsible for both teaching and counselling. In fact, the time consuming social duties were to be left up to the deacons, so that the elders could dedicate their energies to teaching.

Calvin also distinguished between disciplinary authority and doctrinal authority; in his opinion the disciplinary action in Matthew 18:15–18 was to be carried out by the whole congregation, as represented by the lay elders, whereas the doctrinal authority defined in Matthew 16:19 and John 20:23 was limited to the pastors.¹⁰ “From the order of the presbyters, part were selected as pastors and teachers, while to the remainder was committed the censure of manners and discipline. To the deacons belonged the care of the poor and the dispensing of alms.”¹¹ Elsie Anne McKee has demonstrated that the primary reason for the distinction between permanent and temporary offices lay in the fact that Ephesians 4:11 was understood to define offices rather than responsibilities or spiritual gifts.¹²

Ever since, 1 Timothy 5:17–18 has been used to classify the elders as ruling lay elders and teaching, mostly fulltime elders; a view originated by Calvin and long characteristic of Reformed-Presbyterian Churches. Prior to Calvin, the text had been interpreted as a distinction between paid elders and better paid elders, i. e. pastors.¹³ Homer A. Kent, writing about 1 Timothy 5:17, says: “This verse does not give sufficient warrant for the Reformed view of two classes of elders, those who ruled and those who taught. Every elder [is] engaged in teaching (3:2) However, some would do so with more energy and excellence than others. The differentiation in this verse is between those who do the work perfunctorily and those who labor to the end of their strength performing their function.”¹⁴

Reformed Churches have begun to question the classical Reformed interpretation of 1 Timothy 5:17, in spite of the fact that it has been the most typical feature of their theology.¹⁵ The Reformed New Testament theologian Jan van Bruggen disagrees with Calvinistic tradition at this point, for the New Testament, including 1 Timothy 5:17, requires only that all elders should teach, not that there are two classes of elders.¹⁶

A comparison¹⁷ of the qualifications of elders and overseers (Tit. 1:6–9; 1 Tim. 3:2–7) and of the deacons (1 Tim.

3:8–12) shows that the only qualification required only of elders, was the ability to teach: “A bishop then must be . . . able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2). Paul describes the elder as “holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”

The New Testament never calls Church officers, especially the elders, “priests,” even though Paul uses Old Testament ritual language to describe his ministry (for example Romans 15:15–16), terminology he also applies to all Christians (for example Rom. 12:1. See also 1 Pet. 2:5–9).

THE FIRST LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT: DEACONS AND DEACONESSES

The first level of leadership consists of the deacons and deaconesses. The Greek word *diakonos* is often translated as “servant” in various translations, and, according to the majority of exegetes, is used as the official title of “deacon” in only three instances. The term originally designated the person who served at table or took care of others. The New Testament term is intimately connected with serving and with service in general, and can only be understood in those terms.

1. *The original meaning.* Out of the thirty occurrences of the word “servant” in the New Testament, only a few reflect the original meaning. Matthew 22:13 and John 2:5 used the word to describe the servants at a wedding. In Romans 13:4, Paul calls the governing authorities “servants.” The aspect of material and personal service, however, is never completely absent in New Testament usage, particularly when designating the “servant” (deacon).

2. *Discipleship as ministry.* Jesus was the role model of the servant, even though the Bible never uses the term explicitly as a title (in Rom. 15:8, he is a “servant of the Jews [Greek: circumcision],” which describes his submission to Jewish custom). For this reason, discipleship is equated with service: “Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.” The services of Christians is, however, radically different from secular rulership (Mt. 20:26; 23:11; Mk 9:35; 10:43; See also 1 Pet. 5:2–4). Whether service or ministry pleases God or not depends on the person it is dedicated to. There are servants of Sin (Gal. 2:17) and servants of Satan who “masquerade as servants of righteousness.”¹⁸

3. *Minister.* While every Christian is a servant, special duties may carry the designation “ministry.” Paul, who includes his assistants, sees himself as a minister, who led the Corinthians to Christ (1 Cor. 3:5), as a minister of the New Covenant (2 Cor. 3:6), as a minister of God (2 Cor. 6:4), as a minister of Christ (2 Cor. 11:23) or as a minister of the gospel (Eph. 3:7; Col. 1:23) or of the Church (Col. 1:25). He applies the same title to Tychicus, who is both a faithful servant in the Lord (Eph 6:21) and “a fellow servant in the Lord,” (Col. 4:7). Epaphras is a “our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf,” (Col. 1:7), and Timothy is admonished to be a “good minister of Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 4:6). In these contexts, the word “servant” or “minister” means a fulltime colleague with a leadership function in Church and mission work.

10. Elsie Anne McKee, *Elders and the Plural Ministry: The Role of Exegetical History in Illuminating John Calvin's Theology* (Droz, Genf: Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance Librairie 223, 1988), pp. 28, 33, 62.

11. Johannes Calvin, *op. cit.*, p. 328 (Book IV, Ch. 4, Section 1).

12. Elsie Anne McKee, *op. cit.*, pp. 162–165.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 88–89. This book includes a thorough history of the exegesis of 1 Tim. 5:17 up to the end of the Reformation.

14. Homer A. Kent, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Chicago: Moody, 1977 [1958]), p. 181f.

15. Elsie Anne McKee, *op. cit.*, pp. 103–114.

16. Jan van Bruggen, *Ambten in de Apostolische Kerken: Een exegetisch mozaïk* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1984), pp. 98–104 and Jakob van Bruggen, “Apostolischer Gemeindebau: Widersprüchliche Ekklesiologien im Neuen Testament?” pp. 57–82 in Helge Stadelmann (Ed.), *Bausteine zur Erneuerung der Kirche* (TVG. Brunnen: Gießen & R. Brockhaus: Wuppertal, 1998), p. 69. *Ihm stimmt der Presbyterianer Reinhold Widter: Evangelische Missionskirchen im nachchristlichen Europa, Theologische Schriften* 3, (Medien, Neuhofen: Evangelisch-Reformierte, 1999), pp. 85–86 zu.

17. Vgl. die Tabelle in William Hendriksen, *I & II Timothy & Titus: New Testament Commentary* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976 [Nachdruck von 1960/1957] p. 347ff.

18. See 2 Cor. 11:14.

4. *The office of church leadership.* Assuming that the texts which designate full-time workers as servants of God are not referring to a specific office, we find few instances in which a “deacon” held an official function. Philippians 1:1, with its greeting, “to all the saints . . . with the bishops and deacons,” is the only definite evidence that the New Testament Church had an office of deacons alongside the actual leadership position of the elders and overseers. Unfortunately the text does not define the office more clearly. In 1 Timothy, Paul lists not only qualifications for the overseers, but also for the deacons (1 Tim. 3:8–13). Parallel to the qualifications for the elders and overseers (bishops), a deacon must demonstrate a good reputation for their service, good leadership of their families and a blameless life. Paul, however, fails to describe the deacon’s responsibilities.

Were the “women” in 1 Timothy 3:11 the deacons’ wives or deaconesses? I find the arguments in favour of the deaconesses more convincing.¹⁹ It seems significant to me that Paul gives no list of qualifications for the wives of the elders. Why should more be required of the deacons’ wives than of the elders’ wives?²⁰ The fact that Paul gives deaconesses an extra list of qualifications besides those of the deacons, but none for female bishops or overseers, corresponds to the rest of the New Testament: women could carry out responsible functions, but were not ordained as fathers of one or more Churches.

Romans 16:1 proves that the Church had deaconesses. Phoebe is described as a “sister, who is a servant (or deacon) of the church in Cenchrea.” Since the masculine form of the word is used, it would seem to describe a specific office rather than a general term, an office open to women. Besides, the addition, “of the church in Cenchrea,” indicates that Paul means an office in a specific local congregation, not a general sort of service.²¹ Besides, Phoebe is also called a *prostatis* (“Patroness”—Rom. 16:2), which emphasises her official role. The Greek word means “protectress” or “patron.”²² The corresponding form indicated a patron, a chairperson, a legal advisor.²³

The office of deaconess was well known in the Byzantine Church until the eleventh century,²⁴ and in Rome, Italy and

the Western Church until the fifth and sixth centuries.²⁵ There is also documentation for the office in the West up until the eleventh century.²⁶ The Monophysites had the office until the thirteenth century,²⁷ and the Eastern church defended the office, following Johannes Chrysostomos, while the Western Church gave it up in order to avoid ordaining women, according to Ambrosiaster and Erasmus of Rotterdam.²⁸

These deaconesses definitely carried out spiritual duties. Elsie Anne McKee rightly says there is strong evidence that the deaconesses were employed by the Church and were counted among the Church officials.²⁹ They thus shared the status, privileges and restrictions of clerical persons such as the right to provisions,³⁰ ordination³¹ and celibacy,³² and are mentioned in Canon 19 of the Council of Nicaea for this reason.³³

Since the time of the early Church, the specific responsibilities of the deacons and deaconesses have been drawn from Acts 6. The apostles distinguish between their responsibility, “to give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4) and the duty to “serve tables” and to rule this business (Acts 6:2). Certain qualifications are required and an election is carried out. There is good reason to use this as example for the deaconate, for other cases in Scripture also discuss duties without clearly designating the “right” office. The duty is essential, not the title, which may vary.

A comparison³⁴ of the necessary qualities of the elders and overseers (Tit. 1:5–9, 1 Tim. 3:4–5) and of the deacons (1 Tim. 3:8–12), shows that the only qualification required of the elders above and beyond that of the deacons, was the ability to teach: “able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2), “holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.” After all, the deacons in Acts 6 were appointed so that the apostles and elders did not neglect “prayer and the ministry of the word.”

Social ministry was the deacons’ first priority, but that does not eliminate the possibility of other responsibilities. The only deacons in the whole New Testament about whom we learn details are Stephen (Acts 6:8–7:60) and Philip (Acts 8:4–40). Both were active as evangelists. Philip baptised as a deacon (Acts 8:12, 16, 36), but apparently did not carry out the laying on of hands which followed baptism (cf. Heb. 6:2 for example), for the apostles Peter and John came as representatives of all apostles to Samaria for this purpose. (Acts 8:14–17). It was also the two apostles, not Philip, who excommunicated Simon Magus from the Church (Acts 8:18–24).

A comparison with the Old Testament Levites further clarifies the role of the deacons. Subject to the priests, the actual spiritual leaders of the people of God, the Levites assisted in the services and in teaching, in organising the

19. See the arguments in Gerhard Lohfink, “Weibliche Diakone im Neuen Testament,” *Diakonia* 11 (1980) 1: 385–400 and Hermann Cremer, Julius Kögel, *Biblisch-Theologisches Wörterbuch des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, F. A. Perthes: Stuttgart, 1923, p. 290. Thomas R. Schreiner, “The Valuable Ministries of Women in the Context of Male Leadership: A Survey of Old and New Testament Examples and Teaching,” pp. 209–224 in John Piper, Wayne Grudem (ed.), *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, Crossway Books: Wheaton (IL), 1991, lists pp. 213–214 the arguments for deaconesses, but follows the arguments against it (pp. 219–221), even though he proves p. 220 that the difference between the offices of presbyters and deacons is that presbyters teach and govern and deacons do not (1 Tim. 3, 2, 5).

20. See Gerhard Lohfink, “Weibliche Diakone im Neuen Testament,” *op. cit.*, p. 396.

21. See Hermann Cremer, Julius Kögel, *op. cit.*, p. 290 and Thomas Schirrmacher, *Der Römerbrief*, Vol. 2, pp. 310f.

22. Walter Bauer, Kurt and Barbara Aland, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments . . .* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1988), col. 1439.

23. G. E. Benseler, Adolf Kaegi, *Benselers Griechisch-Deutsches Schulwörterbuch* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1926), p. 794.

24. Adolf Kalsbach, “Die altkirchliche Einrichtung der Diakonissen bis zu ihrem Erlöschen,” *Römische Quartalsschrift*, Supplementheft 22 (Freiburg: Herder, 1926), especially pp. 63–71, in which the author discusses the problems of widowhood, virginity and the office of deaconess in the Early Church.

25. Vgl. L. Duchesne, *Christian Worship: Its Origin and Evolution: A Study of the Latin Liturgy up to the Time of Charlemagne* (New York: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1931), pp. 342f.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 79–94 in detail.

27. Adolf Kalsbach, *op. cit.*, pp. 59–60.

28. Elsie Anne McKee, *op. cit.*, pp. 161–163.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Deaconesses, like the priests, were required to remain single, which Protestants see as a possibility, but cannot consider a law. The necessity of remaining celibate proves that the office of deaconess was understood as a spiritual office.

33. *Ibid.*, 46–49.

distribution of the tithe and the provision for the poor, provided the music and took on other duties.

Under Clement of Rome and Ignatius of Antioch, the Church continued to use the title “deacon” in a general way but later limited it to the designation of the official responsible for the provision of the poor, or to assistants at the Eucharist, often forgetting how closely these two duties are related (food for the starving and spiritual nourishment for the congregation at Communion). Not until this century did the office of deacon regain its responsibility for the practical concerns of the Church. Modern Church practice orients the duties of deacons and deaconesses on the functions described in the New Testament, although the appropriate biblical structure is often otherwise absent.

In many Churches, the diaconate has become merely a preparation for the presbyterate. However, in 1967 at the Second Vatican Council, even the Catholic Church recreated the diaconate as a separate office, which can be held for a longer period of time or even for a life-time.³⁵ Primarily due to this development, women were not permitted to become deacons, because the ordination to the diaconate would practically allow them to become priests or elders as well.³⁶ The diaconate is certainly a natural antecedent to the priesthood, but need not necessarily lead to it. As Calvin did, we may consider the diaconate a “step to the priesthood”³⁷ without making the priesthood a necessary result or requiring the deacon to seek the priesthood in the near future.

The Reformed refer to Calvin as the source of their doctrine of Church office, but his high evaluation of the office of deacon and deaconess has been largely forgotten.³⁸ He adopted this attitude from Martin Bucer, and had first encountered it in Strassburg.³⁹ Like the Early Church, he considered Acts 6:1–6 not merely a report, but a norm for all time.⁴⁰

Calvin deliberately revived the office of deaconess,⁴¹ which he justified with reference to New Testament texts which speak of female deacons,⁴² but had been ignored throughout the Middle Ages, as is the case in most modern Evangelical Churches, in which the pastor is the actual leader of the Church, although in theory he is only one elder among many.

In my opinion, most Churches would do well to increase the number of pastors and reduce the number of elders, for many lay elders carry out administrative duties

more appropriate for deacons or for a Church committee. Administering buildings, book-keeping and paying salaries is not the responsibility of the elders, but takes up most of the presbyters’ time in many Churches. Churches should appoint a committee, with the assistance of the deacons, takes care of the “earthly” matters, so that the elders, who should be elected according to the time and ability they have for teaching and counselling, should be able to dedicate themselves to these areas. This would mean that we would have more pastors, salaried or not, but smaller presbyteries.

EXCURSUS:

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH ACCORDING TO ACTS 6

The appointment of deacons in Acts 6 and in the New Testament Church in general is of great significance. It is surprising, that besides the offices of overseers (bishops) and elders, who were responsible for leadership and teaching, the Church had only one other office, that of the deacons and the deaconesses, whose duties were exclusively social in nature. The social responsibility of the Church for its members is so institutionalised in the office of the deacons, that a Church without them is just as unthinkable as a Church without leadership or biblical teaching.

(1) The Church carries fully the social responsibility for its own members, insofar as the individual’s family is unable to do so. This duty consists in more than donations or symbolic assistance for a few, but in responsibility for all.

(2) Therefore the Church must distinguish clearly between its social obligations toward fellow Christians and its social responsibility for others. The former has been institutionalised in the office of deacons and is binding, insofar as funds and possibilities are available (assuming that the individual has not willfully brought the situation upon himself). Proverbs 3:27 speaks of both cases, “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so.” Galations 6:10 speaks of our duties toward all men, but emphasises the priority of the believer: “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

The command in Matthew 25:45 should also be understood in this sense. Jesus is speaking of believers, not of everyone. Were the “brethren” mentioned in verse 40 intended to mean all men, this would be the only text in the New Testament that uses the term figuratively to indicate anyone other than Church members or fellow Christians.⁴³

A comparison with the question of peace-making will help clarify the matter. Scripture obliges Christians to live in peace with fellow-believers. If they do not, then the Church leadership is to interfere. As far as the relationship to non-Christians is concerned, Paul says, “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Rom. 12:18). The New Testament Church is based on a covenant binding on all members. The expectation that the believer is obliged to care for all men stems from a false understanding of fairness and justice, for the Bible requires the believer to provide first for his own family, next for the members of the local congregation, and finally for the world-wide Church.

34. See the table in William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, pp. 347–349.

35. See Rudolf Weigand, “Der ständige Diakon,” p. 229–238 in Joseph Listl, Hubert Müller, Heribert Schmitz (ed.), *Handbuch des katholischen Kirchenrechts* (Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1983), p. 229.

36. Leon Morris, “Church Government,” pp. 238–241 in Walter Elwell (Hg.), *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986).

37. Johannes Calvin, *op. cit.*, p. 349, (Book IV, Ch. 5, Section 15; See also Vol. IV, Ch. 3, Section 9).

38. Elsie Anne McKee, *John Calvin on the Diaconate and Liturgical Almsgiving*, a. a. O. S. 13; vgl. etwa Jean Calvin, *Calvin-Studienausgabe*, Bd. 2: *Gestalt und Ordnung der Kirche*. Neukirchener Verlag: Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1997. p. 257–259 (aus *Ordonnances ecclésiastiques* [1541/1561] p. 227–279).

39. Elsie Anne McKee, *op. cit.*, pp. 129, 153; See also the note on Bucer’s 1538 pamphlet, “Von der Waren Seelsorge” on p. 179. McKee also mentions John Chrysostomos as an influence on Calvin’s thought on the diaconate (p. 153). She also shows that, following Bucer, Calvin applied Romans 12:8 to the diaconate, which no one does today (pp. 185–204).

40. Elsie Anne McKee, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 213–217.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 205–210.

43. Kurt Hennig, “Beim Wort kommt es auch auf die Worte an,” *Das Fundament*, (DCTB) 1, 1991, pp. 9–24 (particularly pp. 22, 19–24).

Only when these obligations are fulfilled, does he have any responsibilities for other people.

(3) Acts 6 gives great priority to the social obligations of the Church towards her members, but the responsibility for proclaiming the word of God and prayer remains more important and is institutionalised in the offices of the elders and the apostles.

The apostles give the following reason for refusing to accept this “business” (Acts 6:3): “but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). Prayer and proclamation of the word, which always belong together, have priority over social engagement and must never be neglected. The combination of prayer and teaching is not new. Long before, for example, it had been the ministry of the prophet Samuel to “pray” and to “teach” (1 Sam. 12:23).⁴⁴

The provision for the socially weak was also considered a matter of course in the Early Church, which universally reserved special funds for social purposes.⁴⁵ Its provision for widows was exemplary.⁴⁶ As a matter of fact, more money was spent on social concerns than on the salaries of the elders and pastors. According to the Church Father, Eusebius, the Church in Rome in the year 250 A.D., for example, supported 100 clergymen and 1500 poor people, particularly widows and orphans. Alois Kehl writes, “Never, in the whole of antiquity, had there been a society or a religious group which cared for its members as the Christian Church did.”⁴⁷

Arnold Angenendt adds: “Becoming a Christian automatically means practicing social service. Every Christian church has its ‘social services,’ and the bishop is to prove himself a father to the poor. This was a quite new idea in the ancient world—in all of the Greek and Roman world, there is not one legal enactment dedicated to the needs of the poor.”⁴⁸

Incidentally, the responsibility of the wealthy, above all, for the provision for the poor, gave the donors no special rights in the congregation. For this reason, James 2:1–13 energetically attacks their attempts to exploit their position in the Church.

THE THIRD LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT (FIRST PART): CONGREGATIONALISM AND PRESBYTERIANISM

At this point, we need to investigate the third, supraregional level of Church leadership. Let’s take a look at the structures in the Evangelical denominations.⁴⁹

The Baptist-oriented Churches are generally Congregationalist⁵⁰ in structure, that is, they consider the local

congregation the basic and essential element of the Church.⁵¹ Church government consists of only a two-part hierarchy, that of the deacons and the elders, offices seldom exercised on a full-time basis. Above the local congregation is no further hierarchy but only a loose confederation of Churches (which does wield a certain amount of unintended authority by employing and training the editors of denominational literature, the presidents of denominational seminaries, etc.).

There are two different forms of Congregationalism. The most extreme is to be found in denominations such as the Brethren, which in theory acknowledge no supraregional structures at all, but in reality permit a single publishing house or publisher and a single seminary to determine their theology and practice. Besides, the fact that local congregations all belong to one denomination points to a sense of a certain inter-congregational accountability. Some of these Churches have no officers at all; all decisions are made by the membership (the brethren). In other Churches, laymen serve as officers, but can be overruled by the congregation at any time and are seldom employed on a full-time basis. The few full-time ministers are usually “itinerant brethren” who preach in various Churches, but have no authority over the local congregation.

The second type of Congregationalist structure permits a loose affiliation of local congregations (denomination), which provides seminaries, publishing houses, or synods, but maintains the fundamental independence of the local congregation. The deacons, elders and pastors elected by the congregation wield actual authority as long as they are in office. This structure thus serves as the transition to the Presbyterian system.

Since the visible Church consists of all members accepted on the basis of their confession of faith, the authority of the local congregation to elect its officers is not to be denied, but since, as we have seen, the office of elder is essential to Church government, a structure without elders is unsustainable. At the same time, such elders are in reality the highest Church officers designated in the New Testament and require neither ordination nor the authorisation by a higher officer. Nor must the local Church of the New Testament visibly belong to a larger unit or submit to a higher authority in order to be a Church in the full sense of the word. This aspect of Congregationalism is a truth not to be denied or surrendered. We will see, however, that this concept neither denies the possibility of supraregional co-operation between congregations and their spiritual leadership nor forbids any sort of supraregional direction above the local elders and pastors. As a matter of fact, most congregationalist denominations have some sort of advisory synodical structure which consists of delegates sent by the local congregation and functions as a co-operative governing body.

The Presbyterian Churches⁵² have only a two-part Church government (elders and deacons), but form a third level of

44. Compare the combination of prayer and watching in Neh. 4:9.

45. Adolf von Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (VMA-Verlag: Wiesbaden, O. J., reprint 1924), pp. 178–183, and the chapter, “Das Evangelium der Liebe und Hilfsleistung,” pp. 170–220.

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 184ff.

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 182ff.

48. Arnold Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien: Die Geschichte ihres Kultes vom frühen Christentum bis zur Gegenwart* (München: C. H. Beck, 1997), p. 48.

49. For a good, concise comparison, see Leon Morris, “Church Government,” in Walter Elwell (ed.), *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), pp. 218–241.

50. “Congregationalist” from “congregation,” i.e. the local congregation has the last word on all issues.

51. John Huxtable, “Kongregationalismus,” in Gerhard Müller (ed.), *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000/1990, Studienausgabe), Vol. 19, p. 452. For the history of Congregationalism, see the whole article.

52. The term designates the structure of Church government, but is frequently used to indicate Reformed since this form developed in that tradition. See James K. Cameron, “Presbyterianism,” in Gerhard Müller (ed.), *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Vol. 27, pp. 340–359 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000/1997, textbook edition).

government by collecting the elders of several Churches into synods, without giving any single person supreme authority.⁵³ The Presbyterian-synodal constitution “describes an ecclesiastical principle evolved within the Reformed tradition of the sixteenth century, in which ecclesiastical authority (church government) lies in a cooperative body, in which both theologians and non-theologians discuss and resolve pertinent issues.”⁵⁴ “The theological intent of the presbyterian-synodal constitution is to be found in the conviction based on Matthew 18:15–20, that the church can be led by lay elders without bishops or local princes. Jesus Christ Himself rules His Church through His Word in such a way that He entrusts the churches with certain functions, so that the Gospel is brought to all men in various forms. These officers and offices are of equal authority, and since each congregation is a church in the full sense of the word, no church has power over any other. Synods consisting of delegates from all the congregations resolve all interchurch issues so as to avoid permitting the supremacy of any one officer or individual congregation.”⁵⁵

The authority of the synod varies, depending on the range of issues in which its decisions are binding on the local congregations. The boundaries between Presbyterianism and Congregationalism are rather fluid in this respect. In some Presbyterian groups, representatives from the synod exercise visitations in order to investigate the state of the congregations or to examine candidates for the pastorate, but these officials act only as the representatives of the larger Church and have no personal authority.

The idea of a synod consisting of officials and lay delegates originated neither with Calvin nor with the early Reformed synods,⁵⁶ which were merely assemblies of the presbyters of the local Churches. The first mixed synods were held in 1559 in Paris and, in Germany, in 1571 in Emden. Beginning in 1610, mixed synods were held in Jülich, Cleve, Berg and Mark.⁵⁷ Both the synod itself and the mixed synod have biblical roots in the Apostolic Council of Acts 15, in which apostles, elders and the Church participated. “Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole Church, to send chosen men of their own company . . .” (Acts 15:22).

As a unique historical event, the Apostolic Council serves as the prototype for a synod, but cannot be used to warrant an absolute rule. Note, however, that the Council did have a leadership structure. Simon Peter (Acts 15:7–10) and James (15:13–21) had the veto—James, as chairman, formulated the final decision (15:1–20), to which the others agreed. All full-time elders and all supraregional officers were present: “Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter” (15:6. See also Gal. 2:9, where John, Peter and James are called the “pillars.” See also 1 Cor. 9:5). Acts 21:18 also mentions a meeting between Paul and the synod of the

elders and James, the leader (“bishop”) of the Church in Jerusalem: “On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.” Within the highest level there may be further hierarchies—James, for example, presided over the Council, but we do not know whether he merely represented the others or had more authority over them. Paul’s associates, Silas and Timothy, also take their orders from him (Acts 17:15). The New Testament frequently mentions the fact that Paul, in an “Episcopal” role, sends his assistants out to their new fields (for example, Timothy in Phil. 2:23 or 1 Thess. 3:2).

The synodical principle of the Reformed Churches has been adopted by almost all Churches in the world,⁵⁸ and determines the constituents of the supraregional bodies of the Congregationalist denominations as well as of the Episcopal bodies.

In both Presbyterian and Congregationalist Churches, the full-time pastor plays a special, fairly independent role not intended in the original model, such as that of the teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church, in contrast to the usual governing elders, although the pastor is theoretically and legally on the same level as the other elders.

Elsie Anne McKee has shown that the Calvinists in fact had instituted three governing offices: pastors, elders and deacons,⁵⁹ with a fourth office, the teacher, in the Genevan church.⁶⁰ In this combination, the pastor often plays a role similar to that of the bishop, when the congregation officially opposes the idea of episcopal government. At least in larger congregations, the office and function of the main pastor corresponds very closely to the role of the bishop in the Early Church. The Baptist Johannes Jansen wrote in 1931: “Many Churches have liberated the preacher from the burden of administration by electing two or more elders, so that he is only responsible for the spiritual direction.”⁶¹

Many Baptist congregations have resolved the problem by designating only the pastor as elder and calling the other members of the leadership structure deacons, just as the Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican Churches, in which the pastor is the “priest” (derived from “presbyter,” which means “elder”). All other officers are subject first to the pastor, then to the deacons. In both cases, the individual congregation has only one elder, which is possible, but not recommendable.

The fact that the Book of Revelation mentions the “Angel of the Churches” seven times (Rev. 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14) is often used to justify this one-man leadership, whether for a local pastor or for a bishop. The meaning of the term has been disputed and interpreted in so many ways that the text cannot serve as an adequate argument.

THE THIRD LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT (SECOND PART): EPISCOPALIANISM

The view that the early Church had professional leaders responsible for several Churches and their elders is called

53. Gerhard Troeger, “Bischof III: Das evangelische Bischofsamt,” in Gerhard Krause, Gerhard Müller (ed.), *op. cit.*, Vol. 6, p. 693, writes, quoting Hans Dombois: “Calvin’s rejection of the office of bishop is still alive in the Reformed Church, like an allergy against any form of officialdom dependent on any individual.”

54. Joachim Mehlhausen, “Presbyterial-synodale Kirchenverfassung,” in Gerhard Müller (ed.), *op. cit.*, Vol. 27, p. 331. On the origin and history see the complete article.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 331.

56. Irmtraut Tempel, *Bischofsamt und Kirchenleitung in den lutherischen, reformierten und unierten deutschen Landeskirchen*, *Jus Ecclesiasticum: Beiträge zum Staatskirchenrecht* 4, (Munic: Claudius Verlag, 1966), p. 54.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 54–55.

58. Joachim Mehlhausen, “Presbyterial-synodale Kirchenverfassung,” *op. cit.*, pp. 331–332.

59. Elsie Anne McKee, *John Calvin on the Diaconate and Liturgical Almsgiving*, Travaux d’Humanisme et Renaissance Librairie 197 (Geneva: Droz, 1984), p. 134.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

61. Johannes Jansen, *Gemeinde und Gemeindeführung: Episkopat, Presbyterium oder Demokratie? Gemeinde und Gegenwart* 2 (Kassel: J. G. Oncken, 1931), p. 5.

“episcopal,” because the early church had begun to give this inter-Church function the title “bishop.” (Actually, “overseer” [Greek: *episkopos*], which is the origin of the word “bishop,” in contrast to the “elder” [Greek, *presbyter*], the origin of the word “priest,” that is, the pastors of the local Church).⁶²

Within the episcopal Churches, the authority of the bishop varies. It declines as we move from the sacramental and judicial power of the Roman Catholic bishop through the Orthodox, the Anglican,⁶³ the Lutheran to the Methodist bishop, whose duties are representative and advisory rather than judicial.

As we have already seen, the titles, “elder” and “overseer”/“bishop” can be used interchangeably. “Overseer” describes the governing function of the elders (Acts 20:28, 1 Tim. 3:2, Tit. 1:7, Phil 1:1—“bishops and deacons” without further specification. In 1 Pet. 2:25, Jesus is called the “Shepherd and Overseer of your souls”). We also find the term “office of overseer” (*episkopē*) used to describe the office of apostle (Acts 1:20) as well as the office of the elder (1 Tim. 3:1. “If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work”).

Adolf Schlatter assumes that Tit. 1, 5, 7 distinguished between bishops and elders, and that Paul had chosen bishops out of the presbyterate.⁶⁴ Leonard Goppelt, in studying the Pastoral Epistles, comes to the conclusion that each body of elders was led by an overseer (“bishop”).⁶⁵ Similarly, Ray R. Sutton believes that Titus 1 defines the qualifications of the bishops, who are to be examples for the elders and are responsible for them.⁶⁶ A. M. Farrer also objects to the identification of elders with overseers in the New Testament and applies the duty of overseeing mentioned in Acts 20:17–18, 28 to the elders. He sees this idea more definitely in 1 Peter 1:5–4 and in Hebrews 12:14–15,⁶⁷ where only the verb “to oversee” is used. He divides Titus 1:7 into one list of qualities for elders and one for overseers, but suggests that verse 6 does not apply to elders, but belongs to the following section, since the expression “If a man . . .” is used four times in the Pastoral Epistles to introduce a new paragraph (1 Tim. 3:1; 5:4, 16; 6:3).⁶⁸ These views may be valid, but are unconvincing—their argumentation is a rather forced

attempt to read the modern terminology back into the New Testament. The designation of Timothy as overseer would have been a more convincing attestation for the existence of a first century supraregional level of authority above the elders.

The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, uses the same word, “episkopos” or “overseer” to designate the “overseers” of the sons of Benjamin (Neh. 11:9, 14, 22), as well as the overseers of the Temple builders (2 Chron. 2:2; see also 34:17 and compare the verb in verse 12) and political officials.⁶⁹ In these cases, “episkopos” indicates a normal office, not a superior one in the hierarchy.

The New Testament evidence thus neither proves nor contradicts the use of the term “bishop” or “episcopal,” but the appellation has always been controversial among Christians. On the other hand, the supraregional structure was retained for centuries after the Reformation, even by many Anabaptist Churches, who retained some sort of supraregional structure in order to provide a necessary supervision of their pastors. The question is not whether the *term* itself is biblical, but whether the *office* existed in the New Testament Church.

The New Testament often uses one title to indicate a variety of offices, and Jesus was often given titles used for many other offices and duties in the Church. The apostles are only “fellow elders,” but have authority over the other elders, and could also classify themselves simply as elders. The elders have received a certain degree of authority from God, but remain simply brethren: “The elders who are among you I exhort . . . shepherd the flock of God . . . nor as being lords . . . but being examples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5:1–5).

No one disputes the fact that the apostles were Church leaders responsible for larger geographical areas, and that they appointed the first elders in each region. “So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed” (Acts 14:2).

Since many assume that the apostolic office died with the twelve apostles, we must ask whether the supraregional responsibility was limited to them or at least to their immediate successors, or whether it was carried on by a third level of leadership. Because we know almost nothing about the apostles’ assistants, except for Paul’s associates Timothy and Titus, and nothing about their subsequent activities, we can only ask which responsibilities Timothy and Titus carried and which of Paul’s responsibilities they later took over. Unfortunately, this issue has been insufficiently explored in discussions of church hierarchy.

Apostolic practice and particularly that of the Church in Jerusalem, in so far as Scripture reports it, is considered to be the model for all the Churches of Jesus Christ, as Paul writes to the Church in Thessalonica, “For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess. 2:14). Besides, we find not only reports in the New Testament describing Church structure and leadership issues, but—particularly in the pastoral letters (First and Second Timothy, Titus)—we also find concrete directions about the expression of the Church’s essential character in structural and organisational matters. How

62. On the development of the term “bishop” in Judaism, in the New Testament and in the Early Church, see Hermann Beyer, “episkeptomai . . . episkopos . . .” in Gerhard Kittel (ed.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1990, [1935]), Bd. II, pp. 595–619, here pp. 604–617; and Theo Sorg, F. O. July, “Bischof/Bischöfamt,” pp. 279–281 in Helmut Burkhardt, Uwe Swarat (ed.), *Evangelisches Lexikon für Theologie und Gemeinde* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1992), Vol. 1.

63. The “continuing Churches,” independent Churches that have taken over their the bishop’s office from the Anglican Church, ordain their bishops by laying on of hands. To a certain extent, these Churches demand the same sort of submission to the bishop as the Roman Church does.

64. Adolf Schlatter, *Die Kirche der Griechen im Urteil des Paulus: Eine Auslegung seiner Briefe an Timotheus und Titus* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1958), p. 182 (see also: pp. 181–183).

65. Leonhard Goppelt, “Kirchenleitung und Bischofsamt in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten,” in Ivar Asheim, Victor R. Gold (ed.), *Kirchenpräsident oder Bischof? Untersuchungen zur Entwicklung des kirchenleitenden Amtes in der lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1968), p. 21.

66. Ray Sutton, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

67. A. M. Farrer, “The Ministry in the New Testament,” p. 113–182 in Kenneth E. Kirk, *The Apostolic Ministry: Essays on the History and the Doctrine of Episcopacy* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1957 [1946]), pp. 134–141.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 160.

69. See Johannes Neumann, “Bischof I: Das katholische Bischofsamt,” pp. 653–682 in Gerhard Krause, Gerhard Müller (ed.), *op. cit.* Vol. 6, p. 611. Neumann cites examples from Grecian culture.

did the apostles deal with the fact that they were unable to oversee certain areas because they were involved elsewhere in evangelisation? What did they do to provide the Church with leadership in the event of their deaths? Apparently, they ordained their successors by laying on of hands, so that these men could oversee the congregations and their elders. The best known successors are the recipients of the Pastoral Epistles, Timothy (Acts 16:1–3; 17:13–15; 19:21–22; 20:3–4; Rom. 16:21; 1 Cor. 4:17; 15:10–11; 2 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; 2:19–21; Col 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 3:1–8; 1 Tim. 1:1–2, 18, 14–15; 5:23; 2 Tim. 1:1–2, 5–6, 8; 3:10; 4:9–22; Phlm 1:1; Heb. 13:23) and Titus (2 Cor. 2:12–13; 7:6–7, 12–16; 8:16–24; 12:16–18; Gal. 2:1–4; 2 Tim 4:10; Tit. 1:1–5; 1:1,15; 3: 9,15).

Timothy was originally ordained by laying on of hands by the elders (1 Tim. 4:13–15; See also 1:18), but probably later ordained by Paul into a higher office (2 Tim 1:6)—unless both verses refer to the same incident—as ordination is always carried out by a higher official (Acts 1:24; 6:6; 13:3).⁷⁰ His ordination by Paul clearly indicates that he took on the apostle's responsibility. In the Old Testament, successors were ordained by laying on of hands (Moses and Joshua; Elijah and Elisha).⁷¹

Titus was to “appoint elders” (Titus 1:5) and resist heretical teachers in the Churches, and was responsible for all of Crete (Tit. 1:5). Timothy had the same charges and was responsible for Ephesus and its surroundings (1 Tim. 1:3).

The word used for “appoint” (Greek: *cheirotonein*) can mean either “to raise one's hand in voting” or “to point at someone,” i. e. “to elect a person” or “to appoint.”⁷² In 2 Corinthians 8:19, it indicates the selection of a delegate by the congregation. Acts 14:23 uses the word to describe the election and ordination of elders by the apostles, and probably intends both the election by the congregation and the confirmation and the ordination by the apostles.⁷³ The apostles apparently suggested several candidates, from which the congregation selected the person consequently ordained by the apostles. This process is used frequently in the Bible when ecclesiastical or political offices are to be filled: the superior nominates candidates, his followers then elect the official. The best example is the election of the first deacons in Acts 6:1–6.

Timothy's responsibility for several Churches and particularly for their elders can be seen in 1 Tim. 5:19–21: “Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear. I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality.” Timothy deals here, as superior elder (bishop) over several Churches, with accusations against the elders of local congregations. This duty has a personal aspect unsuitable for a committee or synod. The bishop, Timothy, is, above

all, teacher and counsellor to the pastors (elders). Who cares for the personal and dogmatic needs of the pastors, when there is no inter-Church leadership? Who provides them with “soul-care” if the supraregional authority consists only of committees, which make decisions, but cannot handle personal, spiritual needs?

Timothy and Titus exercised these episcopal functions during the life-time of the apostles. Before Paul, others had done so. Barnabas, for example, ordains elders with him (Acts 14:23). The existence of a body governing several local congregations can also be observed in Jerusalem, where James is bishop and chairman of an episcopal college. The Twelve led the entire Church under Peter's direction; James and the elders led the Church in Jerusalem,⁷⁴ and James, as main pastor of the mother Church in Jerusalem, was honorary chairman of the apostolic council.

The Pastoral epistles are generally dated rather late, but the episcopal system is already in operation⁷⁵ (which is of course all the more true, if we date the Pastoral Epistles later).

I have dealt with the failure of Protestantism, not only of the liberal camp, to seriously study the Pastoral Epistles and their supposedly late, non-Pauline ecclesiology, in my theological thesis,⁷⁶ since Emil Brunner's rejection of the New Testament treatment of Church office depends on his rejection of the Pastoral Epistles. This has led me to a more intensive scrutiny of these epistles, their authenticity and their ecclesiology.⁷⁷ I have yet to find a reason for the general failure to recognise Timothy's and Titus' responsibility as Church officers above the local officers, and to underestimate the role of the diaconate, as I mention in the first edition of my *Ethik*.⁷⁸ The issue requires much more study, and I hope that my ideas will stimulate further discussion.

What can we conclude from our knowledge of Timothy and Titus?

1. Timothy and Titus had spiritual authority and advisory roles within and over the local Churches, but their activities were not tied to any specific office. Whereas we can clearly demonstrate that deacons and elders/overseers (Greek: *presbyteros*, *episkopos*) existed as specific offices not designated by specific titles, Scripture never designates any third office with any sort of title carried by the two men. For

74. Leonhard Goppelt, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

75. Z. B. Gerhard Tröger, *Das Bischofsamt in der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche, Jus Ecclesiasticum: Beiträge zum Staatskirchenrecht 2* (München: Claudius Verlag, 1966), pp. 20–21; Leonhard Goppelt, *op. cit.*, pp. 19–20.

76. Thomas Schirmmayer, *Das Mißverständnis des Emil Brunner: Emil Brunner's Bibliologie als Ursache für das Scheitern seiner Ekklesiologie*, (Theologische Untersuchungen zu Weltmission und Gemeindebau), ed. von Hans-Georg Wüch and Thomas Schirmmayer, *Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Weltmission und Gemeindebau* (Lörrach: 1982), p. 54, Revised and abbreviated in “Das Mißverständnis der Kirche und das Mißverständnis des Emil Brunner,” *Bibel und Gemeinde* 89 (1989) 3: 279–311 and “Zur neutestamentlichen Gemeindestruktur: Ergänzungen zu, Das Mißverständnis der Kirche und das Mißverständnis des Emil Brunner,” *Bibel und Gemeinde* 90 (1990) 1: 53–62.

77. See: Thomas Schirmmayer: “Die Pastoralbriefe Factum” 3, 4/1984: 9–10 and “Plädoyer für die historische Glaubwürdigkeit der Apostelgeschichte und der Pastoralbriefe,” a. 181–235/254 in Heinz Warnecke, Thomas Schirmmayer, *War Paulus wirklich auf Malta?* (Neuhausen: Hänssler, 1992).

78. Thomas Schirmmayer, *Ethik* (Neuhausen: Hänssler, 1994), Band 2, Lektion 44, pp. 525–566, especially pp. 532–546, Abbreviated as “Die drei Ebenen der neutestamentlichen Leitungsstruktur,” Anstöße—Beilage zu Neues vom Euroteam 1/1994: 1–4.

70. See also Eduard Lohse, “*cheir* . . . *cheirotoneo*,” in Gerhard Kittel (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 417–418, 420–423.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 418.

72. Walter Bauer, Kurt and Barbara Aland, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1988), col. 1757; Eduard Lohse, *op. cit.*, p. 426–427.

73. Josef Bohatec, *Calvins Lehre von Staat und Kirche: mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Organismusgedankens*, Untersuchungen zur Deutschen Staats- und Rechtsgeschichte 147 (Breslau: M. & H. Marcus, 1937) [Josef Bohatec, *Calvins Lehre von Staat und Kirche: mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Organismusgedankens*, (Aalen: Scientia, 1968 [1937]), p. 478.

this reason, I consider their roles an argument against the creation of a third office with definite duties and areas of authority, although I believe their responsibility for spiritual guidance to be essential, especially for the spread of the gospel.

2. Even though no final word can be spoken on the issue, I believe that their duties in Crete and Ephesus probably corresponded to the roles later carried out by pastors. They were not bishops in the modern sense of the word, but pastors. That would explain the fact that there is no historical documentation of an episcopal system in the Early Church derived from the Pastoral Epistles. The bishops of the Early Church derived their offices from the apostolic successors, but seem to have been officers of the local congregation above the elders, not supraregional bishops with sacramental authority.

3. I believe that Timothy's and Titus' duties outside of the local congregation within the framework of a growing missionary movement should be understood as a facet of the expanded New Testament apostolic concept, which we must investigate more thoroughly.

NINE PROPOSITIONS ON CHURCH STRUCTURE AND LEADERSHIP

I would like to conclude with nine propositions on the subject, and a call for spiritual leadership.

1. The question of New Testament Church structure does not depend solely on the terminology used in Scripture: the issue is not whether to call a pastor's superior a bishop, superintendent, a visitor or nothing at all, but whether such an institution can be found in Scripture. If so, what duties and authority should such a person carry?

A Christian with the title "Brother" can be dictatorial, while another with the title "Father" or "Bishop" may prove to have no authority at all in the decisive moment, when evil must be opposed. A man with no authority at home may be adamant in his demands for female submission. Another, who supports women's rights in public, may be a tyrant at home.

2. The issue of proper Church government cannot be decided on paper or in theory, but only in the everyday reality of Church life. We must not forget that theory and practice are often worlds apart. The Pope, whose theoretical authority is supreme on earth,⁷⁹ has little influence in many local Roman Catholic Churches, but I have experienced the absolute authority exercised by the editors of one of the Brethren's publishing companies, often the secret leader of the whole denomination. Although the denomination officially vehemently rejects the idea of any sort of power or authority outside of the local congregation, all of the Churches in that denomination accepted his decree that a foreign Christian was not to speak in the Churches.

3. The use of a term such as "episcopal," "presbyterian"

or "congregational" has little to do with the reality within a Church or denomination. The buildings of some congregationalist Churches belong to the denomination, and those of some episcopal churches belong to the local congregation. In the latter case, the local Church is more independent than in the former. If an episcopal Church elects its own pastors (and if this denomination has no seminary of its own), it is more independent than a congregationalist Church which can select only pastors trained at the denomination's own seminary.

The seminary administrations, the people who determine which students may study at a seminary, and who refer their graduates to the congregations, often have more influence on the denomination than the bishops. (The role of the director of a seminary partly corresponds to that of the Early Church's bishops.)

4. Even when form and content agree, and even though the visible forms of Church life have a certain significance, spiritual goals must have the first priority. We are always in danger of paying more attention to visible differences than to the invisible ones, but true spiritual humility is more important than the limitations of authority on paper. An arrogant person will destroy any office, but a humble man will never abuse even the most exaggerated authority. Anyone who intends to exercise personal power in a Church will do so—with or without the authorisation of a Church constitution. A person whose first priority is the spiritual welfare of the Church will never harm her, even though the constitution may give him absolute power.

5. Both the Old Testament and the New limit authority delegated from below through authority delegated from above. A summary of New Testament decision-making⁸⁰ demonstrates that the actual procedure depends on the situation; sometimes authority is exercised from above, sometimes from below. Some decisions are made by consensus, some by an individual. Johannes Jansen writes: "Neither the episcopalian, the presbyterian nor the congregational leadership models comprehend completely the dimensions of the first churches' constitutions, individually or in their entirety. We find administration by qualified individuals (autocratic-episcopal), as well as through cooperation between elders, groups of apostles, the individual apostle and the elders of Jerusalem (presbyterian) and authority carried by the congregation (democratic-ecclesiastic). Yet, in all models, all submit to each other, and to Christ. The New Testament provides a happy union of liberty and obedience, a synthesis of all three principles. There is neither monarchical apostolate or episcopate, nor all-powerful presbyter, nor absolute congregational democracy with elected officers."⁸¹

6. Both the Old Testament and the New limit both the power of the leadership to make decisions and the authority of the group. Robert Woodward Barnwell points out that the New Testament equally values the authority of individuals and that of the many.⁸² He rightly says that

79. See Thomas Schirrmacher, "Has Roman Catholicism Changed? An Examination of Recent Canon Law," *Antithesis: A Review of Reformed/Presbyterian Thought and Practice*, 1 (1990) 2 (März/Apr): 23–30. For the Roman Catholic position see Knut Walf, "Kollegialität der Bischöfe ohne römischen Zentralismus?" *Diakonia: Internationale Zeitschrift für die Praxis der Kirche* 17 (1986) 3: 167–179, here pp. 167–173; and Joseph Kommonchak, "Das ökumenische Konzil im neuen Kirchenrechtskodex," *Concilium* (German edition) 19 (1983) 8/9: 574–579.

80. Joost Reinke, Jürgen Tischler, "Dynamisch leiten," *Missiologica Evangelica* 10 (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 1998), pp. 68–70 in Anlehnung and Johannes Jansen, *Gemeinde und Gemeindeführung: Episkopat, Presbyterium oder Demokratie?* (Kassel: J. G. Oncken, 1931), p. 49. For an opposing view, see Jeff Brown, *Gemeindeleitung nach dem Neuen Testament* (Nürnberg: VTR, 2000), pp. 14–15.

81. Johannes Jansen, *op. cit.*, p. 49. On p. 3, he summarises: one leads, a council of brothers leads, all lead.

82. Robert Woodward Barnwell, *The Analysis of Church Government*

DECISION MAKING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT				
TEXT	PROBLEM	PARTICIPANTS	PROCEDURE	STRUCTURE
Acts 1:15–26	Enlargement of apostolate	11 Disciples and 120 men (plus women?)	Peter takes the initiative, two candidates are nominated. Choice made by casting lots.	Democracy, the congregation
Acts 5:2; 6:1–2	The Church account and care of the poor	12 Apostles	Distribution and administration by the disciples alone	Presbyterial, leadership team
Acts 6:1–7	Care of the poor is more than the Twelve can handle	12 Apostles, the Church (more than 1000?), 7 deacons	Initiative: apostolic counsel, election with confirmation	Presbyterial, democratic
Acts 10:48	Conversion and baptism	Peter and several brethren from Joppa	Peter orders the baptism	Episcopal, authoritarian
Acts 14:23	Ordination of elders	Paul and Barnabas	Both elected	Almost episcopal, but also presbyterial (as two were involved)
	Apostolic Council, fellowship between Jews and Gentiles	Paul, Barnabas, the apostles and elders, the Churches of Antioch and Jerusalem	The congregation and a final meeting elders and apostles → resolution of the Church	Presbyterial, democratic
Acts 15:36–40	Qualifications of John Mark for planned missionary journey	Barnabas, Paul (objects: Barnabas, possibly also Silas)	Dispute → separation. Mission is carried out in spite of the division. Reconciliation at later time.	Episcopal? (Two bishops at odds?)
Acts 21:17, 25	Paul's visit to Jerusalem Rumour that Paul is contradicting Jewish law	Paul, James, the elders of the Church at Jerusalem	Meeting of the elders leads to resolution, which is carried out by the congregation	Presbyterial
1 Cor. 14:26ff.	Directions on the form of worship	Paul and the Church at Corinth	Written directions	Episcopal
2 Cor. 13:2–4:10	Sin in the Church	Paul and the Church at Corinth	“Do not spare the sinner”; Paul uses his authority	Episcopal

papalism has magnified authority so much that consensus died, while congregationalism has emphasised consensus so much, that authority died.⁸³ Synods are therefore important, but they have never shown the activity, initiative and daring essential to the advancing of the Kingdom of God. The great missionaries and Church builders have always been individuals. Monte E. Wilson writes:⁸⁴ “A biblical case can be made for each of the above mentioned forms of church

government. Each of them has a revered history. Each also has its potential weaknesses. Congregationalism can degenerate into a democracy where we vote on God's revealed will and everyone does what's right in his or her own sight, a.k.a., anarchy. Presbyterianism may morph into a ruling aristocracy detached from and insensitive to the spiritual needs of the congregation. Episcopacy can lead to an autocracy that is utterly divorced from the local congregation it presumes to lead.”

Central to biblical Church structure are the offices of deacon and elder, who require authorisation by the congregation's membership. The deacons are responsible for the practical and social needs of the congregation, the elders, who govern the Church, for doctrine and spiritual guidance.

(Petersburg, VA: The Franklin Press Company Publ., 1907). pp. 250, 269, 279.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 252.

84. Monte E. Wilson, “Church Government: The Problem of Tyranny and Anarchy within the Local Church,” Chalcedon Report No. 416 (March, 2000), pp. 18–19, here p. 18.

Besides these structures within the individual congregations, the New Testament Churches demonstrated a sense of spiritual responsibility for each other, which implied supraregional co-operation and mutual support.

Personally, I find a combination of elements of the three models the best solution to the problem. The Bible does not necessarily imply synthesis of congregational, presbyterian and episcopal elements, and there may, of course, be other ways to handle the matter. Essential to the solution are: (1) a strong, relatively independent local congregation whose elders have both authority and responsibility, (2) synods, in which the full-time ministers, the elders and the congregations both correct and stimulate each other, and (3) supraregional leaders, spiritual role models who observe general developments and manage missions, but have no sacramental or legal powers.

7. Authority, whether it flows from above or below, is in the last instance subject to the word of God—neither office nor constitution have the last word, but Scripture. Authority belongs to the person whose admonitions are drawn from the Bible and the Holy Spirit. When Paul took leave of the elders of Ephesus, he left them neither a Church code nor an office. He merely admonished them, “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). That is what the Church is for. When the Church fails in its missionary responsibilities, it needs spiritually gifted, independent, courageous leaders to admonish and recall her to her duties, as the Old Testament prophets did. They disregarded the Levitical priests, when these officials neglected their duties or exploited their positions. On the other hand, leaders in the local congregation must be replaced when they misuse their authority or substitute bureaucracy for missionary perspective. In that case, the membership, insofar as it is motivated by the word of God and the Holy Spirit, is called upon to reprove the leadership.

No constitution or structure, as excellent as it may be, is infallible. Even if it has provided for co-operation and mutual restraint from above and from below, a Church government can founder, when it follows unbiblical doctrine or unspiritual leaders. God stands by his word and the work of his Spirit. In any conflict, he will support those who, like the Old Testament prophets, exhort according to his word with or without the legal justification of Church constitution or custom. Because Scripture was on their side, Paul (and Barnabas) were right in daring to accuse even Peter (“I withstood him to his face,” Gal. 2:11–14, 18) of betraying the gospel (“... they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel” Gal. 2:14).

Paul later writes in a similar vein when rebuking the Corinthians about their doctrinal disputes. “Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other” (1 Cor. 4:6). Anyone who goes beyond Scripture is vain and endangers the Church, whether or not he is authorised by his Church’s constitution.

Just as the State should be subject to the law (the constitution)⁸⁵ and not to any individual, the New Testament

Church acknowledges no person, either local or supraregional not subject to the Bible. Scripture is the only constitution given to the Body of Christ, even though denominations and congregations may find it practical to formulate concrete regulations or confessions of faith.

8. Pastors need counsellors and mentors. Visitors, bishops, etc. are above all the pastors and counsellors of the pastors, not administrative bosses or officials. Pastors need encouragement and exhortation just as much as other Christians do, but such mentors should not be members of the pastor’s own Church. In the New Testament, the errors of one pastor concerned not only his own congregation but also the other Churches. When, however, a pastor or elder was in difficulties, he was first approached by an individual, not by a synod, a committee or a Church court, just as in the case of a sinning Church member in Matthew 18:15.⁸⁶

In episcopal Churches, the office is carried out by a “synodical bishopric” in which the bishop is elected by the synod as a visitor, and is thus subject to the synod. In the other Churches, a synodical president, a deacon or visitor carries out these duties. This officer should have at least enough authority to require a synod to reconsider wrong decisions, but the synod should have the power to call the visitor to account, to dismiss him or to regulate the limits of his authority.

Marie M. Fortune insists that the elders of congregational Churches have the authority to interfere, when pastors misuse their office. She blames the lack of such restraints for the repeated cases of pastors who entertain sexual relationships to women seeking counselling.⁸⁷

9. A Church should have enough counsellors to provide sufficient personal and spiritual guidance. These should be active in a local congregation as well. No one can know 50 pastors and 300 elders (for example) well enough to provide the “soul care” they need.

Few episcopal Churches have enough bishops to be aware of all that goes on in the local congregations. Except for practical administrative and organisational matters, such as calling synods etc., the Church does not need a hierarchy above the bishops. Episcopal Churches need to learn from the early Church, which had bishops as “pastors” over small areas and as colleagues, who supported and exhorted each other.

Because of the usage of the word, “apostle,” in the New Testament, I assume that there were founding apostles, such as Peter or Paul (“apostles of Jesus Christ”), whom God had confirmed by signs and miracles, and whose directions were absolutely binding on all Churches. This office no longer exists, but the spiritual gift and the office of apostle in a general sense still do (“apostles” [or messengers of the churches], 2 Cor. 8:23, Phil. 2:25).⁸⁸ These apostles were and are missionaries with a particular gift for starting Churches where none previously existed and where there are no believers. First, Jesus’ twelve disciples are called apostles. Later, Matthias, a substitute for Judas, and Paul are added. All of these had seen Jesus (Paul in a vision), were appointed

86. *Ibid.*, Lektion 57.

87. Marie M. Fortune, *Is Nothing Sacred? When Sex Invades the Pastoral Relationship* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), p. 98.

88. See my list and discussion of all New Testament texts speaking of apostles in Thomas Schirrmacher, *Ethik*, Vol. 2, pp. 542–546 and Thomas Schirrmacher, *Der Römerbrief*, Vol. 2, pp. 292–296.

85. See Thomas Schirrmacher, *Ethik*. Vol 2, Lektion 59 and 60.

by him, confirmed their apostolic authority by signs and miracles and assisted in the revelation and recording of the New Testament message.

Occasionally, other workers in the New Testament Churches are called apostles, namely Jesus' brothers, James and Jude (1 Cor. 9:5, 15:7, Gal. 1:19) and possibly Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14) and others (1 Cor. 15:7, possibly Acts 1:25). In the case of Barnabas, the term may already be used in the general sense, as in 2 Cor. 8:23. Paul, speaking here of the "apostles" or "messengers" of the Churches, refers to colleagues whom he has sent out as missionaries (the word "missionary" being the Latin translation of the Greek "apostle" or "messenger"), with governing duties over several congregations. They are not "apostles of Jesus Christ" in the narrower sense of the word, but correspond to modern missionaries involved in founding new Churches, or to missionary bishops.

As important as the general responsibility of the

missionary is, note that only the founding apostles are meant, whenever Scripture speaks of the words or commands of the apostles, the foundation of the New Testament Church or of the revelation of God's word.

It becomes apparent, therefore, that the office of founding apostle existed only in the generation during and immediately after Jesus' life on earth. In the second century,⁸⁹ however, there were still "apostles" in the sense used in 2 Cor. 8:23, as there are now as well, although, in order to avoid confusion, one should call them missionaries and bishops. C&S

89. See Adolf von Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Wiesbaden: VMA-Verlag, O. J. [1924]), pp. 361. According to Einar Molland, "Besatz die Alte Kirche ein Missionsprogramm?" pp. 51–76 in Heinzgünther Frohnes, Uwe W. Knorr (ed.), *Die Alte Kirche, Kirchengeschichte als Missionsgeschichte 1* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1974), p. 57, missionaries were still called "apostles" during the Middle Ages.

GRACE & LAW

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THE IMPULSE OF POWER: FORMATIVE IDEALS OF WESTERN CIVILISATION

by Michael W. Kelley

PART II: MEDIAEVAL MAN: “THE GRAND SYNTHESIS”—*Cont.*

5. THE UNIVERSITY AND SCHOLASTICISM

MEN in the Middle Ages were accustomed to looking at life in terms of distinct categories or classifications. Everyone and everything, it seemed, must belong in the proper place, fit the proper rank, and behave according to the proper function. Only when the world appeared in its correct arrangements could mediaeval men be confident that everything was as it should be. Each man has his ordained place and purpose and the responsibility not to violate God’s design and order. At the same time, mediaeval men longed passionately to see the unity of all things. While life must divide into several compartments, they accepted that these distinctions ought to be somehow joined at a *higher* level, where the antagonisms so apparent in politics and society throughout much of this period could be overcome and a more basic harmony be realised.

The most serious conflict resulted, as already indicated, from the partition into *Sacerdotium* on the one hand and *Regnum* or *Imperium* on the other; that is, from the difference that was posited to exist between things *spiritual* and things *temporal*. In the Middle Ages this drive for unity of the separate and opposite categories was fought out as a struggle over authority. Which *side* of the *Church* had been granted the highest authority, the power to rule over the entire Christian Society? On the sacred or spiritual side stood the clerical aristocracy led by the vicar of St. Peter, the pope in Rome; on the secular or temporal side was the lay aristocracy, the knights and barons who, theoretically at least, were subject to the king or emperor as their supreme authority. Ideologically it was not an even fight. Although kings and emperors might claim the status of the Lord’s *anointed*, because they were not only crowned but consecrated with holy chrism, they were not qualified to perform such rites upon themselves; they must receive their *ordination* to office from hands more sacred, more blessed, than theirs could ever hope to be. Only the clergy could anoint lay rulers. The pope in particular claimed this

prerogative, which thereby elevated him above all sacred and lay power. If the pope was higher than the emperor, should not the unity of society be centered in the pope? Should we not look for the harmony between *Sacerdotium* and *Imperium* in a hierarchical relationship between the two? This was the theory, if not always the reality.

Although Western mediaeval society was principally dominated by a struggle for control between clerical and lay orders, it became complicated by the emergence of a *third* order—the *Studium*, what has been termed the *university*.¹

It may seem strange to speak of the university as a new order coming to exist alongside that of the previous two orders, for was not the university made up largely of clerics? Even though the university would in time become the breeding ground for that new civil official, the trained lawyer, whose chief responsibility was to serve the needs of the new *secular* State that was also beginning to emerge in the late Middle Ages, did not the university and the curriculum of learning remain largely an instrument of the Church? Should we not think of it as primarily promoted by the Church in order to provide the learning necessary to qualify candidates for high office in the clerical order?

With education in the Middle Ages limited to a narrow curriculum of study when compared with that of today, and with theology the dominant subject, it might seem valid to conclude that the university was an aspect of the clerical world, a sub-section of the *Sacerdotium*. But this is only partly true, for the *Studium* came to represent an entirely new order, the centre of whose intellectual vision would chart the course of Western history out of the Middle Ages and in the direction

1. “The universities came to form in effect a third public force, standing beside the ecclesiastical and secular hierarchies.” Alexander Murray, *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 284.

of the *humanist* Renaissance and Enlightenment. Although it was initially closely associated with Christianity and the Church, the university generated a mentality increasingly hostile towards the Church and the rule of the Sacerdotium. In time, it supplied the ideological support for a new secular ideal—*reason* as man's highest order.

The university as it exists today is a mediaeval invention. "In its final perfection," writes David Knowles, "it was to be one of the most important original contributions that the mediaeval centuries made to the civilised life of Europe, and it has proved one of the most valuable of legacies left to modern times by the mediaeval past. For the University, in the sense of that word now current, was wholly a mediaeval creation."² Although some have thought it possible to trace the origins of the university as far back as Plato's Academy or Aristotle's Lyceum, there was actually very little similarity between the university as it gradually took shape in the Middle Ages and the methods of learning employed in the classical Greek past. The ancient world knew nothing of an organised body of certified masters and students who engaged in a course of instruction that led, by a long and searching process of examination, towards a degree which admitted one to privileges within a carefully guarded corporation or which opened doors to greater professional opportunities. This was the product of the age of the guilds—the Middle Ages.

The university in the Middle Ages reflected mediaeval man's passion for embodying his ideals in institutional form. Everywhere, in trade or commerce, arts or crafts, on the land or in the cloister, men were setting up structures to give durability and permanence to their cultural efforts. This was, in part at least, a legacy of the Christian belief that civilisation advances by organised effort and careful construction. But it sprang just as much from a fear of competition and a desire for protection against the encroachments of others. According to the prevailing outlook, the world was inevitably a threat to life and goods. Men were wont to organise around some common interest, to form a guild to prevent others from poaching on their domain. The guild mentality is at heart a cartel mentality. Learning, knowledge, and education—the properties of the mind—were just as likely to become a closely guarded preserve of an elite few.³ Whatever the word *Studium* might connote in late mediaeval culture, the educational ideal that it came to represent was not meant to benefit an expanding populace, but only a privileged small number.

The rise of the university was, in a sense, accidental. It sprang up as an offshoot of the intellectual revolution of the twelfth century, a consequence of the new scholastic culture in the realm of learning. This cultural development represented a new confidence in the mind of man to reason about everything in his experience, not only to understand himself and his world but God as well, by the mere instrument of his logic. It was nothing less than the urge to explain *everything* by means of an inherent intellectual *power* which would provide man with a rational comprehension of all there is to know.

Scholasticism is a mark of the beginning of Western man's attempt to turn back from an unduly mystical contemplation of, and preoccupation with, that other *spiritual* world to a greater immediate concern with and appreciation for this one. To a great extent, it was done under a dominant Christian impulse, yet because the instruments employed for this end were taken from the non-Christian world of thought, from Aristotle especially, it would eventually have the effect of splitting man's world into opposing realms of nature (knowledge) and grace (faith). In time, even the traditional authority of Scripture, to the extent it was seen as applicable to life, would recede before a new secular ideal by which man, from the resources of his reason alone, would seek to build his world. Reason independent of revelation would come to represent the new authority in the modern world.

It is important to ask, however, whether the idea of learning and knowledge in the Christian West was ever wholly founded upon an exclusively Scriptural basis. Was it not infected with non-Christian assumptions from the beginning? Much that passed for learning in the centuries that followed after the apostles and the early Church was a combination of Scripture and Greek philosophical speculation. Scholasticism, which sought to synthesise Christian truth with the pagan Greek mind, was far from initiating the type of intellectual endeavour that dominated its agenda. The infection of Christian thinking with non-Christian presuppositions was not something that suddenly cropped up in the High Middle Ages; it can be seen lurking in the inner assumptions of learning long before this time. Scholasticism was the long working out of these disparate points of view at a time when men had regained confidence in man's ability to bring order into their world by the power of the mind.

1. *Purge of the Mind—Ascent of the Soul*

From its beginning Christianity was an *intellectual* religion, for it was supremely a religion of the Book—the Scriptures. Rather than a religion of mystical release or semi-philosophical introspection, it was founded upon the words of God *written*. Knowledge and understanding of the written word of God was an indispensable requirement for becoming a Christian and living according to the faith which set one apart from all other religious points of view. Christianity could not exist in a context of utter barbarity, where reading or writing were virtually non-existent. Some measure of literate culture was an unavoidable necessity. Always, then, the first order of business whenever and wherever early Christian missionaries penetrated heathen lands where no knowledge of letters was available was the translation of the Scriptures and the organisation of methods of teaching reading and writing.

Since any book religion requires the application of the mind to the study of its content, in time a system of *doctrine* is built up. The transmission of Christianity to new generations of converts, or to sons and daughters of earlier converts, would require them to have some knowledge not only of the essential contents of Scripture, but of this system of doctrine as well. To believe the gospel came to mean more than simply accepting some facts about what Jesus said or did while on earth, it would also involve some knowledge of who Jesus is and the nature of his relationship to God. Moreover, one needed to understand how men could be saved by this Jesus,

2. David Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, p. 159.

3. "Among the aims of these corporations were self-government and monopoly—which amount to control of the teaching enterprise." David C. Lindberg, *The Beginnings of Western Science: The European Scientific Tradition in Philosophical, Religious, and Institutional Context, 600 B.C. to A.D. 1450*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 208.

that is, how salvation was appropriated, what it involved as a way of life, and why Christianity's explanation was unique in these respects. More was involved, but the point is that much was needed to be taught and learned, efforts that would require the application of intellect.

Christianity was a religion of truth; it was also a religion which demanded a new obedience. Not only was it necessary to know the way of salvation, but Christianity required a moral transformation as well. The moral behaviour it proclaimed was formulated in rules and regulations which new converts would then be required to learn. Naturally, these, too, would be recorded in literary form so as to ensure universal recognition and acceptance.

Christianity was bound to attract opponents, sometimes from other religious viewpoints, but also from those who accepted some of its features but perverted its doctrines. Thus, an apologetics against false religions and heresies would add still more thought-content to be learned. Christianity spread in the early centuries not only in a spatial and geographical sense, but it also grew as a body of ideas and teachings.

Because Christianity was an intellectual religion, teaching its truths raises the question of the need for schools in order to instruct future generations. In this respect Marrou has offered an important, if perhaps somewhat debatable, observation: "One would have expected the early Christians, who were adamant in their determination to break with a pagan world that they were constantly upbraiding for its errors and defects, to develop their own religious types of schools as something quite separate from the classical pagan school. But this, surprisingly, they did not do . . ." This was primarily true of the Greco-Latin cultural world in which Christianity first dawned. There Christians encountered a strong educational tradition already long in existence that proved difficult to supplant or discredit. "Never throughout the whole of antiquity," Marrou goes on to say, "except for a few particular cases, did Christians set up their own special schools. They simply added their own specifically religious kind of training . . . on to the classical teaching that they received along with their non-Christian fellows in the established schools."⁴ Knowles makes a similar claim: "The Christian Church in the West was for long recruited principally from the lower, un leisured strata of society. When in the fourth century it began to win the educated classes there was no opposition or rival system to the old Roman primary education based on grammar and the classics. Christian children attended the schools of non-Christian masters, while Christian masters taught all comers according to the old curriculum."⁵

Thus, when it came to the most important assumptions, such as how, or in terms of what, the mind should be educated, or what presuppositions should control man's view of himself and his purpose in the world, many Christians seemed not to have been especially disturbed by what the established pagan schools taught and whether or not they would undermine the doctrines of Christianity in those respects. They did not entirely grasp that no neutrality was possible between pagans and Christians on the fundamental ideas of man, the world, and the understanding of truth which the mind sought to comprehend.

Perhaps this indifference in the early Church may be explained by the evident fact, signified by many, that the

Christian religion was thought of primarily as a matter of *personal* or *inner* salvation, which meant by and large a salvation of the *soul*. At the same time, its corollary was expressed in the goal of salvation which did not so much include the renewal of life here and now but the achievement of the after-life in heaven. Such a concept of salvation naturally held little consequence for man's life in this world. It implied almost no connection to any cultural idea nor application to the management of life on this earth. These matters, if necessary, apparently could be safely learned from non-Christians. In much of Christian literature little was said of man's broader relationship to God, that he was created to be God's dominion servant and that all his culture and civilisation were either products of submission to God or rebellion against God. That God was to be Lord over *all* man's life and that his redemption of man was meant to restore his rights as man's Lord in *all* areas of his life was neither fully nor firmly grasped. Thus, it was easy for Christians to assume that the culture in which they lived was legitimate and normal for Christians to adopt, and they accepted the category of "Hellenistic humanism as 'natural' and self-evident . . ."⁶ This humanism, it was accepted, taught one how to be a man, and it was believed that one must first know how to be a *man* before he can become a Christian. As a result, Christians sought merely to graft a supernatural act of grace on to an already defined human nature.⁷ From the beginning, a dualism took root in Christian thinking.

In a telling comment Knowles indicates what this dualism meant for Christianity in its history both in the period of Late Antiquity and in the Middle Ages: "Christianity, in its origins and pre-history, had little kinship with Greece, but what we call Christendom, for more than a thousand years from the conversion of the emperor Constantine, was almost exclusively a society of peoples deriving their intellectual discipline and the habits of reasoning directly or indirectly from the Greco-Roman culture of the ancient world. It would consequently be scarcely an exaggeration to say that the philosophy of Christendom in those centuries is so deeply impregnated with the methods and ideas of Greek thought, and with the doctrines of non-Christian and more particularly of pre-Christian philosophers, as to be in a very real sense a direct extension or prolongation of ancient philosophy."⁸

Here we approach the essence of the matter. Christianity developed on the foundation of the "habits of reasoning" and "the methods and ideas of Greek thought" which were supplied to her by the culture in which she grew up. This created enormous tensions, for Christianity and this pagan culture were deeply at odds, not simply due to the fact that this classical world of thought was a product of the old polytheism and Christianity was monotheistic, but because they had contradicting explanations on just about everything, most especially the claims to possess solutions to the problem of human existence.⁹ For Hellenistic man the solution to man was to be found in becoming cultured and learned, to triumph over barbarism and ignorance. The cultivation of mind and the achievement of *sacred* philosophy were the means to overcome the debilitating influence of matter and

4. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, pp. 422, 424.

5. Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, p. 59.

6. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, p. 425.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 425f.

8. Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, p. 3.

9. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, p. 426.

the body which were responsible for producing personal and social disorder. The Greeks, as we discussed earlier, believed that man—at least certain elite men—could truly rise to the level of divinity, that mind, although hindered somewhat by matter, was not basically corrupted or sinful as the Christians maintained (or ought to have). Man's problems were within man's capability to manage, and his *reason* could act as a reliable guide in his endeavour to achieve true humanity in culture and civilisation. How is it, we may wonder, that so many in the early Church were thus attracted to Greek ideas and teaching?

On the one hand, because Christianity knew itself to be different from pagan culture and since no culture existed but the pagan one which surrounded it, and Christians failed to recognise they had one to offer themselves, it was easy to take the view that culture as such was evil, the only real alternative being to retreat into Monasticism as the denial of culture *per se*. On the other hand, a large number maintained contact with the world, but in so doing did not ask how or whether a specifically Christian idea of culture could be possible. Most accepted the Greek definition as far as it was conceivable to do so without severing connection to Christianity altogether. As a result, Christians did not altogether remove their children from pagan schools nor insist that the classical heritage compromised the essential nature of the Christian religion. A Christian upbringing was merely superimposed upon a humanistic education. This meant that the intellectual faith of Christianity was early and pervasively suffused with non-Christian assumptions, and the significance of this condition for the rise of scholasticism and the university should soon become apparent.

Throughout the early Middle Ages—certainly from about 600 up to the twelfth century *renaissance*—the figure who most influenced the definition of Christian learning was Augustine. In the words of R. W. Southern, “The most comprehensive syllabus of Christian studies which was available to scholars at the end of the tenth century was the plan sketched by St. Augustine in his treatise on Christian learning, *De Doctrina Christiana*.”¹⁰ Two others who helped to shape the educational ideal, if to a somewhat lesser extent, were Origen, whom we have already mentioned, and Boethius whom we shall briefly mention later. Augustine's imprint was more deeply etched than any other, chiefly because his works were more readily available, but also because Augustine, who was a greater systematic thinker than any other, endeavoured to integrate the Christian faith with the present world to which the Christian, he rightly believed, somehow belonged. However, as we also mentioned, Augustine's legacy would long act as a prop to the Monastic ideal of culture and thus to an ideal of learning and knowledge that meant little beyond the framing of speculations and metaphysical abstractions for the sake of pious contemplation and devotional exercises. His conception of learning did involve genuine intellectual activity, for Augustine understood that no advance in the faith was truly possible without real understanding of its content. Yet, Augustine intuitively clung to the Greek definition that man was essentially rational in his nature; using this understanding as the image of God in man he would then define the cultivation of the intellect as the noblest of all tasks for Christian men.

For Augustine the primary goal of Christian learning was to know the Scriptures. It was no simple matter, for faith required long and painstaking effort to understand that which it professed to be true and believed to be man's highest good. More importantly, Augustine did not believe that the knowledge of Scripture was an end in itself, rather it was the means to attain to a knowledge of what the heart of man deeply thirsts for, namely, to know God the Trinity as the author and founder of the universe and he who cares for his creatures through the truth.¹¹ Yet, what is of interest to us, and what influenced the idea of learning for so long in mediaeval man's outlook, is what, in Augustine's mind, constituted the process by which knowledge of the truth is acquired as well as what it meant concretely for Christian activity in the world. In both respects, Augustine showed himself vulnerable to non-Christian notions.

In the first place, that process by which we might hope to arrive at the knowledge of the truth Augustine characterised as a *journey* or *voyage*. Specifically, it was a journey by which the mind is *cleansed* or *purged* of anything that prevents the soul of man from seeing the immutable light of God. Man is described as having wandered far from God, a characterisation depicted by means of a geographical analogy called man's “native country.” If he would know the truth which is God and enjoy the blessedness of him who lives immutably, man must leave behind his changeable world and return to his spiritual home-land. Such a process was, if anything, a type of *ascent* of the soul from the material present which weighs man down to that realm of eternal contemplation of God and his truth.

Augustine did not hesitate to say of *temporal* things that they are such that we should “run through them quickly that we may be worthy to approach and to reach Him who freed our nature from temporal things . . .”¹² This was the essence of the matter for Augustine when it came to the idea of Christian learning. The Christian's chief responsibility was to undergo an intellectual process of purging his mind of the influences of this temporal world so that he might ascend to God. According to Augustine this was achieved principally by means of the study of Scripture which he took to be superior to mere ascetic withdrawal. Still, it would seem, learning the Scriptures did not mean that we were studying God's kingdom agenda for man *in* this world, nor from it did we learn to know God by knowing his will for all areas of life. The study of Scripture for Augustine and for early mediaeval men was intended more to erase man's connection to this world and to teach him primarily how to achieve the next than it was to teach him how to live and serve God in all aspects of life in this world. This programme of education, therefore, did not have in mind a specifically Christian idea of civilisation which was to be proclaimed and inculcated. It was intended for purely personal and internal soul-building.

We have seen and mentioned repeatedly that Neoplatonic thinking, ancient pagan man's last attempt to retain his grip on the control of culture and civilisation, had pervaded Christian thought. It continued to shape the outlook of Christianity throughout the Middle Ages, for, as Knowles rightly avers, “Neoplatonism . . . appears throughout late antiquity and

10. R. W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), p. 170f.

11. Saint Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D. W. Robertson, Jr., (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1958), p. 13.

12. *On Christian Doctrine*, p. 30.

the Middle Ages as the principal ingredient of Christian philosophical thought and theological speculation.¹³ In the context of education it invaded the West largely through Augustine whose thinking had been early influenced by many of its assumptions. In Neoplatonism, as we saw, the great problem for man was matter, especially the body. The body was viewed as a drag on the spirit or soul and the cause of evil in the world. The chief purpose of man was to free himself from the entanglements of the body and of the material world around him. He must ascend to the home of spirit in the great cosmic Spirit above all change and flux. This was achieved essentially by great intellectual discipline and purification of the mind from thoughts that distract man from contemplating eternal verities. What made Neoplatonism appealing was its accent upon the mind and the reason. It offered the hope of philosophical certainty and a rational satisfaction which could neither be affected nor controverted by the movement of time and things.

While Augustine played down the disparagement of the body as the source of evil, nevertheless he did appreciate the concept of learning as one which essentially involved purging the mind of temporal things and of the soul ascending intellectually to God in order to contemplate his being and truth. And though he centered the achievement of knowledge on the study of Scripture, he did not sufficiently grasp its covenantal purpose for the entire life of man in God's world.

In the second place, because his programme was genuinely intellectual Augustine was compelled to take the whole realm of learning into account in order to explain how Christians ought to acquire the mental tools they needed even to gain the truth of God. But that realm of learning was controlled by the pagan consciousness, for the classical world had defined the problems to be studied as well as the methods that were to be employed in thinking about them. They had already stipulated what were the *sciences*. How to absorb their achievements without becoming deceived by their agenda was the issue to be resolved. Augustine had to struggle against positing a dualistic outlook, because for him truth must be one and unified. There could not be truth as taught by pagans and another taught by Scripture. It was his undoubted conviction, therefore, that "every good and true Christian should understand that wherever he may find truth, it is his Lord's."¹⁴ Still, it cannot be said that Augustine succeeded in overcoming this problematic dualism for the basic reason that he never found a sufficient point of integration for all of life in God's word.

Thus, he maintained that among the things of life some are there to be *enjoyed*, while others are merely to be *used*. "Those things which are to be used help and, as it were, sustain us as we move toward blessedness in order that we may gain and cling to those things which make us blessed."¹⁵ On what Scriptural basis did he introduce these distinctions? How does Scripture define the *useful*? And why posit a difference between things to be merely used and other things to be enjoyed? And why should blessedness lie beyond the things that are either used or enjoyed, even though these might assist one to arrive at that goal? Augustine cannot be said to have provided any biblical explanation for his assertion.

One thing is certain: among the things that Augustine deemed *useful* was the whole realm of the sciences known to the pagan world. His intention was to find their *use* for a Christian curriculum. Scripture, after all, required interpreting, and the task of interpretation was no simple matter, but a *scientific* endeavour. It was a difficult job searching the mysteries of the faith; the best equipment was needed. Augustine found that equipment available in the pagan method of intellectual training. He saw its use as an *ancillary* preparation for studying the truths and doctrines of Scripture. As Knowles states, "he desires to explain and interpret the nature of God and of the soul with all the means at his command, whether he finds help in philosophers of the past, and in the Scriptures and teachings of the Church, or whether he presents the results of his own reasoning and religious experience."¹⁶ This pagan science and learning, however, was acceptable so long as it remained merely in the category of the *useful*, and did not pretend to lead to the blessed life. Still, he allowed, in its proper place its usefulness was undoubted.

Thus, from the start there was always a loose connection between *divine* and *secular* learning. So long as man's essential religious purpose was one of escape from this world, the pagan world of thought as an acceptable explanation of man and his world would be kept in subordination to divine learning. But when men became more earnest about this world, as began to occur in the late eleventh century, eventually the secular world of thought would not be content to play the role of the merely ancillary or useful to that with which it had no intrinsic connection. If Christians could not integrate the *useful* and the *blessed* on a strictly Scriptural basis, then any attempt to combine the non-Christian *useful* with the Christian *blessed* would eventually show the Scriptures to be lacking in all that man needed in order for him to be truly man and the world to be a legitimate realm for his endeavours. These he would increasingly find from non-Christian thought, pushing Scripture and its *spiritual* agenda from the centre to the periphery of culture and civilisation.

In the concept of learning that was to take shape in the Middle Ages, Origen's importance is second only to that of Augustine. His primary contribution lay in the method of interpreting Scripture and the *ends* for which Scripture ought to be studied. Beryl Smalley offers here an appropriate summary: "Scripture for him [Origen] was a mirror, which reflected the divinity now darkly, now brightly; it had body, soul, and spirit, a literal, moral, and allegorical sense, the first two for 'simple believers' who were 'unable to understand profounder meanings', the third for the initiates, the Christian gnostics, who were able to investigate *the wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom of God*."¹⁷ Thus, learning was determined by the capacity one had for penetrating into the supra-rational mysteries of God, apparently a capability limited to a select few. Not only that, but those who could benefit from such *insights* need not concern themselves with whether or not they should seek to inculcate a similar understanding among the mass of believers in order to build up a common Christian enterprise, for the *average* believer was not capable of receiving such knowledge, limited as it was to those who not only had the inclinations to study them but the requisite training to appreciate their obviously esoteric

13. Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, p. 28.

14. *On Christian Doctrine*, p. 54.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

16. Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, p. 33.

17. Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, (University of Notre Dame Press, 1964), p. 8f.

quality. The effect was to promote an elitism in the realm of knowledge, a development that would preclude any covenantal/civilisational understanding of truth. It would also aid the growth of mere credulity among the masses as they would not be expected to understand Scripture on anything other than a simplistic level, consequently making them easy prey to control by those with power, especially the clerical aristocracy in whose hands all learning would become a guarded preserve. As with the Greeks, mediaeval Christian learning would foster a distinct social attitude, namely, the notion of culture and civilisation as something from which only a privileged few could or should possibly benefit. “The educated,” comments Murray, “were an elite, set above the herd of ordinary men.”¹⁸

2. *The Age of “Faith”*

With the passing of Late Antiquity we move into the early and central Middle Ages. Historians have sometimes defined these centuries—from approximately 600 to 1050 A.D.—as the Age of Faith. Often they have thought that this was the quintessential time in history when men believed unquestioningly in God, when faith and religious phenomena of all kinds were the great preoccupations of Western man. The term *age of faith* separates an era of pious credulity from the present time when men no longer give credence to myths and fables, when science and knowledge have liberated us from superstition and the need to seek solace in withdrawal and other-worldly contemplation. The accent on the word *faith* as depicted by modern historians tends to fall upon the inner man, upon his subjective disposition, and they are apt to regard the object of mediaeval man’s faith as something unworthy of consideration.

While this portrayal is to some extent true, it is not entirely accurate. For the term *age of faith* ought not to emphasise the act of believing as an inner experience so much as faith primarily “in the sense of that which is believed. A synonym for such ‘faith’ would be ‘doctrine’ . . .”¹⁹ The Middle Ages as an age of faith, then, was an age of doctrine as a body of thought which men were taught to believe and not to question. It was especially a time when Christian doctrine became set by the authority of tradition and was upheld by the consensus of the orthodox teachers of the Church. What men believed was the *catholic* faith, as it was the one and universal or catholic Church in which true doctrine had been delivered once and for all and had been transmitted by apostolic tradition.²⁰ The age of faith was synonymous with the age of the Church, an age when loyalty to the truth would be seen as indistinguishable from loyalty to apostolic tradition as this was embodied in the councils and fathers of the Church. The Church, through her clerical, especially pontifical, office holders, maintained complete control over the subject matter of learning and knowledge. This being so, all learning not only became a matter of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, it was fostered only to the extent that it served ecclesiastical interests.

As mentioned, the chief architect of this Church-dom-

inated idea of learning, at least initially, was Augustine. He was considered to be the father of the Church’s doctrine *par excellence*. This meant that his idea of learning, the nature of which first required preparatory study of the non-Christian classical methodology of thought to be completed by applying its technique to the content of the Scripture, came to be the accepted practice in the Church. But it also meant that the Church adopted Origen’s idea of one kind of knowledge for the elites and another kind for the simple believers. A third person left his legacy upon Church-controlled education in the Middle Ages, namely, Boethius (*c.* 480–524) whose importance lies uppermost in his great skill as a translator and preserver of much of the classical heritage that the mediaeval world possessed. In particular, “Boethius was the first to apply Aristotelian methods to theological problems and to the elucidation of dogmatic statements.”²¹ Very quickly, then, Aristotle’s syllogistic approach became chiefly responsible for the way questions and problems were to become formulated and resolved.

While it was Aristotle who first fascinated mediaeval men with the power of reason, the metaphysics, that is, the conceptual content, came essentially from Augustine. As long as this was so, the rational methodology of Aristotle was kept subordinate to the Christian control of culture. But when in the twelfth century the remaining corpus of Aristotle was introduced, including especially his metaphysics, then the Christian outlook, which was in truth a Church outlook, began to crumble. The intellectuals and scholars of the thirteenth century who fully embraced the complete Aristotelian system as the essence of Christian truth could not be aware of how far they had moved Christian thought away from its Augustinian presuppositions. What they did, however, in inheriting the whole corpus of Aristotelian ideas was “to erect a system of thought covering the whole of human experience without reference to the truths of faith . . . [a] development . . . greatly assisted by the contemporary tendency amongst theologians to separate the spheres of nature and grace, of reason and revelation.”²²

Aristotle’s logic, along with the system of doctrine of the Church fathers, particularly Augustine, had been the main subject of intellectual development throughout much of the early and central Middle Ages. And as Augustine’s mind had been influenced by the metaphysics of Neoplatonism, the primary purpose of mediaeval study, using Aristotelian logical categories, was to give *ascent of the soul* and the *purge of the mind* a seemingly scientific or rational grounding. As long as men believed that the purpose of the Christian life was to escape materiality, the use of Aristotelian logic only served to give that goal a rational basis, and would always remain in a subservient and somewhat artificial role. But when mediaeval thought began to shift slowly away from this Monastic ideal, when belief in an exclusively non-material and non-bodily end to life began to be doubted, Aristotle’s philosophical method would suddenly become the means to achieve independence for human thought which would eventually replace the Church’s control of learning with the authority of autonomous reason.

The problem of the relationship between the *secular* Aristotelian logic and the supposedly Christian Neoplatonic metaphysics can perhaps be explained as the problem of

18. Murray, *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages*, p. 241.

19. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600–1300)* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 4.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

21. Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, p. 48.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

trying to connect a view of life that had little room for the natural world as a realm of *Christian* activity, indeed as a place for man at all, with a system of rational investigation that could only view the realm of nature as all that was available for man to realise and perfect his humanity. In this period, so far as Christianity was concerned, the natural world had no intrinsic place in God's purpose for man; it was simply a means to a *spiritual* end. As Jonathan Riley-Smith has commented: "The natural world, itself miraculous since it stemmed from God's act of creation, was important only in so far as it gave men signs of what was in reality happening behind it, revealing to them the significance of these supernatural events. Nature was to be interpreted, not explained."²³ If learning and knowledge had any place in the Christian cultural ideal of this period it was to be able to *interpret* nature and the natural world, but with some loftier goal of disclosing its *spiritual* message. Aristotle was deemed useful in that he provided a mental instrument for engaging in that enterprise. His logic was employed for the sake of a *scientific* interpretation. But to *explain* nature so that Christians might be able to exercise *dominion* over it under God and so labour for his kingdom on earth (i.e., in the *natural* world) was not the primary purpose of learning and education. Yet, by adopting the Aristotelian logic as the principal tool for the purposes of religious *interpretation*, the natural world would soon begin to intrude, but it would not be a natural world built from the outset upon a Scriptural viewpoint. When the mediaeval outlook shifted from one of interpretation to one of explanation the intellectual process would already be seen as having been cut loose from Scriptural authority.

The high point of the central Middle Ages, so far as the development of the Western school and idea of learning is concerned, was the so-called Carolingian Renaissance. Beginning with the *reforms* of Charlemagne in the early ninth century the next two and a half centuries saw the establishment and spread of schools and a fixed educational curriculum that in time would become the seeds of the universities of the High Middle Ages. Initially, it was in association with the monastic houses and the monastic reform movement that schools emerged. Because for some time the monasteries were the chief seats and agents of education these centuries are generally referred to as the monastic or Benedictine centuries.²⁴ A few of the more famous monastic centres were St. Gall in France and Fulda and Reichenau in Germany. It was in these locations that the great collections of the classical past were gathered and copied. It was also here that the formation of a curriculum slowly took shape based primarily upon the study of letters and rhetoric. The goal of learning was to acquire the necessary skills for reading, writing and especially speaking, for the needs of the Church were centered upon knowledge of the Scriptures and the Latin Fathers with the capacity to teach and preach from them. The basic curriculum in this context became known as the *Trivium*, for it included three parts: grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic. The latter, the portion having to do with dialectic, was the study of Boethius's Aristotle, but in the monastic context was of limited value.

A second type of school also made its appearance during these centuries—the so-called cathedral school. The cathedral

schools were located at the great cathedral cities and were placed under the jurisdiction of the bishop. Among the most famous were Chartres, Tours, Rheims, Laon, and, of course, Paris. Here schools were established for the sake of educating the young clerks. Here, too, the principal course of study was Scripture and the Fathers. But it was in the cathedral schools that the great theological ideas were studied as well and consequently a greater need was felt for the development of the powers of reasoning in order to be able to comprehend the intricacies and nuances of those questions about God the Trinity and the person of Christ that had been on Christians' minds for centuries. Because a greater demand was placed upon the training of the intellectual faculty than in the monastic houses where the goal of learning was set more in the context of withdrawal, contemplation and *lectio divina*, or the reciting of Scripture and the Fathers, then naturally the tools for developing the mind, such as dialectic, took on a greater importance. Alongside were added studies in those areas also thought to be necessary for developing one's intellectual abilities—music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy, the core courses of the *Quadrivium*, the second part of the mediaeval curriculum. Since the goal of this learning was to become theologically astute, the purpose of these courses was no more than the means to that end. Still, they did require some comprehension of matters not primarily of *spiritual* value. In time they would begin to tantalise men's minds with ideas for their own sake, not necessarily for the sake of the Church or the faith. They would encourage a new confidence in the faculty of reason to investigate problems and issues without reference to established orthodoxy or the Church's accepted tradition.

During these centuries, but especially around the end of the tenth and early eleventh centuries, the study of dialectic or logic in the cathedral schools gained an enormous appeal. Students and intellectuals became increasingly fascinated with what they believed was the most important instrument for the organisation and arrangement of the totality of man's experience. Here was a *power* in the mind of man to discover all truth, to rectify all injustices, to clarify all problems and resolve all dilemmas of man's existence in the world as well as his relationship to God and eternity! Logic was viewed as a mental power capable of discovering order in what otherwise seemed like a confused world. Again, in the words of R. W. Southern, "The world of nature was chaotic—a playground of supernatural forces, demoniac and otherwise, over which the mind had no control. The world of politics was similarly disordered, intractable to thought." However, man would turn to logic as the means to confront this disorder, for it was passionately believed that "logic . . . opened a window on to an orderly and systematic view of the world and of man's mind."²⁵ Men were determined to place everything in its proper classification—genus, species, differentia, property, accident. Nothing must remain that could not be fit into its logical category—quantity, quality, relation, position, place, time, state, action and affection. Great amounts of time and mental energy were spent seeking to explain everything in terms of these systematic arrangements. The apparent beneficiary of all this systematising was theology, that intellectual realm which, at first, seemed the least amenable to logical ordering. Here everything accepted as orthodox was precisely classified—seven deadly sins, seven sacraments,

23. Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), p. 11.

24. Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, p. 70.

25. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages*, p. 179f.

seven virtues, seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, not to mention the exact nature of the Trinity, the precise relationship between the Lord's body and blood in the bread and wine of the Eucharist, and so forth. Nothing, it would seem, was examined but that it was not immediately transformed into a "chain of syllogisms."²⁶ More and more, however, the world of Aristotelian thought would displace that of Augustine at the centre of the Christian idea of learning and knowledge in the Middle Ages. With it would emerge what scholars at present have referred to as *mediaeval humanism*. This was bound to occur when the study of logic led to the triumph of philosophy over the study of Scripture and the Fathers of the Church.

3. *The Triumph of Philosophy*

In the latter half of the eleventh century noticeable changes were beginning to make themselves felt in nearly every area of mediaeval life and society. In the first place, the period witnessed a considerable literary renaissance. Vast new quantities of previously unavailable materials had been brought to light, thereby stirring an eagerness in men's thinking to absorb new ideas and re-evaluate old ones. Secondly, and more importantly, what contributed most to this literary revival was the rapid economic change taking place, stimulated as it was by renewed large-scale commercial activity and the burgeoning prosperity brought about by the growth of trade, especially with the Islamic east. Heretofore unimaginable wealth and opulence suddenly made their appearance in the urban centres which were also the locations of the cathedral schools. An accompanying feature of this new prosperity was a growth in the population, bringing about a natural increase in the number of youths eager to imbibe the new learning. But perhaps the most important change of all had to do with the new attitude that learned minds were beginning to entertain with respect to the powers of reason and logic. Everywhere a new confidence was being expressed, namely, that "there seemed no limits to the field which the human mind could master, and all arguments that were not strictly logical and formal seemed worthless."²⁷ Reason, employed under the spell of the *new* Aristotelian logic, became the new mistress and judge, acquiring a new authority.²⁸ Men were beginning to think that nothing lay beyond the capability of the mind to arrange or order by means of a total systematic rationality. From this sort of optimism would come the *Summa*, the complete compendium on all knowledge in any given field of thought. This desire for a complete organisation of knowledge made the institutionalisation of study in a university curriculum a growing necessity.

Along with Aristotle's logic a number of other factors also contributed to give rise to mediaeval *humanism*. Following Southern we may say that the emergence of humanism in the Middle Ages was the result of *three* symptoms. (1) From the concentration upon the Classical thinkers a new sense of the dignity of human nature began to appear—a new belief in the *nobility* of man despite his fallen state. It was accompanied by the belief that human nature was capable

of development in this world and that man's reason was the principal instrument for his advancement. (2) It was closely accompanied by a new sense of the dignity of nature, a belief that "if man is by nature noble, the natural order itself, of which he forms part, must be noble" as well.²⁹ (3) These naturally led to a new sense of the importance of the natural and physical as over against the merely supernatural and spiritual. Mediaeval men began to regard the world here and now as intelligible and accessible to human reason and purpose, that nature was orderly and conducive to human endeavour and was not simply the means to a supernatural end. For the first time, it seemed, men were beginning to feel at home in this world and were no longer content to escape the realm of matter and view the body as an alien sphere. For a long time man's link with the *heavenly* realm alone provided order and dignity. Because of man's sinfulness he was the least dignified of creatures. Only through *religious* exercises (prayers, pilgrimages, penances, touching of relics) could he possibly hope to achieve any sense of purpose or order. While this link was not immediately broken it was beginning to be relegated to a mere part of what it means to be human. Nature was starting to emerge as a realm independent of grace and salvation.

Ironically, the monastic atmosphere itself did much to contribute to the new nature outlook that had emerged. One need not suppose that this refers to the monasteries exclusively. For Monasticism was much more than something practiced by a few, it was the very definition of Christianity, and all who sought inclusion in its world would have regarded a measure of monastic activity as necessary to its life and faith. Consequently, even among the clerics of the Church, and in the cathedral schools, it is possible to find similar attitudes and tendencies.

One crucial factor in monastic thinking and behaviour had been to concentrate intensely upon the soul, to seek for God in the *inner* self. This focus upon the *experience* of God and the supernatural could easily lead into speculation upon the inner workings of the consciousness and its relationship to its surroundings. Consequently, one of the influences of this monastic psychology of self-absorption was that it "seemed to show that men could find new truths of the greatest general importance simply by looking within themselves."³⁰ If man could find God in his soul, so it was thought, then man was a sufficient starting-point not only for *religious* truth but for truth in general. At the same time, the self-knowledge that was gained from this discovery was bound to produce a greater sense of self-importance or self-worth. Finally, if experience was an acceptable road to God, then experience might not be bad after all. Perhaps the practice of asceticism was not all that was normal for man.

In both the monastic and cathedral schools a new sense of community also took hold. In the context of learning men were given the opportunity to discuss and debate ideas and to compare points of view with one another. A critical spirit displayed itself in a new questioning of traditional dogma and standard Church orthodoxy. Knowledge began to be seen not as something deposited once for all, but as a goal toward which one ought painstakingly to strive, as a quest

26. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

27. Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, p. 86.

28. The *new* Aristotelian logic derived from the recent discovery of the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle.

29. The discussion of these matters is taken from a collection of essays by R. W. Southern entitled, *Medieval Humanism and Other Studies*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970). The quote is from one of the essays of that title, p. 31.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

to be pursued wherever reason might lead. The give-and-take of this new intellectual and social contact encouraged the belief that the knowledge available from experience was sufficient to become a standard of truth for broader societal concerns. Knowledge could be applied to the problems of society and need not be seen merely as a personal route to heaven. In fact, learning itself was a way to deal with the effects of sin in all aspects of man's life, not simply a way to escape this world. However, the learning that inspired this belief was not the traditional theology but the new liberal arts. To be sure, theology remained the principal field of knowledge and learning in the Middle Ages, but it was coming to be increasingly believed that it was possible only with the aid of a propaedeutic, that one first needed a grounding in philosophy in order to advance to the knowledge of theology. Philosophy, of course, meant the Greeks, especially Aristotle!

At about this time—late eleventh and early twelfth century—a new type of man made his appearance on the mediaeval landscape. He has often been referred to as a *Goliard*, a “wandering clerk,” who, as an “escapee” from the cloister and the world of strict ecclesiastical control, migrated to the towns in search of the new learning.³¹ His was a more worldly attitude, representing a new and restless spirit no longer satisfied with the world he knew and was coming to despise. He longed to break out of the cramped mediaeval world and saw in the new learning an opportunity for doing so. Le Goff describes him: “Those poor students who had no fixed home, who had no prebend, no stipend, thus set out on an intellectual adventure, following the master who pleased them at the moment, hastening toward the one currently in fashion, going from city to city to glean the teachings being offered at the moment.”³² Apparently, these sorts could be found in increasingly larger numbers as the century progressed. It was because of these restless spirits and their thirst for learning that schools independent of the cathedrals also began to appear at this time, schools where the new intellectual problems concerning the soul and its relationship to the world of universals was strictly the subject of interest.

The Goliard was the anti-establishment figure of his day. No longer satisfied with a world imposed by the Church and tradition, such men sought freedom in a new libertine attitude towards customs, dogmas, and standards. They would seek emancipation from their bondage by means of a supposedly *intellectual* liberation. Many who were weary of the sterile world of theology and its vast assortment of esoteric queries found deliverance in a turn to nature and the senses. Specifically, they found release through poetry and song—many were travelling musicians, the *jongleur* or court troubadours, who sang the tunes and stoked the flames of the romantic ideals of knighthood and chivalry. Often in their music they dared to attack the representatives of the established order. They especially hated and despised that part of Christianity which had for so long “rejected the earth, which embraced solitude, asceticism, poverty, celibacy, and which could even be considered a renunciation of the fruits of the mind.”³³ They exhibited all the usual prejudices of

the city against the countryside that upstart cultivated youth tend to show. That is, they loved nature, but disdained rural occupations and stigmatised the peasantry. They displayed the intellectual's customary contempt for physical labour and exalted the mind as a thing of nobility. They wished to see in the mind and the reason a new and superior source of *natural* values. They looked to reason to produce a general system of morals free from the dictates of Church and Cloister.

We have mentioned these characters because the rise of scholasticism and the university would scarcely have been possible without them. Their attitudes and aspirations helped to shape an altogether new outlook on the world and man's place in it. They inspired an independence from the old autocratic canons of thought and encouraged a new confidence in the powers of the human intellect to peer inside itself, there to discover the intrinsic powers necessary to understand and erect a world no longer fettered by indiscriminate, external authority. They would accept only a thinking about the world in which the mind, freed from all authority besides its own, was capable of organising everything to its own satisfaction. The rise of scholastic philosophy was due not merely to a newly awakened intellectual curiosity in response to a growing awareness of a fresh body of previously unheard ideas flooding into the West, but to a whole new mental and moral disposition stemming from a yearning to break with Church-imposed dogma and the Monastic culture which controlled it. In this respect, authority meant *every* authority which hindered the mind's search for truth and knowledge on its own. Thus, even the authority of *revelation*, associated as it was with Church and Monasticism, would no longer suffice to explain man and his world unless it, too, be subjected to the demands of logic and questioning. The Greeks and Aristotle had taught that more and perhaps *better* truths—certainly in the sense that they were more intellectually satisfying—were available. The Goliard was a man who saw in these the means to challenge, if not to escape, the static world in which he lived.

The most famous of these itinerant sophists, the man who would be called the founder of the scholastic methodology, was Abelard (*d.* 1142). His was a clever, self-assured young mind which exhibited all the usual impatience for those who could not, or would not, see intellectual problems on his level. Abelard was not merely a brilliant thinker, but a cantankerous disputer. It was a basic trait of his nature always to pick intellectual fights. While others went off on geographic crusades, Abelard spent his energies on intellectual ones. He saw himself as on a mission to found the basis of a new and liberated culture of the mind, and he could ill tolerate any who stood in his way. The world of his day had erected too many false and stupid idols which he believed it his duty to demolish. For too long the reasoning powers of the mind had lain in the clutches of dogmas, customs, habits and mysticism. His intent was to free reasoning from servitude and submission to theology, to enable it to soar to the realms of philosophy. For this reason Abelard has been called “the first great modern intellectual figure”; his outlook was closer to the modern Enlightenment than it was to the mediaeval world of thought.³⁴

What Abelard's faith in humanism came to mean for the rise of scholasticism went much deeper than the desire simply to free thought from the institutional control of the

31. For here and the comments to follow one should see Jacques Le Goff, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan, (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 24–35.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Church. His humanism stood for the belief that through reason man acquired a new freedom from God. His faith in the power of logic extended to the moral sphere where he came to represent the new, anti-Augustinian, moralism. For him, man was capable of achieving a true self-knowledge by his own inner lights, out of which he could discover the means by which it was “up to us to accept or reject the contempt for God which constitutes sin.” Man has the power to choose or refuse the uprightness of the moral life. In Abelard’s estimation, sin was nothing more than the failure to acquire the necessary knowledge by which to make a rational choice. His, and that of all subsequent scholastic thinkers, was an incipient Socinianism. And like those later rationalists, Abelard stood for a humanism that was the sum of human thought regardless of the differences of faith, mores, and traditions. “He aimed to discover the natural laws which, beyond religions, would enable one to recognise the son of God in all men.”³⁵

Prior to the rise of the school of Paris, Chartres was the preeminent centre of the humanist revival. Scholars often speak of something they call the *Chartrian spirit*, a new outlook on learning bolstered by the influx and absorption of Greco-Arab knowledge. In the twelfth century, along with renewed contact between east and west, primarily with Constantinople, rediscoveries of long unknown classical materials, especially Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* and *Ethics*, began to appear in the learning hungry West. Even more important were the interchanges taking place in Moorish Spain between Western scholars and Jewish scholars who possessed manuscripts of Arab commentators on Aristotle. A new world of ideas suddenly became available to thinkers in the cathedral schools as the result of this contact. No centre of learning was more affected or transformed by this inflow than was the school at Chartres. It was here more than elsewhere that the new humanistic learning took hold. Students flocked to Chartres eager to absorb the new philosophy of the Arabs and Aristotle.

The central concern of the Chartrian system of learning was to define man and his place in the new realm of nature. Nature did not exist simply to provide allegorical insights into the *spiritual* realm, but possessed its own legitimacy. More important, the key to nature was man, who has the means to unlock the secrets of nature; the world stands open to his reason and logical penetration. Nature was looked upon as a *cosmos* in and of itself. It was inherently rational and organised by a system of laws which the mind could study independent from the authority of revelation. For Chartrians, God was pushed beyond the realm of nature which he had created, but which he now respects as a semi-independent realm or order. In fact, as Le Goff states, “Chartrian rationalism was a belief in the all-powerfulness of Nature. For the Chartrian, Nature was first and foremost a life-giving power, perpetually creative, with inexhaustible resources, *mater generationis*.”³⁶ This new secular outlook on nature bred a new man-centered activism, for man himself was a part of this new nature ideal. He was looked upon as having the natural ability to re-work and re-shape his world as he wished it to be. Man’s purpose was no longer merely to contemplate heaven and God by means of nature, rather it was to work in the world as a place submissive to his will. The outcome of this attitude was to foster the notion that

life, especially social life, was not something to be merely received from God. Instead, it was something that man was capable of molding for himself.

It might seem that this new nature outlook of mediaeval man represented a type of *Romantic* absorption in the senses and the feelings. However, this would be to misconstrue what nature meant in this mediaeval context. Nature was merely that realm of existence which stood over against the supernatural, the world of God, saints, and angels. It concerned the here and now and whether or not the material existence of man possessed any logic or reason other than to provide a place of pilgrimage to the next world. It should not be thought that men believed the material realm of nature to be somehow superior to the so-called spiritual realm. Their approach to questions of truth in the realm of nature was very much a matter of *idea* and not of *sensation*, which was no source of knowledge whatsoever. Yet ideas were somehow connected to the things the mind receives by means of the senses. What was that connection, and how did the mind get beyond the merely sensed to the more certain understanding of the *universal* that lay hidden behind or beyond the material object? Here was introduced the great problem of the soul and of cognition that occupied thinkers and scholars nearly to the exclusion of all else.

The problem stemmed from mediaeval thinkers having accepted the Greek view, which looked at matter and spirit as more or less antithetical. Moreover, spirit, as the essential nature of man, was equated with Mind. Man was primarily reason or intelligence. His greatest problem was to find a way to ascend from the flux of perceptual experience to the world of intelligences where understanding was no longer distracted by his material nature and the sensations of his body. Knowledge was only of the forms, the universals. How does the mind know these logical entities since man must make his first approach to them *via* sensation? Knowledge was looked upon as made possible by the *active* agency of the mind, whereas sense impressions were viewed as merely *passive*, as material that was inchoate until reworked in cognition. Mediaeval man, under the strong influence of Aristotle, did not wish to conceive of learning and knowledge as a merely *receptive* capacity, but as something over which the mind possessed *constructive* powers.

Framing the problem this way helped to open the door to a great distinction between the realms of *reason* and *revelation*. The human mind was bounded by the visible world to which it came in contact by the senses. Knowledge, however, was achievable by means of contact with the external world, for human reason was entirely capable of abstracting from the sense impressions which the external world makes upon us and thus of forming the conceptual content that is knowledge. In this world of man’s experience reason was adequate for grasping the truth of things, causes, and events. Revelation was reserved for those things of *faith* which the unaided reason could not grasp on its own. From this distinction arose what became known as the *double truth* theory: that something could be true in the realm of philosophy and nature which was entirely opposed to the truth in theology and grace, and vice versa.³⁷ The authority of reason was pitted against the authority of faith, yet somehow they formed a unity.

37. For example, Aristotle taught the eternity of the world, which, in the realm of *natural* observation, was entirely philosophically acceptable. But, what was acceptable to *reasoned* analysis was unac-

35. *Ibid.*, p. 46f.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

The thirteenth century was the high tide of the mediaeval synthesis. It was the century of Bonaventure, Albert the Great, and especially of Thomas Aquinas. Thomas, under the predominant influence of Aristotle, maintained “a resolute separation of the spheres of reason and revelation, the natural and the supernatural [and] recognized the autonomy of human reason in its own field . . .”³⁸ That is, “he accepted human reason as an adequate and self-sufficient instrument for attaining truth within the realm of man’s natural experience” without any reference to faith.³⁹ Thomas believed that the order of reality was such that man’s reason could know it without the need to submit to any authority but the power of reason itself. But, in fact, Thomas accepted Aristotle’s explanation of that natural realm as authoritative. In effect, he gave support to the idea that reason in general was not affected by the power of sin and corruption, as Augustine had maintained; rather, he claimed that man possessed a “natural light” which enabled him to grasp fully the truth of the natural realm on its own, without need of the transforming power of Divine grace. In the words of Gilson, “From the time of St. Thomas we are henceforth in possession of a natural light, that of the active intellect . . . capable, on contact with sensible experience, of generating first principles, and, with the aid of these, it will gradually build up the system of the sciences.”⁴⁰ With Thomas, it is believed possible to “reason from the existence of contingent beings and conclude to the existence of a necessary being.”⁴¹ In other words, one could arrive at a knowledge of God and divine things by a process of extrapolation from created things. Indeed, without doing so, no knowledge of God could be truly attained.

The thirteenth century was also the century in which the full-blown university began to make its appearance. The whole realm of academics and learning was coming to stand for the belief that the mind of man was free to pursue the *reason of things*, certainly in the realm of nature, to the exclusion of the authority of revelation. It looked to Aristotle, not Scripture, as the starting-point for the mind’s investigation of problems and questions. But, however much thinkers like Thomas maintained a harmony between the things of reason and the things of revelation, the tendency was to push them farther and farther apart. No amount of optimism could prevent the triumph of philosophy over theology. So long as the new scholastic method, in which all traditional sources of knowledge were to be questioned, maintained control of the new brand of learning in the universities, all areas of knowledge would be dominated by the belief that reason was sufficient to pose problems and seek resolutions without reference to anything outside the mind of man.

ceptable to the teachings of *faith* which asserted that God created the world and, thus, the world had a beginning in time and so was not eternal. However, since the things of reason and those of faith belong to different spheres, their contradiction need not be considered upsetting.

38. Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, p. 236.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 239.

40. Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, (University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), p. 140.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 258.

Nature was coming to be viewed as an autonomous, rational entity, which operates without interference according to its own principles or law.

By the late Middle Ages, Nominalism, in many ways the final form of scholasticism, would assert the notion that if anything could be truly known by the powers of the intellect, it was limited to what the mind of man could discover by means of a combination of reasoning and perception alone. In other words, questions of God and his relationship to the Creation, as well as the soul and matters of faith, were said to lie beyond the limits of reason. And what was beyond reason was beyond knowledge in the strict sense of the word. If one thought it possible to arrive at the truth of *natural* religion by means of the demonstrations of reason, then one was mistaken. Here one had only the intuitions of faith to go on. Reason must be left behind. Thus, for example, in speaking of Ockham, David Knowles writes; “The truths of ‘natural’ theology, which had formed the chains binding the dictates of reason to the declarations of revelation, melted into thin air. Neither the existence of God, nor the immortality of the soul, nor the essential relation between human action and its ethical worth, could be held as demonstrable by the reason.”⁴² A dual world was coming into being, one in which faith and reason were pitted against one another. And as reason provided the only access to the natural realm, faith was increasingly driven from having any role to play in understanding the world of man’s experience. The result would be to divide the truth of religion from the truth of science and eventually to claim that only the truth of science possessed knowledge. However, this would only occur more explicitly in the next stage of Western Culture, the Renaissance.

Among the legacies of mediaeval learning, certainly of scholasticism, is the belief, descended from the Stoics, that “right *reason* was the source of all virtue.”⁴³ The Studium represented a new nobility, one that would challenge the idea of nobility associated with both Sacerdotium and Imperium, namely, the nobility of the mind. Henceforth, nobility was not so much a product of a correct social order and established hierarchy, but “rested in the man who particularly cultivated his mind, *alias* the educated man.”⁴⁴ Such a view presented a challenge to all constituted authority, whether clerical or lay. What is more, it was a challenge presented on behalf of reason alone. To the clergy, it was manifested “in the usurpation of a canonical distinction,” in that it erected “a rival magisterial authority in ‘philosophers’.”⁴⁵ Reasoned analysis stood pre-eminent over dogmatical pronouncement, no matter whether those proclamations asserted the claims of divinity or not. To the lay nobility which was based upon birth or wealth, it simply proclaimed the superior virtues of the educated man to the accidents of nature or the advantages of possessions. The “Reason” Ideal would brook no inferior status. In time, it would suffer no rivals. C&S

42. Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, p. 299.

43. Murray, *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages*, p. 273.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 274.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 281.

THE DECENT DRAPERY OF LIFE:

A Study in Sexual Morality and Gender

By Robin Phillips

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The Decent Drapery of Life attempts to defend biblical morality by showing the consequences of the alternative. However, rather than simply lamenting the decadent condition of our society, Phillips goes deeper to show that the results of the sexual revolution have actually been antithetic to its own goals.

Starting at the time of the Enlightenment and working through to the present day, the author observes that a consequence of rejecting the biblical worldview has been to rob men and women of the ability to properly enjoy themselves as God intended. The reductionism of sexuality and gender wrought by the materialistic paradigm has created a new network of secular taboos. The result is not only that gender has been neutralised, but the spice has been taken out of life.

As the argument unfolds, it becomes clear that the biblical approach is not simply the ethical option: it is also the most erotic. The alternatives to Christian morality, which our society has been desperately trying to make work, not only fail to achieve their own goals, but are ultimately boring by comparison.

The Decent Drapery of Life should help the Church at a time when chastity is “in” but coherent thinking about chastity is at an all time low. The book is well researched, drawing on a large body of philosophical and historical literature, in addition to anecdotal sources. Written for teenagers to help them think in fresh ways about old truths, every chapter ends with questions for reflection and a list of materials for further reading.

“Having read this book I think it will be a valuable and helpful resource both for those who are struggling to understand the moral principles of Christianity in a confused age and for those who are trying to explain the Christian position and the contemporary situation to the confused and misled. It will also be very useful in Bible study classes and house groups.”—Stephen Perks

- If you would be disturbed to discover that the sexual revolution created more taboos than it eradicated, DO NOT BUY THIS BOOK!
- If you are comfortable believing that gender differences are culturally conditioned, DO NOT BUY THIS BOOK!
- If you are secure in the illusion that feminism liberates women to enjoy themselves, DO NOT BUY THIS BOOK!
- If you find it convenient to believe that modesty is for those who are uncomfortable with their bodies, DO NOT BUY THIS BOOK!

IS BEAUTY IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER?

by Robin Phillips

“And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it. . . .”—Psalm. 90:17

OUR era tends to give unquestioning acceptance to the truism that beauty exists in the eye of the beholder. This maxim does not mean that beauty is perceived through the organ of sight; rather, “eye,” in the context of this dictum is an approximation for the mind. Put another way, beauty exists in our own heads rather than *in* whatever objects we might describe as beautiful. A corollary of this position is that calling something “beautiful” is like expressing a preference for red wine over white wine: what is beautiful to you may not be beautiful to me.

An alternative to this aesthetic relativism is to say that beauty is an objective quality that describes how things truly are in God’s Creation. On this view, saying that a painting is beautiful is just as true as making accurate statements about its size, shape and chemical properties.

Which of these perspectives are correct, or might there be some truth in both approaches? In answering this question, a good place to start is to consider what the Bible has to say on this subject of beauty.

Beauty in the Bible

Although Scripture does not directly address the question of beauty’s objectivity, it does include other teachings from which we can make certain inferences on this question.

Throughout Scripture we find that the Lord puts a premium on beauty and on the aesthetic dimension of life. For example, when the Lord gives instructions for building the Temple, the Lord’s design is beautiful and includes aesthetically pleasing specimens of representational and abstract art.¹ As the Psalmist says, “Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary” (Ps. 96:6). Throughout Scripture the Lord delights to describe physically pleasing women and clothing, and he doesn’t hesitate to pronounce these things as being beautiful.

The Lord’s Creation reveals that he is a masterful artist, since he has filled every continent with beauty beyond compare. When Psalm 19 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows his handiwork” (Ps. 19:1), it is the beauty and majesty of God’s creation to which the Psalmist refers. On the seventh day, when the Lord admired

everything he had made, it is clear that he was exercising his aesthetic sense. Despite the ugliness sin has brought to the world, the beauty of God’s artistry remains evident.

All this shows that beauty is important to the Lord. We can go one step further. Beauty is part of the nature or character of the Trinitarian God. A simple word search in a concordance will reveal that in many of the places in which Scripture speaks of beauty it is in relation to the Lord himself. For example, the Bible refers to “the beauty of the Lord our God” (Ps 27:4; 90:17), “the beauty of [God’s] holiness” (1 Chron 16:29; Ps. 29:2), and so on. God shines on his people as “the perfection of beauty” (Ps. 50:2) while the beauty of his holiness is an object of praise (2 Chron. 20:21). It follows from these and other passages that beauty is an aspect of who God is. It is part of his character.

To summarise the discussion thus far, we have seen that the Bible teaches two things about beauty. First, Scripture shows us that beauty is important to the Lord. Second, Scripture reveals us that beauty is an aspect of God’s character.

The Objectivity of Beauty

In order for beauty to be important to the Lord it must exist objectively. After all, the Lord could not say in the Psalms that Creation actually declares his beautiful handiwork if the difference between beauty and ugliness is merely in the eye of the beholder. If the relativist view of beauty is correct, then all the Psalmist could say is that Creation declares God’s beautiful handiwork *to me*, but if someone else finds no beauty in God’s Creation, that is just as valid an assessment. Similarly, if beauty is in the eye/mind of the beholder rather than objectively within things themselves, then strength and beauty do not *actually* abide in God’s sanctuary as the Psalmist declares, since the only place beauty really resides is in one’s own subjective thought-processes.

This same conclusion (that beauty is an objective quality) can also be reached through Scripture’s teaching that beauty is an aspect of God’s character and a central feature of his holiness. It should be axiomatic that if God exists at all, then the attributes of his deity must necessarily be objective, just as if an elephant objectively exists, then all the essential properties which make the elephant what it is must also necessarily exist. Therefore the attributes of God, including his beauty, must necessarily exist as objective qualities.

1. For an analysis of the aesthetics of the Temple, see Gene Veith’s book, *State of the Arts* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1991).

Measuring Beauty

We have seen in the previous section that the objectivity of beauty can be inferred from biblical teaching. But this is something very different to saying that the Bible delineates to us a clear criteria for arbitrating between beauty and ugliness. There are no Ten Commandments of aesthetics in the Bible.

To say that a painting is beautiful may be just as true as saying that it is 12 by 8 inches, yet the latter and not the former can be measured and proven. If someone disagreed on the measurement of the canvas, we could always produce the tape measure. But if someone disagrees that Schubert's Trout Quintet is gloriously beautiful beyond words, there is no concrete or abstract standard against which we can prove the person to be in error.

Nevertheless, certain general aesthetic principles can be inferred by studying what Scripture teaches about the Lord's character. For example, since the Bible reveals that God—the source of all beauty—is not a God of aggression, decadence, chaos, disorder and frustration, one could cogently argue that art (whether visual, musical or performance art) which promotes these qualities as ends in themselves, is clearly contrary to the character of God and, therefore, ugly by definition. (This does not necessarily mean that we should not view or listen to or enjoy ugly art, or that there are certain aesthetic features which require some degree of ugliness in order to be appreciated. That is a different question altogether). However, beyond these very general considerations, the Bible does not give us much direct guidance for determining whether Titian was a better painter than Michelangelo.

Thus, to say that there is an objective truth about beauty is not to imply that we can always know what that truth is. Only God knows absolutely what is beautiful. It seems reasonable to assume that human beings, even sanctified human beings, will always have disagreements over aesthetics.

Does this mean that on a functional level, at least, the "eye of the beholder" truism still holds? When it comes to deciding what is beautiful and what is not, is every man and woman basically left to their own devices, even if we still affirm the objectivity of beauty in a theoretical sense?

While it is true that the Bible does not give us a well-defined set of parameters for determining what is beautiful, I do not think it follows that our perception of beauty is functionally subjective, any more than the fact that the Bible does not give us a yardstick for determining which objects are green entails us believing that our perception of colours is purely relative.

In both these areas (colours and aesthetics), the Lord has given us the faculties of perception by which we may acquire objective information. Shortly we will be considering some of the dynamics of how this perception works, but first it is necessary to pause and counter a possible objection.

Speaking of Beauty

Like many other things, our awareness of beauty is often deconstructed as being merely a matter of language. "To be sure," someone will say, "a child learns what the word beauty means just as he will learn the meaning of any word, but that in no way proves that we have an innate awareness of beauty. It only proves that human beings have invented a category and given a name to it." If the one offering this

objection has done his homework, he may even go so far as to point out that since the word "beauty" does not have an equivalent in many of the world's languages, the concept cannot be innate but is merely a result of linguistic convention. It is interesting that the ancient Greeks, for all their preoccupation with aesthetic matters, did not have a word comparable to the English word beauty. The Greek word *kolos*, which is often translated "beautiful," could equally be translated "fine, admirable, noble," as it is rendered in one edition of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.² I am inclined to think that if this proves anything, it proves that the concept of beauty is *not* reducible to language, for there can be no denying that the Greeks were intensely sensitive to beauty, whether they had a name for it or not. One has only to look at Greek architecture and sculpture to see that.

The aesthetic philosopher Collingwood has asserted that

To call a thing beautiful in Greek is simply to call it admirable or excellent or desirable. A poem or painting may certainly receive the epithet, but only by the same kind of right as a boot or any other simple artifact. The sandals of Hermes, for example, are regularly called beautiful by Homer, not because they are conceived as elegantly designed or decorated, but because they are conceived as jolly good sandals which enable him to fly as well as walk.³

Collingwood makes the *non sequitur* leap from this purely linguistic fact to the idea that "if we go back to the Greek, we find that there is no connection at all between beauty and art."⁴ But there certainly is a connection between Greek art and what we call beauty. The simple fact that Greek art is so beautiful should be sufficient to establish that connection. Collingwood overlooks this in his failure to distinguish between beauty as a reality and beauty as a concept. The ancient Greeks did not have a concept of micro-organisms, but it does not follow from this that they did not experience, and indeed die from, micro-organisms.

Again, the parallel with colours may prove useful. One would hardly dare suppose that we only see blue because we have a name for it. On the contrary, the word is posterior to the thing itself. One can imagine a culture without any colour language, just as our own culture does not have a very sophisticated nomenclature for describing smells, but it does not follow that individuals without colour language do not see colours, or that we can detect only the smells we have named. Similarly, it does not follow that a culture without a conscious concept or word for beauty does not have the innate beauty-vision that is the inheritance of being made in the image of the Triune God.

Beauty Obscured

Because human beings are made in the image of the Trinitarian God, every person has an imperfect yet genuine awareness of the difference between beauty and ugliness, just as every person has a genuine but imperfect awareness that there is a difference between right and wrong. That awareness is innate to us as images of God; however, because we are fallen, that awareness is imperfect and subject to distortion and corruption. Because of this, and also because of

2. *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (R. McKeon, ed. [Random House, 1941], p. 368.

3. Collingwood, *Principles of Art* (Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 38.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

the Creator/creature distinction, it is a fact of life that what one person perceives as beautiful another person may not.

This does not mean that beauty is relative, for even apart from what we have already seen, we do not normally consider that disagreement about perception, even when widespread, means that everything is simply a matter of personal opinion. For example, suppose I give each of my dinner companions two glasses of wine, each from a different vintage. I ask each guest to guess which wine is from which vintage. Suppose further that there is widespread disagreement amongst my guests—they argue and argue but cannot reach a consensus as to which wine is which. Now such disagreement does not mean that the case ceases to have any objective bearing. Even if none of the guests is able to make the correct perceptual discriminations, there is still a correct answer.

Similarly, it is not sufficient to use the fact that there is widespread disagreement on aesthetic matters to undermine the objectivity of beauty. If a thing is truly beautiful, that is as solid a fact as the fact that the world is round. Just as the world would still be round even if no one recognised that it was (and even if everyone erroneously believed in a flat earth), so a beautiful sunset is still beautiful even when there is no one to see and affirm the beauty. This is because God—the ultimate source of all beauty—sees the sunset he has created and knows it is beautiful.

Beauty and Nurture

Just as our colour vision is brought to life by experience, likewise our beauty vision is brought alive through experience. Just as someone who was raised in a colourless room would never know the difference between blue and pink, so someone raised in an environment with little or no beauty will never have the chance to cultivate an appreciation and love for what is beautiful.

Or we might compare it to taste in food: a girl who has grown up all her life eating food from McDonald's will not readily distinguish and enjoy the differences of various herbs or discriminate between the subtle flavours inherent in different varieties of oranges. A teenager who has heard nothing but the Christian rock group, DC Talk, since he was 12, will require training and nurture before he can distinguish and enjoy the difference between Bach and Handel or between Mozart and Haydn.

To say God has implanted us with an innate sense of beauty does not mean that it works automatically. Just as one's sense of taste needs to be nurtured before it can function properly, so the sense of beauty also needs careful nurturing.

The same principle governs our innate sense of right and wrong. Scripture tells us what happens when an individual, or even a whole culture group, constantly denies the inclinations of the conscience by despising God's laws: the conscience ceases to function, or at least ceases to function very well (Rom. 1:28; 1 Tim. 4:2). The sense of beauty can also cease to operate correctly when our minds are constantly bombarded with trash, ugliness and decadence.

The uglifying influences of our society often have the effect of desensitising our beauty-vision. The way to guard against that is to nurture our children to appreciate beauty. This is done, not by saying "this or that is beautiful and ought to be enjoyed." Rather, the way to cultivate a love of beauty is to saturate a child's environment with truly beauti-

ful things, whether it be good literature, music, art, *etc.*, at the same time as excluding what is ugly, banal and of poor quality. Regular exposure to beauty in this way can work to awaken the child's God-given inner sense.

This same point can be expressed philosophically by saying that knowledge which is *a priori* (innate) and knowledge which is *a posteriori* (derived from experience) go hand in hand. The one cannot exist without the other, for without *a priori* awareness, experience would be unintelligible, and without experience, what is innate could never be awakened. God made the two to work together.

But suppose someone has not been raised to appreciate beauty. Suppose he is beauty-blind, as some people are colour blind—can anything be done to help such a person?

Yes, and in the next section I'd like to explore how.

Aesthetic Growth

If someone does not see that there is a traffic light ahead, what do we do? We direct their gaze in its direction. The person may still not see the traffic light because of having an impediment to their vision. Some impediments to vision are correctable—for example by wearing glasses—while other impediments, such as blindness, may not be correctable.

Similarly with beauty. If someone does not appreciate that a thing is beautiful, we have to direct their gaze in the right direction. They still may not be able to see the beauty if there are various factors inhibiting their beauty-vision. Such impediments might include ignorance, prejudice, inexperience, shallowness, stubbornness, haste, and so forth. Clearing these impediments away is usually a non-aesthetic process and therefore need not occupy us here. Suffice to say that after these correctable impediments have been dealt with, then assuming there is no uncorrectable impediment present (such as madness), it becomes possible to awaken a person's beauty-vision.

But how do we awake a person's beauty-vision? How do we direct someone's gaze in the right direction? One way is by getting the individual to see or hear beautiful artworks in a new way. You could start by getting the person to notice factual things about the work, such as that the movement begins in C major but then modulates to G, or that the figures in the top left corner of the painting mirror activity that is happening in the bottom right, or that the cello is echoing the violin, or that in those days brass had royal associations ("and therefore you can just imagine the king marching by when you hear the trumpet, can't you?").

Other facts might be information about the background of the work, the artistic context, how the work conformed (or did not conform) to the dominant conventions of the day, the intention of the artist, and so on. For me personally, the knowledge that the brass in Mozart's *Magic Flute* was intended to give a royal sound, or that in Bach and Handel's day the oboe and flute were reminiscent of the rustic bagpipe and shepherd's pipe, greatly informs and enhances my aesthetic response. Facts like this can help someone to view an artwork from the inside, so to speak, like learning to speak a new language.

These sorts of factual observations about an artwork I will call *Level 1* observations. After we have helped a person to understand facts about the artwork (*Level 1*), we can begin to show how aesthetic properties flow out of these factual observations. Aesthetic properties are characteristics such as

elegance, poise, gracefulness, heaviness, drama, clumsiness, glibness, humour, smoothness, *etc.* To enjoy or to blame an artwork, a person must be able to perceive these types of qualities. If a person does not perceive these or other aesthetic features, it may be necessary to demonstrate how such qualities arise out of *Level 1* factual observations. For example, “the lines make this painting *graceful*,” “the shift of key creates a *tension*,” “the rhyming pattern is *witty*,” “the color scheme is *sombre*,” “the way she entered the stage was *graceful*,” *etc.* In each of these examples, an aesthetic judgment (represented by the words in italics) arises out of the non-aesthetic factual features (*Level 1*). These aesthetic judgments form what I am calling *Level 2* observations.

The next stage is *Level 3*. After first pointing out factual features about the artwork (*Level 1*) and then the aesthetic properties which arise from those features (*Level 2*), we need to help the person make an overall verdict of praise or blame. This is where our category of beauty comes into play. Beauty is one of many positive verdicts which arise from a work’s aesthetic features, and therefore much of what I have written about beauty could equally apply to other positive verdict predicates. Verdicts might include statements like “that poem is *worthless*,” “that sculpture is *magnificent*,” “his opera is simply *glorious*.” Our choice of an appropriate verdict-adjective will often depend on what type of aesthetic properties the assessment is based upon, not least because many verdict-adjectives overlap with certain aesthetic properties. For example, “majestically glorious” describes something different than “stunningly beautiful,” although glorious and beautiful are both descriptions connoting positive overall judgments. These overall judgments (*Level 3*) proceed out of the aesthetic properties (*Level 2*) which, in turn, proceed out of the factual features (*Level 1*) inherent in a work.

Sometimes the whole process works the other way around: after pronouncing an overall verdict, we go back and support it by looking at *Levels 1* and *2*. A good critic may help us to see, hear or feel aesthetic features of the work and only afterwards go back to show how the non-aesthetic properties contribute to the effect. They can show us how the valuable features of a work depend on the fine details of the texture; how, for example, *this* word, or *that* color patch, or *that* chord is essential to the overall effect. It is the task of the critic, like the poet, teacher or writer, to help us to see things in a different way, to bring alive the beauty that was present all along but that somehow we missed.

After taking a person through the above procedures, he may still “just not get it,” or there may still be significant aesthetic disagreement. Even when that is the case, however, it is likely that a person taught with the above method will be in a position to *appreciate* what he might still refrain from praising, or praise what he might still refrain from enjoying. Furthermore, being educated about an artwork allows one to make an informed statement of *why* he does not like something or where he thinks the critic has gone wrong, and then to intelligently compare and contrast it with other examples from the same genre that he would prefer.

All this runs directly counter to a popular idea I have encountered on numerous occasions, that either you like something or you do not, with the attendant assumption that our tastes are fixed, like the colours of our eyes. However, just as we may grow in wisdom, so we may (and as Christians, *should*) grow in our aesthetic sensibilities. Just as we can and should aspire to grow in our appreciation for what is good

and true, we can and should aspire to grow in our appreciation for what is beautiful.

Perception and the Objectivity of Beauty

The above section attempted to establish that aesthetic growth is possible, but it had the side benefit of furnishing material towards another argument for the objectivity of beauty. Before showing how such is the case, it may be helpful to review some of the ground we have covered so far. I have suggested that there are the following three levels of remarks about artworks.

1. Non-aesthetic remarks: “The first movement is in C major.”
2. Aesthetic remarks: “The lines are graceful.” (Other aesthetic categories are things like witty, jolly, balanced, bland, graceful, expressive, garish, sentimental, clumsy, *etc.*)
3. Remarks of overall verdict: “The sonnet is beautiful,” “the oil painting is worthless,” “the symphony is magnificent.”

I suggested that these three *levels* are related. Remarks from *Level 1* lead one into making remarks about *Level 2*, while remarks about *Level 2* lead one into making remarks about *Level 3*. Or the whole process can work backwards: after pronouncing an overall verdict, we go back and support it with aesthetic and non-aesthetic criteria. In either case, one is not *deducing* an aesthetic description from a non-aesthetic one: you have to *see* it for yourself (or, in the case of music, *hear* it for yourself).

Discrimination and judgment in the arts are, therefore, *matters of perception*. To appreciate the gracefulness of a painting, we have to perceive the gracefulness; to appreciate the expressive emotional quality in a piece of music, we have to perceive that quality when we listen to it. Since discrimination in the arts is a matter of perception, it follows that it is not something a person can be argued into any more than you can be argued into believing that there are traffic lights. While reasons cannot be given to justify the proposition that a picture is well balanced, we can give reasons to *explain* the source of the balance, but these reasons will rest on perception.

It is true that someone with no aesthetic sense may believe that a work is a masterpiece on the authority of an expert, just as someone who is blind may accept truths about the material world on the authority of those who see. However, that is not the route we want to take if our goal is aesthetic enjoyment. We want to see *for ourselves* why the Firebird Ballet is considered a masterpiece so we can enjoy the features that make it one.

Recognising that aesthetic appreciation is a matter of perception, some people use this to try to prove that all aesthetic judgments must be subjective. However, the shoe is actually on the other foot, for understanding the role that perception plays in aesthetic judgments furnishes a powerful argument for the objectivity, not only of all aesthetic qualities, but all the merit predicates (including beauty) which arise from those qualities (and represented as *Level 3* in the previous nomenclature).

Consider that a statement is normally said to be objective if there is a way of getting people to see that the statement is true. Formal proof or argument is not the only way to get someone to see that something is true—one can see the truth of some statements by observation/perception. The fact that

I cannot argue people into seeing that the sky is blue does not establish that the sky's blueness is subjective, nor that I have no rationally defensible way of getting people to accept that the sky is blue. All I have to do is direct someone's gaze upward and they will see that the sky is blue for themselves (assuming that it is).

Perceptual judgments do report objective truths, whether it is that the sky is blue or that the symphony sounds lovely.

It may be helpful to push the analogy with colour a bit further.⁵ Our objective colour language did not come about because we proved abstractly that certain things were coloured and then devised a language for talking about that. Rather, our colour language came about *because we observed the colours in the real world*. At the same time, we gradually began to recognise that certain things can impede someone's perception of colour. The colour language rests on the agreement among those who are capable of making certain sorts of visual distinctions and do not suffer from impairment.

In a similar way, it came about that human beings started to respond in certain ways to different kinds of objects and sounds, saying they were graceful, witty, elegant, garish, expressive, and so forth. As with colour, we recognised that certain factors can disqualify a person's judgment: haste, impairment of organs, ignorance, prejudice, shallowness, etc.

There is not space to develop the point, but there are many influences in today's society that actively distort our aesthetic sense and our God-given beauty-vision. This has produced a situation wherein it seems as if some people have no innate sense of the difference between beauty and ugliness, just as some people seem to have no innate knowledge of the difference between right and wrong. It is possible to imagine our society becoming so decadent that only a few people would be capable of appreciating true beauty. If that does happen (Lord have mercy!), it would be like the current situation with wine tasting, where there are only a small minority of experts who can make extremely subtle perceptual discriminations (for example, detecting the differences of flavour within bottles from the same vintage). The fact that the majority are unable to make the correct perceptual discriminations does not mean that the whole show is subjective. In fact, we could go further. Should there come a time when no person on the entire planet is capable of recognising the characteristics of certain wines or the sight of certain colours or the difference between beauty and ugliness, these properties would still have just as objective an existence as they do now. The perversion of taste, whether physical or aesthetic, does not open the floodgates to relativism.

Because aesthetics is a matter of perceiving what is objectively out there, we rightly describe aesthetic disagreements as one person failing to "see" what another sees. Our knowledge of beauty, like our knowledge of truth, is genuine, even though it is partial and incomplete; and because it is partial some people will miss things that others clearly see. For creatures who perceive everything, as it were, "through a glass darkly," this is to be expected.

5. I am indebted to Frank Sibley for the analogy with colour language. See Sibley's "Aesthetic Concepts" in *Philosophical Review* 58, 1959, and his "Objectivity and Aesthetics," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, (supplementary volume, 1978).

So What?

We have seen that the Bible shows that beauty does not exist in the eye of the beholder and that it is an objective quality. We have also seen that we can talk objectively about beauty and aesthetic qualities just as we can talk objectively about colours. But does this have any practical relevance? It's an interesting philosophical question, but does it make any practical difference?

Yes, and here's why.

The twentieth century witnessed the creation of a corpus of works designed specifically to show that beauty, if it exists at all, is completely relative to the framework of the perceiver. Some art galleries intentionally juxtapose work from the great artists of the Western tradition with nihilistic art, the message being obvious: there is no essential difference between the two. As one artist was quoted as saying, "You complain that my art is just bricks. Well, painting is just paint." Since beauty never did have any objective meaning, according to this viewpoint, it is possible for contemporary artists to claim the great works of the past as their pedigree. There is no essential difference between the works of Raphael and the works of Francis Bacon. The only difference is the relative conceptual categories externally imposed by the viewer.

It is more than mere coincidence that a society which has progressively accepted the idea that beauty is completely subjective should also produce some of the most repulsive, anti-beautiful art this planet has ever witnessed. Anecdotal evidences for the self-conscious pursuit of hideousness in art are legion and hardly need be adduced here. We only have to reflect on the Chapman brothers—that notorious duo who are rich enough to buy paintings of great masters and decadent enough to deface and then exhibit what is left of the work. Granted that the Chapman brothers are extreme and, in some respects, non-representative, yet the conceptual framework underpinning their pursuits is typical. That conceptual framework is not the idea that people have grown tired of beauty and desire ugliness instead. Rather, it is that the very concept of beauty is itself void of objective content. This is the same reason why Theodor Adorno praised Schoenberg's music. "All of its beauty," wrote Adorno, "is in *denying itself the illusion of beauty* . . ."⁶

A contemporary artist once told me that the new orthodoxy is to teach people to draw badly well. I am not quite sure if I understand how someone can "draw badly well" any more than I understand Adorno's contention that a thing's beauty can be its denial of beauty. Nevertheless, what is perfectly understandable is that in the world of postmodern relativism, contemporary artists are embarrassed, even ashamed, at the idea of beauty. I am told by people who have attended art schools that beauty has actually become somewhat of a dirty word.⁷

6. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1973), p. 133.

7. Among critics and philosophers of art, the term beauty has also tended to disappear, but for different reasons. See Mary Mothersill, *Beauty Restored* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 257f. Mothersill argues that though the term "beautiful" does not figure prominently in the shop talk of art criticism, just as the term "legality" is probably rare in the shoptalk of lawyers, nevertheless "when a point about a poem or a musical performance is made, the concept of beauty is in the background." Beauty is "like knowledge or action, a 'standing' concept, that is taken for granted in critical discussion of the arts, and that is indispensable" (Mothersill, *op. cit.*, p. 257, 247). As these comments suggest, most professional philosophers of art and art critics have not

It may seem that the common man represents a last refuge against total artistic decadence. These are the people who still fail to see the point of animal sculptures crafted from carpet fluff, nor can they even begin to fathom why The Tate would want to spend £22,300 on one of Manzoni's go tins of his own excrement. Yet still, the "man on the street" usually subscribes to the mindset that has legitimised such work, namely that beauty is relative. All you have to do is observe the common reactions if you chance to remark that the music someone prefers is ugly. Nine times out of ten, the person will not openly disagree, but will instead question the meaningfulness of your evaluation. Because taste in music and the other arts is seen as being on the same level as taste in say, food, anyone who makes a value judgment is vulnerable to the charge of arrogance or of "trying to force your opinion on others."

Beauty and the Biblical Worldview

We saw earlier that the perception of objective beauty could be obscured by various factors and conditions. The rejection of the biblical worldview seems to be one of those factors. Before defending this statement, it is necessary to explain what I am *not* saying: I am not saying that you have to be a Christian in order to appreciate beauty. Neither am I saying that being a Christian automatically enhances one's aesthetic sensibilities. But what I do want to suggest is that there is a broad link between our culture's rejection of the biblical worldview and our culture's progressive rejection of beauty.

Many of the aesthetic norms which have characterised Western society have come as a direct result of the Christian worldview being deeply saturated in the fabric of our cultural ethos. Although the doctrine of the image of God as well as the doctrine of God's common grace mean that unbelievers are capable of producing artifacts which truly reflect divine beauty, over long periods of time non-Christian cultures generally tend towards ugliness. They tend towards the ugliness that comes as a corollary of the relativism necessitated by the rejection of any final standard of truth.

Another reason that non-Christian cultures degenerate toward ugliness is because a world without God is an ugly and frightening place. Indeed, if there is no God, then beauty is but a transitory parenthesis in a world in which the ugliness of chance, chaos and death have the final say over all of us. Just as mediaeval cathedrals, with their spires pointing to the heavens, were the appropriate artistic outworking of the Trinitarian metaphysic, so nihilistic art, with its hopelessness and celebration for the ugly is a consistent outworking of a world without God.⁸

Conversely, over long periods of time Christian cul-

tures tend to increase in beauty. That is what happened in the Christian West, which gave rise to the symphony, polyphonic harmony, perspective in painting and many other developments that have enriched our world, to say nothing of specific creative geniuses from Bach to Michelangelo, from Shakespeare to Beethoven. Some of these artistic geniuses were not believers, but they lived, worked and breathed in a civilisation that was built (albeit imperfectly) on the Christian worldview. Whether or not every great composer, artist or poet explicitly acknowledged that worldview, they worked on the basis of presuppositional aesthetic norms which arose out of the West's Christian orientation. Long after our society threw off this heritage, these norms have continued to operate like a lizard's tail which twitches even after it has been severed from the body. But a severed lizard's tail will not twitch forever.

What is happening in our society today, and has been happening very gradually for some time now, is that our art and our ideas about aesthetics are finally *catching up* with the collective worldview. In a future article I intend to chart the historical process whereby this has occurred. At the moment, suffice to say that as the nihilism birthed by both modernism and postmodernism has begun to seep into the very air that we breathe, beauty has become one of the chief casualties. The result is that our world has become a very ugly place.

This is good news for Christians, since it presents us with an enormous opportunity. In the midst of the shallow ugliness that nihilism and relativism have birthed in our society, the church of today has the marvellous opportunity to corporately witness to the beauty of God's holiness.

This means that we should be people of beauty just as we pray to be people of goodness, truth and righteousness. To a world that is slipping into ever-deeper degrees of ugliness, a rediscovery of biblical aesthetics is necessarily at the heart of our spiritual warfare and evangelism. For too long the Church has evangelized with Gnostic aspirations, thinking we must appeal simply to the spirit or the mind instead of seducing the whole person with the loveliness of Christ's Kingdom, confirming Nietzsche's complaint that modern Christianity is anaemic, opposed to life rather than an affirmation of it. Believing that God is only interested in disembodied souls, we have retreated from a central aspect of the good news.

The gospel is the message that Jesus Christ has saved the world from death. One way that we can show this is by letting the gospel confront whatever aspects of the death-principle are most prevalent in our age. Since our age manifests the death-principle in, among other things, excessive degrees of ugliness, it follows that the articulation of beauty—in word, deed, music, drama, worship, dance and all the arts—is not an optional extra for the Church but ought to be a central feature in our annunciation of Christ's Lordship. Through our artifacts, lives, homes, churches and all our other Kingdom-building endeavours, we can and should constantly be announcing the beauty of the God we worship. Our prayer should be that of Psalm. 90:17: "*And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.*"

This project is only possible with a clear understanding of the objectivity of beauty. If we subscribe to the notion that beauty merely exists in the eye of the beholder, our witness as Christians will be severely diminished. C&S

accepted the total subjectivity of beauty. Though such professionals do not tend to speak in terms of beauty, but prefer the wider range of categories available under our rich vocabulary for aesthetic judgments, art critics have held some ground against total subjectivism. (See Ian Ground's *Art or Bunk?*, [London: Bristol Classical Press, 1989]) Nor is this surprising, for it is hard to see how critics could continue to have anything meaningful to write about if they did come to accept that everything is just a matter of personal taste.

8. This is a point which Thomas Howard makes in his book *Change of the Dance? A Critique of Modern Secularism* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1969), particularly in chapter 6.

BAPTISM, CONTINUITY AND INDIVIDUALISM

by *Derek Carlsen*

FROM the beginning of Creation the Lord has had his people and he has related to them along family lines. This is both striking and instructive. An amazing picture of this is seen in God's ordering of the family line from Adam to Abraham. Consider this brief summary:

Adam talked with his son Seth for 800 years; from Seth's line Methusaleh was born when Adam was still alive and Methusaleh talked with Adam for 243 years; Noah was born from the line of Methusaleh and Noah talked with Methusaleh for some 600 years; Noah's son, Shem talked with Methusaleh for about 100 years; the flood then came that same year that Methusaleh died; the human race began again after the flood through the three sons of Noah and their wives; it is from Shem's line that Abraham came and Shem's life overlapped Abram's life for some 150 years, which means Shem also overlapped Isaac's life by 50 years. We see very clear, solid family ties reaching all the way from Abraham back to Adam.

With Abraham God introduced a change—he pronounced covenantal promises and then introduced the covenantal sign of circumcision (Gen. 17). The context where this is done in Genesis doesn't allow us to regard the sign as something to mark ethnic identity. The sign's purpose was not merely a racial or cultural marker, but first and foremost a sign of God's covenant—it was supremely religious and relational. The sign was inseparable from God's relationship with his visible people.

Why a sign now?

It is appropriate to ask why God only introduced this covenantal sign at this stage, seeing that he had had his called-out people since Adam. Many people argue that the sign is a marker of ethnic distinctiveness because it hadn't been established with Adam and the families leading up to Abraham. However, there is a reason that circumcision was introduced by God when it was and it makes perfect sense. We learn the reason from what God said to Abraham. He said, "My covenant is with you and you shall be a father of many nations" (Gen. 17:3). The term "many nations" is important, clearly showing that worldwide expansion was in God's sights. The Lord then went on and explained what the sign of this covenant would be: "This is My covenant which

you shall keep, between me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you" (Gen. 17:10–11).

The sign, therefore, became necessary due to the broadening of God's work. It was expanded from a direct and easily traceable or identifiable family line, to nations throughout the whole world. The visible body of God's people, up until Abraham, was easily distinguished by direct family lineage. There were only a few steps in the family line from Adam to Abraham, but the Lord was making it known that his people were going to cover the whole earth—as the stars of heaven and as the sand on the sea shore. God's people would be from every tribe and nation. The Lord in his wisdom and sovereign ordering said that his visible people would be marked and so he separated and distinguished them from those who were not part of his visible covenant community. Ethnicity was never the determining factor in God's dealings, as the line of Christ so clearly reveals, with Gentiles named in his direct lineage. It was always through the covenant and in accordance with the covenant distinctives that God moved and worked his Kingdom work.

So in the Older Testament days God established a covenant community. This was a visible people whom he preserved and instructed in his ways and who were the recipients of his special revelation. He marked this visible body as his own and he held them accountable to all that he had revealed to them. They were to be his special people and serve him and be a light to the world, testifying to the salvation, wisdom and glory of the only true God. The beginning emphasis remained however, namely, that integral to God's working and covenant was the family and thus the Lord applied the covenant sign to the whole household through the representative head of the household. The covenant sign wasn't just meant for those who believed in God. While we know Abraham believed prior to receiving the sign of circumcision, the criteria for his household to receive the sign arose from *his* standing in the covenant. God revealed that the covenant sign was rightly applied to those who were legally connected to Abraham's household and thus under his jurisdiction. People might not like how God ordained his covenant to function in this visible realm, but what people

cannot do, is deny that this *is* how it functioned. If you are amongst those who find fault with how the covenant works, then your issue is with God.

Households, not Atomistic Individuals

What Scripture shows is that the visible community of God, according to his ordering, is marked and set apart unto him. It is God who wants to mark his visible body and so he puts a sign upon them and the way he instituted this reveals how he regards households. The primary component in God's visible body on the earth has to do with representation, which means the heart of God's visible community has to do with households, not atomistic individuals. This is how God ordained to work in this world—he made family central to his Kingdom purposes. We should regard it as significant and weighty that from the beginning up to Abraham (and beyond), the emphasis of Scripture is upon the centrality and significance of the family. When we look at God's dealing with mankind from Adam to Abraham it is inescapably clear that God's emphasis is upon working through and with families. God's covenant is deliberately tied to the structure of the family unit whereby covenantal blessings and responsibilities fall upon the household members because of the head of the household.

If people fail to recognise that God deals with his people in terms of the covenant, which means the family unit is a fundamental aspect of his working, then they will identify the Kingdom with atomistic individuals and adopt an unbiblical view of spirituality. It is the covenant, as God has revealed it, that keeps our feet on the ground, that is, in the dusty reality of this life. Individuality and false spirituality are closer to the monastic idea of spirituality which adopts irrelevant vows and withdraws from meaningful life. The monastery embraced a dualistic view of life and divided it into two realms: a so-called spiritual realm and an earthly unimportant realm and the focus was upon the "spiritual" realm. The real danger with such thinking is that people confine the Kingdom of God to the spiritual or eternal realm and despise the dusty, mundane, earthy aspects of our existence. They exalt the spiritual, eternal, invisible aspects of the Kingdom at the expense of the earthy, temporal, visible aspects.

It is the covenant that keeps both aspects before our eyes and shows that both the invisible and visible aspects of God's Kingdom are included in the outworking of his eternal plan. It is a misunderstanding to think external signs testify to an individual's eternal standing in the Kingdom. God's Kingdom plan is bigger, more complex and more encompassing than just the eternal aspect. What is clear from Scripture is that not all of those numbered amongst the visible people of God were eternally saved or numbered in the invisible community of believers. Yet, what is inescapable is that the whole visible community was governed by the same covenantal terms and they received the same blessings, promises, sign, threats, etc. The whole visible body was subjected to the same covenantal terms under God and he expected them to be conformed to his will and do it all.

This picture is consistently seen throughout Scripture. For example, consider the visible body that was delivered out of Egyptian bondage. Was God carrying out his Kingdom purposes through that visible body? Absolutely! Why were they delivered from Egypt? Because they were God's visible people who were in covenant relationship with him.

They all ate of the manna (the bread from heaven); they all drank from the Rock that followed them and that Rock was Christ; they all received God's protection from Pharaoh's army and passed through the sea (Paul says that by this they were baptized into Moses, that is, became disciples of his teaching); and they were all comforted and led by the cloud and the pillar of fire and yet despite all these many special blessings, not all obtained eternal life (1 Cor. 10:1–5).

We have to understand the covenant and God's dealing with his people in the light of such testimony. We must realise that it was through that visible body which was delivered from Egypt that God's eternal plans were being worked out. They were a mixed multitude in the eternal sense (consisting of eternally lost and saved people). Yet, God makes it clear that his Kingdom purposes are worked out in this realm through a visible body who are all bound by the terms of his covenant and marked or set apart by him for this purpose. There was a real and detailed covenantal relationship between God and that visible body. When we think about God's Kingdom work, Scripture will not allow us to restrict that work to only the invisible aspect. God is not merely working with saved souls. The Kingdom work moves along according to the covenant, not atomistic individuals. The Kingdom is not just about the invisible realm, it has much to do with this earthy, visible realm and God relates to this visible aspect of his Kingdom in terms of the covenant. Throughout the whole Older Testament era the Lord delivered, preserved, blessed, judged and restored his visible covenant body. He related to them in a unique way compared to the surrounding nations; he called them his special people and he expected them to act according to his stipulations.

God's covenant with his visible people did not merely rest upon invisible criteria. That is, upon criteria that is beyond man's ability to observe. True faith falls into the invisible realm. Only God knows who has true faith in the ultimate sense. We have some indicators in this visible realm that show us that true faith probably exists in someone else, namely because they have a true profession and an obedient life, but ultimately, only God knows who is truly saved. But the fact that we do not have absolute assurance about the standing of others does not remove them from being part of the real working of God's Kingdom in the visible realm. The way God works in the visible realm is according to the covenant: visible criteria and structures of authority along with relationships of representation. God doesn't allow us to define his Kingdom work in terms of invisible criteria; he doesn't allow us to define his visible Church or body by invisible criteria—or insist upon invisible criteria. The covenant is revealed to us in the context of very visible things; thus, we must bring our thinking about God's visible body into line with God's revelation on the matter. The covenant calls us to have true faith and it speaks about eternal things that we cannot yet fully partake of; nevertheless, it does not call us to function in God's visible body according to invisible criteria. Rather, it calls us to function in terms of very visible, covenantal principles, jurisdictions, representations, boundaries, relationships and obligations. And one of the most basic covenantal principles in the visible realm of God's Kingdom is the covenantal nature of the family unit. The family unit is the most important integer or component in God's visible covenant community, the Church, and it is the most basic and important component in society. Thus, when

we think about the family unit, we must think God's thoughts after him and understand it in terms of his covenant.

Family and Covenant

When children were born, or a slave brought into, the household of, a covenant member, that child or slave became a covenant member and was identified with that covenant. That infant or slave then came under the blessings, promises, expectations and judgments of the covenant—he became a full member in and accountable to that covenant, though he might have been without true saving faith. God made this very clear when he explained the covenant details to Abraham and said, “I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you” (Gen.17:7). This applied to both children and slaves, for God continued, “He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant” (Gen.17:13–14).

What we have looked at is enough to establish the existence of God's covenant people or community in the Older Testament era. We have seen that God related to them in terms of covenantal blessings, curses, obligations and signs. His visible community was marked out as his and the terms of the covenant determined all of his dealings with them throughout this era.

The Newer Testament and Covenant

When we come to the Newer Testament we see that it was according to the same covenantal terms that Christ was promised and it was in conformity to the covenant that Christ came. He submitted himself to all the details and demands that were specified in that covenant, including receiving the Older Testament sign of covenant membership—he was circumcised on the eighth day. Christ accomplished all his work of redemption in accordance with God's demands. Then on the day when the official Newer Testament church came into being (on the day of Pentecost), Peter, preaching to the crowd said, “For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:39).

Here, right at the beginning, we are struck with an already well known Older Covenant theme, namely, that the covenant included households. We are reminded of this already long established fact that God's Kingdom work is carried out through a visible, set apart body, whose most basic component was not the atomistic individual, but the household. Peter confirmed the Biblical picture of God's covenantal body, whereas the modern idea is to think about the Kingdom in atomistic, individualistic terms. Modern man wants to restrict the extent of God's Kingdom work and thus, restrict the covenant members, to only saved individuals who have come to personal saving faith. This view refuses to think about the work of the Kingdom other than in this restricted sense. It equates the visible body with the invisible and thus forces the Scriptures into this configuration claiming that God's work only flows through those who are part

of the invisible body of Christ. God's covenant, however, has never been restricted to the notion of individualism in this modern sense, nor merely to the invisible aspect of his body.

To challenge the modern emphasis upon individualism is regarded as an assault upon the very foundations of civilised existence—it is seen as an assault upon freedom itself. Modern man has on a pair of glasses that are coloured by the dogma of individualism and he tries to conform all things to this absolute ideal. Such thinking has impacted the thinking of believers too and thus when they read the Newer Testament they interpret it through the lens of atomistic individualism, namely, that God's Kingdom work is confined to those individuals who have saving faith. Which means a person's significance and purpose in God's Kingdom is defined independently of the family unit and visible community: the individual is made the most basic component of God's covenantal working in this world. Due to this distorted perception of God's Kingdom and work, people tend to exalt only one dimension of that work, namely, the eternal aspect. This perspective blinds them to something that is shown to be vitally important throughout Scripture, namely, the crucial aspect of God's visible covenant people. The only covenant that is thought to exist is that which has to do with the eternal state of men, whereas God's covenant includes him working with both the visible and invisible realms. God's covenant is as real and relevant in the visible realm as it is in the invisible realm. But while we look for that eternal city, we are to live in this visible realm according to God's covenant principles for this visible realm.

Thus, continuity is presumed between the Testaments, which means that unless God clearly shows that the way he now deals with his visible body has changed from Older Testament times, then the presumption is to be that it has not changed. Moreover, it is utterly impossible to understand the meaning of covenant other than in the light of the Older Testament revelation on this subject. So, unless we presume continuity with respect to God's covenantal dealings with his people, then we can make the term “covenant” in the Newer Testament mean anything we choose. But this would be wrong. It is from the Older Testament that we ought to understand the covenant that God has with his visible body. Thus, when we come to Acts 2, where Peter is speaking to people seeped in God's Older Testament revelation, and he talks about households sharing in these wonderful promises, how were they to understand him? I assure you they did not view the covenant in atomistic, individualistic terms. On the other hand, Paul had to explain to the Corinthians something that didn't come naturally to the Gentile mind, namely, that if one parent in the household was a believer, then the children were holy (1 Cor.7:14). Did Paul mean saved? No, he meant that they were in the visible covenant of God—separated unto the Lord by virtue of the fact that one of their parents was in the covenant.

Both circumcision and baptism talk about the need to be cleansed from the filthiness of the flesh and Paul uses circumcision and baptism like this in the same sentence (Col.2:11–12). There can be no doubt as to the religious meaning behind circumcision or baptism; both talk about our need to be cleansed and washed because our natural state is one of being dirty. They present the same picture and proclaim the same solution for man's problem, and they are both types or pictures teaching that the only way to be

cleansed is through faith in Christ's work completed on our behalf (Dt.30:6; Phil.3:3; Titus 3:5).

Circumcision is clearly brought to an end in the Newer Testament, fundamentally because all the blood that needs to be shed for our redemption has been shed by Christ and thus there is to be no more religious shedding of blood. Also, in the Older Testament, the male had the role of being a priestly representative for the women and thus his blood, shed through circumcision, covered for the women. Women did not need to be circumcised or marked. This priestly function from the atonement side has been completely fulfilled in Christ, our great High Priest, and thus the ceremonial or cultic distinctions between men and women are no longer in force (1 Pet.2:5, 9; Rev.1:6; 5:10). Therefore, Paul taught there is no longer Jew or Gentile, male or female, for we are all made one in our great High Priest (more could be said about this ceremonial distinction between men and women in the Older Testament). Thus, the sign of the Newer Covenant, which is baptism, is applied to both males and females, confirming the fact that the ceremonial distinctions have been fulfilled by Christ. As a caution though, when Paul says that there is no longer male or female (Gal. 3:28), he is not implying that God's covenantal authority structures have changed, since he clearly enforces these elsewhere (1 Timothy 2:8–15 and Titus 2:5).

Baptism and the Visible Realm

As the New Testament Church was born, people were told about the need to believe in Christ and be baptised. It is a misunderstanding to connect the act of baptism in this context to the invisible realm. It is the influence of atomistic individualism that causes people to do this. God's covenant dealings are inseparable from his working with his visible covenant community. How are we to understand what this covenant community looks like and how it functions? We can only know in the light of the whole of God's revelation on this matter. To start merely with the Newer Testament in order to understand God's covenant community makes it impossible to arrive at a biblical understanding of God's visible body and Kingdom work through that body. God has not changed the fact that he works through a visible body in this earth and that that visible body is connected by his covenant terms and defined by his covenant stipulations. When we read about the apostles baptising people and their households (Lydia and her household were baptised and the Philippian jailer and his family were baptised, Acts 16:15, 33), the way we honour Scripture is to presume that there is continuity with the bulk of revelation in the Older Testament about God's visible people and their families. Why should we presume otherwise? On what Scriptural authority can people claim change? When this change is claimed, what is presumed, without proof, is an automatic discontinuity between the Testaments. However, to presume

that God changed direction in the way he defined his visible Church and how the covenant relates to the family unit, without clear Biblical explanation of this change, destroys the authority of Scripture. Those who do this are actually allowing man to radically redefine the visible body of Christ and his relationship to the covenantal family unit, without any basis in Scripture for doing so.

When the New Testament tells people to believe and be baptised, it is emphasising God's dealings on two different levels, namely, the visible and the invisible. While baptism talks about the need to be washed from our sins by believing in Christ's completed work, it is also clearly marking Christ's visible body, a body that his Kingdom work is carried out through, and the most basic components in that visible body are family units. It is God who puts his mark upon his people who stand related to him through his covenant. We do not believe that the mark equals salvation; it does not. It talks to the need of salvation, but primarily it is the mark of God's covenant. That is what we teach our children and whenever a child is baptised everyone witnessing the baptism is once again challenged by the fact that they too were baptised.

Baptism marks people as being in God's covenant community. They have been set apart unto his service and are accountable to live in terms of his covenant. There is no other biblical basis for holding our children accountable to the moral requirements of the Lord, unless they are numbered of God's covenant community and marked out by the Lord. That is why we teach them not to lie; why they should obey their parents; why they should be respectful to their elders; why they should attend worship and listen to the preached word; it is why we encourage them to read the Bible and pray. It is because they are in the covenant by virtue of the fact we, their parents, are in the covenant and through our faith, the Lord includes them in his visible community. It is God who made a visible sign for his visible community. The family forever remains the most basic integer in God's covenantal Kingdom. We are not baptised into an atomistic existence but into God's visible community, of which the family unit is the bedrock. This is a glorious message and has wonderful promises for both us and our children.

Each time there is a baptism we ought to remind our own children about who they are in God's covenant community. They are marked out by God for his service and thus they are to be reminded of what it means to be a child of the covenant. It is through this visible, covenant community that the Lord has ordained to carry out his Kingdom purposes and he has called us as families to work together in this high calling. What glorious promises and what an amazing plan! I challenge you to understand the Kingdom, the covenant and baptism in the light of the whole of Scripture, where the emphasis is clearly that God works through his visible covenant community, and where the most basic unit in this community is the covenantal family, not the atomistic individual. *C&S*

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE USE OF MUSIC IN CHURCH

by Stephen C. Perks

It is obvious to anyone who goes to just about any kind of church today that music is one of the most central features of what happens in a church service. Indeed, for many, the act of singing songs and choruses is equated with worship. In many services the time of “worship” is a continuous medley of choruses led by the church band, who are often called the “worship group,” or some such title. Other things that take place in the service therefore, such as prayer, the reading of Scripture and teaching, are not categorised as worship. If we are to worship together this means singing songs and choruses together.

But this is a serious mistake. All that we do in church is meant to be worship, not just the singing. The identification of singing with worship has produced a reductionist concept of congregational worship. Where this idea prevails church services very commonly consist merely of singing and preaching. Congregational confession of sin, confession of the faith, the saying of the Lord’s Prayer and the reciting of the Ten Commandments are absent. This is, of course, less true of Anglican church services because of the importance of the set liturgy, which, with the exception of the reading of the Ten Commandments, which has now disappeared from most Anglican church services, has preserved these elements; but even in Anglican parish churches the *ethos* of Free Church worship has begun to exercise a strong influence, particularly in the kind of music that is increasingly being used to replace the older hymns.¹ And what should be the central *ritual* of congregational life and worship, a fellowship meal, which is the context in which the Christian Passover, i.e. the Lord’s Supper, should be celebrated, is missing in just about all churches, and has been for most of Church history despite its universal acknowledgement as the practice of the early

Church (the agape feast). As a result, the worship we offer in church becomes unbalanced and lacks essential elements that are needed for the edification of the congregation and the equipment of Christians for a life of service to God, and it is this life of service that worship in the fullest sense should be—the congregational worship service is one aspect of the much broader life of worship (i.e. service) that God requires of his people, not the whole of it.

Nevertheless, this is not to deny the importance and significance of music in the congregational meeting or church service. Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, makes it clear that music and singing are an important *part* of what God requires of his people when they assemble together for public worship. Indeed, I believe a strong case can be made that modern church worship, despite the almost ubiquitous obsession with music in the form of singing choruses, use of church bands and “worship groups,” is seriously *deficient* in the use of music as a means of worshiping God according to his word. This deficiency exists both on the level of our understanding of the purpose and nature of music in the public worship services of the Church, particularly in relation to genre, and also on the level of the practical implementation of appropriate music, both instrumental and sung, in the church service. This deficiency is part of a wider theological problem affecting the Church today, and this theological problem is part of a much greater spiritual, intellectual and cultural problem affecting modern society. This problem is a complex one but it can be summed up briefly by the term *dumbing down*.

Before going any further with this subject I think I should perhaps at this point declare an interest. As someone who has had a lifelong interest in and commitment to music as an important aspect of human culture, and therefore, as a Christian, to the understanding and development of music as a *necessary* feature of man’s Creation or cultural mandate, and furthermore as someone who enjoys composing music, sometimes for church services, my views are perhaps not representative of most churchgoers. Some would say that my views on the use of music in church are idiosyncratic, while others would claim they are elitist or amount to “musical snobbery” and that in addressing this issue I am merely

1. I am not implying by this that there is anything sacrosanct about traditional hymn music or that new music should not be used in church services. In principle there is nothing wrong and much that is good with the use of new music in church services, and the argument that a certain type of music should be used in church services *because* it has always been used in the past is in itself without any merit. The question is one of appropriate genre, of whether the music itself is appropriate to the context and purpose of the worship service and therefore both glorifying to God and edifying for the congregation.

imposing my own views on other people (though of course I do not believe this to be the case), views that are inappropriate in the context of the church service, since church music must appeal aesthetically to the common man. For this reason I have, for most of my life, been reluctant to say, and even more reluctant to write, anything about this subject. More recently, however, I have been more willing to question openly whether this criticism is well-founded and whether or not in truth it is merely a symptom of the dumbing-down problem that affects our society generally, and Church life in particular. For every claim that my views are elitist and amount to “musical snobbery” it can equally be claimed in response that the common fare of modern “worship music” that is relentlessly forced upon us in church is an example of dumbing-down that flies in the face of our mission as Christians and as the Church to pursue the cultural mandate, which entails the cultivation and development of the acoustic landscape of Creation no less than the tilling and cultivation of the ground. In other words, the cultural mandate requires musical development and progress for the glory of God and the betterment of mankind no less than the physical development of the earth. Yet it seems to me that what passes for church music today in much parish and Free-Church worship is a practical denial of this doctrine of the cultural mandate.

Dealing with the cultural mandate in relation to music, however, necessarily means addressing the issue in far broader terms than *church* music. Christian music, i.e. music that arises out of a Christian world-view, is a much wider category than *church* music. In order to develop a proper understanding of and appreciation for church music it is necessary to have a Christian perspective on music in much more general terms. The ability of a mechanic to design an engine for a specific purpose, such as Formula One racing for example, will be based upon a more general understanding of the principles on which the internal combustion engine works. Likewise with music. The general principles of music must inform our understanding of how *church* music in particular works. There are other, non-musical considerations to be taken account of as well though, such as theology and liturgy. The task of deciding on appropriate church music is more complex than it might at first seem. It must be recognised that the ideas of Christian music and church music are not coterminous. Not all Christian music is appropriate for church services, though all church music should be Christian music. A composer who writes Christian music (I am speaking here of the structure of the music itself, not the context, sub-culture or literature associated with the music, nor whether the composer himself is a believer) does not necessarily write church music. Church music is, or rather should be, a particular genre of Christian music. Therefore not all Christian music is appropriate for church services.²

If this is so, why do we assume that merely because some

evangelical words are added to a piece of “nice” music it then automatically becomes appropriate for use in church services? Much of the music used in church services, especially when it comes to modern choruses, but also even some hymns, is not appropriate for church services (again I must stress that I am speaking here of the music itself, not the words). The issue is one of appropriate musical genre for the context, not merely what sort of words are being set. Lest it should be thought that what I am arguing for here is a return to singing only hymns in church, let me say that personally I find much of the traditional hymn music, though not all of it, dreary and unhelpful. This may to some extent be due to the associations that come with this kind of music—i.e. long and dreary Free Church services in which the minister does everything himself with the exception of singing the hymns (a similar form of priestcraft exists in church services where the “worship group” does virtually everything and the congregation merely accompanies it in the singing). But this does not explain my dislike of hymn music altogether. I can see no more value in the hymn sandwich approach to music in church than I can in the continuous medley of choruses approach. It seems to me that both severely test the patience of anyone who wishes to worship God with his *mind* as well as with his vocal chords (and after all, we are commanded to worship God with our minds), or who seeks fellowship with other believers as an essential part of Church life.

Now there is a cultural dimension to this that should not be ignored. It is not being claimed here that one type of music only is appropriate in church services and that music of this genre should always be used. It is not possible to construct an absolute musical ethics that holds good for all societies at all times. The use of music in church has to take cultural factors into consideration. As an example of how cultural considerations may affect how we worship together in church, consider the following question: is it legitimate to bake bread in the church worship service? I suspect most people in Western cultures today would consider the idea that we should bake bread in the church service bizarre to say the least, and it would doubtless severely upset those who hold strongly to the regulative principle (what God has not commanded is forbidden). Even those who do not hold to the regulative principle would on the whole perhaps not go all the way to its antithesis, namely that what God has not forbidden is permitted. The question of what is appropriate rightly comes into play. Just because something is not forbidden does not mean it is helpful. Yet, as I understand it, the Nestorian Church (i.e. the Assyrian Church of the East) for centuries began the worship service with the kneading and baking of the bread that was to be used in the Eucharist. In this context the baking of bread was part of the worship. In our modern Western church services this would seem out of place because it would fall outside the context of our history and traditions. These factors of history and tradition, although not absolute, must be considered since they help to determine how we are to worship appropriately in our culture. For Western Christians, a significant change in our culture would be needed in order to put such a practice into a more appropriate light. What is appropriate for Western Churches, with their particular history, traditions and culture, is different in some respects from what is appropriate for the Assyrian Church of the East, which has a very different history, tradition and culture. Of course, the cultural element must not be absolutised either; culture is not the only

2. What constitutes Christian music is a more complex question, but for my purpose here I am making the assumption that most tonal music in Western culture is Christian in nature at least to some degree. The development of Western tonal music has a long history with many twists and turns in it, but the influence of the Christian world-view, despite the Church's opposition at times to important new musical developments, has been determinative. Western tonal music is what it is, and distinguishable from world music, because of the influence that Christianity (as opposed to the influence of the Church, however) has had upon its development.

consideration to be taken into account. The truth of the gospel remains the same for all cultures and does not alter. But the conditions under which it is applied do change and therefore there is a human and cultural element that has to be taken into consideration.

Returning to music, the task before us therefore is not one of turning musical principles into absolute ethical demands, but rather one of developing an understanding of how music in church should facilitate the purpose of the service and glorify God in the process. This necessitates that we take the cultural context into consideration. In other words, the use of music in church services requires discernment, which in turn necessitates both an understanding of what God requires of us in church services and what principles he has given us in Scripture to guide how we are to order our church worship, and an understanding of the cultural context in which the church service takes place. Unfortunately, the modern Church manifests a serious lack of discernment in this matter (though it has to be admitted that it is not only in the area of music that this lack of discernment is evident).

One of the problems we have is the pragmatic way in which we understand the use of music in church. Instead of seeking to understand church music in spiritual and theological terms (again I must stress that I am still speaking here of the music itself, not the words attached to it) we treat it as one of the primary means of getting people, particularly young people, into church. The consequence of this attitude to music in church is compromise with the world. Instead of redeeming the culture around us we start following it. And unfortunately this musical compromise takes place in the context of Church life and worship that is already compromised in others ways, for example false spirituality, unorthodox theology and permissive morality.

Another problem we face is that the clergy have monopolised so much of what happens in the church service that there is very little for the congregation to do except the singing. Church services have become, as a result of this, largely clergy-centred performances. Church worship services are designed by the clergy for the clergy. Going to church is on the whole a spectator sport where the clergy and their “team” of acolytes, known as the “worship group” in Free Churches, are the players and the members of the congregation sit in the stalls and watch. The singing of songs and even hymn tunes at football and rugby matches offers more of an analogy with church worship than it should. Even the archetypal fellowship event, a shared meal, which, as already mentioned, is the proper setting for the Lord’s Supper, and which should be at the heart of congregational worship, has been transformed into a clergy performance devoid of any true congregational fellowship. The highly ritualised communion services of most Churches are a corruption of the meaning and purpose of the Lord’s Supper. The symbolism of the Anglican Eucharist, in which the congregation kneels before the clergy to receive the “sacramental”³ elements, is pure sacerdotalism and an abuse of both the institution of

the Lord’s Supper and the people who come to participate in it by the clergy (though doubtless it is seldom these days intentionally so). The problem with these clergy-centred worship services is that there is very little for the congregation to do in church except sing; in other words, the congregation acts as the chorus for the principal actors in the drama, the clergy. The congregation is reduced to pew fodder, and the music is reduced to the lowest common denominator so that all can participate fully in the one thing that the congregation is expected to do: singing. Without this there would be virtually nothing left for most of the congregation to do. The worship services of most Churches are no more than a highly ritualised form of religious dumbing down, and this inevitably affects the music as well. Justification for such an approach to congregational worship can be found in neither the Old nor the New Testaments. The Bible requires something more than, and in many respects something rather different from, what passes for congregational worship in most churches.⁴

The answer to this problem is the development of a Christian world-view that is broad enough to encompass these issues as part of the Church’s cultural mission. Again, we must remember that there is a cultural dimension that must be taken into account. What is appropriate in one culture may not be in another. But not all cultures are equal. The claim that they are is one of the dogmas of the secular humanist religion that dominates our society. This dogma is not consistent with orthodox Christian faith because culture is largely the externalisation or incarnation of religion, to use T. S. Eliot’s term.⁵ There are therefore higher and lower cultures, more advanced cultures and more backward cultures. What primarily determines the nature of a particular culture is the religion that informs its world-view. Our goal as individuals and as a Church, i.e. as a Christian society or community, is to advance culturally in all areas of life in terms of God’s purpose for his Creation, namely the Kingdom of God. It is appropriate for a backward society to advance culturally in terms of this purpose, but not for an advanced society to go backwards culturally, which is what seems to have been happening in our society for some time. And because the Church has in so many things followed the world, the Church has also gone backwards. Again, this trend is not confined merely to music in church; it includes spirituality, theology and ethics, all of which have a significant impact upon many other areas of life and culture (e.g. education, welfare, healthcare, criminal justice etc.). But it certainly includes music as well.

This brings us to a vexing question that as Christians we need to consider: why is the Church today so eager to throw away the cultural influence that she has exercised in the past and that has played such a vital part in the growth and development of our society? All around us we can still see the cultural fruit of this influence in the past; but what we see increasingly in our own time is the mere ruins of this cultural influence. Why is the Church today so determined to abandon her cultural influence in the world? The Church has in the past led the world, not always and never perfectly

3. I use this word here merely because it is the word commonly used and because this “sacrament” bears such little resemblance to what Scripture actually requires in the Lord’s Supper. In fact there are no sacraments in Scripture. The concept of sacrament is foreign to biblical religion. See further my essay “Covenant Signs and Sacraments” in *Common-Law Wives and Concubines: Essays on Covenantal Christianity and Contemporary Western Culture* (Taunton: The Kuyper Foundation, 2003), pp. 32–46.

4. See further my essay “The Christian Passover: Agape Feast or Ritual Abuse” in *Christianity & Society*, Vol. x, No. 2 (April 2000), pp. 16–21, available as a free PDF download from the Kuyper Foundation’s web site (www.kuyper.org).

5. *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1948), pp. 28, 33.

of course; but now there seems to be a determined effort to abandon any attempt to exercise such an influence and instead a determination to follow the world in its idolatry.

Of course the apostasy of the liberal wing of the Church has played its part in this. But it would be wrong to lay the blame entirely at the door of liberalism. The theological error and false spirituality of the conservative and evangelical wings of the Church are equally responsible. This is an age of apostasy, and that apostasy has been embraced with enthusiasm by the Church as a whole. It would be strange if the only area where this apostasy were not evident were in the use of music in church. And it would be strange if the only area where the Church sought to overturn this apostasy were in the use of music in church. The problems that the Church faces in the use of music in church services are part of the much larger apostasy of the age. The solving of this problem, therefore, must be part of the much larger task of dealing with that apostasy. Until the apostasy is recognised it will not be challenged, and until it is challenged we shall have to put up increasingly with the use of culturally backward and inappropriate music in our church worship services, along with the heretical theology and corrupt ethics that have blazed a path for it.

At this point, however, we need to be aware of a danger inherent in the attempt to correct any *particular* problem in life, whether as individuals or as part of the Church. This danger should not deter us from the attempt to reform our lives or the Church, but we need to be aware of it, and especially if our speciality lies in the area that is being reformed. In our culture atheism is dominant. What this means is that people do not look to God for the meaning of life. Instead they try to find the meaning of life in something else, in some aspect of the created order—it might be in their work, in sport, in their hobby, even in their holidays. They load the meaning of life into these things. This is what the Bible calls idolatry. The problem is not these things in themselves, which are all legitimate aspects of life. The problem is that these things cannot bear the load that is laid upon them, and so they disappoint. The professional snooker player Ronnie O'Sullivan recently complained that snooker has become boring and needs something else to make it more interesting. I have watched the big snooker tournaments on television for most of my life and I find it as entertaining to watch the professionals now as it ever was, perhaps more so. But snooker cannot bear the load of meaning that only belief in God, and more importantly *service* of God, should and can give to man. Idols always disappoint because they cannot deliver what is expected of them, and ultimately they are tyrants that crush the human spirit. Sport is one of the idols of our age. People expect it to provide meaning for their lives. When sport does not provide this they take it out on their sporting heroes, or on the sport itself, for disappointing them, for not providing them with the meaning they are looking for and that can only be found in serving God. Snooker, like cricket and football, is just a game. Idolising it—expecting it to provide meaning for one's life—ruins it by loading onto it a meaning that it cannot bear.

Why all this talk about sport? Well, music is another significant idol of our age. It functions for many in an idolatrous capacity the same way that sport does. It is every bit as much idolised in our society as sport is, even in the Church, and this is another of the problems we face when it comes to dealing with this issue. People are sensitive to their idols and they are

easily upset if their idols are challenged. It is not that there is anything wrong with music itself, any more than there is anything wrong with sport. But even professional musicians should see music not as an end in itself, but rather as a means for the glorifying of God in their lives. *Music is not the meaning of life*, and if it is expected to bear that kind of meaning it will disappoint. If it is made to bear that kind of meaning in the life of the Church it will cause immense harm and schism for the Church. Jesus said that he did not come to bring peace on earth, but a sword, to set a man against his father and a daughter against her mother (Mt. 10:34–35). Sport and music are not here to cause division and strife. If they are doing this it is because they have been idolised, put in the place of Christ himself. Music is not important enough to bear such meaning or to be the cause of such division. This does not mean that music does not have a proper place and meaning in life or that it is altogether unimportant. What it means is that it is a servant, not a master. While it is important to have a proper understanding and use of music in the church worship service, underpinned by a biblical theology of worship, music is not an end in itself, nor is it to be equated with worship, though it is of course *an* important aspect of worship. Reform of church music therefore is not the answer to the problems that the Church faces anymore than reform of the liturgy is the answer. Dealing with these issues will solve the *music* problem or the *liturgy* problem. But there will still be much else that remains to be done when these issues have been addressed. Of course this does not mean that these areas of Church life should not be reformed. They should. The danger we face when trying to reform such areas of Church life is not reform itself, but thinking that if we sort this or that area out, which just so happens to be the areas of our own speciality or particular interest, e.g. if we get the music or the liturgy right, everything else will come right as a result of this. It will not. To think it will is to believe that there is something magical about the role of music or liturgy in the life of the Church. But Christianity does not work by magic. It works by Christians living out the faith in the whole of their lives, both as individuals and as members of a true society or community of faith.

As individual Christians and as the Church, a Christian society or community, we are to lead the world in the good and proper use of the things God has given us in this world. This means we should not follow the world in its idolatry. Instead we should use, enjoy and *develop* the world as a means of serving God. We shall enjoy music and all other things more if we put them in their right place. If we seek first the Kingdom of God, all these other things shall be given to us (Mt. 6:33). The question we must ask regarding church music, therefore, is whether or not it does glorify God, or whether in fact it glorifies man; whether it serves the purpose of God in the congregational worship or whether it panders to the obsessions of our atheistic and man-centred culture. The use of man-centred music in church worship services is not justified by the addition of God-centred words, much less by the addition of words that promote the false spirituality that has become so popular in many Churches today, and which is in its own way just as man-centred. The use of such music in church worship will not glorify God, but rather man himself; and this will be detrimental to the congregation's spiritual growth, since man's true purpose, and therefore his true happiness, can only be found in serving and glorifying God. C&S

Book Reviews

AUTHORITY NOT MAJORITY: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF FRIEDRICH JULIUS STAHL

BY RUBEN ALVARADO

Aalten, Netherlands: WordBridge Publishing, 2007,
134 pages, ISBN: 978-90-76660-04-2

REVIEWED BY THOMAS SCHIRRMACHER

THIS new book is the best introduction into Friedrich Julius Stahl's (1802–1861) ideas and work in print. Stahl was a nineteenth century German State philosopher. This is not only the best publication about Stahl in English, but there is also no better work on Stahl in German, as all German books on Stahl of the last decades are extensive dissertations covering certain important aspects of this thought, but not presenting the whole picture. So we can be grateful that Alvarado has written a valuable guide to the life and work of an eminent Christian State philosopher of the nineteenth century.

It is a pity that Stahl's life and thought has to be brought to our attention by a Dutch publisher in the English language. Our Martin Bucer Seminary just published Thomas Zimmermann's paper "Ernst Ludwig von Gerlach: Politiker und Richter nach dem Gesetz Gottes." Gerlach was another Lutheran conservative theologian and a friend of Stahl, who was in favour of a Christian monarchy controlled by the constitution. We as staff of the seminar were amazed to learn about many emotional negative and positive reactions to our publication about Gerlach (*was war daran so kritikwürdig?*). The time has come to rediscover these Christian Lutheran thinkers, even though Reformed Christians will have some problems with some of their theological ideas.

But who was Stahl? Friedrich Julius Stahl's grandfather Abraham Uhlfelder, in whose house he grew up, was head of the Jewish congregation in Munich. His son Friedrich Julius converted to Lutheran Christianity at age 17 and chose the name 'Stahl' (steel) at his baptism. After that he stayed a convinced Lutheran, active Church member and Church leader for the rest of his life.

After studying and teaching law he became professor of law in Bavaria. Even being a defender of the Bavarian monarchy, he fell into disgrace at the King's court, when he insisted in a session of the Bavarian parliament on the introduction of some constitutional elements regarding the absolute budgeting power of the King—this being a mirror of his whole life and thought. To prevent further problems Stahl took a prestigious chair in Berlin and henceforth played

a major role in Prussia—in the academic world, in politics, in the press and in the State Church.

Stahl's enormous influence is due to the fact that he was a brilliant academic, an influential member of parliament and co-founder of a major political party (the Conservatives) and at the same time co-founder and editor of a leading newspaper. Stahl held several leadership positions in the Protestant State Church in Prussia. He was also one of the two presidents of the yearly All-German-Protestant-Meeting, the only organisation enclosing all Protestant Churches in all German States at that time.

As chief editor of the *New Prussian Times* (*Neue Preussische Zeitung*) he was the public face of those conservatives who fought for a Christian State with a strong constitutional monarchy. He was also fighting for the establishment of a representative parliament, advocating freedom and human rights, at least to a certain extent. Stahl's position was located somewhere between advocating the revolution against the monarchy on the one side (especially till 1848 when the All-German-Parliament had failed) and the absolute monarchists on the other side. He wanted to transform Prussia and the German States into constitutional monarchies, similar to the process that actually took place in Great Britain during the reign of Queen Victoria.

In the so-called "New Era" of Germany beginning 1858, the Prussian Prime Minister Otto von Bismarck cut down the political influence of Stahl, Bismarck advocating a stronger position of the monarchic government as well as a secular "politics of the possible," which included the so called cultural war against the Catholic Church. This transformed Prussia and later the whole of Germany into a secular State, with the introduction of, for example, civil marriages and State oversight over private schools. For this reason Alvarado agrees with a quote (p. 111) of Stahl's colleague Ludwig Gerlach, who called Bismarck an "Anti-Christ" (even though Bismarck himself was a very pious Protestant, I personally doubt that Germany was much more Christian prior to Bismarck). This is the background for evaluating Stahl as the last state philosopher in Germany calling for a "Christian" Germany.

Stahl's major work is his *Philosophy of Law* (*Philosophie des Rechts*). Especially the second volume is of importance, which includes a State law giving arguments for a Christian State with a constitutional monarchy and a representation of the people, rights of freedom, subduing State and monarchy under the rule of the law.

Let me mention some German dissertations and lectures on Stahl which Alvarado does not list in his book

(the best bibliography can be found in a 1995 article in the “Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon” available at www.bautz.de/bbkl/).

1. The Korean professor of law, Myoung-Jae Kim, in her doctoral thesis (*Staat und Gesellschaft bei Friedrich Julius Stahl—eine Innenansicht seiner Staatsphilosophie*. Hannover, 1993) totally leaves out Stahl’s Christian background. So Alvarado did not lose much by not mentioning her work.

2. One of the finest statements on Stahl stems from the work of a professor at the university of the German army, Johann Baptist Müller (*Die Staatslehre Friedrich Julius Stahls*, München: Institut für Staatswissenschaften, 1999). Alvarado did not use this lecture but Müller totally argues in his line. Müller writes in his abstract: “Stahl’s political theory is still a paradox to many interpreters. On the one hand, he is accused of holding a dull reactionary position and on the other, he is celebrated as a scholar who opened Conservatism’s door to modernity. In fact, Stahl was not, as is sometimes alleged, insensitive to the ideas of modern Liberalism. Few Conservatives loved liberty with a nobler and more unselfish passion. For this leading figure of the older Prussian Conservatism the Christian religion was the necessary basis for the rights of man . . . he firmly rejected the idea of a theocratic state. In spite of a certain sympathy for the thinking of the Liberals, he did not accept all of their premises and did not believe in the continuous development of progressive ideas. Equally unacceptable to him was Roussau’s notion of a ‘volonte generale’, which for him possessed none of the elements of political stability . . . he did not make his monarchical thinking into an argument for absolutism but maintained that a perfect form of government is to be found where a paternal monarchy is limited by parliamentary representation. Stahl thus adored the English constitution and even accepted the presidential system of the United States of America. In both systems the government must yield to legitimate pressures for reform, thus providing the securest guarantee against revolution.”

Müller proves that Stahl wanted to build the State on the Christian moral law but at the same time rejects a theocracy and the application of Old Testament Law. Thus, says Müller, Stahl was very strong in advocating the Christian State in general. He was convinced that a Christian monarch relying on a Christian people could best fulfil the role given to him by God. At the same time he always remained rather vague when it came to details of what the Christian moral law says or does not say. In the end it was never clear what the will of God actually is—at least beyond what was generally accepted in Stahl’s time anyway by all Christian confessions. But Müller (and Alvarado) do not discuss this problem further. But can we really speak about Christian politics in general, if we are not willing to enter an exegetical and ethical debate on what constitutes sin, like incest, homosexuality, slavery, bribery or any other sin?

3. Gottfried Hütter (*Die Beurteilung der Menschenrechte bei Richard Rothe und Friedrich Julius Stahl*, Frankfurt: Lang, 1976) has proved in detail that Stahl was of the opinion that human rights have a Christian base, not a secular one. But Hütter also proves in detail (p. 115) that Stahl bases his view of human rights on the Aristotelian natural law, quoting Aristotle several times and arguing according to natural law, not according to biblical law. He also shows that Stahl

considered giving equal political rights to Jews, Catholics and independent Free Churches to be the very mistake of his time. According to Stahl, any ruler and politician should be a member of the Protestant State Church, which was to a great extent already the case in the nineteenth century.

Let me add some critical remarks which all have to do with Stahl being a strict Lutheran within the liberal Protestant State Church in Germany. Arie Barings (*Friedrich Julius Stahl*, Bielefeld: Luther Verlag, 1981) whom Alvarado quotes has proved that Stahl was a strong Lutheran who was not interested in being united with Reformed Christians. He was opposing a common Lord’s supper. What does this mean for an evaluation of Stahl’s thinking?

1. Stahl—influential and brilliant as he was—nevertheless was more or less unaware of developments in the Reformed world inside and outside of Germany, e.g. the Reformed views of the State in the Netherlands or the USA.

2. Stahl most of the time spoke in general terms, so that, for example, Catholic Christians in Germany could agree with him. As he himself found human rights more in Aristotelian natural law than in the Bible, he held much in common with Catholic defenders of the monarchy.

3. Stahl was in favour of full citizen rights only for members of the Lutheran State Church, thus not only turning down Catholics and Atheists, but also Reformed Christians as well as all bible believing movements. These movements by that time had already separated from the State Church because of liberalism. For modern Germany that would mean that you would have to be a member of a liberal Church and that half of the evangelicals of the whole country would not enjoy full civil rights. For Stahl, a Christian nation was only possible in combination with a historic State Church. Thus the term “Christian” in his State philosophy often does not mean a personal believer in Christ and a use of the Bible as final proof, but a more general cultural and historic designation.

Alvarado does not enter into this discussion. When he summarises Stahl’s views correctly by the statement “God’s law, not man’s” (p. 121), it is a good and necessary, but very general statement, which does not answer the question how we can determine what exactly God’s law is. Stahl did not find it by exegesis. But is there another way for Christians?

The same is true with the motto of the book’s title “Authority, not Majority.” Yes, it is true that the starting point is the authority God has and gives. And in Stahl’s time one could easily accept the kingdom as the alternative to the rule of the majority. But what about a country like modern Germany? Who can represent the authority when there is no longstanding tradition of the government? And is a monarchy really the only way to assure the idea that God’s authority authorises the government (Rom. 13,1–7)? Can we regain God’s law only through re-establishing monarchy? And what if the monarch is not a Christian? And is the establishment of a Christian State only possible if there is a longstanding, powerful State Church? And what if it becomes liberal and becomes an enemy of God’s law? True, not all of these were the problems of Stahl’s days, but they are ours and we need to get into a discussion of how we can discern between the valid principles of Christian statesmen like Stahl, and those principles that are merely the children of their time. C&S

WHAT DO YOU LEARN IN SCHOOL?
HOW TO CHOOSE OR DEVELOP A CURRICU-
LUM FOR CHURCH-BASED AND HOME-SCHOOL
TEACHING PROGRAMS

BY BRIAN WATTS

Pescara: Italy, Destiny Image Europe, 2004, paperback,
161 pages, ISBN: 88-89127-05-8

REVIEWED BY BRUCE DAYMAN

HERE is a book about curriculum. It is the first of a series of three books on Christian education. It is written for parents and teachers who want to implement a distinctly Christian course for the education of the children in their care. The author is concerned to present teaching in contrast to secular curriculum so that a thoroughly biblical worldview is consciously chosen from the outset.

The book is broken down into six parts, each with two chapters. The source, end (goal), scope, assumptions, authority and outcome of curriculum is examined. Within each of the chapters the author is concerned with the subject of what to teach our children from a thoroughly biblical worldview so that they are equipped for a life of victorious service to whatever God-ordained sphere of service they are called.

Watts begins chapter one with the cliché, “it’s not *what* you know but *who* you know.” He is intent on showing that every human being knows God, whether or not they choose to acknowledge it (Rom. 1: 19, 20). Suppression of this fact leads to incorrect thinking about all of life as is made clear from secular textbooks. The heart is also introduced in distinction to purely rational thinking as an indispensable part of the learning process.

Leaning on our own understanding (sin) is shown to be disastrous. Failing to see God as the source of our understanding will have devastating consequences. While showing the importance of Scripture in the curriculum, Watts avoids the encyclopaedic fallacy of claiming God teaches agriculture, or any other discipline, by means of special revelation (p. 9). Still, the Law (Moses) is shown to be foundational as a text book because it provides “the first principles upon which a curriculum is to be built . . .” Since obedience is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge, the Law is vital for educating the young. Proverbs references about wisdom and knowledge are cited. The author does a good job of showing why the Law is still pertinent to Christians and spends time refuting erroneous views.

In chapter two we are challenged with starting fresh in our understanding of the scope and sequence of not only curriculum but everything from 6-hour school days and 50-minute periods to final exams and grades. With this challenge the book then refocuses on specifically rethinking curriculum in the areas of reading, writing, dominion studies, heritage studies, worship, health and government. Dominion studies include mathematics, science and vocational training. Worship includes art, popular and spiritual.

Chapter 3 discusses the goal of Christian education and draws upon the Great Commission/Creation Mandate. Rather than a narrow evangelical mandate this includes ruling over Creation as godly stewards. Drawing a distinction between temple activities (worship) and city living (the covenant community), the mandate encompasses both spheres

and so the scope of a godly curriculum must do the same. Due to failure to consider this, the secular/sacred divide has pushed Christians into a “sacred” ghetto irrelevant to the public sphere. Curriculum must train “city dwellers” (pp. 41–42). The book provides excellent charts contrasting the city of man and the city of God and the sacred/secular dichotomy.

Chapter four continues on the theme of the city of man and the city of God. Here Watts addresses culture. He shows how culture has been hi-jacked by the world and how the Church has invited the world into its sanctuary. In other words, the city of God has conformed to the city of man. Again the challenge comes forth to rethink “from scratch the Christian way to approach everything, and only go along with the world when we have a particular Christian and biblical reason for doing so.” (p. 55). Jesus is portrayed as God’s primary city builder and cites his kingdom parables, miracles and prayers as prime examples of his commitment to both the material and spiritual issues. It is his example that shows we are called to rule as man was originally intended to rule. Therefore schools should not simply be junior Bible colleges (59), but train children to fulfill every facet of Christ’s rule. Curriculum must reflect this reality.

Heads and hearts is the topic of chapter five. Here it is recognised that education is not a panacea to the world’s problems. Character training as well as academic excellence is needed. This would include learning how to become skilled relationally. Instead of trying to fill children’s heads with facts and information, it must be remembered that each of them are in fact persons made in God’s image. With this in mind the author steers his readers out of the morass of irrationalism and rationalism into affirming that both head and heart are vital to the curriculum. And so he singles out some of the modern problems with rationalism, subjectivism, and postmodernism by recognising that truth, as taught in Scripture, must be presented to the whole man or person. Lives will not be changed by merely imparting information but by a biblical worldview that is integrated into every lesson plan and taught by teachers who model it.

Chapter six explores the different nuances between wisdom and knowledge. “Wisdom is applied knowledge, and that application is contingent upon character. What we do will depend on who we are” (75). Wisdom produces good character or behavior because it flows from reverence for God (Pr. 1:7; 9:10). In other words education flows from a moral base.

This is brought out by Watts’ exploration of the Hebrew model of education. In contrast to the Greek model which is dualistic, the Hebrew model is holistic. It involves the heart which is the centre of the mind, will and emotions. True education not only provides information but stirs the passions about the subject matter. It is a passion that engages the will and results in a godly lifestyle in which what has been learned is used for the benefit of man and the glory of God.

Education is a matter of being rather than knowing or doing (79). Citing the Puritans, scriptural examples of the artisans (Ex. 28:3) and Daniel as well, it is made clear that what we are will determine the success of what we are taught. While the Greeks learned in order to simply comprehend, the Hebrews learned in order to do. A Hebrew father was required to teach his son the Torah and a trade.

Learning must be oriented toward doing. The discipleship model of Jesus portrays learning for doing. Students

must see how their learning makes a difference, therefore problem-solving becomes an important teaching strategy. While this involves abstraction, students learn *by* observing *through* recreating real life learning contexts. Being able to see the truth at work will help students apply their knowledge and become useful servants in the Kingdom of God.

Chapters seven and eight delve more deeply into the differences between Hebrew and Greek thinking patterns. Here the uncomfortable fact that many Christians assume their thinking is rooted in a Judeo-Christian worldview is revealed. The assumptions of the Western world are heavily diluted by Greek dualism and Plato's forms or ideas. Watts backs this up by showing the similarities between Greek society and our modern Western culture.

In chapter eight he gets down to specific assumptions about science, man, and life. Here he shows how concepts of morality, sin, the family and parenting, youth, philosophy, dualism and culture differ between Greeks and Hebrews. He wraps it up with a picture of what Hebrew education looks like.

The place of Scripture and its authority in a curriculum is covered in chapters nine and ten. The author cites Van Til's dictum, "The bible is authoritative on everything to which it speaks. And it speaks to everything." Here he asserts that the building of a curriculum must begin, not with the Department of Education curriculum guide, but with the Bible. The historicity and reliability of the whole of Scripture is defended. This means both the Old and New Testaments, and chapter ten is titled, "Rediscovering the Old Testament."

The final section of the book (Part 6) deals with the outcomes of curriculum. Here in chapter eleven and twelve the author enters into the realm of eschatology and its importance to curricular content. He poses two questions: Do we win and how long is the fight? Here he covers all the usual suspects including premil, amil and postmillennial positions and what their assumptions mean for a curriculum to be successful.

Today most of the curriculum used by Christian schools and homeschoolers is nothing more than textbooks that have been developed for use in public schools. In other words, they use the same scope and sequence that is used in institutions that convinced parents to look for something better. While many are just glad to get their children out of an ungodly milieu where drugs, sex and rap music predominate, many fail to consider what true education is. So they end up baptising a secular curriculum, in the belief that they have done what is required to rear godly children. The fact that many children go their own way after graduation is testimony to the fact that something is missing here.

Brian Watts has addressed this issue and provided alternatives. He has done so on a popular, rather than scholarly level, which is appealing to parents and teachers. He has gone beyond regurgitating mere facts in a rationalistic manner by opening up ways that most educators give little attention to. These ways are informed by a dedication to all of Scripture (Old and New Testaments) that refuses to buy into the pietism that is so endemic in modern Christianity.

He has invited us to change how we think about school, starting with the knowledge of God rather than things in themselves. The intellectual idolatry which reduces subjects to brute facts and then exalts them to an independent status that is unaccountable to God is addressed from the start. The

importance of a correct starting point for our knowledge is either ignored or taken for granted by modern educators. The result has been disastrous.

Christian and home-schools today often become either junior Bible colleges or holding tanks for children until they are thrown into the world to be gobbled up by secular humanism. This recipe for disillusionment has been addressed in the book, which addresses one of the predominant heresies of our time. Dualism, which separates spirit and matter, is prevalent. The author wisely displays the difference here between Greek (dualistic) thinking and Hebrew (holistic) thinking. One has produced the City of Man, the other the City of God.

It is here I believe Christian educators need to spend time and thought regarding education. Many Christian children are reared with a ghetto mentality that has compartmentalised the spiritual into religious exercises rather than seeing all of Creation as God's handiwork. Watts wisely sees the creation mandate (and the Great Commission) as a challenge for children to do all to the glory of God.

Having an optimistic view about the future is also vital for successful education. If we are on a sinking ship education means nothing. Being rescued is all that matters. The author shows wherein our eschatology affects our teaching methods, learning outcomes as well as curricular scope and sequence.

This book does not pretend to solve all problems related to developing curriculum for church-based and home-schools. What it does well is to open vital ideas to teachers and parents to pursue in their educational endeavours. If these ideas are taken seriously then godly results will follow. What has been written has been put to the test by many already, with encouraging signs. We are seeing young people coming out of a robust Christian education and taking on leadership in many different areas.

I highly recommend this book to parents and teachers. Written on a popular level it is easily understood by anyone in any walk of life. This book should be given out by pastors, obtained by libraries, and shared by anyone who is concerned about the future impact of God's covenant community in the world. The book may be purchased at www.eurodestinyimage.com. C&S

C. S. LEWIS: THEN AND NOW

BY WESLEY A. KORT

Oxford University Press, 2001

REVIEWED BY DOUG P. BAKER

C. S. LEWIS did not write treatises about pen and paper theology. Rather he wrote, whether essays or fiction, regarding the human experience of embodying our theology. Although he was quite familiar with many of the great thinkers of the Christian tradition, and he took them seriously, this is not where he chose to do his scholarly work. Rather, he focused on the day to day reality, and on the exceptional moments, that define Christian life.

And in any life, not just the Christian life, it is often these exceptional moments that define us. Think back to

when you were starting school. What do you remember with the most clarity? Do you recall practising penmanship at the table with your mother standing over you? Or is it the Christmas gathering that springs back into your mind? Or maybe fishing with your father? Whatever it is, it is most likely that your most vivid childhood memories are of the exceptional moments rather than the mundane and repeated exercises.

These exceptional moments that we remember are quite often times of celebration, times that bring far flung families back together to renew their love and family ties.

In *C. S. Lewis: Then and Now*, Kort dedicates one chapter to exploring how Lewis incorporated celebrations into his stories and his essays. This is by far the best chapter of the book, and it would make a useful element in many college courses on Christian ethics. It is also the only one I will focus on in this review.

The Christian life should be one marked by celebration. Of all people, who has more to celebrate than we do? We all seem to acknowledge this, yet not only do we not always embody it, we don't even necessarily agree on what we ought to celebrate. Most people who are immersed in theological pursuits will answer at once that Christians celebrate God's redemption of his people. Yes, this is true.

But Kort argues convincingly that Lewis did not primarily celebrate redemption, but Creation. The creatures of Narnia sing and dance in celebration of Narnia, of Creation and life and the goodness of both. When the White Witch is slain they celebrate, to be sure, but victory celebrations are minor and always morph into celebrations of Narnia itself. It is life itself that makes them want to dance. Such was the celebration as Aslan sang Narnia into existence in *The Magician's Nephew*, and such was the celebration inside the shed, in the new Narnia, at the end of *The Last Battle*. They are celebrations of life and Creation and the relatedness of us all.

Lewis says, "If you could see humanity spread out in time, as God sees it, it would not look like a lot of separate things dotted about. It would look like one single growing thing—rather like a very complicated tree. Every individual would appear connected with every other." It is this connectedness that celebrations remind us of. In ordinary every day life it is easy to lose sight of the relationships that made us and that keep us who we are. But in celebrations, in communal holidays and family get-togethers, we are reminded that we are not so individual as we sometimes feel; in celebration we know ourselves to be intimately connected to others. "Celebrations are celebrations, finally, of the Creator whose creative act is a great and complex gift of interrelationships."

The celebration of Creation is, these days, out of fashion in the Christian community as a whole. Not that we don't do it, just that we try not to call it this. We call them birthdays, Christmas, Boxing Day, etc. But these are all celebrations of Creation and the place that we have been given connecting us to it.

There are at least three reasons we choose not to think of them as Creation celebrations. One is that celebrating Creation sounds to our ears too much like the pagan solstice celebrations; it sounds like nature worship. Second, we often do not feel that Creation is really good. When Adam ate the fruit, all Creation fell with him and we don't see much to celebrate in it. Therefore, third, modern Christians often seem to think that the only legitimate focus of worship is

the redemption, Christ on the cross and the salvation of his people.

But this sets us in distinction to God's people in the Old Testament. All of their feasts were Creation celebrations in one way or another. Think especially of the feast of weeks, the fifty day celebration that they were God's people. For fifty days, and with many different offerings and activities, they commemorated the creation of Israel. What we must see is that creation is not limited to the first seven days; you and I were created and placed in particular family structures, connected to others in a host of ways. Creation is still going on and we can celebrate it. Creation is still good.

But why does Lewis not also focus on redemption celebrations? Kort offers a couple of analogies to help us see. All parents must make personal sacrifices in order to provide a secure home for their children. Children should therefore "show their gratitude for the sacrifices of their parents by enjoying and enhancing as much as possible the life of the home that those sacrifices made possible." Thus we should live in the redeemed life without focusing overmuch on what it cost God to attain it for us. "Parents who support a child in college . . . want that child neither to ignore what it cost them nor to dwell on it. They want the child to participate as fully and profitably in the college experience as possible." Kort is afraid that many Christians are "like children who cannot enjoy a trip to the zoo because their parents had to pay an entrance fee."

Both Kort and Lewis affirm that a great cost was paid for us. But they don't want the cost to remain centre stage for the Christian community. As Lewis said, the Crucifixion "ought to be periodically faced. But no one could live with it." In other words they think it not healthy to dwell too frequently or too long on the cost of our freedom. Instead, we should gratefully acknowledge that cost and then work to live in the freedom.

I think Kort has accurately expounded Lewis regarding celebrations and the cost of the atonement. We can wrestle with the questions that they raise regarding the proper focus of Christian celebration. Even if we end up not agreeing with them, this chapter provocatively invites us to clarify our own doctrine of celebration, and then to celebrate with all our hearts. *C&S*

MILTON AND THE MANUSCRIPTS OF DE DOCTRINA CHRISTIANA

BY GORDON CAMPBELL, THOMAS N. CORNS,
JOHN K. HALE, FIONA J. TWEEDIE

Oxford, 180 pages including indices, £45 GBP,
ISBN: 978-0-19-929649-1

REVIEWED BY STEPHEN HAYHOW

If *De Doctrina Christiana* was written by John Milton, then the poet, political radical, State translator and "Puritan" was a unitarian. In November 1823 Robert Lemon, Deputy Keeper of His Majesty's State Papers, uncovered a manuscript, stashed away in a cupboard in the Old State Paper Office, Whitehall, London, a seventeenth century manuscript, *De*

Doctrina Christiana. Lemon attributed this work to John Milton. The matter was deemed of such significance that on 29 March 1824 “the matter was raised in the House of Commons.” Peel announced, in response, that publication would follow forthwith. Since that time the authorship of the manuscript has not been contested. The only exception at the time of its re-discovery and publication was Thomas Burgess, Bishop of Salisbury, who just could not believe that the author of *Paradise Lost* could have written an arian tract!

Then in 1991 the whole question of authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana* was re-opened by William Hunter, “since then, the issue has dominated Milton studies.”

The purpose of this study is to take “on and answer a big question in contemporary Milton studies.” It does this by introducing the controversy, then embarks on a history of the manuscript and its formation; this is then followed by an essay on the statistical analysis of the text (stylometric analysis), which the authors believe supports the case for Milton as author, the theology of the manuscript, and finally a chapter on the Latin style. The four authors are all experts in their respective fields, and their conclusion is that the Miltonian authorship is beyond doubt and they are probably right.

In 1675 Daniel Skinner of Trinity College, Cambridge passed the manuscript of *De Doctrina* to a Dutch seaman to be delivered to a Dutch publisher in Holland, Daniel Elsevier. The latter sent the document to an elderly professor at the Remonstrant College in Amsterdam, Phillippus Limborchus, who advised against publication due to its heretical nature, the “strongest Arianism,” of the treatise. Elsevier wrote to Skinner declining to publish, but this letter seems never to have reached Skinner. Skinner, meanwhile, had made his way to London to seek the patronage of Samuel Pepys (his sister was Pepys’ mistress). Pepys managed to persuade Sir Leoline Jenkins in Nijmegen to offer Skinner a position as Mr Chudleigh’s secretary at the embassy in Nijmegen. However, as Skinner made his way to take up his new position, the same vessel carried a letter from the Secretary of State, Sir Joseph Williamson, recommending against his appointment! Williamson had been alerted by the publication of Milton’s *Literae Pseudo-Senatus* by Blaeu publishers in Amsterdam. Milton’s political works were viewed with deep suspicion, and hence, as the connection between Skinner and Milton had been noted by government officials, Skinner was not to be recommended.

Eventually the manuscript was sent by Elsevier to Skinner’s father, who promptly took it to Whitehall, where it was deposited and there it remained until the early nineteenth century, when Lemon discovered it. There is no doubt that Skinner was Milton’s amanuensis for the first 196 pages; the remainder was later attributed to a man called Jeremie Picard (pp. 197–735).

Concerning the theology of *De Doctrina Christiana* there is no need to assume that the views expressed in the treatise were Milton’s life-long views. However, the tract is clearly Arian, Arminian and anti-Trinitarian as well as advocating

polygamy. The authors seem to think that because there were varieties of belief in the seventeenth century, and anti-trinitarianism was one of those varieties, that this would suggest a variegated Christianity. This is more an indicator of their own relativism, than of Milton and his times. The same is seen in the discussion of the Trinity in Scripture, where the authors proceed as if the whole biblical proof depended upon a discussion of the Johannine Comma. The authors also claim that a glimpse of Milton’s anti-trinitarianism may be visible in *Paradise Lost* (XII. 439–43). Milton also seems to have licensed a printing of the Arian *Racovian Catechism* in 1652. Similarly, the Christology is suspect, “The Son was generated in time, and therefore is perpetual but not eternal, in that he had a beginning.”

This is a highly specialised work and will appeal to those with a detailed interest in this issue. *C&S*

ECCLESIASTICAL LAW

BY MARK HILL

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REVIEWED BY STEPHEN PERKS

“THE Church of England as a whole has no legal status or personality. There is no Act of Parliament that purports to establish it as the Church of England . . . the relationship which the state has with the Church of England is one of recognition, not the devolution to it of any of the powers or functions of government” (p. 1). This is an important point for the perhaps inaptly named establishment principle, although the Coronation Service does speak of the “Protestant Reformed Religion established by law.” The State does not, and should not, establish the Church. For it to do so would be presumptuous to say the least. Rather, the State recognises the Church of England. Nevertheless, the ecclesiastical law of the Church of England is part of the law of the land: “the law is one, but jurisdiction as to its enforcement is divided between the ecclesiastical courts and the temporal courts” (p. 2).

This massive volume will be a useful aid for anyone studying ecclesiastical law or who merely wants to know how the Church of England functions legally and how its offices and worship etc. are defined. The contents include: The Nature and Sources of Ecclesiastical Law, The Constitution of the Church of England, The Parish, Clergy, Services and Worship, Clergy Discipline, Faculty Jurisdiction and Cathedrals. This takes us to page 311. The rest of the volume contains the Canons of the Church of England, extracts from the Statutes and Measures, Statutory Instruments, Church Representation Rules, and Cases. *C&S*

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EDITOR: STEPHEN C. PERKS

STEPHEN PERKS is the Director of the Kuyper Foundation. He has lectured in the UK, Europe, America, New Zealand, Australia and Africa on a wide variety of issues dealing with the application of Christian principles to contemporary society and has written a number of books and numerous articles and essays dealing with issues such as law, education, theology, politics and economics.

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