

p.3

The Coming of the Kingdom

Dr. Robert Morey

p.23

A Christian Philosophy of Logic

Dr. Richard Ostella

p.49

***The Da Vinci Code:
Historical Fact or Historical Fiction***

Dr. B.J. Rudge

p.69

The Eschatology of John the Baptist

Dr. Robert Morey

p.91

***A Critique of Autonomous Free Will In Kant's
"Religion Within the Bounds of Reason Alone"***

Dr. Richard Ostella

p.125

***The Quranic Doctrine of the Creation of
the World and Man***

Vijay Chandra

p.135

The Renaissance of Natural Theology

Teri C. Jacobsen



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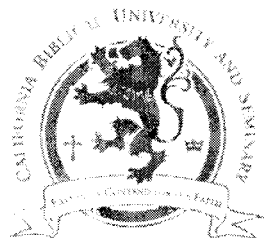
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The Coming of the Kingdom

© Dr. Robert A. Morey

One of the central concerns of the New Testament is that the Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached among all nations before the End comes (Matt. 24:14). Luke even concludes his apostolic history with the note that the Apostle Paul was preaching the Kingdom of God in Rome during his imprisonment (Acts 28:31).

When we turn to the opening pages of the New Testament itself, we find that both John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth proclaimed, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2; 4:17).

In this light, it is no wonder that the nature, origin, attributes, citizens, and manner of the coming of the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven have exercised the finest minds in the history of the Christian Church. While the last century has witnessed a veritable avalanche of literature on the subject, we must not forget such great classics as St. Augustine's The City of God.

A survey of literature on the kingdom of God reveals that while much has been written on the subject, particularly during the last century, very little progress has been made in terms of developing a general definition which is acceptable to most scholars. There are two basic reasons why so little progress has been made concerning the nature of the kingdom of God.

The first problem with most of the literature on the subject is that many authors are guilty of the error of theological reductionism. Reductionism is the attempt to present part of

the truth as if it were all of the truth. One aspect or meaning of the word or phrase in Scripture is absolutized as the only meaning. All other meanings or aspects are ignored, denied, or reduced to the basic meaning.

It is also assumed that the word or phrase will have the same meaning regardless of where it is found in Scripture. There is thus no appreciation for the dynamic character of redemptive history or the progressive nature of special revelation. The distinction between the New Testament and the Old Testament is often overlooked. The Epistles reflect the post-resurrection theology of the Apostles after Pentecost, and thus should thus not be reduced to what we find in the Gospels is little understood.

The problem of reductionism reveals itself most clearly when an author presents the reader with an "either/or" choice which leaves no room for a synthesis. For example, it is often assumed that the kingdom of God is either totally present (ex. Ritschl), or totally future (ex. Weiss). The reason why it is assumed that the kingdom cannot be both present and future is usually never discussed. The reader is placed in a position of having to choose between a thesis and antithesis without the option of choosing a synthesis.

The chart below lists the central issues concerning the nature of the Kingdom of God. The choice set before the reader is whether to arrange these issues as irreconcilable opposites or to embrace both of them in a synthesis. For example, is the Kingdom of God either rule or realm, or can it be both rule and realm? Can the Kingdom be present now in a spiritual sense and later appear in a literal sense? etc.

The Kingdom of God

Issues	"Either/Or"	"Both-And"
present/future?		
rule/realm?		
transcendent/imminent?		
subjective/objective?		
personal/historical?		
heavenly/earthly?		
spiritual/literal?		
event/process?		
history/eschaton?		
kingdom/church?		
power/presence?		
inward/outward?		
secret/public?		
ethical/soteriological?		
gradual/sudden?		
human/divine?		
invisible/visible?		
Jewish/universal?		
Political/non-political?		
etc.		

Most liberal and neo-orthodox scholars have traditionally viewed the issues connected with the nature of the kingdom of God solely in terms of the "either/or" antithesis, while conservative scholars have usually attempted to find a synthesis. Thus, modern liberal scholars still teach that the kingdom is either wholly present or wholly future, while most modern conservative scholars believe that the kingdom is both present

and future at the same time. Liberal theologians tend to view the kingdom as either a subjective existential event, experience in the heart, or as an ongoing objective process in history itself; while conservatives view it as event and process, inward and outward, objective and subjective, etc.

While most modern conservative scholars are no longer guilty of reductionism when it comes to the nature of the kingdom of God, some older dispensational writers were guilty of the reductionism of literalism.

They assumed that whatever the Bible said about the coming of the kingdom, they must interpret it in an absolutely literal way. For example, when God promised David that one of his descendants would sit upon his throne (II Sam. 7:12f), they assumed that this meant that in order for this prophecy to be fulfilled, the Messiah must literally sit on a literal throne in a literal re-gathered Israel in a literal Jerusalem. Some of the older dispensationalists even believed in literal eternal animal sacrifices in a literal temple during the millennium!

When we turn instead to the New Testament writers, we find that they interpreted the prophecy concerning David's throne in terms of Christ's resurrection, ascension, exaltation and session at the right hand of the Father in heaven (Acts 2:29-36).

Christ is thus sitting on David's throne in Heaven. This is not a literal earthly throne per se. The rebuilding of David's tabernacle is interpreted as a reference to the present in-gathering of the Gentiles into the Church (Acts 15:12-19). Neither the throne nor the tabernacle is interpreted in a strictly literal sense.

The Elijah prophecy is another example of the danger of literalism. There is nothing in the context of Mal. 4:5-6 which would indicate that the Elijah referred to is any other person than Elijah the Prophet. If we begin our hermeneutic with the assumption that a passage is to be interpreted literally unless something in the context indicates otherwise, then John the Baptist cannot be the one who fulfilled this prophecy.

Yet, the New Testament is crystal clear that John the Baptist did fulfill the Mal. 4:5-6 prophecy in a spiritual way and not in a literal way. (See article on John the Baptist.) Luke clearly stated

that John the Baptist came in the "spirit and power" of Elijah (Lk. 1:17).

But we must also clearly state that a methodology which assumes that all the O.T. prophecies concerning the kingdom are to be interpreted in a strictly spiritual way is just as much reductionism as literalism.

The choice is not either literalism or spiritualism, because the fulfilment of prophecy can be both literal and spiritual. Our hermeneutic must be able to transcend the dichotomy between these two polar positions. This can be done by focusing on the principle of *hindsight*.

When it comes to prophecy, the only sure guide to interpretation is its fulfilment. Not even the context of the passage itself can clearly establish what is spiritual and what is literal. Thus, when the New Testament writers interpret a prophecy as literally fulfilled, then we know that it was literal. When they spiritualize a prophecy, then we know it was spiritual. It is impossible to tell ahead of time what is going to be literally or spiritually fulfilled.

By avoiding the dangers of reductionism, literalism and spiritualism, we can begin to see that it is quite possible for the "kingdom of God" to have several different meanings in Scripture and that it is impossible to arrive at a single definition which would do justice to all the Biblical passages involved.

Old Testament Meanings

The Sovereign Rule of God

The picture or metaphor of God sitting enthroned as King over all the earth is one of the core concepts of the monotheism of the Jews. YHWH is pictured as enthroned because He is the sole and absolute ruler of heaven and earth (Psa. 29:10; 103:19; Isa. 6:5). He cannot be compared to the false gods of the heathen who are limited in power and presence (Psa. 115:4f).

"Our God is (enthroned) in the heavens, He does whatever pleases Him." (Psa. 115:3f)

This sovereign transcendent rule is eternal (Jer. 10:10), throughout all generations (Psa. 145:13), immutable (Dan. 4:34-

35), irresistible (Job 42:2; Dan. 4:34-35), universal (Psa. 103:19), and personal (Psa. 5:2). At no point is YHWH viewed as a finite local deity who is the personal god of the Jews.

YHWH's kingdom or rule encompasses all the inhabitants of earth and heaven (Dan 4:34-35) and embraces all the nations of the world (Psa. 47:8; Jer. 10:7).

Because God's kingdom in this first and basic sense refers to his sovereign rule over all of the universe, the word "kingdom" is even translated as sovereignty in such places as Psalm 103:19.

"The Lord has established his throne in the heavens,
and His sovereignty rules over all." (N.A.S.V.)

Even in the context of man's sin and rebellion, God is pictured as enthroned in the heavens and in complete control of what is happening (Psa. 2:1-6). Because God is the Creator of all, He is the King of All (Isa. 43:15). As the King of the Universe, God is the Lawgiver and Judge (Isa. 33:22).

The symbol of God's heavenly throne is found throughout the Old Testament (I Kings 22:19; II Chron. 18:18; Psa. 9:7; 11:4; 47:8; Isa. 6:1; Ezk. 1:26; Dan. 7:9, etc.).

God's kingdom in the sense of his sovereign rule over all the earth does not increase or decrease. Its transcendence is symbolized as God's throne established in the heavens from which he sees and judges all things (Psa. 11:4; 14:2; 33:13; etc.).

The Paradigm of Paradise

God's sovereign rule over all the earth cannot be reduced to the mere concept or principle of transcendence because this kingdom has appeared on earth. Its first historical manifestation was at the commencement of history in the Paradise of God. And it will finally reappear at the consummation of Biblical history after the Resurrection and Judgment.

In the opening pages of Genesis, God is pictured as the King, Lawgiver, and Judge who not only created man in his own image, but who also told man his duties in the Garden and what he was and was not to do (Gen. 2:15-17). The act of giving man dominion over the earth assumed God's prior dominion of God

(Gen. 1:28). Man's role as prophet, priest and king over the earth is but an aspect of his image-bearing capacity.

This initial manifestation or realization of the kingdom of God on earth was a true paradise. No evil was present in the Garden, and thus there was no sin, pain, suffering, tears, or death. All the needs of man were fulfilled, and he was at peace within himself as well as with the world around him.

The original paradise of God serves as the inspiration of and model for all utopian ideologies. Regardless of whether the utopian dream is used to fuel the fires of fascism or Marxism, the attempt to recreate paradise on earth by human means is doomed to ultimate failure. Man's radical fall into sin makes paradise on this side of eternity utterly impossible.

The Paradise of God will reappear only at the End of history when the eternal state begins. After the Resurrection of all men and the General Judgment, a new heavens and a new earth will be created (Isa. 65:17). God will wipe away all the effects of sin, such as pain and death (Isa. 25:8).

In contrast to the temporary nature of the first paradise, this final manifestation of the kingdom of God will be eternal and will never again be disrupted by angelic or human rebellion.

Israel as a Theocracy

After the nation of Israel was delivered out of Egypt, it was set up as a theocracy. A theocracy is the direct rule of God in the affairs of man. God directly revealed all civil laws and as religious observances to Moses and the civil and religious leaders who followed him. No aspect of life was left untouched, because God's kingship extended over all of life.

When the people wanted to make Gideon the King of Israel, he refused because he knew that YHWH was King over his people (Judges 8:23). Samuel reminded the nation that "YHWH your God was your King" (I Sam. 12:12).

The nation of Israel thus became the realm of God's personal and special rule, just as the world as a whole was the realm of God's sovereign and general rule. Israel as a nation was the kingdom of God on earth in a way that no other nation before or after can claim. Israel was the "kingdom of YHWH" on

earth because it was the sole recipient of his Word, Law and salvation (I Chron. 28:5).

Israel Under the Kings

When the people finally forced Samuel to appoint them a king, God comforted Samuel by telling him,

"They have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them" (I Sam. 8:7)

Even though the theocracy was now rejected, the king of Israel was still under the kingship of God. Thus, kings were to be chosen according to God's direction (Deut. 17:14-20). The king was to be "His" king (I Sam. 2:10). Since the kingdom was still YHWH's (Psa. 22:28), all of God's laws were to be obeyed. The mere presence of a human king did not negate Israel's responsibility to obey the King of the Universe.

While the rejection of the kingdom of God is associated with the rule of Saul, the glory of the Kingdom of God is later identified with the rule of David. His kingdom became the symbol and type of Messiah's glorious kingdom (II Sam. 7:12). Many of the messianic Psalms were originally Davidic in origin and theme (Psa. 16, 22, etc.).

Messiah's Kingdom

In the Old Testament, the Messiah is always viewed as a royal figure. In the Law, the concept of the Messiah is closely aligned with the symbol of the royal scepter and ruling staff of a king (Gen. 49:10; Num. 24:17). In the Writings, the Messiah is directly identified as a king (Psa. 2; 8; 24; 25; 45; 68; 72; 89; etc.). In the Prophets the Messiah as a King establishes YHWH's kingdom on earth (Isa. 9:6-7; 16:5; Dan. 2:44-45; 7:13-14, 18, 27; 9:26; Micah 5:2; etc.). Kingship is thus absolutely fundamental to the Old Testament concept of the Messiah.

The coming of the Messiah and establishing of his kingdom is never viewed as taking place at the End of history, but always as signaling a new era or age in history. His coming is never associated with the consummation of the ages at the end of time, but with the commencement of a new order or age in time. (See particularly Dan. 2:44-45).

The new era or age which the Messiah progressively ushers in is not a Paradise or a golden millennium where no evil dwells (Dan. 2:44-45). The pattern for Messiah's kingdom is not taken from the Paradise of God, but from the Kingdom of David. Thus the Messiah will be the "son of David" (Jer. 30:9; Ezk. 34:23-24), or a "David-like" leader (Jer. 23:5; Hos. 3:5). He will be of the "stem and shoot of Jesse" (Isa. 11:1-16), and will sit on David's throne (II Sam. 7:12-13; I Chron. 17:14; Isa. 6:7).

One frequent mistake concerning the Messianic kingdom is the assumption that Messiah's kingdom is established after the Resurrection. This is never stated in the Old Testament.

The Eternal Kingdom

While God is pictured as presently enthroned as King in the sense of his sovereign rule over all things, and various manifestations of that rule have been realized in history and will climax in Messiah's kingdom, the Old Testament seems to look beyond Messiah's kingdom to a new heavens and new earth when the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord (Num. 14:21; Isa. 11:6-9). Thus the Old Testament speaks of God being enthroned in the future (Psa. 47; 93; 97; 99; Isa. 40-45; Oba. 21, etc.)

The establishing of this eternal kingdom means the permanent end of evil on earth (Isa. 2:4; 11:6-9; Hos. 2:18, etc.). It is Paradise regained, and is free from all evil, sin and death (Isa. 25:8-9).

While we have chosen those Old Testament passages which seem to have some clarity in order to make the above distinctions, it must be admitted that, at times, the Old Testament mixed all these things together without any concern for chronological order. In such places, we must remember that just because future events are placed next to each other does not mean that they are destined to happen at the same time. For example, the two advents of Christ were never separated clearly in the Old Testament.

In summary, the concept of the kingdom of God in the Old Testament embraces the past, present, and future reign of God over men and nations. It is transcendent and imminent. It is process and event. It is in time and after time. It is usually identified as rule, but also sometimes as realm. It is universal in

scope, and then it is only ethnic Israel. It is pictured as a perfect future paradise, and then it is seen as a present kingdom marred by sin and death.

Given the principle of progressive revelation, we should not be surprised to find that the Old Testament does not give us a clear picture of the nature of the coming of the Kingdom and what role the Messiah will play in its establishment. The New Testament writers point out that the Old Testament prophets simply did not understand what the prophecies meant (Matt. 13:16-17; 1 Pet. 1:10-12).

The messianic prophecies were "mysteries" which could not be understood during the age of the prophets, but are now revealed in the age of the Apostles (Eph. 3:4-5). It is the New Testament alone which supplies us with the last pieces of the puzzle so that we can understand the nature and manner of the coming of the kingdom of heaven.

Intertestamental Judaism

The New Testament writers began with the assumption that their readers already had a prior understanding of the meaning of the terminology connected with the coming of the kingdom of God. Thus, they never defined this terminology. This leads us to inquire as to the beliefs of the Jewish people before, during and immediately after the time of Christ.

It is difficult to understand all of the different theories that were espoused by the many conflicting schools of thought in existence around the time of Christ. Some of the sects of that time have gone into extinction without leaving any extant literature. Other groups, such as the Qumran Community, have left a large body of literature which reflected esoteric doctrines known only by the members of that sect. But a large body of extant literature need not imply a large influence in the nation's religious thought. Some sects were apocalyptic in character, while others were not. Some looked to living prophets, while others revered only the Law.

What this means is that it is not altogether clear as to which group represented "normative" Judaism. The safest answer at this time is that the rabbinic Judaism found in the Mishna, Midrash, Targums, and Talmuds represents the main beliefs of Jews during the time of Christ. Even with this answer, it is

sometimes difficult to separate and identify later post-Christian interpolations from older traditions.

Most terminology found in the New Testament can be identified in the rabbinic literature. For example, the phrase "the kingdom of heaven" and the imagery of taking upon yourself the "yolk" of that kingdom which Jesus used (Matt. 11:29, 30) can be found in the Mishna (Ber. 2:2,5).

In addition to rabbinic literature of that period, there is Apocalyptic literature. Even within this genre there exists a broad range of ideas concerning the coming of the Kingdom and the Messiah. In The Psalms of Solomon, the messianic kingdom is an earthly kingdom which is the last era before the end of the world. Yet, in The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, the messianic kingdom takes place after the end of the world. In one apocalyptic work the Messiah is mentioned, while in another there is no reference to him at all.

It is no longer possible to state with dogmatism that Apocalyptic literature is the spawning ground of the New Testament, because Apocalyptic literature cannot be reduced to one monolithic view of the coming of the kingdom or the coming of the Messiah. Jesus did not fit many of the apocalyptic expectations, such as the Messiah suddenly appearing in the skies alongside Elijah.

What is germane to our investigation is to discover if any of the schools of thought during this time reflected Old Testament ideas concerning the coming of the kingdom and the Messiah. Several important Biblical concepts were believed during this period.

In all of the literature, the concept of the Messiah is intrinsically bound up with his kingship. While the coming of the kingdom was sometimes mentioned without any reference to the Messiah, the coming of the Messiah is never mentioned apart from the establishment of his kingdom.

At times all future events are mixed together, such as Messiah's coming, Elijah's coming, the Messianic kingdom, the Resurrection, the Judgment, and the eternal state without any indication in the context as to the exact chronology of these things. But just because these events are placed together in the

same context, it does not logically imply that the author thought these events would happen at the same time.

One prominent view which can be found in nearly all of the literature of that period, but especially in the rabbinic literature, is that the Messiah's kingdom is the last temporary era before the end of the world, and the final Kingdom of the eternal state when God's universal perfect rule will be established forever.

In the Babylonian Talmud we find that history is sometimes divided into three eras each composed of two thousand years. Two thousand years of chaos passed from the Creation to Moses. Two thousand years of the Torah or Law passed between Moses to the Messiah. The Messianic kingdom will occupy the last two thousand years, and then comes the resurrection and the final state (see: Sanh. p. 657). Other rabbis give different lengths of years, but the basic chronology is the same.

What is important for our purposes is the fact that there is a clear Rabbinic tradition where the coming of the Messiah means the beginning of the last great earthly kingdom or era before history as we know it comes to its close. Thus Messiah's coming means the dawn of a new age, and not the consummation of the ages.

The New Testament

Judaism and Christianity

As we begin this section on the New Testament, it must be recognized that the majority of the First Century Jews did not accept Jesus of Nazareth as the long-awaited Messiah. Evidently, what Jesus did by way of the cross did not fit the popular idea of what role the Messiah would play when he finally appeared. In other words, Jesus did not fulfill the messianic expectations that were predominant at the time.

As we turn to the literature of that period, it must be admitted that it is exceedingly rare to find any clear references in intertestamental literature to the idea that the Messiah was to die for the sins of the people of God.

While the suffering and slaying of the Messiah is mentioned in such places as the Babylonian Talmud (Sukkah pp. 246-

247), and the name of the Messiah is said to be "the leper scholar" because surely he has borne our grief, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him a leper, smitten of God and afflicted" (Sanhedrin p. 668), the concept of the Messiah accomplishing a substitutionary atonement is usually missing.

There are two basic reasons why the Jews during this period overlooked the clear Old Testament teaching (See: Psa. 22; Isa. 53; Dan. 9:24-27; Zech. 12:10) that the Messiah was to suffer and to die for the sins of the people of God.

First of all, just as the Christians looked to Christ as the source and basis of their salvation, the Jews looked to the Law as fulfilling these functions. This is why the Jews found it extremely difficult to accept the early Church's proclamation of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone apart from the works of the Law.

To the average Jew, the Christians were clearly overthrowing the Law of Moses. In their mind, such a "free" salvation would lead to antinomianism. The Law was the way of salvation and the way of life. It was unthinkable that the Law was now fulfilled and could be set aside.

It was these very objections to the Gospel that prompted the Apostle Paul to write both Romans and Galatians, where he demonstrated from the Old Testament itself that the Law was never intended to be the way of salvation. Indeed, it was given to show man his total depravity and that he cannot save himself by obedience to the Law.

The second reason why the suffering of the Messiah was overlooked during this period was the political oppression of Rome. The people needed hope to face this oppression, and a belief in the coming of a Messiah who would redeem Israel from all her enemies supplied that hope. Surely, the Messiah would throw off the yolk of Rome and establish Israel as a glorious kingdom on earth.

Because of this messianic hope, many false messiahs arose who attempted to lead a rebellion against Rome and set the nation free. It was thus only natural that in such circumstances the glorious reign of the Son of David should obscure the fact of the suffering and death of the Messiah. This also supplies us

with some reasons as to why the majority of the Jews did not accept Jesus as the Messiah.

The people yearned for a mighty Messiah who would free the nation from the tyranny of Rome. They were looking only at those prophecies which spoke of the Glory of the Messianic reign. This is no doubt what was in the minds of Zacharias, Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna (Lk. 1:42-55; 67-79; 2:29-38).

The record is also clear that the Apostles thought this way until Pentecost. This is why they continually rejected the warnings of Christ that he was going to suffer and die (ex. Matt. 16:21-22). They pictured themselves sitting on thrones with Christ, and argued as to which of them would sit on the right and left of Christ's throne (Matt. 20:20-24). Even during the interval between Christ's resurrection and Pentecost, the Apostles hoped for a national deliverance for Israel (Acts 1:6).

This same confusion over the exact nature of the messianic kingdom no doubt laid behind the doubts of the disciples of John the Baptist (Matt. 11:1-6). In the manner of the Old Testament prophets, John had proclaimed to all that the Messiah would do without any clear indication of when these things would take place. His disciples naturally expected more than John thrown into prison and Jesus' evangelistic crusade, which focused only on the spiritual condition of sinners instead of dealing with the issue of the tyranny of Rome.

Jesus came as the spiritual Savior of sinners and not as the political deliverer of the nation. He consistently rejected the masses' attempt to make him King of Israel (John 6:15). The erroneous idea that Jesus initially offered himself to the nation as a political redeemer, and after he was rejected he decided to die for sinners contradicts both the Gospels (Matt. 20:28) and the Epistles (I Tim. 1:15). Such an idea would justify the crucifixion, which was based on the idea that Jesus was seeking to overthrow the Roman government. Thus, Jesus was guilty of treason (John 19:12-15).

The General Picture

The New Testament concept of the kingdom of God follows the basic pattern found in the Old Testament. God's sovereign rule or kingship over all the earth is doxologically celebrated in terms of God not only being the "King" (I Tim. 1:17), but also

the "King of kings and Lord of lords" (I Tim. 6:15). The symbol of God's heavenly throne is found in Heb. 4:16; 8:1; 12:2; Rev. 1:4; 4:2; 7:10; etc.).

Paradise is to be rebuilt on earth after the Resurrection and final Judgment (Rev. 21:1). The Garden of Eden with its rivers and trees will return to earth (Rev. 22:15). All evil shall be vanquished from the earth (Rev. 21:27) and God will wipe away all tears (Rev. 21:4). The Meek shall inherit the new earth (Matt. 5:5).

The Kingdom is Present

The Messianic kingdom began during the days of John the Baptist (Matt. 11:12). This kingdom is now present and has come in the sense of its saving power in the hearts of God's people (Matt. 12:28). This is why the Epistles speak of this present age as the kingdom of Christ, which will end when he returns to hand over his kingdom to the Father (I Cor. 15:24).

In I Cor. 15:24-28, the Apostle Paul clearly states that Christ is reigning now, but all things are not yet under his feet. In line with rabbinic literature, Paul pictures the kingdom of the Messiah as a temporary age which will come to its close at the End of history when the Father's kingdom will be established forever. Christ's kingdom is not a perfect millennium, because all his enemies have not yet been defeated (I Cor. 15:24-27 cf. Heb. 2:8). Evil is still present in the same age as Christ's kingdom (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-50).

During this present age sinners enter the kingdom of Jesus the Messiah through the regenerating work of the Spirit of God (John 3:1-5; Col. 1:13). When Jesus returns, he will remove the wicked from his kingdom (Matt. 13:41).

The Lordship of Christ

Throughout the Gospels and the Epistles, the kingdom of Christ is a present reality (Matt. 16:19; Lk. 17:21; Col. 4:11; Eph. 5:15). In Rev. 1:5, Christ is already proclaimed as the "ruler of the kings of the earth," and has constituted his people a "Kingdom of priests" (Rev. 1:6).

By virtue of his work of atonement, Jesus was enthroned as "LORD" when he sat down at the right hand of the Father (Phil. 2:5-11). The New Testament concept of the universal lordship

of Christ is based upon his glorious enthronement in heaven after he had secured the salvation of his people.

The Binding of Satan

As the Lord of the universe, Jesus is enthroned above all earthly and demonic powers (Eph. 1:20-22). Indeed, Christ's power over demonic forces is singled out as the sign of the coming of the Messiah's kingdom (Matt. 12:28). The "strong man," i.e. Satan himself, must be bound before the Messiah can deliver those in bondage to him (Matt. 12:29).

The imagery of the binding of Satan and his downfall is picked up by the other Gospel writers (Mk. 3:27; Lk. 10:18; John 12:31; 16:11). This is further developed in the Epistles to mean that Jesus Christ has already won the crucial victory over Satan and all his forces (Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8; Rev. 20:2).

The fact that Christ has now bound Satan is the basis of three essential elements of the Gospel. First, because Satan has been bound by Jesus, Christ can "steal" or deliver those souls who were in bondage to Satan (Matt. 12:28-29). Thus salvation is itself described in terms of taking sinners out of Satan's kingdom and ushering them into Messiah's kingdom (Col. 1:13). Through the Gospel, sinners are delivered from the power of Satan and placed under the power of God (Acts 26:18). They who were once slaves of sin are now set free to be servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:17-22).

Second, because of their union with Christ, all believers share in Christ's victory over the forces of evil. Thus they are enthroned in the heavens above all earthly and demonic powers (Eph. 2:6 cf. 1:20-21). The devil must flee from them (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9). They too can trample Satan under their feet (Rom. 16:20). Because of Christ's work, the people of God fight from victory instead of for victory.

Third, the binding of Satan means that world evangelization is now possible (Rev. 20:3). Before the coming of the Messiah, Satan was able to deceive the nations to such a degree that Israel was the only nation that knew of the true and living God, the Creator of the universe. Satan ruled over the kingdoms of this world, and by the religions which he had created he

prevented the Light of God's Word from penetrating the darkness of the Gentile world.

In the Old Testament, the coming of the Messiah is described in terms of the dawning of a new day for the Gentiles when the Light of the Messiah shall shine upon those who sat in darkness (Isa. 9:2 cf. Matt. 4:16). The Messiah is the "Light" who would dispel the darkness of sin (Isa. 60:1-3). This "Light" is none other than YHWH Himself (Isa. 60:19,20). The Messiah would be the "Sun of Righteousness who would arise with healing in his wings" (Mal. 4:2).

Messiah's people would also be a light to the nations by virtue of their union with him (Isa. 42:6; 49:6). They would go forth to dispel the darkness of the nations. At last the nations of this world would come to worship the true God (Isa.60:3).

The imagery of the Messiah being "the Light of the world," i.e. the Light which would shine upon the Gentiles as well as the Jews, is used by the Gospel writers to establish the fact that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah of Israel (Matt. 4:16; Lk. 1:78-79; 2:32; John 1:4-9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35,36,46).

By virtue of their union with Christ, all believers are to function as a light to the lost men and women around them (Matt. 5:14,16; 28:19,20). They are to conquer every square inch of this world for Christ and his kingdom (Acts. 1:8).

Before the Messiah came, Satan was able to keep entire nations in darkness concerning the truth, but now the church has planted its Gospel flag on every continent and in every nation. All the ancient walls of superstition and unbelief which had kept out the truth of God's Word for millennia have begun to crumble because Satan's ability to deceive all the nations has been bound until the last days when the Anti-Christ and the False Prophet shall rule the earth (Rev. 20:7-10).

The Kingdom is Future

The distinction between the present temporary kingdom of Christ and the eternal kingdom of the Father is made by both Jesus and the Apostle Paul (Matt. 6:10, 33; 13:v.31 cf. v.33; 26:29; I Cor. 15:24-28; I Thess. 2:12). Thus the full manifestation of the kingdom of God is yet future awaiting the Resurrection and the day of Judgment (Matt. 6:10; 7:21-23;

8:10-11; 25:31,34; Mk. 1:15; Lk. 4:18-19; I Cor. 6:9,10; 15:50; II Pet. 1:11; Rev. 11:15, etc.).

The Cause of Confusion

Most of the confusion over the nature of the kingdom of God is caused by the failure to see that this kingdom was in fact viewed by the biblical writers as being both present (Matt. 12:28) and future (Matt. 6:10) at the same time. Matthew and the other Gospel writers were not confused, and neither were they contradicting themselves when they spoke of the kingdom of God as "NOW," and at the same time "NOT YET."

The kingdom of God arrived as an event associated with the coming of King Messiah. This kingdom is still in the process of becoming as it slowly overcomes all its enemies and embraces sinners from every tribe, tongue, and nation. One day, Jesus will return and will finalize the conquest of his enemies, perfect the earth as his kingdom, and then turn it all over to the Father so that God may be all in all. Then the Kingdom of God and of His Son will reach its climax in a new earth where the glory of the Lord will at last be eternal and universal.

Summary

The New Testament writers view the kingdom of God in terms of its nature as being both rule and realm (Rev. 1:5-6 cf. Mk. 9:47). The kingdom is subjective i.e. in you, and at the same time is an objective reality yet to be experienced (Lk. 17:21 cf. Matt. 8:10-11). This kingdom is both heavenly and earthly (II Tim. 4:18 cf. Rev. 12:10). It is sometimes viewed as a spiritual reality which only the Spirit of God can enable sinners to see and enter (John 3:1-8). Then it is viewed as a literal kingdom on earth which the human eye will one day see (Rev. 11:15). The kingdom of God is "power" according to I Cor. 4:20, but then it is also viewed as being the inward presence of the righteousness, peace and joy of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17).

As the manner of its coming, the New Testament writers did not hesitate to speak of the kingdom of God as past, present and future. The kingdom came as an event associated with the coming of the Messiah. This kingdom is now in the process of becoming worldwide. It will reach its climax with the event of the

Second Coming of Christ, when he will turn over his kingdom to the Father and the Father's eternal kingdom will begin. Thus the coming of the kingdom is both event and process, present and future, spiritual and literal, etc.

Just as the most beautiful jewel is highly prized because as it is turned, every facet of it shines with a color and brilliance all its own. Even so, all the different facets or meanings of the biblical concept of the kingdom of God add to its overall brilliance and beauty. We must stand in awe of the Author of Scripture who alone could have combined so many different meanings into one grand concept of the rule of God over heaven and earth. 👑

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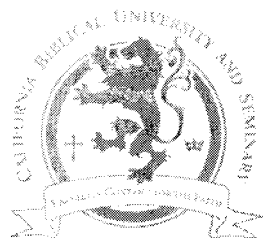
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A Christian Philosophy of Logic

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I. Introduction

By a “philosophy of logic,” we are referring to the wise principles necessary in the use of logic. Philosophy is simply the striving after wisdom and we strive for it as a goal that we attain by a process. The process aspect of philosophy focuses on principles by which we obtain wisdom, the principles by which we reach the goal of wisdom in a multitude of areas from how to drive a car to how to live the Christian life. These principles of the process are in summary the principles of logic. Logical reasoning is how we strive for wisdom, but we need to apply wise principles in the process of striving for wisdom; it would be silly to think that we can arrive at true wisdom on the basis of unwise principles. We have a circle: we seek wisdom and to do so, we need logic, but logic must operate wisely or it is out of whack. Thus, to say Christians need a philosophy of logic is to say that even the pursuit of wisdom must have a godly foundation. We need wisdom to strive for wisdom. Bottom line: a philosophy of logic means that true knowledge begins with the fear of God and knowledge of His will.

Five components show how the fear of God and knowledge of His will give us the foundation for wisdom in a philosophy of logic: logical skill, contextual sensitivity, open-minded humility, presuppositional awareness, and the acceptance of paradox (picture a pie with five slices that represent the basic elements in a Christian philosophy of logic. If any of these components are lacking in our reasoning then to that degree we are unwise,

which means we are to that degree ungodly. To be a critical thinker is a matter of godliness.

II. Logical skill

This is the ability to argue intelligently (knowing what you are doing; knowing what logic is at its core) with contextual sensitivity, presuppositional awareness, and a submissive acceptance of paradox.

Christians are duty bound to develop reasoning skills through the study of argument. This may take place in a more or less informal context, but it is needful that we grow in *knowledge of what logic is* at its core. However, the more difficult and more important challenge is to *develop and improve in logical skill* through the study of argument recognition and analysis.

III. Contextual sensitivity

Of course, to be context sensitive means that we must read Scripture in its context (of the grammar, paragraphs, book, history of redemption), but it also means that we must include how various thinkers use terms and concepts in systematic theology, philosophy, and historical theology. For example, the terminology of “free will” is difficult to define, and in argument, it is difficult for people to preserve fairness and civility regarding the definition of this concept. This subject often spills over from arguing to quarrelling.

At its core (in the history of philosophy and theology), free will refers to the ability to choose between good and evil. Thus, according to this standard definition, a personal being (a responsible person) is only free if they have this ability. Without this ability, the claim is that one not only loses his freedom, but he ceases to be a person, a responsible person.

However, this idea of freedom (*free will*) is unbiblical; it is false and it is wrong. Biblically, freedom refers to the ability to choose what is good. Freedom is incomplete where someone has the ability to choose evil. Thus, the fact that Christians (saints, holy ones) can still sin is not a mark of their freedom; instead, it shows that they are not fully free and their freedom is incomplete. Clearly then, their ability to sin has nothing to do with their freedom. This is the case because 1) freedom for believers

is eschatological (Rom. 8:21). 2) The ability to sin showed Adam and Eve's incompleteness; it revealed the fact that God was testing them. It did not show them to have free will but that they did not yet have complete freedom. 3) The ability to sin shows the remnants of bondage in the Christians life. 4) God is perfectly free and He does not have the ability to choose to sin.

There is more to discuss here, but this point is clear: for the reader to understand this writer's claim that free will is unbiblical, he must grab hold of the definition the writer is using. Otherwise, understanding will fall short and reactions, critiques, and counter argument will miss the mark of accuracy as well. In other words, the reader will interact with this subject in some unwise way, which means that he will fail in that degree to be a critical thinker. Note that understanding and properly critiquing in a godly way says nothing about truth or error *per se*; that comes through the process of striving after wisdom on the basis of wise principles of a Christian philosophy of logic.

IV. Open-minded humility

In order to tackle this subject (a philosophy logic) and all theological subjects with the right attitude (in reverence to the Lord Jesus Christ), the Christian needs a very helpful cluster of graces summarized in the principle of open-minded humility.

Acts 17:10-11 is a backdrop for explaining open-minded humility. The Jewish Bereans confronted teachings on the Bible that were extremely different from their views to date. Luke describes them to be of "noble character" because they eagerly examined Paul's message. The Berean spirit equates with a mindset in dealing with differences, the time when emotions run high. When something affects us deeply, that is the time when we need clear-headedness the most. In this context, the attitude of the Bereans is a model for Christians to emulate. With other related passages in mind (such as "test all things...hold the good, 1 Thess. 5:21), it leads to the open-minded humility model.

Open-minded humility subdivides into two important areas: openness and humility. Each area has a number of ingredients, which together make up a deliciously baked open-minded humility pie. As we go through them, note how a person could have some of these ingredients and still not have true openness.

1. Open-Minded Humility

First, we can sketch the ingredients of openness. There are at least four and they are all needed or closed-mindedness results. As we go through them note how you could have some ingredients and still not have openness. Also note the quip that calls us to broad-mindedness: "Some people are so narrow that if they turn sideways, they disappear!" Face to face they may look broad shouldered but when they turn, look out! They can be razor sharp and cut deeply.

1) The first ingredient is comparison.

It contrasts with the following: "Don't talk to me about religion or politics." "Don't confuse me with the facts." Comparison is up front in openness, even with views we perceive to be wrong! Consider how we view the same facts in different ways in the well-known duck-rabbit illustration in which the viewer sees either a duck or a rabbit, and can adjust his perspective from seeing one to seeing the other. How do we know if we should see a duck or a rabbit (or both)? We must get the point of view of the author of the facts. Developing open-minded humility includes engaging the mind from different perspectives to rule out one and rule in another where necessary. It may be a process with some fluidity at times (of being unsure, or of wavering on the same idea). Still, there is value and privilege in receiving exposure to other views. We get a rich vein of perspective from church history (past and present), an inside view not just that of an outsider, and a varied diet. This is good because variety is a spice to life.

A quote from Silas Mariner illustrates the blind-sidedness we experience when we refuse to disturb ourselves by comparison. "The Squire had been used to parish homage all his life, used to the presupposition that his family, his tankards, and everything that was his, were the oldest and best; and as he never associated with any gentry higher than himself, his opinion was not disturbed by comparison."¹ If we avoid association with other views, perhaps higher than our own, then we may avoid

¹ George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1899), 87.

being disquieted in our walk, but this will only last until we stumble and fall due to our willful blindness.

However, comparison is not enough to ensure true openness. Here is why. You could be willing to compare in order to tear the opposing view to shreds! While sitting outside and pondering this principle, I noticed a spider in a large web in the sun. When I walked over to the huge spider, it slipped behind a leaf. I thought, "What an ugly surprise hides behind that leaf! Open-minded humility will not spin webs to trap others. True openness does not operate with an ugly and feigned piety that tends to hurt and humiliate by showing others wrong and ourselves right. This kind of "piety" hides an ugly meanness by which we devour people with our words. This ought not to be so (James 3:10).

2) We need more than comparison.

We also need empathy to be truly open. This accentuates comparing that looks for the good; at least some good, however little might be expected. This involves a training of the mind that includes testing all to hold to the good and having your senses exercised to discern between good and evil (1 Thess 5:21, note the larger context of pastoral care beginning at v. 12; cf. Heb. 5:14). This is a thought-provoking question to ask in this regard, "Can you meaningfully understand something without empathy?" But this is not enough to make one broad-minded because you could say, "Okay, I will compare and do so empathically, but only one time, you get one crack at it and that's it." The additional quality of dialogue is required for true openness.

3) Third, we need "counter question and question."

What does beginning with "counter question" imply? A process of dialogue is already going on: there is a claim, a question, and a counter question already on the table. Now to the table comes a question regarding the counter question. This is the "Pete and Re-Pete" principle in dialogue over time. They did not build Rome in a day, nor do we edify the people of God in a day. Learning takes time under the teaching of the Holy Spirit through pastors as frail human instruments. Nevertheless, they must work hard to handle the work accurately and to refute that which contradicts the truth (2 Tim 2:14-15, "remind...rightly handling the word of truth"; Titus 1:9, "give instruction in sound doctrine...rebuke those who contradict it"). Most of all, they must

do their work with humility, patience, and gentleness without being quarrelsome (2 Tim 2:24-25). In a word, they must argue vigorously without quarrelling!

But all these do not make for open-mindedness if we stiff-arm and polarize the situation by a subjective posture. This closes down discussion. The subjective posture manifests itself in statements like the following: "I know I am right" and "I know you're wrong." In addition, it can be subtle (it can be conveyed in tone, gesture, or in overall approach). For example, some students never ask questions for clarification, information, and learning, instead, they only offer objections and alternatives. "There is a time to be a student" is a lesson sometimes difficult to apply. Some students are not content to listen for even a class period, let alone for a time long enough to hear a full presentation of the view they oppose. They must disagree; they must express their disagreement immediately, they must relay the other side even before the whole picture they oppose is given (they interrupt flow of thought and thus divide and conquer by fragmentation).

4) Therefore, fourth, we need an objective posture.

This refers to how we carry ourselves in discussion. Objective means we try to steer away from saying, "I believe," "My view is" and we try to concentrate attention on the issues at hand (depersonalizing where possible). We will pursue clear definition, historical perspective, be context sensitive (get speaker's or writer's perspective, definitions of terms, etc., to receive what he presents, fairly and fully). It is "reasons oriented" rather than "conclusions oriented" (emphasize process versus conclusion). We will say, "I may be wrong, but here is why one might hold x" (even here, we try not to say why "I" hold x). "Let's talk about the whys and wherefores." "Correct me if I'm wrong." "Please, correct me where I am wrong." These comments depolarize, invite further discussion, and welcome counter-question. This objective approach opens up discussion rather than closing it down.

C. S. Lewis made a statement that has the effect of defining open-minded humility: "I like my Christianity as I like my whisky, straight." This defines Christian broad-mindedness as an attitude that says, "Give me the whole picture, both the easy and

the hard stuff, undiluted."² For example, the doctrines of grace have some difficult aspects that are hard to understand (2 Pet 3:16) and hard to hear without complaint (Rom 9:18-21). However, we must not complain against God but submit ourselves to Him, to His sovereignty with adoring wonder. Therefore, in the first place, a philosophy of logic, that is, principles regarding the right use of logic, includes an openness of heart to the Lord to receive all He has said whatever the difficulty.

Closed-mindedness puts logic into a straight jacket of "invincible ignorance." Also, note the quip that calls us to broad-mindedness: "Some people are so narrow that if they turn sideways, they disappear!" Face to face, they may look broad shouldered but when they turn on you, eek! They can be razor sharp and cut deeply. Open-mindedness is critical to good conversation in which godly people seek to build up one another.

2. Open-Minded *Humility*

In our context, humility is involves the right use of the *mind*. This is an aspect of loving God with all your heart, soul, and mind. One does not have open-minded humility if he does not engage the mind and engage it critically (one ought not to be so open-minded that his or her brains fall out: one should have answers, 1 Pet. 3:15).

² Here are some questions for personal reflection that summarize a humble openness that should govern Christian learning. Do you listen looking for the good? Do you immediately go into a counteraction mode (recall how difficult it may be to catch ourselves eating impulsively)? Do you only counteract? Do you listen with empathy looking for the whole picture and for the greatest clarity? Do you simply challenge or do you inquire for clarification? Do you read good representatives of the view you oppose? Can you outline the best case for the view you do not hold? Cf. what Vanhoozer calls interpretive virtues or dispositions of the mind that arise from the motivation for understanding: honesty, openness, attention, and obedience, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 376-77. From the outset we must recognize that we have a hermeneutical circle here in that the open-minded humility virtues are on one hand part of the means through which we receive the blessing of the Spirit and on the other hand they are themselves blessings given by the Spirit. At the least, we can untangle this paradox by depending prayerfully on the Spirit to create new hearts within us and by cultivating these virtues through diligent effort. For Vanhoozer this means attentive listening to the Author of the text with a willingness to be changed by reading which "develops the interpretive virtues" and these virtues "help us become better readers," 377.

Looked at this way, as mindedness, the open-minded humility pie includes presuppositional self-awareness. Presuppositions enter this discussion in the use of logic or critical thinking in a self-critical way. The ultimate expression of humble-mindedness or humility in our use of reason and logic is the submission of ourselves, of our reasoning selves to Christ speaking in Scripture. This necessitates the acceptance of paradox. Another way of speaking about a Christian use of logic is to substitute thinking, reasoning, or meditating for the word logic.

Four basic ingredients make up humility. These virtues are of supreme importance for the right use of logic at a basic level. As we consider these ingredients, remember, there is a right kind of humble pie to eat without getting sick.

1) First, there must be awareness.

That is, awareness and acknowledgement of the "hidden man" problem (the mask-wearing problem, hiding from ourselves, hiding from our sinful selves; as Augustine said, we put ourselves behind our backs so that we will not see how foul we are). The point here is the personal recognition that sin is *my* problem. We must each face this squarely before the Lord or we are not humble.

2) Second, there is risk.

We must be willing to take the risk of being wrong. Pride keeps us from candidness lest someone shows others and us where we are wrong. We must be willing to admit it when we are "wrong"! The word just does not want to come out. However, it is good to put our reasons for what we believe on the table in public view. This helps us see them better, to see strengths and weaknesses in our thinking better; it helps us see what others offer in critique and as alternatives. Of course, such a process of exchange gives clearer and clearer perspective that runs the risk of showing our thinking to be wrong. Knowing that may happen, we still engage with others "out of reverence for Christ" (Eph 5:21).

3) Third, an element of distrust is part of the idea of humility.

This refers to a basic distrust of one's self. The intent here is not an ostrich extreme; instead, it is a focus on the self in which we use language that indicates a seasoned inward view. We will use language like this: "Maybe, I don't have it all together. I need more perspective. I must suspend judgment on this or that until I get a better handle on it, especially regarding something new and different." Or we may say, "Although I have been through all the important arguments for x, I can always do so again, besides, I may have missed something along the way." Circumstances and consideration of the needs of others may call us to revisit stopping points of arguments that we passed long ago, but we honor the call in honor to Christ, to the gospel, and to our neighbors in need.

4) Fourth, a preventative love is part of being humble.

Humility is having qualities of love that are opposite to pride. Love prevents a) scorn, making others feel small or worthless around you. Some people exude a radius about themselves that says, "You are not worthy to come into my presence" (a nose in the air attitude: "don't trouble the bubble"). Love prevents b) an arrogance that says, "I have all the answers, no one else's opinion is worth consideration." We should have answers (1 Pet 3:15), and we should engage in earnest refutation (Titus 1:9), but we must always give due consideration to other views (to other people and their views). If they do not give us due consideration, then we must strive after patience and gentleness without quarrelling (2 Tim 2:24-25). In addition, love prevents c) a leveling spirit or destructive criticism. What happens when you tear other people down? You lift self up! If logical criticism is necessary, and often it is, it will emerge from self-criticism (doing something about the telephone pole in one's own eye) and will be gentle (with a speck of dust in the other person's eye; the analogy here concerns the eye with all its sensitivity, Mat 7:3-5).

V. Self-Critical use of Logic: Presuppositional Self-Awareness

Presuppositions enter this discussion because we are to use logic in a humble way (it is open-minded-humility oriented). For it

to be humble, it must be self-critical (thus, we have self-critical thinking and not just critical thinking; we are usually better at the latter than at the former). Moreover, note that a necessary and deep-rooted ingredient in self-critical thinking is being critically aware of that with which you think, which brings us to our use of presuppositions. Without presuppositional self-awareness, we will not have humble mindedness or be self-critical in our thinking.

Presuppositions are beliefs of a particular kind in a hierarchy of beliefs. Not all beliefs are the same. Some have a unique supportive role in holding other beliefs in place. They are like foundations to buildings, if you take away the foundation the superstructure will not remain in place. They subdivide into two types: weak and strong. Weak presuppositions hold up some beliefs but other beliefs hold them in place being more foundational. Think of a superstructure on a foundation that rests on bedrock. The foundation is a weak presupposition. Strong presuppositions are beliefs over which nothing else takes precedence.³ They are like the bedrock in the building illustration. Presuppositions are comparable with sunglasses. They color all that you see (thus they govern how you see everything), perhaps without noticing it; hence, the need for self-awareness. It is like someone wearing blue tinted glasses and someone else wearing gray tinted glasses. One person says, "I want to prove that that cat is gray. Here is my evidence: this piece of paper is gray and it is the same color as the cat, so the cat is gray." The problem is that all the evidence is already tinted gray by the glasses. To find a solution, we must look *at*, (not just *through*) each pair. This is often very difficult. Each contrary presupposition must be tested and examined to determine if it gives a true representation of reality (or supportive of the very intelligibility of the world that we presuppose when we make claims about it, cf. the proof of proof in the justification of logic).

We need to be able to look at that with which we look, (as a person can do when he tilts his head and sees the line in his bifocals; he can see that with which he sees and which governs

³ John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company: Phillipsburg, New Jersey, 1987), pp. 125-125.

what he see).⁴ For example, returning to the earlier discussion of free will, we can ask, "Does belief in free will have presuppositional status in a Christian's belief system? How does this look or work out in a practical way? Does this presupposition stand the test of Scripture? Finally, what is the ultimate presupposition of the Christian worldview?"

The ultimate presupposition of the Christian worldview is belief in God speaking through Christ by the Spirit in the Bible (for short: it is belief in Christ speaking in Scripture). The ultimate presupposition for the non-Christian is belief in the autonomy and self-sufficiency of human experience and reason (cf. Col 2:8, man-centered and creature-centered versus being God-centered and depending on Christ). Therefore, the ultimate presupposition for the non-Christian is belief in human autonomy, which refers to claiming independence from God in some way or another. What results is the contrast of theonomy (God's law) versus autonomy (self-law), and this ethical posture asserts that logic is the ultimate standard for truth. Notably, this assertion is moral and theoretical at the same time: ethics and epistemology are inseparable in such a way that true knowledge is only attainable by submission to Christ.

Consider the example of an atheist and a Christian who agree against abortion but disagree on capital punishment. The Christian holds to the latter based on Genesis 9:6. Both have the same presupposition of the sanctity of life. Thus, the atheist argues for the preservation of life from "the womb to the tomb" opposing abortion and euthanasia as well as capital punishment. Why does the Christian favor capital punishment despite his belief in the sanctity of life, and how do we account for this difference with the atheist? The answer is not in the "common"

⁴ In the famous duck-rabbit drawing the image perceived could be either a duck or a rabbit depending on your perspective at the moment. So we must ask, "how do we know which image is the true one?" We must back up and get more perspective from a wider angle; we must get the perspective of the author of the facts. All biblical interpretation must seek the perspective of the author of the whole, the Holy Spirit. For Vanhoozer this means being open to be changed by personal encounter with the Author of the text of Scripture because in all reading "we encounter an other that calls us to respond," and in the process of reading the true reader becomes a "disciple of the text" who "lays himself or herself open to divine communicative action" and thus to "personal encounter" with God in order to be transformed, *Ibid.*, *Meaning*, 368, 372, 406.

presupposition regarding the sanctity of life. These views diverge because belief in the sanctity of life is a weak presupposition that depends for its existence and its shape on the diverging strong presuppositions that hold it in place. For the non-Christian, the strong presupposition is belief in the autonomy and self-sufficiency of human reason and experience. Because of this strong presupposition, to be consistent, the non-Christian must respect human life across the board. For the Christian, the strong presupposition is belief in God speaking in Scripture. Since God is the life-giver par excellence as creator and sustainer of everything, His word regarding capital punishment is final in the matter. Therefore, because God designed and governs the sanctity of life, the unlawful taking of a human life demands "life for life" regarding men and women, His image bearers (Gen 1:26; 9:6).

Therefore, it bears repeating that a self-critical use of logic is necessary to a humble use of logic, and a central ingredient in self-critical reasoning is presuppositional self-awareness. We discussed two aspects of a philosophy of logic and one more remains, the relationship of paradox to a believing use of logic. In this relationship, logic, that is, logic's user is humbled to the utmost and the bearing of this on spiritual renewal should be evident: The Spirit mends and renews the broken heart of true humility by His sovereign grace.

VI. Most Humble Use of Logic: Accepting Paradox

1. Definition

As we enter the domain of paradoxical thinking, let me begin with a definition.⁵ A paradox is an apparent contradiction.⁶ It grows from the notion of a contradiction, for which there is

⁵ Cf. John Frame on Van Til's use of logic, "The Problem of Theological Paradox," in *Foundations of Christian Scholarship: Essays in the Van Til Perspective*, ed. Gary North, (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1979), 320-329 and Corneilus Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1967), 45.

⁶ cf. a brief and helpful discussion of this theme by Hoekema in *Saved by Grace*, pp. 5-7. However, Hoekema's approval of citations of Dowey on Calvin mistakenly defines paradoxes as logical inconsistencies and incompatibilities, p. 6.

almost universal recognition in the history of Western philosophy. Outside of the kind of thinking we have inherited in our culture, some people try to make sense of statements like "you are to meditate on one hand clapping." However, this example shows that one of the reasons that contradiction is wrong is that it is meaningless and blocks communication. You cannot make sense of "one hand clapping." Try to clap with only one hand; it becomes "one hand waving." It is ambiguous (you can "clap" one hand against something) but what is meant is "clap your hands together but only use one hand" (trying it I cannot even keep one hand still!). That is contradiction. It breaks down honest communication; very often, it breaks down honest communication.

However, no one is allowed contradiction. It is ethically wrong. We have argued this ethical dimension in the justification of logic. Simply put: we are to be like God as His image and likeness in the wholeness of what makes us tick as human beings, created in His image, male and female. God is logical because He is truth. If there were contradictions in God's knowledge, then some of His knowledge would be false, He would not be the truth, and He would not be God.

Therefore, to fulfill our role on earth receiving God's communication to us in nature and in Christ, we ought to be logical, consistent, and non-contradictory in our thinking. It is an "ought to"; it is an ethical ought. Being logical is being godly. It is God-like. It is good and proper. It is required of us not only academically or intellectually but also morally and spiritually. Granted, not everyone has the same mental taste buds for logic due to their inherited predisposition and to their training. Nevertheless, we all use it everyday. If we did not use it at all, then we would not make sense to ourselves or to others in anything we said or did (with great confusion "I'm going to the store" could mean, "You take a nap" or anything else!).

Here is an important rub: we can all improve our reasoning skills. Moreover, we ought to improve our reasoning skills where it is possible. It is one thing to have poor logic; it is another to have a poor interest in improvement (as a teacher of a college course in logic I have discouraged students from going into law as a career not simply because they showed poor skill in logic,

but because they showed poor interest in improving their logical skill).

To live by Scripture as God's image bearers, it is necessary that we improve our reasoning skills. One very important way is by strenuous study of the arguments in Scripture (cf. the arguments in, and the argument of, the book of Romans). How else are we going to obey the Lord when He says, "Come now let us reason together"? To place a healthy emphasis on logical and critical thinking is a hurdle all its own. However, once we jump this obstacle, we face other ones. This is not an end; it is a beginning.

This brings us back to apparent contradictions. Note the key word, *apparent*. We must not tolerate contradictions in our thinking, but we must come to terms with *apparent* contradictions, which are beliefs (or claims) that seem to be inconsistent with one another. Importantly, we know that there is no inconsistency between them because God has given them to us in the Bible. Because it is God's word, the Bible has no contradictions. As the word of God to man, it should not surprise us to find *apparent* contradiction or paradoxes. How then do we know that something is a paradox? One way to answer this question is by comparing paradoxicality with a pie and by directing our focus to its ingredients.

2. Ingredients of the Paradox Pie

How do we know something is a paradox? Here are some general ingredients (perhaps these may be likened to both ingredients and baking instructions).

1. There are two claims or beliefs. Let us call them threads.
2. Both are in Scripture; they are threads of biblical teaching, threads of truth.
3. They seem to contradict each other. This means we have difficulty seeing how these threads fit together in the whole fabric of Bible truth. It means that human reason has trouble accepting one of the teachings because of the corresponding paradoxical thread.
4. The imminent danger, in our analogy of a baking danger, is that we will tend in various ways to do damage to one ingredient or the other by our reasoning. Our logic may inform us that A contradicts B so both cannot be true. Then

we will try to eliminate one or the other. We may take a biblical truth and use it to deny another biblical truth! It is like reading directions that say, "Bake at 350 and do not bake at 350 degrees" presumably in the same conditions and at the same time. On this presumption, we intuitively eliminate one requirement or the other.

5. Failure in the handling of paradoxes shows up in the twisting of words and the forcing of passages beyond clear contextual warrant. Sometimes we will have to debate about what is clear. What may seem clear to me may not seem clear to you. Nonetheless, in a rough and ready way, we can say that one thing is critical to clarity in reading a passage. The flow of a given context is super-important. We must saturate ourselves with a passage by prayerful meditation and reflection in order to absorb the pattern of thought. We must work hard at grasping the writer's purpose in a verse within a paragraph, within a book in the New Testament, within the Bible, within the history of redemption, remembering that the ultimate author is the Holy Spirit. This is saying that context is king, especially the immediate flow of thought within the larger framework of biblical teaching as a whole. This is easier to say than to do: we need to practice the art of careful contextual thinking. We need to expend much effort to absorb the patterns present in the word of God (cf. the outline of sound words, 2 Tim 1:13).

We might illustrate this by reference to the gears in a mechanical clock. Taking a word or phrase out of context is like removing a gear from a clock. When this happens, things will not mesh properly and you will not be able to read the proper time. Both "taking away" and "adding in" mess up the mechanism. Switching analogies, we can say that we must be concerned with every relevant thread that intersects the piece of fabric at any given time; otherwise, our work of interpretation will come apart at the seams. Paradoxical truths are threads of truth that are clearly and tightly woven together in the fabric of Scripture even though *how* they can co-exist in the same fabric may be difficult or even impossible to grasp.

3. Implications

The fact of paradox implies a number of things for the Christian.

First, careful, diligent and seasoned interpretation is presupposed. A paradox does not exist unless the threads in tension with one another actually exist. Therefore, approved workmanship and prayerful meditation are essential in the discovery and interpretation of paradoxical truths (2 Tim 2:15); an awareness of paradoxicality itself is vital in the process of identifying truths that make up an actual paradox.

Second, facing the fact of paradoxicality demands that we exercise faith. The saint must take God at His word even when, and especially when, things spoken by the Holy Spirit are difficult to accept or seem to contradict each other. Again, we should stress the need for humility; this is the most humble use of logic: to bow to God speaking through Christ by the Spirit in all of Scripture. Paradoxes are threads of truth that have a hidden quality about them that demand a humble seeking faith. Many twist the Scriptures to their own destruction. Therefore, wise (godly) critical (most humbly critical) thinking demands that we submit to all the threads of biblical truth.

Third, wrestling with paradoxes in Scripture is wrestling like Jacob with the Lord. In prayerful persistence, we wrestle with God for His blessing. Ultimately, we must be humble in the presence of the covenant-keeping God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We end up on our faces in worship. Logic bows to its Creator. We submit our reason, we submit our reasoning selves to God speaking truths that soar above our thoughts like the heavens above the earth. Truly, such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high and I cannot attain unto it (cf. Ps 139, especially v. 6). Still it reaches the ear, inflames the heart, and enlivens the believer's walk in the steps of the Spirit (Gal 2:14; 5:16).

For clarification, it will be helpful to list some of the major paradoxes of Scripture with some brief comments. With each, we tend to do injustice to one claim because of another. We have difficulty seeing how both are true. We cannot resolve much.

4. A Paradox List

This list of biblical paradoxes is not exhaustive. It is representative of truths that are slices of the pie of Scriptural paradox. Each slice has all the ingredients mentioned earlier (another addition to the list is the foreordination of evil and God's holiness; He wills the existence of evil but is not the author of sin; cf. Calvin on this point as reported by Warfield, *Studies in Theology*, 189).

1) The Bible: God's Word and man's word

We want to say, "If God's thoughts are not our thoughts, then if it is His word it is not man's word." Nevertheless, and this is central, He tells us that the Bible is His speech and He tells us that it is the word of Isaiah, Peter and Paul.

2) Jesus: God and man

If He is God, how can He be a man? If a man, how can He be God? Scripture teaches both; they do not contradict each other, but contradiction does seem to be present.

3) God's Decree and God's Desire

God tells us of His decree or plan to save particular sinners out of the fallen human family. He elects some for salvation and passes over others. To raise a question of justice here is different from discerning a paradox. There is no injustice with God since no one deserves salvation. Paradox enters the picture here when we find that the Bible also tells us that God desires that all people come to repentance for salvation. Therefore, we tend to think, if there really is an unconditional election, then this desire cannot be true or if this desire is true, then unconditional election has to be false. However, both are true. They appear to be contradictory, but we must accept both and live by both because God gives us both in His holy word.

Similarly, God's desire to save all and the work of Christ on the cross to efficaciously save some deserve classification together as a paradox. The parallel comes to expression, for example, in the debates where people use the same argument against election that they use against efficacious redemption. Namely, they reason that since God desires the salvation of all, then there can be no election of some and since God desires

the salvation of all, then there can be no efficacious redemption of some.

4) Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility⁷

Sovereignty refers to the kingship and rule of God over all that He created and made. He is in control of all things. Nothing is outside of His control. He has foreordained whatsoever happens in time. Then we ask, "If this is so, how can man be responsible?" Does this not make man a puppet on a string? No, he is not a puppet on a string. True, God planned and controls all things, and God tells us that man is responsible. Both facts are true and we strain to grasp how it can be so.

5. Balancing principles

A subset of the paradox of divine sovereignty and human responsibility is the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit and human responsibility in spiritual renewal. In this connection, we need some balancing principles.

1. First, we need balance with regard to biblical teaching, as expressed by Calvin, between earnestly pursuing all that the Holy Spirit has given and closing the way to inquiry at the precise point where the Lord has closed his holy lips:

Scripture is the school of the Holy Spirit, in which, as nothing is omitted that is both necessary and useful to know, so nothing is taught but what is expedient to know. Therefore we must guard against depriving believers of anything disclosedin Scripture, lest we seem either wickedly to defraud them of the blessing of their God or to accuse and scoff at the Holy Spirit for having published what it is in any way profitable to suppress. Let us, I say, permit the Christian man to open his mind and ears to every utterance of God directed to him, provided it be with such restraint that

⁷ Note that the paradox is not "Divine Sovereignty and Human Free Will." If we define free will as the opposite of total depravity, then it means that the natural man has the ability to believe the gospel logically prior to being born from above. The position adopted here is that there is no paradox between divine sovereignty and free will because a paradox involves two truths and the doctrine of free will is false.

when the Lord closes his holy lips, he also shall at once close the way to inquiry⁸

Calvin then calls for equilibrium in our walk in the Spirit where we are to "follow God's lead always." We are "not investigate what the Lord has left hidden in secret, that we should not neglect what he has brought into the open, so that we may not be convicted of excessive curiosity on the one hand, or of excessive ingratitude on the other."⁹

2. Second, having this commitment regarding the things revealed and the secret things firmly in mind, we must balance this responsibility (itself balanced as stated above) with the teaching of Scripture that renewal by the Spirit is His sovereign work. This is concisely put by Calvin when he says that no one benefits of God's word unless the Father "either gives eyes or opens them"¹⁰ by the illuminating work of the Spirit:

If we are not ashamed of the gospel we must confess what is there plainly declared. God, by His eternal goodwill, which has no cause outside itself, destined those whom he pleased to salvation, rejecting the rest; those whom He dignified by gratuitous adoption he illumined by His Spirit, so that they receive the life offered in Christ, while others voluntarily disbelieve, so that they remain in darkness destitute of the light of faith.¹¹

All these paradoxes challenge us to a remarkable depth. They challenge the very place of reason in giving a reason for our hope (1 Pet. 3:15). The danger is that we give logic, and thus the reasoning self, an ultimate status as a standard of truth.

6. Deuteronomy 29:29

Based on Deuteronomy 29:29, at least two relevant biblical principles must govern our approach to Scripture in general and paradox in particular. a) First, some things belong to God and

⁸ John Calvin, *Ibid*, 2.3.21.21, sec. 3: 924.

⁹ *Ibid*, sec. 4: 925.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 1.2.21, sec. 21:281.

¹¹ John Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, trans. J. K. S. Reid, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 58, italics mine.

He reveals other things (Deut. 29:29a). His thoughts are far above ours and demand acceptance with submissive hearts and minds as creatures before our Creator. Otherwise, we run the risk of exalting the creature above the Creator. b) Second, all revealed truth is clear and beneficial. It is for us and for our children (Deut. 29:29b). All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for instruction (2 Tim. 3:16 -17). In this light, the paradoxes are clear doctrines: God's sovereignty is a clear doctrine, and man's responsibility is a clear doctrine. God's desire for all is a clear teaching and so is the efficacy of the cross. Granted, some teachings in Scripture are difficult to understand (2 Pet. 3:16), and we face paradoxicality in how we bring them together.

However, we should note that with the areas of difficulty there is the great promise of profitability. Further attention to the example of Jesus will bring out some of the value of reflecting on the biblical paradoxes. In the end, this must lead us to adoring worship of the risen Lord of glory.

7. The Example of Jesus

How can Jesus be both fully God and fully man in one person, concerning whom we must neither divide the person nor confound the natures? In the history of Christian thought, many have denied that Jesus is a man on the basis that He is God and others have denied that He was God on the ground of His true humanity. How does a humble use of logic proceed? It follows the biblical text on the humiliation of Christ (birth, eating and sleeping, growing and learning; the Word became flesh) and affirms his humanity. It listens to the references that characterize Jesus as existing before his incarnation and His equality with the Father (the Word was God; I forgive you). Moreover, it accents the biblical teaching that that Jesus is a single person. The same one that existed before the creation of the world is bound to the limits of time, space, and suffering while at the same time He continues to uphold all things by the word of his power! No wonder Matthew reports of Him, "no one knows the Son except the Father" (Mat 11:27). Even the Christian, the one to whom the Father has revealed the Son (cf. Matt. 16:16 -17), cannot know Jesus exhaustively though He does know Him truly by the Father's gift of "the Spirit of wisdom

and revelation" to enlighten the eyes of the believer's heart (Eph. 1:17-18). Meditation on the Scriptural presentation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ stretches our reasoning capacities to their limits. However, we know there is no contradiction because the Holy Spirit is the author of Scripture; we have God's speech in Scripture and He does not contradict Himself. In addition, this stretching of reason to its limits is not disheartening because the gracious renewing work of the Spirit enlightens the eyes of our hearts in order that we may "know him better" (Eph. 1:17).

8. Reflections on the fact of paradox

The fact of paradox reminds us that total consistency of aspects of Scripture is beyond our reach. There is mystery. Our knowledge will necessarily have loose ends but without contradiction. This is humbling. On the other hand, the rationalist must have all the loose ends tied together.

Why do we face paradox? Our knowledge of God's thoughts is true in that it actually conforms to what God is thinking. However, it is not exhaustive because 1) we are finite creatures and 2) because it is God's sovereign decision to reveal what he chooses to reveal while keeping other things, some we could presumably grasp, to Himself. Paradox is simply a way of saying that our knowledge of God's thoughts is limited. He has given creation interconnectedness in his wise plan wherein everything dovetails together, but we do not know all the interconnections. We cannot see the entire dovetailing.¹²

Given these limits, do we have true knowledge? Due to God's gift of logic, to His placement of logic in a meaningful relation to the facts He first interprets, we can in fact think His thoughts after him. We do know truly, though we do not know exhaustively.¹³ How do we know that there is no contradiction in Scripture? God cannot deny himself; He is truth, in Him is no inconsistency or contradiction; so, in His word there is no actual contradiction.

¹² John Frame, *Ibid*, 321.

¹³ Cf. Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, 40-41.

In one sense, admitting paradox is simply another way of saying that God's thoughts are above ours as the heavens are above the earth and it should not surprise us when we face difficulty. What we must do in faithful quest of the truth is pull together biblical data and accept paradox "where it is warranted."¹⁴ Logic is properly used when it is governed by the recognition of our creaturehood and hence by the recognition of the limits of creaturely reasoning. We must acknowledge the distinction between Creator and creature, and thinking this way must control the use of logic because the laws of logic are founded in the character of God (He is truth and thus there can be no contradiction in His knowledge or revelation). Properly used, the laws of logic will reveal no contradiction in the biblical system of truth because as God's revelation it has no real contradiction.

9. The question of application

From another angle, the whole problem of paradox turns out to be a question of application because all teaching is for living. Scripture gives clear guidance by the same teachings that seem contradictory, but which we cannot demonstrate by the canons of logic in all the fullness of their consistency. What we do know, we know in truth and in conformity to God's thinking. This guides our conduct even if we cannot reconcile all the interconnections.¹⁵

The apparently contradictory truths are interdependent and applicable. Consider how we can apply the dual nature doctrine of the Lord Jesus. As man, He could and did die for sinners. However, this would be of no avail to save if He were not also God. As God, He was able to endure the eternal punishment of sinners in His own body on the tree! Being God, He was able to pay an infinite price on the cross. Hence, Scripture speaks of the blood of God! Because of both sides of this paradox, we

¹⁴ John Frame, *Ibid*, 323-24. Bassinger, in criticism of theological paradox, states a similar position regarding the identification of truth as prior to determining whether or not biblical statements are contradictory, David Bassinger, "The Postulate of Paradox: Does Revelation Challenge Logic?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 30, (June 1978): 213. For Van Til and Frame, this simply underscores the point that faithfulness to the text is paramount.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 328.

worship Him, the Son of God who came from glory to claim a people given to Him by the Father and who as the Son of man is one with us. Still this Immanuel, this one with us, is God with us! Finally, we must fall on our knees and worship the Lord Jesus. This is the greatest use of logic. Here logic is at its best when the reasoning self bows in submission to the risen Savior and there finds renewal by the work of the Holy Spirit through the words of the Holy Spirit.

10. Calvin on Pastors and Paradoxes

Before we leave this area of paradoxicality, it will be good to recall the place of the work of pastors (and by analogy all Christians). One of the means God appointed for our work is the consistent (i.e., logical) preaching of the word by pastors. In this context, it will serve us well to consider some thoughts from Calvin on pastors and paradoxes. This will remind us that belief in the sovereignty of God cannot be divorced from responsible, consistent, and thus logical conduct in the life of the church in both the giving and receiving of ministry of the word. Nevertheless, remarkably, the summons here is to a most humble use of logic in submission to God with a teachable spirit.

Calvin stresses that it is God's will to teach us through human means as we "grow up into manhood solely under the education of the church."¹⁶ Thus, preaching and public assemblies are not superfluous. Instead, God, by ordaining them, has shown them to be necessary and highly approved. Calvin writes:

On the one hand, he proves our obedience by a very good test when we hear his ministers speaking just as if he himself spoke. On the other, he also provides for our weakness in that he prefers to address us in human fashion through interpreters in order to draw us to himself, rather than to thunder at us and drive us away.¹⁷

¹⁶ John Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.4.1, sec. 5: 1017.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 1018.

He notes further that we do not want to exaggerate the dignity of ministers and give to them "what belongs to the Holy Spirit."¹⁸ Thus, for balance Calvin puts the relevant passages into two categories. There are passages that express that God is the author of preaching, that God joins His Spirit with it, and that promises His benefits to it (i.e. Jn 15:16; 1Cor 4:15; 2 Cor 3:6). Another category contains passages where God separates Himself from all outward helps and "claims for himself alone both the beginnings of faith and its entire course."¹⁹ This balance comes out in the paradox of illumination:

Surely we ought to remember those statements in which God, ascribing to Himself illumination of mind and renewal of heart, warns that it is sacrilege for man to claim any part of either for himself. Meanwhile, anyone who presents himself in a teachable spirit to the ministers ordained by God shall know by the result that with good reason this way of teaching was pleasing to God, and also that with good reason this yoke of moderation was imposed on believers.²⁰

It is a paradox of illumination because a) man cannot claim "any part" of either illumination or renewal for himself, and b) man's responsibility is to present himself in a teachable spirit in hope of good result. A bold balance of divine sovereignty and human responsibility comes to expression in this way of connecting them without doing injustice to either. The key is rigorous attention to Scripture alone as the steps of the Spirit to follow.

Conclusion

Indeed, by definition, the Christian travels the road of life in firm commitment to Christ as his prophet, priest, and king in every step he takes (Mat 11:28-30; cf. 1 Thess 1:5; 2:13). Submission to the risen Lord, submission of the reasoning self to Him is central for the wisdom required in the pursuit of wisdom. To have wisdom as a Christian doing any science, to

¹⁸ Ibid, sec. 6: 1020.

¹⁹ Ibid, i.e. 1 Cor. 3.7; 15.10.

²⁰ Ibid, 1021.

have wisdom in seeking wisdom, we need to be critical thinkers. Accordingly, we seek wisdom wisely (in a godly manner) when we cultivate and apply contextual sensitivity, presuppositional awareness, open-minded humility, logical skill, and acceptance of paradox. In seeking wisdom, we are seeking God; we are doing theology and we begin to answer the question Jesus asks of us, "Who do you *think* I am?" 👑

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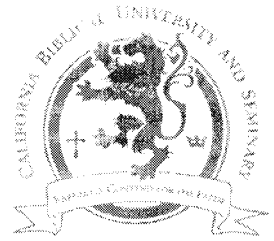
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The Da Vinci Code

HISTORICAL FACT OR HISTORICAL FICTION

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I. Introduction

"When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' So they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'" (Matthew 16:13-16).

The issue of "who Jesus is" has been a topic of debate throughout history. During His own time, some saw Him as a great prophet like Elijah or John the Baptist (Matthew 16:14). Those who opposed Jesus saw Him as working in the power of Satan and his demons (Luke 11:15). Finally, others, like Peter, saw Jesus as the Son of God (Matt. 16:16). Today this debate continues as our culture has been inundated with a plethora of attempts to answer the question: "Who is Jesus of Nazareth?"

II. Contemporary Quest for the Historical Jesus

In recent times, there has been a growing interest in the study of the historical Jesus. This resurgence has resulted in numerous published books, documentaries, and even movies. Within these sources one can find a variety of opinions on who was the historical Jesus. Consider some of the following theories on the historical Jesus: a political revolutionary, a Jewish

prophet, a magician, founder of a royal dynasty, and an international traveler. While there is a divergence of opinion on the “true” identity of Jesus of Nazareth, there appears to be a common underlying belief that runs throughout many of these modern historical theories on Jesus. This shared belief is that the canonical Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are inaccurate and religiously biased accounts of the historical Jesus. As noted by Gary Habermas, “Other approaches to the life of Jesus have not shared the conviction that the Gospels were totally accurate. Some scholars think that the Gospels are poor records, dominated not by historical concerns, but written as religious propaganda for the purpose of communicating a particular message. Many such critical surveys have sought to reinterpret the story of Jesus in manners that emphasize non-traditional roles, viewing him as a political revolutionary, or as a Jewish prophet, or even as a magician.”¹ Thus, many of the modern quests for the historical Jesus are not merely trying to critique the traditional view of Jesus of Nazareth, but they are in fact promoting an entirely “new” Jesus. Dan Brown’s book, *The Da Vinci Code*, is an example of this modern attempt to promote a “new” Jesus.

III. The Da Vinci Code

Dan Brown’s book, *The Da Vinci Code*, is not only a page turning conspiracy novel, but it is also a vicious attack upon historical Christianity. Throughout the book the origins and claims of the historical Christian faith are continually questioned and criticized as being the product of century old myths and legends. This attack is most evident in the comments by Teabing, who is one of the characters in the book, “‘What I mean,’ Teabing countered, ‘is that almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false.’”² This comment by Teabing is not just the sentiment of a fictional character, but it is also the

¹ Gary R. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus* (Joplin, Missouri: College Press Publishing Company, 2005) 15.

² Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003) 235.

viewpoint of revisionist scholars such as Elaine Pagels.³ In fact, Brown has done more than just write a book, “he has taken various unorthodox views on the person and work of Jesus Christ articulated in the writings of Elaine Pagels (*et al*) and has popularized them through the medium of ‘novel’ for a mass audience.”⁴

While the book is fictional in nature, Brown makes the following claim in the book’s introduction: “All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate.” While Brown qualifies this statement on his website that this FACT page does not include the ancient theories discussed by the fictional characters;⁵ when the reader encounters the numerous allegations that the characters in the book make against the historical Christian faith, he is still left wondering what is fact and what is fiction. To help shed some light on this issue, let us examine three key allegations made in the book against historical Christianity to see if they are rooted in historical fact or in historical fiction.

IV. Fact versus Fiction: Responding to *The Da Vinci Code*

Allegation #1: The canonical Gospels are not historically reliable documents on the life of Jesus.

“How can you trust the Bible when it was written two thousand years ago?” “How do you know that the Bible is not full of myths and fabrications when it was written many years after the actual events?” It seems that anytime I talk to others about the Christian faith I end up hearing one of these questions. In fact, on a recent trip I was able to speak with an airline pilot about the evidence for the Christian faith. Although he claimed to be a Christian, he argued we really could not be sure of the total accuracy of the recorded events in the Gospels since they

³ See Elaine Pagels book, [Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas](#). (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2003).

⁴ C. Scott Shideman, [Deciphering The DaVinci Code](#), 3. www.geneva.edu/object/da_vinci_code.pdf (accessed 14th January, 2008).

⁵ www.danbrown.com/novels/davinci_code/faqs.html

were written years after the events actually occurred. Instead, he felt that the Gospels were probably the result of men and women bringing together different legends and myths about Jesus of Nazareth.

This idea that the canonical Gospels are historically unreliable is a common theme that runs throughout *The Da Vinci Code*. Consider the following assertion, "More than eighty gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a relatively few were chosen for inclusion—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John among them."⁶ According to *The Da Vinci Code*, the earliest years of Christianity were a time when "competing Christianities" were struggling against each other. During this time, one form of Christianity, which was the view represented by the Council of Nicea, established itself over the other forms of Christianity and became the orthodox form of Christianity that we have today. Among all the gospels that were being circulated at this time, only Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were chosen to be included in the canon, not because they were the best recorded witnesses to the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, but because they reflected the dominant view of Christianity (Council of Nicea). Other competing forms of Christianity, such as Gnostic Christianity, were outlawed, along with their Gospels, and branded as "unorthodox."⁷ Thus, when we read the canonical Gospels, we are not reading the best material on Jesus. Rather, we are merely reading the perspective of the "winners" of the 4th century A.D. theological battle. As Teabing states in *The Da Vinci Code*, "...history is always written by the winners. When two cultures clash, the loser is obliterated, and the winner writes the history books – books which glorify their own cause and disparage the conquered foe. As Napoleon once said, 'What is history, but a fable agreed upon?'"⁸

We should all be thankful that Dan Brown is not writing a history book because his depiction of the early years of the

⁶ Brown 231.

⁷ Out of this "imaginative" scenario on the origins of Christianity, *The Da Vinci Code* goes on to portray the Gnostic form of Christianity, and the Gnostic gospels, as reflecting a more accurate representation, than modern day orthodoxy, on the life and teachings of Jesus.

⁸ Brown 256.

Christian faith is saturated with historical inaccuracies. While we could respond to these inaccuracies through a variety of avenues, for our purposes here, we want to focus our attention on Brown's claim that the canonical Gospels are historically unreliable accounts on the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

There are numerous reasons we could appeal to in establishing the historical trustworthiness of the canonical Gospels. The following are just four of these reasons:⁹

1. **Multiple Attestation:** The canonical Gospels provide us with four different accounts on the life of Jesus. In these accounts, while the authors may stress different aspects of Jesus' life and have different purposes for writing, they each present harmonious historical information about Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁰ The following are just a few examples from the Gospels where we have multiple reports on events in the life of Jesus: Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-23a); Jesus' teaching on the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:3b-23; Mark 4:3-25; Luke 8:5-18); Jesus feeding the crowd of five thousand (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:12-17; John 6:1-14); Jesus' tomb found empty (Matthew 28:5-8; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-8; John 20:1-10). Thus, as New Testament scholar Craig Evans notes, "... when two or three of the Gospels are saying the same thing, independently – as they often do – then this significantly shifts the burden of proof onto somebody who says they're just making it up."¹¹

2. **Primary Sources:** The canonical Gospels are primary sources on the life of Jesus of Nazareth because they are grounded in eyewitness testimony (Luke 1:1-4; John 19:35). In other words, the authors of the canonical Gospels either claim to have had actual contact with the events themselves, or at least knew people who did and then checked it out. This eyewitness

⁹ These four reasons are actually criteria that historians use to determine whether something is credible, trustworthy, and reliable.

¹⁰ For more examples please refer to the following book: *A Harmony of the Gospels*, Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry.

¹¹ Lee Strobel, *The Case for the Real Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2007) 56.

testimony in the canonical Gospel accounts supports their reliability and authority as sources in regard to the events they describe. This is the case because they were not written by men who were disassociated from the events themselves. Rather, the authors of the Gospels either personally participated in them (Matthew and John), or they had first hand knowledge of the events through the testimonies of those who did (Mark and Luke).

3. **Early Date:** The standard dating for the canonical Gospels, even among liberal scholars, ranges from A.D. 50 to 100.¹² The uniqueness of this dating, considering the end of Jesus' earthly ministry is dated between A.D. 30-33, is the fact that the canonical Gospels were in existence during the lifetime of both hostile and non-hostile eyewitnesses. Thus, the presence of these eyewitnesses would help ensure that there were not any fabrications or falsifications on the part of the Gospel writers. For instance, the hostile witnesses (such as the Pharisees and Sadducees) could have easily contradicted what was documented in the canonical Gospels. When a Gospel writer said Jesus did or said "x," the hostile witnesses were in the position to say Jesus did not do or say "x" because they were present during the events the Gospels recorded. However, they remained silent, and their silence merely supports the fact that what is recorded in the canonical Gospels are trustworthy accounts of the person and life of Jesus Christ. As Craig Blomberg astutely notes,

Many people had reasons for wanting to discredit this movement and would have done so if they could have simply told history better. Yet look at what his opponents did say. In later Jewish writings Jesus is called a sorcerer who led Israel astray – which acknowledges that he really did work marvelous wonders, although the writers dispute the source of his power. This would have been a perfect opportunity to say something like, 'The Christians will tell you he worked miracles, but we're here to tell you he didn't.' Yet that's the one thing we never see his opponents saying. Instead they implicitly acknowledge that what

¹² Most scholars date Mark in the 70's, Matthew and Luke in the 80's and John in the 90's.

the gospels wrote-that Jesus performed miracles-is true.¹³

4. Coherence: The canonical Gospels provide us with information that is consistent with what we know about the history and culture of Palestine during the life of Jesus. We know this is the case because archaeology has repeatedly confirmed the canonical Gospels are accurate sources in regard to what they say about historical people, places, and events. Consider just the following two examples. First, all of the canonical Gospels record Jesus was put on trial before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate (Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 18-19). Since there was no mention of Pontius Pilate outside the canonical Gospel accounts, many scholars questioned whether Pilate was a historical person. Two Italian archaeologists answered this question when they unearthed an inscription in Latin at the port city of Caesarea, which stated, "Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea, has presented the Tiberium to the Caesareans."¹⁴

Second, two of the canonical Gospels mention Nazareth as the city where Jesus was raised (Matthew 2:23; Luke 4:16). Since the Old Testament, Josephus and the *Talmud* never list Nazareth (Matthew 2:23; Luke 4:16; John 1:45) among the villages and cities of Galilee Nazareth was considered by many scholars to be a fictitious city. However, in an excavation at Caesarea in 1962, a Hebrew inscription was found "... which mentions it (Nazareth) as one of the places in Galilee to which members of the twenty-four priestly courses emigrated after the foundation of Aelia Capitolina in A.D. 135."¹⁵ Added to this discovery, first-century tombs were uncovered around the vicinity of Nazareth which has led archaeologists to conclude "... that Nazareth was a strongly Jewish settlement in the Roman

¹³ Lee Strobel, The Case for Christ (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998) 51.

¹⁴ Josh McDowell, A Ready Defense, compiled by Bill Wilson. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993) 111-112.

¹⁵ J.D. Douglas, ed. *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1986) 819.

period.”¹⁶ Thus, as these two examples have shown, archaeology continues to demonstrate the canonical Gospels are coherent with what we know about first century Palestine.

A true examination of the evidence has shown Dan Brown's first allegation that the canonical Gospels are not historically reliable documents on the life of Jesus is historical fiction and not historical fact.¹⁷ As Craig Evan notes,

There's every reason to conclude that the Gospels have fairly and accurately reported the essential elements of Jesus' teachings, life, death, and resurrection. They're early enough, they're rooted into the right streams that go back to Jesus and the original people, there's continuity, there's proximity, there's verification of certain distinct points with archaeology and other documents, and then there's the inner logic. That's what pulls it all together.¹⁸

Allegation #2: Jesus was only human. No one claimed He was divine until the Council of Nicea in the fourth century.

Another allegation made in *The Da Vinci Code* is the idea that Jesus was never recognized by his followers as divine until the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. Consider the following comment made by Teabing, “... until *that* moment in history [Council of Nicea], Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet...a great and powerful man, but a man nonetheless. A mortal... Jesus' establishment as ‘the Son of God’ was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicea.”¹⁹ The idea that Jesus' divinity developed over time and was not the official teaching of Jesus and His followers is not

¹⁶ Jack Finegan, The Archaeology of the New Testament (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) 46.

¹⁷ In contrast to the canonical Gospels, the Gnostic Gospels are dated much later (2nd-3rd century); they lack authority since they were not written by eyewitnesses or people associated with eyewitnesses – no one really even knows who wrote these Gospels; and they lack coherence in that they do not accurately reflect first century Palestine (i.e. the Gnostic Gospel of Peter records that the ruling priests spent the night in the graveyard to ensure that no one stole Jesus' body. This comment, as Craig Evans notes, demonstrates an ignorance of first-century political and cultural realities in Palestine.

¹⁸ Strobel, *The Case for the Real Jesus* 58.

¹⁹ Brown 233.

exclusive to Dan Brown's fictional work. This notion has been promoted by liberal scholars, atheists, Muslims, and even Jehovah's Witnesses. In light of this allegation, the main question before us then is did Jesus and His followers affirm His deity prior to the Council of Nicea?²⁰ For if it is the case that there is evidence that confirms that Jesus was recognized as divine prior to the Council of Nicea, then this will deal a decisive blow to Dan Brown's allegation, and demonstrate that it is nothing more than the fanciful imagination of a fictional writer.

As we examine the evidence, we do find sources that affirm Jesus' deity prior to the Council of Nicea. Consider the following four examples:

1. The Canonical Gospels (A.D. 50-100): In the canonical Gospels, we find a vast amount of material that portrays Jesus as being a divine figure. For instance, the Gospels record Jesus as acknowledging His own deity. One way Jesus does this is by applying titles to Himself that were titles used in reference to Yahweh in the Old Testament. For instance, Jesus used the title "I AM" as declaration of who He was.²¹ "Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM'" (John 8:58). Yahweh first used the usage of "I AM" in the Old Testament when He revealed who He was to Moses (Exodus 3:14). Many have argued that Jesus' use of the title I AM merely speaks of His pre-existence and not His divinity. However, after Jesus applies this title to Himself, we find that the Jews became angry and picked up stones to kill Jesus because they clearly understood that by using this title ("I AM") Jesus was claiming to be Yahweh.²² As Robert Morey notes, "If all Jesus

²⁰ It is important to keep in mind that the issue at hand is not whether Jesus was actually divine, but whether or not His followers believed that He was divine. In other words, this is primarily a historical issue and not a theological one.

²¹ There are other titles used in reference to Yahweh in the OT that are ascribed to Jesus in the NT such as, "The Good Shepherd" (Yahweh, Psalm 23:1; Jesus, John 10:11-16); "The First and the Last" (Yahweh, Isaiah 44:6; Jesus, Revelation 22:13); "Creator" (Yahweh, Isaiah 44:24; Jesus, Colossians 1:16); and Savior (Yahweh, Isaiah 45:21; Jesus, Luke 2:11; John 4:42).

²² In the Old Testament (Leviticus 24:16), stoning was the proper method used to put to death an individual who blasphemed the name of the Lord. In John 10:31-33, we find the same response by the crowd to one of Jesus' affirmations about His identity. In this passage, not only do the Jews pick up stones to stone Jesus, but they give their

wanted to say was that He existed before Abraham, all He had to do was to use the imperfect tense "I was." But this would not have caused a riot and an assassination attempt. It is His use of the present tense and the way He said it that made them riot."²³

2. Pauline Epistles (A.D. 50-70): Another pre-Nicene source that confirms the deity of Jesus is the Pauline epistles. One clear example is from Paul's epistle to the church at Colosse.²⁴ One of the main reasons why Paul writes this epistle was to respond to a heresy known as Gnosticism, which was infiltrating the church. Gnosticism taught that the physical body was evil, and, therefore, God could not be incarnate in a human body. In response, Paul acknowledges that the fullness of God does dwell in Jesus, "For in Him [Jesus] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (2:9)." The usage of the word "dwells" by Paul is significant, not only because it suggests the notion of permanent residence, but also because it is in the present tense and therefore denotes a continuous action. Thus, in essence what Paul is saying is that Jesus was, is and always will be the permanent residence of God.²⁵

3. Early Church Fathers: A third pre-Nicene source that affirms Jesus was viewed as divine is the writings by some of the early church fathers. Consider the following three examples:

Ignatius (A.D. 30-107): "We have also as a Physician the Lord our God, Jesus the Christ, the only-begotten Son and Word, before time began..."²⁶

Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-165): "... who [Jesus] also, being the first-begotten Word of God, is even God."²⁷

reason for wanting to stone Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God."

²³ Robert Morey, The Trinity: Evidence and Issues (Grand Rapids: Word Publishing, 1996) 364.

²⁴ Paul wrote Colossians during his first Roman imprisonment (c. A.D. 60-62).

²⁵ For a further examination of this passage, and other passages in the New Testament that acknowledge the deity of Jesus, please refer to chapter 17 of Robert Morey's book, The Trinity: Evidence and Issues.

²⁶ Ignatius, The Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians, Chapter 7. [CD-ROM The Sage Digital Library]. "The Ante-Nicene Fathers," Vol. 1. ed. Philip Schaff (Albany, OR: Sage Software, 1996).

²⁷ Justin Martyr, The First Apology, Chapter 63. [CD-ROM The Sage Digital Library]. "The Ante-Nicene Fathers," Vol. 1. ed. Philip Schaff (Albany, OR: Sage Software, 1996).

Irenaeus (A.D. 120-202): "Proofs from the apostolic writings, that Jesus Christ was one and the same, the only begotten Son of God, perfect God and perfect man."²⁸

4. Non-Christian source: We also have an example of a non-Christian source that confirms that Jesus was perceived as divine by His followers prior to the Council of Nicea. The source is a letter that Pliny the Younger, who served as governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor, wrote to Emperor Trajan about how to deal with Christians who were in his realm of jurisdiction. In this letter, which has been dated by scholars to be written around A.D. 112, Pliny makes the following comment about the early Christian worship of Christ: "They [the Christians] were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god...."²⁹

While the above discussion has not provided a definitive conclusion as to whether Jesus was actually divine, it has provided a definitive conclusion on whether Jesus was considered to be divine by His earliest followers. Thus, the claim that Jesus was not considered divine until the Council of Nicea in the fourth century is another example of Dan Brown's book propagating historical fiction.

Allegation #3: Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and she was pregnant with His child.

A final allegation made in *The Da Vinci Code* is the notion that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and that she became pregnant with His child. Consider the following comment made by Teabing, "Behold... the greatest cover-up in human history. Not only was Jesus Christ married, but He was a father. My dear, Mary Magdalene was the Holy Vessel. She was the chalice that bore the royal bloodline of Jesus Christ."³⁰

²⁸ Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book III, Chapter 16, Title. [CD-ROM The Sage Digital Library]. "The Ante-Nicene Fathers," Vol. 1. ed. Philip Schaff (Albany, OR: Sage Software, 1996).

²⁹ Pliny, Letters, transl. by William Melmoth, rev. by W.M.L. Hutchinson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), vol. II, X:96.

³⁰ Brown 249.

This allegation is another example of the fanciful imagination of a fictional writer. The Jesus bloodline theory is rooted in historical fiction. There is ABSOLUTELY NO historical evidence (biblical or extra-biblical) that supports the idea that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene.³¹ The only sources that people who hold to this theory can appeal to are the Gnostic gospels. For instance, in *The Da Vinci Code*, Teabing appeals to the Gnostic Gospel of Philip to support his claim that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene. However, beyond the fact that the Gnostic gospels are not trustworthy documents on the life of Jesus, as they were written over a hundred years after the events of His life, they nowhere claim that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene. Consider the passage from the Gnostic Gospel of Philip used in *The Da Vinci Code*: “The companion of the [savior] is Mary of Magdala. The [savior loved] her more than [all] the disciples, [and he] kissed her often on her [mouth]. The other [disciples] ... said to him, ‘Why do you love her more than all of us?’”³² As we examine this passage we first find out that it does not mention that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married. To draw that conclusion from this passage would be an example of the fallacy of non sequitur (false conclusion). Second, in contrast to the claim made in *The Da Vinci Code*, the Gnostic Gospel of Philip was originally written in Coptic and not in Aramaic. This is significant because some scholars have pointed out that the Coptic word for companion, which is a loan word from Greek (*koinonos*), conveys the idea of a fellowship or a friendship. Thus, in essence what you have being conveyed is not the idea of a spouse, but that Jesus and Mary Magdalene are associates or friends.³³ Third, the text does not say that Jesus kissed Mary on the mouth. Since the text has been damaged, the word “mouth” has been inserted. In its original form, it could have easily said that Jesus kissed her on her

³¹ Even liberal scholars, such as John Dominic Crossan and Bart Ehrman, argue that there is no evidence that supports Jesus being married and having children.

³² Marvin Meyer, ed., “The Gospel of Philip,” *The Gnostic Gospels of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 2005) 63.

³³ Within the context of the Gnostic worldview, it appears that the special “fellowship” or “friendship” shared between Jesus and Mary Magdalene is not sexual in nature; but it is that they share a hidden spiritual knowledge (*gnosis*), which is not shared with the other disciples.

“cheek,” on her “forehead,” or even on her “hand.” Finally, if Jesus and Mary Magdalene are married, then why are the disciples upset that Jesus is showing more affection and love to her than to them? Even if it is the case that the Gnostic Gospel of Philip portrays Jesus as being married to Mary Magdalene, as a 3rd century document it lacks credibility as being a reliable source on the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

Beyond the problems associated with the Gnostic sources, the following are two other historical reasons which decisively point to the conclusion that Jesus was not married:

1. Celibacy was not forbidden in the Jewish culture: In Dan Brown’s book, it is asserted that Jesus was married because celibacy was forbidden in the Jewish culture.³⁴ However, while it is the case that marriage was the norm, it is not the case that celibacy was forbidden. For example, there are Jeremiah and Elijah in the Old Testament, and John the Baptist, and perhaps Paul (1 Corinthians 7:8), in the New Testament, who lived celibate lives. In addition, the Jewish historian Josephus records in his writings that celibacy was practiced by the Essenes of the Dead Sea community at Qumran. Josephus mentions that one of the distinguishing marks of the Essenes was that they “neglected wedlock” in their attempt to conquer their passions.³⁵

2. The Bible nowhere indicates that Jesus was married: The earliest documents that we have on the life of Jesus (canonical Gospels), and some of the earliest documents on early Christianity (Pauline epistles), make no mention that Jesus was married. This is important to keep in mind because there are several places in the Bible that, if Jesus were married, one would expect the authors to make reference to this marriage. Consider the following two examples: First, in John chapter 19, while Jesus is on the cross, He asks His disciple John to take care of His mother,

³⁴ Brown 245.

³⁵ Flavius Josephus, The War of the Jews. Book II, Chapter 8, Section 2. Recent archeological discoveries at the Qumran community also support the claim that the Essenes practiced celibacy. See the following work by Geza Vermes, The Dead Sea Scrolls in English.

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Women, behold your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home. (John 19:25-27).

If Jesus was married, as asserted in *The Da Vinci Code*, then this passage raises some perplexing questions. First, why did the author, John, not identify Mary Magdalene as Jesus' wife when he identifies the relationship between Jesus and the other two women in the passage? Second, if Mary Magdalene was His wife, then following His crucifixion why did Jesus not make arrangements for her when He made arrangements for His mother?

Second, in I Corinthians 9:5 Paul defends his right to have a wife (which it appears that he never acted upon): "Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?" Now if Jesus were married, then certainly Paul would have cited Jesus as his example rather than the apostles. What greater appeal could Paul have made to validate his right to marry than the fact that Jesus was married! However, Paul makes no mention of Jesus being married, and as historian Paul Maier notes, "First Corinthians 9:5 is the graveyard of the married-Jesus fiction."³⁶

Once again we have found another allegation made in Dan Brown's book that is rooted in historical fiction. However, in contrast to the previous two allegations, the truth of this allegation does not carry much weight in its assault on historical Christianity. For, if evidence was presented which showed that Jesus was married and had children, this in no way would negate His divinity and undercut the foundation of historical Christianity as argued in Dan Brown's novel. Since Jesus is recognized as being truly human, it could have been *possible* for Him to have been married and had children, yet maintain His identity as acknowledged by historic Christianity. Nevertheless,

³⁶ Hank Hanegraaff and Paul L. Maier, *The DaVinci Code Fact or Fiction* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004) 21.

what is *possibly* the case does not always mean what is *actually* the case. Thus, in light of the historical evidence that we presently have about Jesus' life, the burden of proof lies with Dan Brown.

The above is just a glimpse at three of the false allegations made in Dan Brown's book. An honest examination of the other allegations made in his book about historical Christianity will clearly reveal that the conspiracy to hide the truth does not lie with the Christian church, as claimed in *The Da Vinci Code*, but with Dan Brown's pen.

V. Conclusion

"Actually, I am far more furious at *The Da Vinci Code* as a professor of ancient history than I am as a Christian. The church has been attacked for two thousand years now. Well, what's new? But I cannot stand it when universally accepted facts of the past are falsified. This I cannot take."³⁷ This comment made by Paul Maier, who is a professor of ancient history at Western Michigan, summarizes the major problem with Dan Brown's book. As Maier notes, the problem is not with his blatant attack on the Christian church, but that in his attack he attempts to re-write history by interweaving false historical allegations to support his bogus conclusions. Therefore, the real issue at hand is who (Dan Brown or orthodox Christianity) has the right "facts" about Jesus. As the above has shown, the facts decisively favor the orthodox portrait of Jesus of Nazareth, in contrast to the "fictional" Jesus of Dan Brown's imagination. Thus, all Christians who adhere to the orthodox faith can rest confident in knowing the answer to the question: "Who is Jesus of Nazareth?"

Nevertheless, while history can tell us a lot about who Jesus of Nazareth was, by itself it can never bring us to His true identity. In fact, unregenerate man, left to his own human reason, experience, and feelings will always fall short in his quest for truth. It is only when God's spirit awakens our minds that we can say as Peter, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." As Jesus noted in His response to Peter's affirmation,

³⁷ Lee Strobel and Gary Poole, *Exploring the Da Vinci Code* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2006) 19.

"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17).

VI. Reflections on *The Da Vinci Code*

In a time when objectivity is denied and "truth" is nothing more than a person's preference for a particular flavor of ice cream, the church needs to be more aggressive in its task of apologetics. In fact, with the saturation of postmodernism into every facet of society, the church must stand up and share the authoritative and absolute truth of the Gospel message. Unfortunately, with the motivation of wanting to be "relevant," many in the church have embraced the tenets of postmodernism, and instead of reforming the culture through the Gospel message, they have allowed culture to reform the Gospel message. Thus, the Gospel no longer possesses the exclusive message of salvation; instead, it is merely one narrative (worldview) among many other equally authentic narratives (worldviews). Since this is the case, many Christians have begun to assimilate other belief systems into their Christian faith. As a result, Christianity has become a smorgasbord of opinions and beliefs, with no clearly defining parameters on what constitutes the true message of Jesus Christ. Then comes along a book like *The Da Vinci Code* or a documentary like the *Lost Tomb of Jesus*,³⁸ and we all wonder why the majority of Christians are not only inept in being able to articulate a response to the attacks these books and commentaries make against the Christian faith, but also why so many Christians begin to question, and even in some cases, lose their faith. However, should we really be that surprised? Since postmodernism has saturated the Christian church, not only is the average believer un-prepared to give a reason for the hope that he has, but he does not even know the reason for the hope that he has. Thus, *The Da Vinci Code* should be a wake up call to the church. Dan Brown has presented the church with a great

³⁸ *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* was a documentary that aired on the Discovery Channel on March 4, 2007. In this documentary, director Simcha Jacobovici presents "evidence" to support his claim that he found the "Jesus Family Tomb, in which Jesus, his wife Mary Magdalene, and their son Judah were buried, along with other family members.

challenge, and the following are four correctives that can once again equip the church to contend for the faith.

First, pastors need to get back to sound biblical preaching. God's word is essential for a believer's life. However, many messages from the pulpit today make little to no reference to the Bible. Instead of the Bible being the main source of instruction for the body of Christ, many rely solely upon personal stories, jokes, and skits. While these are not unbiblical methods of communication, they certainly should not be the main source(s) of instruction during a Sunday morning service. God's Word should be our main source of instruction! The Bible provides God's people with proper direction (it tells us why we are here and where we are going), proper doctrine (it tells us what we need to know), proper discernment (it tells us how we can know right from wrong), and proper discipline (it tells us how we are to live). Instead of the Bible being a footnote in Sunday morning messages, we need to adhere to the command by Paul, "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2).

Second, Christians need to be educated on the historical roots of the Christian faith. *The Da Vinci Code* has exposed the lack of knowledge that the body of Christ today possesses about the history of the church in general, and the history of the early church specifically. While there are a variety of reasons why studying church history is beneficial, the following are just two of these reasons. First, consideration of church history helps to illuminate and clarify Christian theology. Those who have gone before us are great sources of information in helping us on our intellectual journey into the Christian faith. Second, church history is a great instrument in helping a believer avoid false teaching and in turn equip him in contending for the faith. As church historian Earle E. Cairns notes, "Ignorance of the Bible and the history of the church is a major reason why many advocate false theologies or bad practices."³⁹ In order to effectively respond to contemporary theories that attempt to re-

³⁹ Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996) 22.

define who was Jesus of Nazareth, all Christians need to have a better understanding about the roots of their faith.

Third, Christians need to saturate their lives in prayer. *The Da Vinci Code* should be a reminder to all believers that we are in an intense spiritual battle. In this battle, the enemy earnestly desires to enslave the hearts and the minds of every individual. Perhaps this battle is most intense on high school and college campuses. Many of these intuitions have become a feeding ground for Satan to launch his vicious assault on the Christian faith through false and deceptive theories, such as *The Da Vinci Code*. The result of this attack on our education system has been the tragic result of countless young adults from Christian homes who end up denying their faith before they graduate from college. In order for us to be effective in this battle, we must be persistent in prayer (Colossians 4:2), and daily ask God to open the hearts and minds of our loved ones to the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. As one of my mentors said, "The prayerless Christian is the powerless apologist." While the pages of *The Da Vinci Code* will fade away with time, all of us who follow Jesus Christ face the timeless challenge of giving a reason for the hope that we have in Jesus Christ. May we never grow weary in this task! 🙏

VII. Books for Further Study

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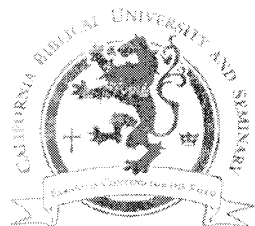
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The Eschatology of John the Baptist

© Dr. Robert A. Morey

Introduction

The importance of John the Baptist to the life, record, and interpretation of Jesus as given in the Gospels is recognized by both Jewish and Christian scholars. John's life and message must also be viewed in the context of such climatic events as the end of Israel's national existence, the destruction of its temple, the disruption of its religious life, the dispersion of its people, the closing of the age of the prophets, and the beginning of the Christian Church.

Sources of information concerning the life and ministry of John the Baptist are threefold. First, there are Old Testament passages which the authors of the New Testament interpret as prophesying the coming of the forerunner of the Messiah.

Second, there are 260 verses in the Gospels and 13 verses in the Acts which describe the life and ministry of John the Baptist. There is no mention of John the Baptist in the rest of the New Testament because, while John has a place in the history of redemption, he has no place in the work of redemption.

While various individuals such as Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets, and John the Baptist had a significant role to play in the historical unfolding of God's plan of salvation, it is only the life and death of Jesus which accomplishes this salvation. Thus, while John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus' ministry, John's life and death are not part of Christ's work of substitutionary atonement.

This is why John, like Mary, the mother of Jesus, is only referred to in the historical sections of the New Testament. The Epistles concern themselves with an explanation of the atonement, and thus neither John nor Mary are mentioned.

Third, there are the extra-biblical references to John found in the Apostolic and Early Church Fathers, the New Testament Apocrypha and apocalyptic literature, Gnostic writings, Josephus, the Salvonic Josephus, and the Qur'an.

Parentage

It is Luke alone who gives us the details of the parentage, birth and early life of John the Baptist. This is consistent with Luke being the "biographer" of the New Testament. He probably derived much of the early history of John from Mary, the mother of Jesus. The richness of detail in the account of the personal conversations between Mary and Elizabeth points to Mary as the source of Luke's account. It is assumed that Elizabeth was dead by this time, since she was "well stricken in years" when John was born.

Luke begins his account with the notation that John's birth took place while Herod was King of Judea (Lk. 1:5). This was no doubt Herod the Great, who ruled Judea from 37-4 B.C. He is referred to elsewhere only in Matt. 2:1-22, and is not to be confused with his son, Herod the Tetrarch.

John's father was named Zacharias, or in its Hellenistic form, Zachariah. In terms of his personal character, he is described as being "righteous" and "blameless" in the ways of the Lord

(Lk. 1:6). Luke also tells us that Zacharias was a temple priest of "the course of Abia" (Lk. 1:5).

Under King David, twenty-four divisions of priests were set up to regulate the worship of God (I Chron. 24:1-6). One of these divisions was under the rule of Abijah (I Chron. 24:10). Solomon maintained these same divisions under the names of the original leaders (II Chron. 8:14). After the return from

Babylon, the twenty-four divisions were set up once again by Ezra and Nehemiah.¹

As a member of the Abijah or Abia division, Zacharias was responsible to serve in the temple when his division's "course" or time of service in the temple came around. Each division was assigned a year, with the individuals of that division given one week of service within that year. What they did during that week was determined by the casting of lots. The lots determined that the honorable task of burning the morning and evening incense on the altar fell to Zacharias (Lk. 1:9).²

John's mother, Elizabeth, is also described as "righteous" and "blameless." She, like her husband, was a descendent of Aaron (Lk. 1:5). It was considered a great blessing for a priest to marry a descendent of Aaron.³ Elizabeth was "barren," and in Jewish culture this was considered a stigma of shame for the woman.⁴

The context seems to indicate that this couple felt the shame of barrenness in a deep way, and it was a matter of constant prayer and concern even after their childbearing years were over. Perhaps the stories of Sarah and Hannah encouraged them to wait for God for a miracle.

As Zacharias went into the temple to burn the incense offering, the people waited outside in the courtyard for him to return and pronounce the Aaronic blessing. As he placed the incense on the altar, an angel suddenly appeared on the right side of the altar. It is clear that Zacharias was not expecting such an event. He was seized with panic, and feared for his life (Lk 1:12).

The angel later identified himself as Gabriel, who "stands in the presence of God." This is the same angel who came to Daniel in the Old Testament (Dan. 8:16; 9:21) and later to the Virgin Mary (Lk. 1:26).

¹ Edersheim, A, The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah, Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1962, Vol. I, pp. 132f.

² For details of temple sacrifice see Mishna (Yoma 26). Talmud (Tean. 69) and Josephus (Ag. AP. 11,8)

³ Talmud (Ber. 44; Pes. 49)

⁴ Lk. 1:36 cf. Exo. 23:25-26; Deut. 7:14.

It is not necessary to seek a pagan source for the name or function of Gabriel. Besides the references in Daniel, there are a number of references to Gabriel in the intertestamental Jewish literature.

In the apocalyptic writings, Gabriel plays a significant role. For example, in the Book of I Enoch, he is listed along with three others as one of four archangels (I Enoch 9:1; 21:1, etc.). Rabbinic writings refer to Gabriel in a similar light.⁵ It is interesting to note that Mohammed claimed that it was Gabriel who carried the Qur'an to him (Qur'an, 6:85).

After telling Zacharias not to be afraid anymore, Gabriel announced that Zacharias' prayer for a son had been heard, and that Elizabeth would bear a son who was to be named "John," which means "the gift of God's grace." This would mean great joy for him and his wife, and many people would rejoice at his birth.

Gabriel then put aside the personal blessing that was in store for Zacharias, and announced that the birth of this child had far reaching implications for all Israel.

First, John would be "great in the sight of the Lord" (Lk. 1:15a.). Second, he was to be a lifelong Nazarite in that he would never drink any alcoholic beverages (Lk. 1:15b.). Third, instead of feeling the exhalation of alcohol, he would be filled with the power and joy of the Holy Spirit from his earliest days (Lk. 1:15c.). Fourth, he would turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God by going before him. Thus John would fulfill "in spirit" the Elijah prophecy which had been given in Mal. 4:5-6. The Messiah is called "the Lord their God" because of his divine nature (v.16 cf. c.17)

Zacharias' response indicates that he was still wondering how he and Elizabeth were going to have a child at their age. In his response to Gabriel, he paid no attention to the far greater news of the coming of the Messiah and John's role as Elijah the

⁵ Mishna: Sher. 2:5; Toan 2:4; Sot. 9:15; B.M. 1:8; 2:8; 3:4, 5; Eduy. 8:7

Midrash (80 references) ex. Gen. 36; Exo. 78; Lev. 32; Num 875; Deut. 44; Lam. 91; Est. 22:3,5,11; Ruth 4; Eccl. 18.

Talmud (B) (Over 100 references) ex. Ber. 6; Shab. 53; Er. 299; Pes. 58; Yom 87; Sur. 15; Sher. 8; Meg. 93.

prophet (Lk. 1:18). He simply could not believe that he was finally going to have a son (Lk. 1:20).

Zacharias objected to Gabriel's message and pointed out it was not possible for him to have a son. He was rebuked just like unbelieving Sarah, and then was struck mute as a visible reminder of his unbelief.

When Zacharias finally came out to the people, he used gestures to tell them that he had seen a vision in the temple. Little did the people know that this event signaled that Messiah's Kingdom was about to be ushered into the world.

Since he could write (Lk. 1:63), he explained Gabriel's message to Elizabeth. When the baby was born and the people wanted to name him after his father, Zacharias wrote that the baby's name was to be John. At that moment, Zacharias was healed of his inability to speak, and burst forth into a prophecy filled with Messianic expectations (Lk. 1:68-79).

In his prophecy, Zacharias revealed that he had various, soteric, eschatological, and political expectations of what the coming of the Messiah would mean. In his view of salvation, Zacharias looked forward to the age of "redemption" (v.68), salvation (v.69), "remission of sins" (v.77), etc., that the coming of the Messiah would bring about. His language reflects such prophecies as Dan. 9:24 and Jer. 31:31-34.

Because of his view of the future, Zacharias expected the imminent arrival of the great day of the Lord described in Malachi, chps. 3 and 4. The "Dayspring" or "Sun of Righteousness" was about to rise with healing in his wings to shine upon those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death (Lk. 1:79 cf. Mal. 4:2). He fully expected that all the messianic prophecies "spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old" were on the verge of being fulfilled (Lk. 1:70).

Zacharias based his expectations on the Old Testament Scriptures, and not on the speculations found in the intertestamental apocalyptic literature. While he alludes to or quotes from the Old Testament many times throughout his prophecy, he never once refers to the apocryphal writers.

In Lk. 1:70, Zacharias cited "the holy prophets of long ago" as the source of his expectations. That he meant the Old

Testament prophets is obvious from his use of Old Testament citations.⁶

Politically, he expected that the coming of the Messianic Kingdom meant Israel's deliverance from all her enemies (vs. 71,74). In this case, he likely thought that the nation's deliverance from Rome would soon happen. His expectation of political deliverance is rooted in the Old Testament vision of the universal peace that the arrival of the Messianic Kingdom would usher into existence. This is particularly true of the prophet Isaiah, who described Israel as dwelling in peace and security after the Messiah comes (Isa. 2:2-4; 32:17-18; etc.).

With the close of the prophecy, Zacharias is never mentioned in Scripture again. The inspired writers do not tell us when or how he died.

When we turn to extra-biblical sources, we find the tradition recorded in both orthodox and Gnostic texts that when King Herod ordered the death of the male infants in Bethlehem, he sent a delegation to Zacharias with instructions to find and kill the young child John. Zacharias was in the temple when they demanded that he tell them the location of his son. When he steadfastly refused, they killed him in the temple.⁷

In later traditions, instead of being buried, the body of Zacharias was carried by the angels into heaven, where he will one day confront his murderers.⁸

The commonly-held legend of Zacharias' death in the temple led many in the early church to interpret the statement of Jesus in Matt. 23:35 to refer to the father of John the Baptist, and not to the Old Testament prophet who also had the name Zacharias

⁶ Gen. 17:7; 22:16; Lev. 26:42; Num. 24:17; I Sam. 2:10; Psa. 18:3; 19:44; 42:14; 72:18; 78:7,16; 89:53; 92:10; 105:8; 106:10; 45:48; 111:9; 132:17; Isa. 9:1; 42:7; 59:8; 60:1; Jer. 11:5; 23:5; 30:8; 31:34; Mic. 3:1; 7:20; Zech. 3:8; 6:12.

⁷ The Protevangelium of James, 23: origin, Com. ser. 25 in Matt., etc.). For all references see Berendts, A, Studren uber Zacharias -Apokryphen und Zacharias -Legenden, (Leipzig, 1895).

⁸ (The Apocalypse of Paul.51). (10) (Protevangelium of James, 23; Gospel of Nicodemus, II, XVIII.2).

or Zachariah.⁹ The context of the verse rules out this interpretation.

Elizabeth's relationship to her cousin Mary is significant. When Gabriel visited Mary with the news that she is the virgin who is to give birth to the Messiah, he also told her of Elizabeth's conception (Lk. 1:36). This led Mary to travel to the home of Elizabeth to share what the angel had told her.

When Mary gave her salutation, Elizabeth exclaimed that the infant within her gave a sudden kick for joy. She was immediately filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied that Mary was to be the mother of her Lord. Luke is careful to lead the reader to the conclusion that, since Mary had just come and had not yet told Elizabeth her story, Elizabeth had obtained her knowledge of Mary's honor due to a direct revelation from the Spirit of God. In this way, the supernatural character of the birth of John the Baptist is underlined.

This same use of supernatural revelation is repeated later by Luke when he recounts the inspired revelations received by both Anna and Simeon when Jesus was brought to the temple (Lk. 2:25-38). Their knowledge came directly from God, and this strengthens the supernatural context of the nativity story.

Elizabeth is never mentioned again in Scripture. When we turn to the extra-biblical sources, we find the tradition that, after her husband was killed in the temple, she fled into the wilderness where she eluded those sent to kill her son. She took care of John until he was seven years old. After her death, Gabriel and other angels cared for John until he was self-sufficient.¹⁰

Names and Designations

John is referred to in a number of ways in the Old and New Testaments. Each name or designation emphasizes some aspect of his role as the forerunner of the Messiah.

⁹ Protevang. James 23; Origen Com. on Matt. Br. X, sec. 18; Basil in The Canonical Epistles, Can. VIII.

¹⁰ (Protevangeliium of James, 23; Gospel of Nicodemus, II, XVIII.2).

1. He is called "A Crying Voice" in Isa. 40:3-5. It is this title that is used by all four Gospel writers when they introduced his public ministry (Matt. 3:3; Mk. 1:3; Lk. 3:4; John 1:23).
2. Mal. 3:1 calls the forerunner of the Messiah "My Messenger." This is used by all the Synoptic writers (Matt. 11:10; Mk. 1:2; Lk. 7:27).
3. In Mal. 4:5-6, the forerunner is identified as "the prophet Elijah." Matthew refers to John as such in Matt. 11:14 and 17:11-13.
4. He is called "a prophet" in Matt. 11:9; 21:26 and Lk. 1:76.
5. He is "more than a prophet" (Matt. 11:9, 11-12).
6. John is the "greatest prophet" (Matt. 11:11).
7. At the same time, John is "less than the least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 11:11).
8. He is "a witness to the light" (John 1:7).
9. Jesus refers to John as "the bridegroom's friend" in John 3:28-30).
10. He is simply called "John" in such places as Matt. 21:32 or Acts 19:3-4, where the context clearly indicates that the Baptist and not the apostle is under discussion.
11. When John, the son of Zebedee, was called to be one of the twelve apostles (Matt. 10:2), this created the possibility of confusing him with John, the son of Zacharias. This led the writers of the Gospels to use the title "John the Baptist" fourteen times to make it clear when they were referring to the son of Zacharias.

Early Years

Luke is the only Gospel writer to tell us anything of John's early years. All we are told is that John was "filled with the Holy Spirit" from childhood (Lk. 1:15), and that he "grew and waxed strong in spirit and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel" (Lk. 1:80).

The question sometimes arises as to why the other Gospels begin with John's public ministry and not with his birth or early years, like Luke.

First, the Elijah prophecy of Mal. 4:5-6 does not concern itself with the previous history of Elijah before he comes as the forerunner of the Messiah. Thus it is John's public ministry that begins the fulfillment of the Malachi prophecy. His birth and early years are not part of the fulfillment.

A second reason is that a very widely accepted Elijah tradition developed during the intertestamental period. Elijah was pictured as suddenly appearing either out of heaven or out of nowhere. (See section on the Elijah tradition.)

Some early Christian sects, such as the second century Ebionites, a heretical movement which denied Christ's divine nature, dropped Luke's material altogether so that John appears suddenly at the beginning of his ministry.¹¹ They did this in order to conform it to the Jewish expectation of Elijah Gospel.

Another issue which often arises at this point is the question of whether or not John was an Essene. The evidence is now clear that John was not an Essene.¹²

When the Zadokite Document was first published in 1910, there was a flurry of speculation that John the Baptist was not only a member of the Essene Community, but he was also "the Teacher of Righteousness." This would have made Jesus and Christianity itself a mere extension of the Essene movement.

With the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls and their publication beginning in the 1950's, it became obvious that John could not be "the Teacher of Righteousness," because the Teacher died a century before John was born.

Since the Manual of Discipline does not mention an office of "Teacher of Righteousness" and the original Teacher was a legislator of a community, what possible relationship would he have to an itinerant evangelist who never attempted to found a separate community?

¹¹ Epiphanius: Panarion, Haer. 29

¹² See section on Esseneans.

John did not call people to leave the "world" and join a secret society or community in the desert. He sent his disciples back to their families and jobs (Lk 3:10-14). John cannot be identified as the Teacher of the Qumran community.

As to whether John was an Essene, it is still stated by some that John was an Essene on the sole basis that he had been in the desert before he began his ministry. Since the Essenes had a community in the desert, John must have lived with them.¹³ This argument leaves much to be desired. The desert portions of Israel are quite large, and there is no compelling reason why John would have to live with the Essenes. As a matter of fact, the Essenes were but one among several sects which made the desert their home.

When one considers the tremendous differences between John and the Essenes, one must conclude that they were likely hostile to each other. This would be in agreement with the early tradition of the opposition of the Essenes to John's ministry mentioned in the Salvonic Josephus (War ii.110f). Indeed, there is not mention of John being an Essene in any of the early literature. If he had been an Essene, this would have been mentioned.

The following is a list of a few of the contrasts between the Essenes and John the Baptist. Most of these contrasts equally apply to the question of whether Jesus was an Essene.

The Essenes	John the Baptist
1. Community-centered	Independent, solitary
2. Preached to members only	Preached to all
3. Taught people to abandon city life and join their desert community.	Never directed his converts to a community or to abandon the city.
4. Encouraged asceticism.	No record of this

¹³ The Jewish Encyclopedia bases most of its claim that John was an Essene on the fact he was in the desert.

5. Discouraged marriage	No record of this.
6. Oaths required.	No oaths required.
7. Initiation into the community	No initiation and no community
8. Righteousness was external	Righteousness was internal
9. Saw the Law as the means of salvation.	Repentance and faith are all that is necessary.
10. The Jewish race viewed as the elect.	Being a Jew meant nothing/salvation was not racial, but personal (Lk.3:7-9).
11. Never left that community	Had an itinerant ministry.
12. Looked for two Messiahs	Only one Messiah: Jesus
13. Preached against the Temple and its Worship	Came from a family of temple priests/never condemned the temple or its worship
14. Secret teachings	No secret teachings
15. Ritual washings	No such practice
16. Wore white robes	Wore camel skins.
17. Immersion repeatedly used as a rite of Purification	Converts baptized once for repentance.
18. No outreach to convert people.	Sought the conversion of people.
19. Legalists	No legalism
20. Emphasis on rituals and forms	No rituals or forms.

On the basis of the above contrasts, we must conclude that John's ministry did not arise out of the Essene movement of the First Century.

John as a Prophet

Since both the Old and New Testaments speak of the forerunner of the Messiah as a "Prophet" (Mal. 4:5-6; Lk. 1:76), it is important to understand in what sense John was a prophet.

Jewish prophetism can be broken down into two basic types. First, there is the classic Old Testament prophet who proclaimed the will of God as it related to the past, present and future of God's people. The Old Testament prophet was not primarily a fore-teller, but a forth-teller. He could give exhortations, laws, guidance, etc., as well as predictions concerning the future. He was not irrational or esoteric in his ministry. He spoke as God's representative to His people to exhort them to submit to the will of God. He pointed out their sins and called them to repentance. He warned them of divine judgment if they did not repent.

Second, there was a development of different kinds of prophetism during the intertestamental period. One great error made by most Christians is the assumption that there were no prophets in Israel between Malachi and Matthew. Some have even called this period the "four hundred silent years."

During the intertestamental period, there were hundreds and perhaps even thousands of self-styled prophets. Nearly every sect within Judaism had its own prophets (see Josephus Bell. 2. 159). The Essenes even had a "school of the prophets!"

As a matter of record, the intertestamental period was not barren of prophetic utterances, but filled with written and verbal prophecies, some of which have survived in the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha.

There was, first of all, an apocalyptic movement which concerned itself primarily with the end of the world and the final resurrection and judgment of the last day. They reported experiencing graphic visions of the end times and the eternal bliss and torment which followed. They did not hesitate to claim direct revelation, and neither did they hesitate to claim a Biblical character as the author of their work to give it authenticity. Spurious works of Adam, Enoch, Daniel, etc, became quite common. They fully expected the end of the world in their own lifetime.

The second strain of prophetism during this period is the beginning of the inspired interpretations of the Law and the Prophets. Various commentaries and Targums claimed divine inspiration in their interpretation of the Law (ex. The Habakkuk Commentary). The roots of rabbinic Judaism lie here.

Third, there was also what could be called sibylic prophetism, was composed of "inspired" hymns, psalms, poems, visions, etc., which gave warnings to the gentile world that the end was coming and they must prepare for the Judgment. These prophetic writings were evangelistic in that they concerned people outside the nation. This is in contrast to the apocalyptic writers who were concerned only with Israel.

Undoubtedly there were more genres of prophetism than the four we named. Indeed, each group can be subdivided into several smaller categories, but enough has been stated to enable us to identify what kind of prophet John the Baptist was.

He was not an apocalyptic prophet, for he did not claim to experience any visions or dreams of the end times. He never claimed authenticity for his message by placing it under the name of a biblical figure. His message centered on the need for personal repentance and salvation to prepare oneself for the coming of the Messiah and his kingdom. Neither can John be classed with the interpretive or sibylic prophets. He did not fit any intertestamental classifications.

According to the New Testament, John was the last of the Old Testament prophets (Matt. 11:13; Lk. 16:16). As such, he became the bridge between the two testaments. He stood with one foot in the old covenant and one foot in the new covenant. He was not part of the Bride, but he was the groom's attendant and friend. While he was the greatest prophet under the old order, he was less than least in the new order. As such, John must be viewed as having a unique ministry which signaled the close of the age of the law and the prophets, and the beginning of Messiah's kingdom.

The Elijah Prophecy

In Justin's Dialogue with Trypho (XliX, Ch.L), Trypho raises the objection that Jesus could not be the Messiah because Elijah had not literally and personally returned as prophesied by Malachi.

While Justin's discussion of the issue is the first recorded instance in church history of an attempt to solve this seeming contradiction, Luke's account of Gabriel's announcement to Zacharias is careful to record that John would go forth "in the spirit and power of Elijah," and that this would be the fulfillment of Mal. 4:5-6 (Lk. 1:17).

The words "in the spirit of" may indicate that by the time Luke wrote his Gospel, the Elijah prophecy was already being used to discredit the claim that Jesus was the Messiah.

In Isa. 40:3-4, 9-11, the forerunner of YHWH would be a "Crying Voice." In Mal. 3:1-3, this forerunner is called the "Messenger of the Covenant" who will prepare the way for YHWH's coming to earth. This is followed up in Mal, 4:5-6 by the identification of Elijah as the prophet who would prepare the way for the Messiah.

Elijah is viewed by many as the greatest of the early prophets. His life and work included not only a fierce denouncement of the prevailing apostasy of his day, but mighty miracles such as raising people from the dead and healing the sick. He was taken to heaven without tasting death and, like Enoch, is still alive.

The similarities between Elijah and John are striking. Both men wore camel skins. Both men continually traveled and did not have a permanent place of work. They were often in the desert. Both men were fearless in their denouncing of sin in the political and religious leaders of the nation.¹⁴

The major difference between the two ministries was that John did no miracles (John 10:41), and whereas Elijah ministered at the beginning of the age of the prophets, John ministered at its close (Matt. 11:13).

Justin correctly pointed out that the "Elijah" prophesied by Malachi need not be interpreted literally. Just as Joshua ministered in "the spirit and power" of Moses and became another "Moses" to the people, even so, John came in "the spirit and power" of Elijah and became another "Elijah."

¹⁴ II Kings 1:8; I Kings 17:2,9; 18:2, 10-29 cf. Matt 3:4; Lk. 3:3,19.

We might also add that there is no warrant for approaching Mal. 4:5-6 or any other passage of Scripture with the assumption that it should be interpreted literally. We must approach Scripture with the intent to let the context of each passage determine if it is to be understood in a literal or figurative sense.

Even with this point firmly in mind it must be admitted that when dealing with prophecy, even the context may not provide any clues as to how it should be interpreted. The only way to know if a given prophecy is literal or figurative is to wait until it is fulfilled.

The Elijah prophecy is the clearest example of the principle that the fulfillment of prophecy is its best interpretation. There is nothing in the context of Mal. 4:5-6 that indicates that the "Elijah" spoken of was anyone other than the prophet Elijah. John's fulfillment of the prophecy "in spirit" cannot be viewed as a "literal" fulfillment in any sense.

When we turn to the intertestamental period, we find a rich Elijah tradition.

In the Babylonian Talmud, Elijah is referred to over one hundred times. He appeared to people frequently as himself or in disguise (Ber. 6:28; Shib. 11:534). He would appear to answer difficult questions concerning the Law (Shab. II, 523; Pes. 58; Ta. 109f). His appearances could be in visions, dreams or even floating in mid-air (Er. 299). When confronted with perplexing questions of the meaning of the Law, it was quite normal for the rabbis to say, "When Elijah comes, he will tell us."

While Elijah's ministry was viewed as an ongoing work, his special task awaited the coming of Messiah's kingdom.

While Elijah is viewed as the forerunner of the Messiah (Yoma 87; Suk. 251; BM 441; San. 658), it is Elijah who raises the dead, re-gathers Israel, and judges all men (Pes. 360-361). Elijah is always given a bigger role in the end time events than the Messiah. If Elijah does not come, the Messiah cannot come either (Er. 299-300; BM 296). The time of Messiah's coming is predicted in San. 659, and the name of his father is to be Joseph, according to Suk. 351. World history can be understood in terms of 2,000 years of chaos, 2,000 years of the Torah, and then 2,000 years of Messiah's kingdom (San. 657).

The Mishnah refers to Elijah seven times in the same ways that the Talmuds speak of him. He is seen as resurrecting all men at his coming (Sa. 9:15; BM 2:8; Shek. 2:5). He will come to settle the controversies over the Law (BM 1:8; 3:4-5; Ab. 4:20).

In the Targums, Elijah was to anoint the Messiah with oil (Pseudo. John on Exo.xl.10). He is elsewhere compared to Moses and Phineas.

The Apocrypha speaks of Elijah in Ecclus., Tobit, Wis. of Sol., I & II Macc. and Baruch. He is pictured as re-gathering Israel and resolving controversies over the Law in the same way as the Talmuds.

In the apocalyptic literature, Elijah and the Messiah appear suddenly out of heaven to begin the resurrection and judgment. Elijah is in the forefront of the activity, not the Messiah. The Apocalypse of Elijah is an example of the predominate role that Elijah would play in the end times.

Given the intertestamental traditions concerning the literal return of Elijah and the end of the world, it is no wonder that this later proved to be a stumbling block to the Jews. The importance of this issue is underlined by the fact that the New Testament devoted more than a dozen verses to establish that although John was not literally Elijah the prophet (Lk. 1:17; John 1:21), he was spiritually the "Elijah" predicted by Malachi (Matt. 11:14).

The New Testament Apocrypha and early Fathers never claimed that John was literally Elijah the prophet (Apoc. of Paul, 51). Elijah would still appear at the end of the world to die with Enoch as the two witnesses of Rev. 11:3f (Gospel of Bar. CPV 17; Gospel of Nic. lx (xxv); Apoc. of Peter (Eth.): 2; Pseudo. Clem. Hll. 17.1).

Some commentators have suggested that perhaps Mal. 3:4-5 was literally fulfilled when Elijah appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, or that he will yet return to literally fulfill the original prophecy.

Neither of these suggestions resolve the fact that the New Testament writers stated quite clearly that John the Baptist was the complete fulfillment of the Elijah prophecy. They could do this because they were not bound by an a priori literalistic

hermeneutic. The Malachi prophecy was not intended to be "literal" in its fulfillment. Thus there should be no conflict or concern over John's fulfillment of what Malachi prophesied.

In the Qur'an, John the Baptist and Elijah are both referred to as prophets (6:85), but it is John who takes on the intertestamental Elijah role of resurrecting the dead at the end of the world (19:13). John is viewed as a sinless man as well as a great prophet (6:85-86; 19:13-14).

John's Ministry

Luke is very careful to date the beginning of John's ministry by stating in Lk. 3:1-2 that John began his preaching during the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. This would place the beginning of his ministry between 26-27 A.D.

John dressed himself in camel skins, as did Elijah (II Kings 1:8 cf. Matt. 3:4). The use of locusts and honey as food was already established in the Old Testament (Lev. 11:22; Psa. 81:16, etc). There is no mention of such a diet in the Qumran texts.

We are told in the New Testament that John taught his disciples to pray and to fast (Matt. 9:14). This is pointed out as one of the differences between the ministries of John and Jesus (Matt. 9:14-17).

John's message focused on the need of personal preparation to enter a heavenly kingdom (Lk. 1:16-17, 77). This is in stark contrast to the Essenes, who emphasized cultic initiation into an earthly community. John's ministry was one of preparation, not initiation.

John's message centered on the need of personal repentance from sin, faith in the coming Messiah, and a life which demonstrates that true repentance had taken place, (Matt. 3:2-6; John 1:29; Lk. 3:8-14). He emphasized the need for internal preparation, not the external rituals and forms of the Pharisees or Essenes.

After John baptized Jesus, he began the process of turning over his disciples to him (John 1:26-30). He knew that he must decrease in order for Jesus to increase (John 3:30). John's disciples continued to join the Christian movement even after his death (Acts. 19:1-5).

By his frequent appeal to Isa. 40, John clearly saw himself as the forerunner of the Messiah (ex. John 1:23). His task would be complete once he revealed to all Israel that Jesus was the Messiah. This was accomplished at the baptism of Jesus (John 1:34). John's role was now completed with his public identification of Jesus as the Messiah (Acts. 13:25).

John's Baptism

One natural question which arises is why John came to be called "the Baptist." While such a designation would later prove to be helpful to distinguish him from the Apostle John, it is clear that it had developed independently of this need.

John is called "the Baptist" because his baptism was unique. There is no evidence of any parallel kind of baptism practiced by anyone in the first century.

With the excavations of first-century Jerusalem, it is now clear that nearly every home had an immersion tank for the daily purification rites taught by the Pharisees. These immersion tanks cannot be confused with bathroom facilities, because a separate bathroom with a bathtub can usually be found in the same home. These immersion tanks had stairs leading into the tank and stairs on the opposite side leading out of the tank.¹⁵

The daily ritual of immersion for purification is mentioned in Mk. 7:4, where we are told that the Pharisees would immerse themselves after their return from the marketplace. The fear that they had come into contact with an unclean object or person caused them to cleanse themselves repeatedly in the waters of purification.

In the excavations of the Qumran Community, we also find the same kind of immersion tanks. The washings performed in these tanks were to purify the soul as well as the body. In Mark 7:4, we are told that "all the Jews" as well as the Pharisees immersed themselves daily in a ritual of purification.

There are many differences between the baptism performed by John and the contemporary baptisms or washings performed by the Pharisees and the Essenes. From the Gospel accounts

¹⁵ Discovering Jerusalem, by Nahman Avigad, Thomas Nelson, 1983).

of John's baptism, the following chart summarizes the differences between John and the Pharisees and Essenes.

Contemporary Baptisms	John's Baptism
Self-administered	He baptized them (Mt. 3:16)
Daily ritual	Baptized once (Mt 3:11)
Repeatedly done	Never repeated (Acts 19:3-4)
For purification	Because of forgiveness (Matt. 3:6)
Motivation: legalism	Motivation: Messiah's coming and kingdom (Mt.3:1-3)
Ritualism	Outward sign of inward repentance (Acts 19:4-5)
Private	Public (John 3:23)
etc.	etc.

Furthermore, John's baptism cannot be identified with the proselyte baptisms sometimes practiced by the Jews. These baptisms were ritualistic cleansings and were reserved only for Gentiles who entered the covenant community of Israel. John baptized Jews and reminded them that being a Jew did not guarantee salvation (Lk. 3:8-9).

Just as John's baptism cannot be reduced to any of the contemporary Jewish baptisms, neither can it be reduced to the "baptisms" performed by the Greek Mystery cults.

In the Mystery religions, baptism was an initiation to secret knowledge and a step up on the scale of being in an ongoing process of self-deification. There is obviously no relationship between John's baptism and the secret initiations of the Mystery religions.

John's baptism is thus unique in its soteric focus on repentance for the remission of sin and in its eschatological motivation in the nearness of the coming of the Messiah and his kingdom. Because his baptism was unique, he was called "John the Baptist."

As to the nature of his baptism, John explicitly stated that no regeneration or cleansing took place when he immersed people, because his baptism was only "in water" (Matt. 3:11). In contrast to this, the Messiah would baptize people "in the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11). In this light, it is clear that John immersed people on the basis of their profession of repentance and faith, and not for the purposes of purification or salvation.

The relationship of John's baptism to the baptism of Jesus, the baptisms performed by the apostles during the life of Christ, the baptism of Jesus on the cross, the baptism of the Spirit at Pentecost, and the baptism commanded in the Great Commission and practiced by the Christian Church, has never been fully explored. John's baptism is not viewed in the New Testament as the same Christian baptism, which is obvious from the fact that the apostles did not hesitate to re-baptize John's converts (Acts 19:1-5).

John's Imprisonment and Death

With the baptism of Jesus and John's proclamation of Him as the Lamb of God who would bear away the sins of the world (John 1:29, 36), John's ministry began to wind down. It was during this time that Herod the Tetrarch put John into prison.

Josephus recorded that King Herod was afraid that such a popular folk figure as John the Baptist could easily start a political and military revolt against his government (Act. XVIII, V, 2). While political expediency demanded that Herod place John in prison, the same expediency for the moment also meant that John was not to be killed. This might spark the revolt, which Herod was trying to avoid. The Gospel writers tell us that there was also a personal reason behind Herod imprisoning John. John had openly rebuked him for all the evil he was doing as well as for taking his brother's wife to be his own (Lk. 3:19-20). The ever-present danger of revolt gave Herod the personal opportunity to punish this bold prophet of God.

While in prison, the disciples of John could not help but be confused by this turn of events. Instead of Jesus leading the nation to cast off the yoke of Roman oppression and starting the earthly phase of the Messianic kingdom, he began to prophesy his own death. Given the fact that the Old Testament writers did not divide the coming of the Messiah into two stages, it is no

wonder that the question arose concerning whether Jesus was the Messiah. If Jesus were the Messiah, why was John in prison and his life in danger from Herod the Tetrarch?

These concerns led John to send two of his disciples to Jesus to ask him if he were the Messiah. Jesus responded by pointing to the miracles he was performing, which the Old Testament had prophesied as the mighty works of the Messiah (Lk. 7:18-23).

Tertullian is the first early Church Father to wrestle with the problem of John's apparent doubts or second thoughts about Jesus being the Messiah. In his Against Marcion (BK. II, ch. XVIII), he solves the seeming contradiction by saying that since John's prophetic task as forerunner was over, the spirit of prophecy had departed from John and he now spoke as a normal man who was in a depressed condition.

There is no reason to view John's question as a problem. The question was no doubt asked for the benefit of the disciples of John the Baptist. As he had already received not just one but several divine assurances that Jesus was the Messiah, there is no way that he could personally be in doubt over this issue.

With John's imprisonment, Jesus entered Galilee and openly preached that "the time is now fulfilled" (Mk. 1:15). Christ's public ministry began in earnest once he heard of John's imprisonment.

Although Herod was at first content to imprison John under the pretext of political expediency in order to satisfy the anger of Herodias, his brother's wife with whom Herod now lived, she would not be satisfied except by the death of John the Baptist.

Herod did not initially kill John because he was afraid that the masses would revolt at the killing of someone they believed to be a prophet. But at a palace party, in a drunken stupor when his daughter danced before him, he promised to give her whatever she desired. This was Herodias' golden moment of revenge. She instructed her daughter to ask for the head of John the Baptist to be delivered on a platter before the party was over.

Even though he feared the consequences, Herod ordered John the Baptist's beheading because he could not back down in front of the people at the party or fail to keep his oath to his

daughter (Matt. 14:1-11). He later claimed that political expediency required this drastic action (Josephus' Ant. XVIII, V, 2).

John's disciples retrieved the body of their master and gave him an honorable burial (Matt. 14:12). When Jesus heard of John's death, he departed in sorrow to a desolate place to grieve the passing away of the last Old Testament prophet (Matt. 14:13). With the death of John the Baptist, the age of the Law and the Prophets came to a close. John's task on earth was now complete. He had run his race and finished his course.

The foundation of the Messiah's kingdom yet awaited the cross and the empty tomb. Its universal sway would begin as the Gospel of the Kingdom of God was preached in every nation, tribe and tongue. Like Moses, John could only see the kingdom from afar. But he preached what he saw with the fearless boldness that only a true prophet of God possesses. 👑

Dr. Robert A. Morey

President

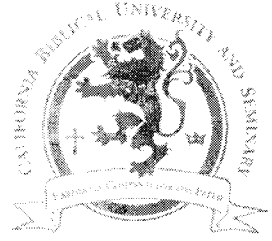
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A Critique of Autonomous Free Will

IN KANT'S "RELIGION WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF REASON ALONE"

© Dr. Richard Ostella

I. Introduction

The purpose of this introduction is: 1) to cite and clarify Kant's own outline of his book, *Religion within the Bounds of Reason Alone* paraphrasing the structure of his thoughts, 2) to overview the argument of the book, and 3) to summarize how this critique will analyze the principle of human autonomy in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant.

1. Outline of Kant's *Religion*

Since Kant's style is difficult, it will be helpful to not only present Kant's own outline but to also attempt an outline that is less cumbersome than the one given by Kant but which does justice to his intentions. Here is the fourfold outline given by Kant¹:

BOOK ONE Concerning the indwelling of the Evil Principle with the Good, or, On the Radical Evil in Human Nature

BOOK TWO Concerning the Conflict of the Good with the Evil Principle for Sovereignty over Man

¹ Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Bounds of Reason Alone* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1960, translated by Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt Hudson) iii-iv.

BOOK THREE The Victory of the Good over the Evil Principle, and the Founding of the Kingdom of God on Earth

BOOK FOUR Concerning Service and Pseudo-Service under the Sovereignty of the Good Principle, or, Concerning Religion and Clericalism

Kant begins with a treatment of the condition of man as "fallen." This is theologically conditioned language. It refers to the nature of man as created in, but fallen from, the image and likeness of God. Kant discusses a key passage in Christian thought on this theme, Genesis 3, in Book One. For Kant, the fall represents *any* act of free will in which man opts to be governed by an evil disposition. By opting to be governed by an evil disposition man is radically evil; even evil by nature. At the same time, he discovers within himself an original moral predisposition to do good acts, which is the key to man's restoration from the fall.

Restoration from the fall is developed in three stages. First, at the end of Book One, Kant discusses how we become morally good people. Second, in Book Two, he discusses how we become judicially good people. That is, "how do we become legally just before God?" Third, Kant considers how we become socially good in Book Three where he introduces the ideas of the ethical commonwealth, the church, and the kingdom of God. Book Four focuses on how leaders conduct themselves in the church. They may further the good of society or they may hinder such advancement. A major failing of the clergy occurs when there is misunderstanding of the principles of restoration from the fall. In a word, "pseudo-clericalism" results when religion exceeds the bounds of reason.

Kant's outline can be revised into the following form:

- I. Becoming morally good people, Book One
- II. Becoming legally good people, Book Two
- III. Becoming socially good people, Books Three, Four

2. The argument of the book

Man must have free will or all moral accountability would be lost. This is the case because everyone has a fundamental sense of the good that ought to be practiced and because "ought" implies can. Therefore, every person, no matter how evil

their conduct, is able to become *morally good* by the exercise of his or her freedom.

But how do we become *legally good* before God? Our past sins give us a lack of righteousness that no present good can ever fill because present good conduct simply keeps pace with what one presently ought to do. Our legal standing is further complicated by the fact that even as good people we are not perfectly good. Kant's answer is that God fills the lack in our worthiness when we make ourselves worthy by committing ourselves to live according to the principle of goodness that we find within ourselves. Only when we make ourselves worthy are we then considered worthy by God who fills the lack in some inscrutable fashion. According to Kant, this is what the Scriptures refer to as salvation and justification by faith in the son of God.

Also, since we ought to do that which is good for the human family at large, we are obligated to form an ethical commonwealth. The ethical commonwealth is the church which promotes the sense of ought that exists within the human family as a whole because the temptation to evil is best overcome when good people band together. Laws revealed by God must govern the church because of human weakness and qualified "trustees" must interpret these laws. The trustees are rational religion and Scriptural learning.

When the ethical state on earth gains a "public foothold" then the kingdom of God will have come. This kingdom comes "by virtue of the true enlightenment" which for Kant means "conformity to law, proceeding from freedom."² Such conformity to law is the action of the good principle within us:

But truth and goodness - and in the natural predisposition of every man there lies a basis of insight into these as well as a basis of heartfelt sympathy with them - do not fail to communicate themselves far and wide once they have become public, thanks to their natural affinity with the moral predisposition of rational beings generally. The obstacles, arising from political and civil causes, which may from time to time hinder their spread, serve rather to make all the closer the

² Ibid.113.

union of men's spirits with the good (which never leaves their thoughts after they have once cast their eyes upon it)... Such, therefore, is the activity of the good principle, unnoted by human eyes but ever continuing-erecting for itself in the human race, regarded as a commonwealth under laws of virtue, a power and kingdom which sustains the victory over evil and, under its own dominion, assures the world of an eternal peace.³

On the basis that rational religion has priority over revealed religion, Kant closes the book with a summons to the theologian and cleric in which he challenges them to give due recognition to the autonomy of man. Human autonomy means that man has free will as a fundamental aspect of his humanity. It means that man is morally self-sufficient to both know and do good. As Hoffe puts it, autonomy is simply an application of Kant's notion of transcendental freedom to ethics: "In ethics, it turns out to be none other than practical (moral) freedom: self-determination. Free of all causation and eternal influence, the will establishes the law for itself. Therefore, the principle of all moral laws lies in the autonomy, or self-legislation, of the will."⁴ The leaders of the church must recognize that this autonomy of man is taught in Scripture and that any interpretation of Scripture that contradicts it is incorrect.

Finally, this principle of autonomy goes farther and deeper than Kant's comments on the place of reason in his explanation of the Enlightenment. There he heralds the famous dare to know motto: "Sapere aude! 'Have courage to use your own reason!'"⁵ Furthermore, he calls the clergyman/scholar to "an unlimited freedom" in the use of his reason.⁶ But here, in the principle of autonomy, Kant makes his own contribution to the Enlightenment in the discovery that "the principle of reason lies in autonomy: freedom as self-legislation."⁷ Kant's autonomy principle is saying much more than the biblical injunctions to "test all things" and to

³ Ibid.113-114.

⁴ Otfried Hoffe, *Immanuel Kant* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1994, Marshall Farrier translator) 159.

⁵ Ibid. 3.

⁶ Ibid. 6.

⁷ Ibid. 2.

"reason together with the Lord." These injunctions necessitate the use of reason and critical judgment as part of the Christian world view but they do not, as Kant, make human reason an ultimate standard.

3. Analysis

The plan of this paper is to evaluate each stage of Kant's overall argument with special attention to the fundamental place that the principle of human autonomy has in his philosophy of religion. We will therefore discuss Kant's view as to how we, being evil, can become morally good in our conduct (chapter two), in our standing before God (chapter three), and in our social interaction across the face of the earth (chapter four). At each juncture, the goal will be to discover how Kant justifies his claim that his views conform to the Scriptures. Then, chapter five covers Kant's biblical hermeneutics. Finally, the concluding chapter includes evaluative comments on Kant's philosophy of religion as a whole.

II. Becoming morally good people

1. The fall

In Book One, Kant seeks to explain the evil of man as a fall from an original innocence that is so far reaching that mankind as a whole must be characterized as evil by nature, as radically evil and as innately evil. His references to the fall indicate a basic confidence on his part in the biblical record concerning the origin of evil:

...the origin of evil in the human heart is depicted as having a [temporal] *beginning*, this beginning being presented in a narrative, wherein what in its essence must be considered as primary (without regard to the element of time) appears as coming first in time. According to this account, evil does not start from a propensity thereto as its underlying basis, for otherwise the beginning of evil would not have its source in freedom; rather does it start from *sin* (by which is meant the transgressing of the moral law as a *divine command*). The state of man prior to all propensity to evil is called the state of *innocence*. The moral law became known to mankind, as it must to any being not pure but tempted by desires, in the form of a *prohibition* (Genesis II, 17-17). Now instead of straightway

following this law as an adequate incentive (the only incentive which is unconditionally good and regarding which there is no further doubt), man looked about for other incentives (Genesis III, 6) such as can be good only conditionally (namely, so far as they involve no infringement of the law). He then made it his maxim - if one thinks of his action as consciously springing from freedom - to follow the law of duty, not as duty, but, if need be, with regard to other aims. Thereupon he began to call in question the severity of the commandment which excludes the influence of all other incentives; then by sophistry he reduced obedience to the law to the merely conditional character of a means (subject to the principle of self-love); and finally he adopted into his maxim of conduct the ascendancy of the sensuous impulse over the incentive which springs from the law - and thus occurred sin (Genesis III, 6)...From all this it is clear that we daily act in the same way, and that therefore "in Adam all have sinned" and still sin; except that in us there is presupposed an innate propensity to transgression, whereas in the first man, from the point of view of time, there is presupposed no such propensity but rather innocence; hence transgression on his part is called a *fall into sin*; but with us sin is represented as resulting from an already innate wickedness in our nature.⁸

Kant thinks, however, that we must not look to the Genesis account for a temporal origin of evil for if we do we will involve ourselves in the contradiction of holding to free actions "as though they were natural effects."⁹ It is a contradiction to seek the temporal origin of man's moral character, "since this character signifies the ground of the *exercise* of freedom."¹⁰ Thus, the most inept explanation of the origin of evil is "that which describes it as descending to us as an *inheritance* from our first parents" because, as the poet, Ovid said, 'Race and ancestors, and those things which we ourselves have not made, I scarcely account our own.'¹¹

Although the biblical narrative depicts the origin of evil as having a temporal beginning, it is the essence of this narrative

⁸ Kant, *Religion* 36-38.

⁹ *Ibid.* 35.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.* 35.

that must be primary and not the element of time.¹² If we were to stress the element of time in the Genesis narrative then we would lose human freedom and accountability. Nonetheless, the account of the fall of our first parent, Adam, reveals the origin of sin in each member of the human race. The biblical account informs us that evil does not start from a propensity thereto as its underlying basis since man was created in a state of innocence.

For Kant, no underlying evil propensity can be causal in a temporal sense because this would deny that its source is freedom; and such denial would eliminate moral accountability. Of course, man's sense of the moral ought with its presupposition of freedom is the one inescapable and absolutely certain idea.¹³ Therefore, any interpretation of the Genesis narrative that is inconsistent with this postulate of freedom cannot be correct.

Given this framework for interpretation, what then is the primary teaching of the biblical account? It is that sin occurs when man adopts as the rule of his conduct "the ascendancy of the sensuous impulse over the incentive which springs from the law."¹⁴ Adam was created innocent yet tempted by desires. In this context, man becomes aware of the moral law through *prohibition*. Then "instead of straightway following this law as an adequate incentive (the only incentive which is unconditionally good and regarding which there is no further doubt), man looked about for other incentives" and made it his maxim to follow the law of duty, "not as duty, but, if need be, with regard to other aims."¹⁵ Kant argues that the prohibitive command "excludes all other incentives" and this grounds his assessment that the essence of moral law and true moral character is to be found in obedience to the law in and of itself as a moral agent's *only* incentive.¹⁶ Apparently, Kant believes that moral action does in

¹² Ibid. 37.

¹³ Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Logic* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1988, translated by Robert S. Hartman and Wolfgang Schwarz) 98.

¹⁴ Kant, *Religion* 37.

¹⁵ Ibid. 37.

¹⁶ Cf. Ibid. 31.

fact involve incentive. Yet his view of freedom is such that free moral action cannot be determined by any prior causal propensity without destroying freedom itself and with it all morality in principle. He therefore synthesizes these competing truths by defining the morally good man as the one who incorporates the moral law into his maxim as an incentive, or motivating force of the will.¹⁷

However, "through no cause in the world can he cease to be a freely acting being."¹⁸ Freedom is basic; it is so basic that every moral act is a new probation analogous to the original Adamic probation. This must hold for every responsible person no matter what his prior history, even if his life were radically and habitually evil:

However evil a man has been up to the moment of an impending free act (so that evil has actually become custom or second nature) it was not only his duty to have been better [in the past], it is *now* still his duty to better himself. To do so must be within his power, and if he does not do so, he is susceptible of, and subjected to, imputability in the very moment of that action, just as much as though, endowed with a predisposition to good (which is inseparable from freedom), he had stepped out of a state of innocence into evil.¹⁹

Kant then stresses the point that this "agrees well with Scripture."²⁰ Every moment of moral action carries with it a renewed awareness of a sense of ought and hence the duty to obey the moral law as the only incentive. Each act is a brand new event and a fresh probation isolated from all previous events as is necessitated by the presupposition of freedom. This is Kant's rational verses temporal account of the origin of evil.²¹ We daily act the same way as our first parent ("in Adam all sinned," Rom. 5:12); the only difference being that for Adam no sin can be traced in his history because he was created good; whereas, we have an innate propensity to transgression.

¹⁷ Ibid. 23.

¹⁸ Ibid. 36.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid. 36; cf. 11.

²¹ Ibid. 36.

This *innateness* simply means that for us sin can be traced back in our earliest history. Still, each act for us is moral in that it is our own act based on the exercise of free will. Likewise, being sinful by nature does not mean that we have an evil character which determines our actions or again we would cease to be free and moral. Rather, it means:

...evil can be predicated of man as a species; not that such a quality can be inferred from the concept of his species (that is of man in general) - for then it would be necessary; but rather that from what we know of man through experience we cannot judge otherwise of him ...it must consist in maxims of the will which are contrary to the law ...Hence we can call this a natural propensity to evil, and as we must after all, ever hold man himself responsible for it, we can further call it a *radical innate evil* in human nature (yet none the less brought upon us by ourselves).²²

The Scriptural account of the fall gives us an account of the source of evil in each one of us. An object determining the will is not the source of evil. Rather, it can only be found in a rule made by the will: "Hence the source of evil cannot lie in an object *determining* the will through inclination, nor yet in a natural impulse; it can lie only in a rule made by the will for the use of its freedom, that is, in a maxim."²³ This conclusion is derived from the general nature of man as free. It is the character of the human species; *an equivalent to being human is to exercise freedom*. This holds to such an extent that the exercise of freedom is the "necessary antecedent of every act apparent to the senses."²⁴ Otherwise, "the use or abuse of man's power of choice in respect of the moral law could not be imputed to him nor could the good or bad in him be called moral."²⁵

Therefore, the basic and inextinguishable predisposition to good within man is a feature of being human which deserves the highest admiration:

²² Ibid. 27-28.

²³ Ibid. 17.

²⁴ Ibid. 16.

²⁵ Ibid.

Yet there is one thing in our soul which we cannot cease from regarding with the highest wonder, when we view it properly, and for which admiration is not only legitimate but even exalting, and that is the original moral predisposition itself in us. What is it in us (we can ask ourselves) whereby we, beings ever dependent upon nature through so many needs, are at the same time raised so far above these needs by the idea of an original predisposition (in us) that we count them all as nothing, and ourselves as unworthy of existence, if we cater to their satisfaction (though this alone can make life worth desiring) in opposition to the law - a law by virtue of which our reason commands us potently, yet without making either promises or threats?²⁶

Evidently, Kant places a great deal of emphasis on the essential goodness of man which he identifies as the wonder within each of us of a moral sense of ought. It is on this sense of ought that Kant grounds the notion of free will.

For Kant, unless we presuppose free will then we empty the moral ought of all significance.

Kant's view of the fall reveals some basic things in his conception of the nature of man. First, it is part of the very essence of man that he has an absolutely free and undetermined will. Nothing moves it in its acting. It has no causal necessity underlying its exercise. Second, this notion of free will explains the dual nature of man in Kant's view. People are predisposed both to good and to evil. Actually, people predispose themselves either to do good or to do evil. They so predispose themselves in the exercise of free will by either incorporating or not incorporating the moral sense of ought within them as the maxim by which they shall live. Evil and good equally flow from the free will fountain.

2. Restoration from the fall

Although a man may exalt in the goodness he finds within himself (and in what even the meanest person sees in himself, R 44), the question that now surfaces is that if evil is thus something such "that man himself is its author" and if we have "before our eyes" a litany of indictments against humanity of

²⁶ Ibid. 44.

radical proportions (R 28) then, if possible, how is man restored to a state of goodness? The answer to this question is discussed in the closing section of Book One.

Pointedly, the moral man must make himself good or evil. *If moving in either direction is not the effect of his free choice then man is not a responsible agent.* So whether we speak of man as originally created good with no previous history of sin or whether we speak of man as historically sinful, each act must be "left wholly to his own free choice."²⁷ Naturally, this controls Kant's view of man's need of divine assistance:

Granted some supernatural cooperation may be necessary to his becoming good, or to his becoming better, yet, whether this cooperation consists merely in the abatement of hindrances or indeed in positive assistance, man must first make himself worthy to receive it, and must *lay hold* of this aid (which is no small matter) - that is, he must adopt this positive increase of power into his maxim, for only thus can good be imputed to him and he be known as a good man.²⁸

If sinful man needs divine assistance, it is crucial for Kant to emphasize that "man must first make himself worthy to receive it."

At this juncture, a stubborn difficulty intrudes itself. "How," Kant asks, "can a bad tree bring forth good fruit? His answer is that "despite the fall, the injunction that we ought to become better men resounds unabatedly in our souls; hence this must be within our power."²⁹

Furthermore, in a typically Kantian synthesis, he tells us that "what we are able to do is in itself inadequate."³⁰ The synthesis here involves making oneself good on one hand but at the same time being unable to do so on the other. Making oneself good must mean that one makes himself worthy to be made good by laying hold of divine aid. This, of course, is the effect of his free choice "for otherwise he could not be held responsible for it"

²⁷ Ibid. 40.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

and this must be "first."³¹ It is in this sense that we make ourselves good and thus worthy to receive a high and inscrutable assistance.³²

What, then, is restoration from the fall for Kant? It is a synergistic principle of cooperation between man and God. The part that God plays in this is unknown and cannot be adopted into one's maxims for either theoretical or practical use.³³

Before we consider man's contribution to his restoration, we might enquire as to why God's part is unknown. Kant clearly places the supernatural outside the limits of pure reason and not within it.³⁴ If you try to place the acts of God within the limits of pure reason and proclaim to have "knowledge" of such then you commit yourself to high-flown ideas³⁵ which are "dishonest or presumptuous."³⁶ One cannot know the transcendent acts of God in either inner experience (works of grace) or external experience (miracles). It is fanatical and superstitious to make such knowledge claims.³⁷

The God who supposedly reveals Himself in Scripture cannot be known by Kant. In a word, God cannot be known because reason is self-contained and autonomous. This is the broad premise that underlies his epistemology as presented in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Specifically, God cannot be known because objective knowledge is knowledge of objects of experience. God is not an object of experience. Instead, he is an idea which is "a concept of reason, whose object can be met with nowhere in experience."³⁸

This is where Kant's view of theoretical reason governs his conception of knowledge. We know something objectively or really if we know it according to human rules of reasoning or

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid. 41.

³³ Ibid. 49.

³⁴ Ibid. 47.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid. 48.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Kant, *Logic* 97

according to universal and necessary rules of reason. I know an object as an object independent of me. I must think of it as existing independent of me to think of it intelligibly at all. However, in Kant's view, does this mean it in fact exists independent of me? No. Nonetheless, we have objective knowledge or knowledge of objects because an object of knowledge is that manifold of perceptions which conforms to universal and necessary laws of reason. Knowledge of a real object is knowledge that conforms to laws. Thus the question of independent existence of real objects is irrelevant to Kant. Such cannot be known. Objects cannot be known as they exist in themselves.

Kant's transcendental argument in the first critique is not an argument for the existence of ontologically independent entities. It is an argument for objectively real knowledge of the objects of experience which holds universally and necessarily. This apparently means something like the following: "Everyone has experience. Everyone experiences objects and we all experience them as objects in space and time. To ask 'how do we know them really?' is to ask the wrong question. Everyone knows that he or she experiences objects. Beyond such experience we cannot know anything with true objective knowledge, so it is irrelevant. If x is not an object of experience then x is not an object of knowledge."

It is precisely at this point that Kant must view God as absolutely incomprehensible and transcendent. He cannot be known. He is transcendent, which technically means that God is an idea and not an actual object because actual objects must be contained in a possible experience.³⁹ The idea of God is a pure concept because it is not something we abstract (or extract) from experience. To the contrary, the idea of God springs from the understanding and this applies even to its content.⁴⁰ It is a basic premise for Kant that man cannot experience God; this is his deism in application to religious worship and the notion of communion with God.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

This does not mean that, for Kant, God does not exist. He simply cannot be known; and the principles which pertain to the possibility of the experience of objects are not valid for the idea of God as they are not valid for the idea of things in themselves.⁴¹ Kant does not deny that objects have existence independent of our experience of them or as things in themselves. He simply denies that they can be known in this way because their independent existence lies outside experience which is necessary, in conjunction with pure reason, for true knowledge. To place God and objects in themselves outside human knowledge is to inoculate them from the claims of theoretical reason. Such claims do not apply to God and to things in themselves.

By this inoculation, Kant hoped to secure the salvation of faith from destruction by theoretical reason by arguing that the principles of reason do not apply to God. Consequently, rational and logical arguments do not apply to theism. They do not support nor do they defeat theism. At the same time that faith is saved so is science and the foundation of all science, human reason, which is given absolute free course with respect to all knowledge, which is knowledge of the objects of experience according to universal rules of reason without theological constraints.

Therefore, reason is autonomous, free, and self-sufficient with regard to objective knowledge; it answers to nothing above itself. This is a sacred truth.⁴²

Kant has a very "earthly" deism. On one hand God cannot be known. On the other hand, God is known to exist as a practical necessity of morality which reason needs. The idea of God is necessary to give morality some bite. In his *Logic*, he states that the idea of God can be proved only with practical intent; that we act as *if* there is a God. And this is the limit of any proof of God: "only for this intent."⁴³ The idea of God is a

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965, translated by Norman Kemp Smith) 629.

⁴³ Kant, *Logic* 98.

guide to reason, guiding it onto the greatest perfection.⁴⁴ "Human reason has need of an idea of highest perfection, to serve it as a standard according to which it can make determinations."⁴⁵ The moral theist "asserts without qualification that it is impossible for speculative reason to demonstrate the existence of such a being (as God) with apodictic certainty. But he is nevertheless firmly convinced of the existence of this being and he has a faith...from practical grounds. It is as certain as mathematical demonstration else reason would have to cease to be."⁴⁶ Earthly practical reason needs the concept of God, but God must be one who cannot be an object of knowledge.

What about revelation? Does this give actual knowledge about God and religious truth? Is faith saved in the sense that it deals objective truth that is obtained by revelation, even though this truth cannot be established by reason? We may need the help of a divine revelation.⁴⁷ Yet the knowledge of God is from pure concepts and must be controlled by the principle of autonomy.⁴⁸

Therefore, any aspects in man's restoration from the fall which involve divine action must be unknown. They are not within the limits of reason in that they are not empirically qualified. Still, man's part in his restoration is quite evident. Out of respect for the moral law, which we can never lose without ceasing to be human, restoration means that we establish:

...the *purity* of this law as the supreme ground of all our maxims, whereby it is not merely associated with other incentives, and certainly is not subordinated to any such (to inclinations) as its conditions, but instead must be adopted, in its entire purity, as an incentive *adequate* in itself for the determination of the will.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Ibid. 97.

⁴⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Lectures in Philosophical Theology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978, translated by Allen W. Wood) 21; cf. 33.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 42-43.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 28.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 43.

⁴⁹ Kant, *Religion* 42.

Such action is not a gradual reformation but a revolution in man's disposition because to become morally good requires knowing something to be one's duty with no incentive other than duty itself.⁵⁰ This involves "a going over to the maxim of holiness of the disposition," and is "a kind of rebirth, as it were a new creation (John III, 5)...a change of heart."⁵¹

Is man capable of such change of heart given his radically evil nature? Yes, absolutely, because "duty bids us do this, and *duty demands nothing of us which we cannot do.*"⁵² Since man is under the necessity of a revolution in his cast of mind, he is therefore capable of it. So, "by a single unchangeable decision" whereby he reverses the highest ground of his maxims and becomes a subject susceptible of goodness he "puts on the new man."⁵³

It is remarkable how often this basic argument of "ought to therefore able to" re-surfaces. It is basic to man's original created state;⁵⁴ it is central in explaining the fall; it is essential in the restoration as a rebirth.

Kant then seeks to clarify how this restoration can arise from "one's own exertions" given the radical evil of man:

But does not this restoration through one's own exertions directly contradict the postulate of the innate corruption of man which unfits him for all good? Yes, to be sure, as far as the conceivability, *i.e.*, our *insight* into the possibility, of such a restoration is concerned. This is true of everything which is to be regarded as an event in time (as change), and to that extent as necessary under the laws of nature, while at the same time its opposite is to be represented as possible through freedom under moral laws. Yet the postulate in question is not opposed to the possibility of this restoration itself. For when the moral law commands that we *ought* now to be better men, it follows inevitably that we must *be able* to be better men.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Ibid. 43.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid. italics mine.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 40.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 46.

Kant balances the corruption of man which unfits him for all good with the "ought therefore can" argument. He must have it that man in his fall can do no good unless he makes the free decision to incorporate the moral law as his supreme maxim.

The self-conversion that emerges does not bring immediate reform in a person's character because his sensuous nature "places obstacles in the way."⁵⁶ The new moral man is a good man only by continuous labor and growth in "an ever-[en]during struggle toward the better, hence as a gradual reformation of the propensity to evil."⁵⁷ True to the optimism of Enlightenment man, Kant has great expectation of progress: "That is, he can hope in the light of that purity of the principle which he has adopted as the supreme maxim of his will, and of its stability, to find himself upon the good (though strait) path of continual progress from bad to better."⁵⁸

However, what is the basis for the expectation that being able to become better men, we shall in fact do so? It is the theme of *hope* that rounds off Kant's treatment of restoration on the side of progress from "bad to better."

He can hope that due to the purity and stability of the supreme maxim he has now chosen he will find himself on the path of *continual* progress.

The purity of this principle of respect for the moral law is not only a matter for praise and wonder, but is also a basis for assurance and hope with regard to one's own efforts. Man can look at the fundamentally improved disposition that he has secured for himself in his self-conversion and take hope that "through his own efforts" he will reach the road of endless progress.⁵⁹ Kant is saying that because one has a new disposition due to his own free act, and because becoming good must stem from something "performed by him alone," then therefore one who has made the choice for the moral law can

⁵⁶ Ibid. 43.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 46.

hope that he is on the road to continual progress. Respect for the law is itself an embodiment of human autonomy.

Yet there are limits to what autonomous man can accomplish in the process of being morally good. He may need outside aid. When he has done all he can do, he makes himself worthy of divine assistance to supply whatever may still be lacking:

But in the moral religion (and of all the public religions which have ever existed, the Christian alone is moral) it is a basic principle that each must do as much as lies in his power to become a better man, and that only when he has not buried his inborn talent (Luke XIX, 12-16) but has made use of his original predisposition to good in order to become a better man, can he hope that what is not within his power will be supplied through cooperation from above. Nor is it absolutely necessary for a man to know wherein this cooperation consists; indeed, it is perhaps inevitable that, were the way it occurs revealed at a given time, different people would at some other time form different conceptions of it, and that with entire sincerity. Even here the principle is valid: "It is not essential, and hence not necessary, for every one to know what God does or has done for his salvation;" but it is essential to know *what man himself must do* in order to become worthy of this assistance.⁶⁰

This assistance is necessary because the new man is progressing from bad to better. Despite the bad, he has now become a good man.

He is good in two important senses. First, he is good in that he has adopted a "new cast of mind" and seeks now to live by his sense of duty to the moral law within him (by making "use of his original predisposition to good in order to become a better man"⁶¹). And this commitment to the law for its own sake *must be and is* his only incentive. Second, he is good in that he is "pleasing to God." He has goodness in this sense because God views "the unending progress" as a unity and therefore "this amounts to his being actually a good man."⁶²

We might think of these two senses of being good as punctiliar versus progressive. There is goodness that attaches

⁶⁰ Ibid. 47.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid. 43.

to the change of heart that begins the journey of the new man. It is good ultimately because in this act man is true to himself as a free individual; he freely chooses to conform his life to that which defines his highest freedom, which is to abide by the law which he finds within his autonomous self. When he chooses against this law within, he chooses against that which embodies and promotes his true self-hood.

There is also the sense of being morally good *in the process*. Here there is obvious lack of full and complete conformity to the moral law. Thus, we must wonder if the divine assistance Kant alludes to is necessary at the beginning or in the process of becoming good people. Kant seems to be saying that divine assistance is necessary with respect to the progressive aspect of being a good man. There is evident lack of goodness that God supplies and it is something outside man's power.⁶³ The change of heart is man's single decision⁶⁴ upon which he embarks on a journey of "continuous labor" and growth in goodness.⁶⁵

Somehow the way God perceives the change of heart and man's subsequent efforts factors into the equation that renders the person morally good in his phenomenal conduct. Kant's readers must wonder how it is that we get a supplement to our moral lack from a perspective in the mind of God.

Kant's explanation is that God's knowledge "penetrates to the intelligible ground of the heart" and views the unending progress as a unity. This means that God views the person who works at growth in goodness as "actually a good man."⁶⁶ Being good before God in this sense is how man pleases Him.⁶⁷ So, though there are many obstacles in the counteractive struggle to bring about reform in his sensuous nature, the new man is good not only in the sense that he has chosen the moral law as his

⁶³ Ibid. 47.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 43.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

only incentive, but also in the sense that God views his gradualism of moral reform as a unit that pleases Him.

3. Evaluation

At this juncture, it will be advantageous to evaluate the answer Kant gives to the question: "can a naturally evil man make himself a good man?" Some areas of critique concern the fruit tree analogy, the creation of man for potential good, the principle of "responsibility therefore ability," the notion of being able with help, Kant's view of free will, and finally the idea of supplement by means of divine perspective.

a. The Fruit Tree Analogy

That naturally evil people can make themselves good in Kant's view is first argued on the basis of the analogy in principle between an evil tree bringing forth good fruit with a good tree bringing forth evil fruit. Kant holds that the first man, Adam, was good potentially but not actually. If he were good in actuality then there would be no bad fruit.⁶⁸ Thus, the bad fruit is an effect of his free choice in which he makes himself evil. Likewise, Kant argues, the evil man can make himself good. Becoming good is the effect of free choice as he states in his use of the fruit tree analogy: "But since, by our previous acknowledgment, an originally good tree (good in predisposition) did bring forth evil fruit, and since the lapse from good into evil (when one remembers that this originates in freedom) is no more comprehensible than the re-ascent from evil to good, the possibility of this last cannot be impugned."⁶⁹

Clearly, he alludes to the following text in the Sermon on the Mount: "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit" (Matt. 7:17-18). Kant argues that since a good tree does bring forth bad fruit, then it must be likewise possible for a bad tree to bring forth good fruit.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 40, fn¹.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 40.

However, in this rendering, Kant uses the text, or the imagery of the text, to argue for the exact opposite point from what the text is saying. The text has it that a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit; Kant has it that a corrupt tree can bring forth good fruit. How can the straightforward meaning of a biblical text be so blatantly misread by Kant? We find part of the answer to this question later in the *Religion* in his treatment of reason as the trustee of biblical interpretation. Here, Kant assumes that trusteeship and puts it to work. For now, let us evaluate his practical use of principles he will formulate later.

At this point, we can note that Kant has the text mean the opposite of what it says because he fails to distinguish between the pre-fallen and the fallen human family in the biblical world view. The teachings of Christ everywhere presuppose a historical departure of the human family from a state of innocence. This verse is not addressing conditions for man in his original state. Good and evil in this text must be defined against the backdrop of biblical teachings on restoration from the fall. Jesus is saying that fallen man cannot bring forth good fruit; he cannot make himself good so that he can then bring forth good fruit that pleases God. Jesus states that man being evil cannot bring forth good fruit well pleasing to God and Kant says that man being evil can bring forth such fruit. Because Kant confuses fallen with un-fallen man, he can turn the message of this text into its opposite.

We can amplify some of what is going on in the failure to properly distinguish between fallen and un-fallen man by noting the disanalogy that weakens Kant's argument. Fallen man is, on all accounts, *evil in actuality*. That which obtains in the case of a good person becoming evil is quite different from that which obtains in the case of an evil person becoming good. The one is potentially evil and the other is actually evil. Why then should the fact that a good but potentially evil person (Adam in Genesis) could fall indicate that an actually evil person can re-ascend from evil to good? This question shows that Kant's tree analogy does not support the conclusion that a naturally evil man can make himself good. Furthermore, the reference to the impossibility of a "good" tree bringing forth evil fruit must refer to man in an eschatological sense, to man beyond probation and testing as occurred in the Garden of Eden. It must refer to saints in heaven

who, restored from the fall, are perfectly free and thus unable to do evil. They are eschatologically good fruit bearing trees.

We should also account for the appeal to inscrutability in this argument. Kant argues that since both the lapse and the re-accident are equally incomprehensible then both must be equally possible. He appears to be arguing that we cannot conclude impossibility here because all matters that might be alluded to as evidence or support are veiled behind a curtain of inscrutability. Possibility is based on our lack of information to the contrary. Complete lack of information is guaranteed by the agnosticism necessitated by the fact, for Kant, that supersensible matters of the heart bear no relation to time and thus elude theoretical analysis. These matters have a noumenal or intelligible character.⁷⁰ It must be possible for fallen evil people to do good, but how it can be possible "wholly surpasses our comprehension."⁷¹ In response, suffice it to say that showing that it is theoretically possible for an evil man to make himself good enough to merit God's help is quite distinct from showing that the evil man has the ability to do so. This latter move depends on the claim we will take up next, the reoccurring insistence on grounding ability in responsibility.

b. If Responsible then Able

As we have seen, despite the fall and the ages old litany of cruelty, deceit and barbarism, Kant exalts in the basic goodness of man. When we look within ourselves we find an unabated sense of ought. Even the most wicked man has this sense of ought before the moral law or else he would not be a man but a devil. From this principle of "ought-ness" Kant develops another reason in support of the conclusion that the naturally and radically evil man can make himself a good man. The argument is "because we have an unabated sense of ought within, therefore, we must be able to obey it."⁷²

⁷⁰ Ibid. 43, 13, 21.

⁷¹ Ibid. 40.

⁷² Cf. Ibid. 40, 45-46, 55.

Why, however, must ability follow from "ought-ness"? Kant may draw this inference because he is actually thinking mechanistically (something he usually tries to avoid). That is, if one cannot do what he ought then he is not free. Instead, he is being restrained or prevented from an action he would do if he could. Of course, if he is not free in this sense, then, we must agree, he is not morally responsible. If we insist, as a duty, that a man jump fifty feet into the air, then we do not hold him accountable because the law of gravity disallows his action. He is said to be unable even if willing.

However, without the mechanistic model in the background, if a man knows he ought to abandon his greed, then in what sense must he be able to do so to be accountable for greedy conduct? Must he be physically able to give away his goods? Yes, and this he can do. There is no external force or circumstance that prevents him from opening his hand to his needy neighbor. But what if the man is unable to abandon his greed? The habit is so strong and his concern for his fellow man is so weak. There is no physical constraint to evil nor is there physical restraint from doing good works with his money. Would we not still judge his actions as greedy and thus evil? Is not this conduct still considered blameworthy and reprehensible? If it is his act, whether he is capable of acting otherwise or not, and if the act that is his is blameworthy or evil, then is he not blameworthy when he does it?

Again, this is not a mechanistic model. Nothing physically prevents the man from acting one way and that forces him physically to act the other way. He is simply unable to choose other than what he prefers. He prefers greedy actions to loving actions. He cannot do otherwise. The man prefers greed and accordingly so chooses. It is not that he is willing but unable, or trying but prevented by circumstances beyond his control. He is able in a physical sense, and that he must be as a necessary condition for responsible action; but he is unwilling. His preference reveals his evil nature. He freely chooses greedy actions. These acts manifest his evil nature. At the same time, he cannot choose non-greedy actions because he cannot change his nature and preferences. He cannot act somehow outside of himself. There is no compromise of his responsibility for

choosing evil by the fact that he does not have the ability to choose the good.

Similarly, the fact that a loving mother cannot throw her child into a dangerous fire does not compromise her freedom in the actions of protection that she performs. She may be physically able to harm her child, but she is not morally able to do so. Likewise, the greedy man is physically able to open his hand to the poor, but he is not morally able to do so. Should we consider him blameworthy even though he is morally unable to exercise true benevolence? Yes, because his greedy acts are still his acts, they are still wrong, and his very preference for greed is also wrong. The fact that one is unable to simply choose to no longer prefer greed is not an argument against responsibility; it is a fact that intensifies responsibility showing how bad the person really is.

In this context, we might ask if a hypnotized person and a drug addict are responsible for their actions? Some distinctions are important here. If we are speaking of their actions as controlled by another person or controlled by a strong drug, then in this narrow sense their actions are not their own but are forced upon them. This is the mechanistic issue again in which physical constraint or prevention governs conduct. However, if we broaden our perspective to the question of how one became a drug addict, then we must judge such a person culpable for choosing drugs, and we must also consider him responsible for all the acts performed under the influence of drugs.

Also, granting that the sense of "ought" is universal and impacts even the wicked of the worst sort, then must conclude that the greedy man knows he ought to share his goods but does not because of his love of money. His inability to do what is right is culpable and his sense of ought intensifies his culpability.

Therefore, contrary to Kant, unless one is thinking in the context of physical mechanisms, ability is not necessary to accountability.

c. Being Able, With Help

Another problem exists here for Kant's argument. Let us grant that his conclusion follows from his premise. On this scheme, we as evil persons must be able to make ourselves

good since we ought to do so. However, Kant immediately goes on to say that what we are able to do is inadequate: "For despite the fall, the injunction that we ought to become better men resounds unabatedly in our souls; hence this must be within our power, *even though what we are able to do is in itself inadequate* and though we thereby only render ourselves susceptible of higher, and for us inscrutable, assistance."⁷³

Can we have this both ways? If what we do is inadequate, then does this not tell us that we are unable? This seems to be a contradiction. We are able to do the good required of us, and this must be the case; yet we are not able to do the good that the moral law requires of us, our doings are inadequate.

To avoid blatant contradiction, Kant's meaning of "able" must mean "able to do enough good to make us worthy of divine assistance, which will pick up the slack." However, if this is his meaning, then Kant has a problem with accountability in relation to divine assistance in two ways. 1) With regard to the area of lack and inability, man must not be responsible; he is unable so he is not responsible. 2) If he is not responsible for this inadequacy then there is really no lack and no need of divine assistance.

If Kant were to deny the need of divine assistance he would stand in marked contrast to biblical religion. However, he denies that his view runs counter to biblical religion.⁷⁴ But then man must be responsible for the inadequacies of his goodness. He has need of divine assistance, so he must be responsible. Furthermore, he must then be responsible despite his moral inability. And this last point is exactly the opposite of Kant's position. It is difficult to see how his attempted synthesis is anything other than a self-contradiction.

Can Kant be delivered from contradiction if we emphasize the point that we are *not* able "by ourselves" but we *are* able "by God's help"? For example, a person who may not be able to push a car up a hill by himself may be able to do so with the

⁷³ Ibid. 40, italics mine.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 11.

help of others.⁷⁵ So, it can be true that he ought to push the car up the hill in the sense that he is to make every effort to do so knowing others will help. He is able with the help of others and he is responsible to make every effort within his power.

There are a number of problems with this model. First, the inability to push the car up the hill alone is a matter of physical inability not moral inability, as is the ability to do so with the help of others.

Second, where moral ability enters the illustration, we have further disanalogy. Surely, we do not conceive of a person as responsible to make every effort on the basis that his making every effort is performed with the help of others. He may be helped in pushing a car but not in *his* "making of every effort." If all of his efforts are done by outside assistance then the actions are not his and his is not praiseworthy. But failure to make every effort is an aspect of the moral problem Kant is addressing. People are evil. They do not prefer to make every effort in matters for which they must give an accounting.

Kant has it that people make themselves worthy of divine assistance which helps them make up for their inadequacies in doing what they ought. However, do they do *all* that they can to make themselves worthy? People act for good and ill out of a host of incentives from self-preservation to the greatest good for the greatest number. Kant's view is not that people must make every effort because for *that* they need divine assistance. His view is that making every effort is a necessary condition for receiving divine help; otherwise, he cannot preserve the key presupposition of his view of freedom, free will, and autonomy.

Again, if one must be able in order to be responsible, then all of the evil inadequacies are areas of non-responsibility. We should think that though Hitler was unable to love Jews, as a Jew hater, he is in no way excused of responsibility for his evil toward them. But on Kant's view, ability alone insures responsibility, and thus on these terms, we cannot judge Hitler to be guilty of genocide.

⁷⁵ An illustration suggested by Bruce Russell of the philosophy department at Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

d. Creation for Good

Furthermore, Kant's entire model runs counter to the biblical presentation. For example, that man is created good is taken by Kant to mean simply that he was created for good, which he will become, if by his own free choice, he adopts the moral law into his maxim as his only incentive.⁷⁶ A number of things appear skewed here.

First, Kant develops his basic understanding of this incorporation of law as the only incentive from the prohibition expressed in the biblical account:

From this it is clear that we daily act in the same way, and that therefore "in Adam all have sinned" and still sin; except that in us there is presupposed an innate propensity to transgression, whereas in the first man, from the point of view of time, there is presupposed no such propensity but rather innocence; hence transgression on his part is called a fall into sin; but with us sin is represented as resulting from an already innate wickedness in our nature.⁷⁷ (R 37-38).

Yet in contrast to Kant, the very prohibition which the first man violated in his fall includes the threat of death and therefore the implicit promise of life. Kant hears the sensual element, in "You must not eat_of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:17a), but he fails to hear the warning, "for when you eat of it, you will surely die" (Gen. 2:17). Here is an incentive to obey that is patently oriented to the hearer's self-interest. The incentive to obey the law is nowhere said to be exclusively for its own sake. Man is to obey for *his* sake, for his very life.

Kant cannot address this side of the biblical picture because it challenges his basic understanding of the dignity and autonomy of man. His fundamental notion of free will is such that man cannot act under the causal constraint of any incentive, not even divine law, without ceasing to be human. Humanity is defined by the exercise of freedom antecedent to any act. The free act of the will must be prior to, and independent of, even obedience to the moral law. Otherwise it would cease to be free

⁷⁶ Ibid. 40.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 37-38.

because something outside the person constrains him. For Kant, this loss of freedom carries with it the loss of moral imputability.

By contrast, the biblical text is very explicit regarding the relationship between divine command and the requirement of human obedience. The very notion of the fruit sets this in relief. All the trees in paradise contain pleasing and beneficial fruits that the Creator placed there for man's health and enjoyment. There is nothing inherent in the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that is unhealthy or displeasing. Therefore, what set this tree apart was God's command. The issue is one of authority in which the question is put to the creature by the Creator, "will you obey my command or not?" This, of course, entails the implication that if man disobeys the command of God, he thereby chooses to live by a law of his own making rather than by the law of God. In direct contrast to Kant's claim that true humanity, dignity and life are found in autonomy, man finds true humanity, dignity and life in theonomy, under the rule of God. It is hard to imagine how one could state the antithesis between Kant and the account in Genesis in any stronger terms.

What Kant calls a Scriptural teaching regarding the expression of true humanity (the assertion of the autonomy of the will to maintain its freedom), turns out to be exactly the opposite. Instead of an expression of true humanity, the assertion of autonomy is the essence of evil. The good man is to live in no other way than by the word of God as command that is sanctioned with incentives. According to the biblical world view, it is before this word that man must bow and to which he must render obedience.

In Scripture, the probation is a test of will and authority. God commanded man to live by His will and authority. The contrast to living by one's own will is clear. The biblical account defines man as a creature who knows and finds himself in the recognition of his creaturehood. If this is what he in fact is, a creature created by God, then he can only know himself truly in willing submission to his Creator. The biblical accounting of man and Kant's could not, it seems, be farther apart.

The suggestion that the biblical account reduces to the notion that man is good only when he does not freely choose to obey God's commands misses the point (or that he must be able to choose to not obey in order to be free). According to the

biblical account, man is good if and only if he does not choose to live outside of God's authority. Thus, he is free only when he chooses to live by God's commands. As a matter of fact, if one adopts Kant's autonomy principle in which man must be and is morally independent, then he could neither consistently nor freely commit himself to the commands of God; he can only hopefully claim that once he finds the law within himself, it will turn out that it conforms to the law of God.

e. The free will

One more question should be asked in critique of Kant's discussion of man's restoration from the fall. What is it that causes an evil free agent to incorporate the moral law as the rule by which he will govern his actions? Of course, Kant would no doubt balk at the question since this uses the notion of causality with regard to the actions of a moral agent. This rings too much of nature verses freedom for Kant. However, we intend the question of causality in a non-physical context. And Kant can then allow the question and give his answer: the cause here is inscrutable; moreover, it must be inscrutable.

Well then, can we make sense of this inscrutability? Can we agree with Kant? To answer these questions we must wrestle with the matters that press Kant in this direction. Kant's reason for this inscrutability is his doctrine of free will which characterizes and distinguishes human beings. Whether good or evil, it is of the essence of man that the antecedent to every act is an expression of freedom.⁷⁸ There are two things that man did not lose in the fall: his free will and his respect for the moral law. Thus restoration is but the establishment of the purity of this law as the supreme ground of all maxims. This happens when man adopts it as an incentive adequate in itself for the determination of the will. Of course, Kant does not allow a determination of the will by natural causes.⁷⁹ Instead, determination of the will comes by a rule that the will makes for itself. This is his notion of *incorporation*.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 16.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 17.

The question now before us is this, "What moves the will to adopt the rule of law into itself for the use of its freedom?" Or, "what moves the will to non-incorporation when that is the direction it chooses?" It cannot be the indestructible sense of moral ought-ness because sometimes the will incorporates the moral law and sometimes it does not. Yet what one does when he incorporates the law as the will's only incentive is to choose to live by this sense of ought for its sake alone. Since no one can explain the choice of the one and not the other with regard to the sole incentive for the will, the only allowable incentive that moves the will, then Kant (and no one) can explain this antecedent choice; therefore, he calls it inscrutable.

On one hand, the will is motivated by something, namely, the moral law if one is good. On the other hand, the will is motivated by nothing; it chooses its motivation opting either for or against the moral law. Again, Kant seeks to avoid natural causation. So ultimately there must be an uncaused and inscrutable freedom.

But how does Kant know this unknown or inexplicable freedom exists? He supports the point by the principle that ought-ness insures ability or freedom. This, as we have seen, is a fragile and self-contradictory line of thought. Kant cannot allow a principle motivating the will, unless it is chosen for the will by the will itself. Otherwise, the will would not be free and morality would be non-existent. Influencing him here again is the notion of a mechanistic framework, which he seeks to avoid, and in which a causality chain governs the will.

However, let us grant that to be free the will must choose its own motivation, where does this lead us? We can make some observations that show that it leads again to contradiction and that we therefore should abandon the idea of free will rather than exalt in it as an inscrutable ingredient of true humanity.

First, we must ask the underlying question, why ought man adopt the moral law into his maxim? Should he? If so, why should he? It is hard to understand why this question would be unacceptable or irrelevant. If the obvious answer is that he should, then we face the problem that fallen man has shown himself unable to do so consistently. At the least, we must conclude from the universal experience of the human family that fallen man does not choose to live by the sense of moral ought-ness that he finds within himself. This strongly and reasonably

confirms the basic ethical inability of man. The fallen human race has been unable to adopt the moral law as its only maxim for action; it also adopts a principle of evil. The pervasiveness and universality of this fact argues that it is reasonable to conclude that man is morally unable to consistently live in accord with his sense of ought.

This problem is basic to Kant's view that man in his fallen state has both a principle of evil and a principle of good within him. So he should, but cannot, *consistently* adopt the moral law into his maxim. But now the problem surfaces that man cannot be held responsible for *this* failure because he is *unable* to consistently so adopt the moral law. Also, in this way, morality is lost because we can argue that it is only human and natural to be inconsistent and no one is perfect. In this context, therefore, we can excuse *any* failure from ethical obligation.

Although a possible explanation, it is inconceivable that Kant would escape this larger problem by saying that man ought not to incorporate his sense of ought. He ought but cannot. So doesn't this argue that there is a problem with man's sense of ought-ness to such an extent that evil somehow infects it and that man is not to praise himself when he looks within? In contrast to Kant, the biblical literature is replete with affirmations regarding the deceitfulness of man to the depths of his being. Evil does infect his moral sensibilities and the subtlety of evil is such that man deceives himself and refuses to acknowledge his true moral ugliness.

We also have a motivation problem. Ultimately, the will must be free of constraint by any incentive. It is therefore without incentive to adopt the moral law. In this way motivation for morality is cut down at its deepest root. The central concern is freedom. For Kant, concern for freedom governs the notion of morality. Unless conduct arises from the pure freedom of man to adopt his sense of ought as his maxim of life, then it has no moral quality. Thus any law from without that tells man what he must do would compromise his autonomy and Kant must judge it to be non-moral.

Kant's free will doctrine is quite expensive. It is paid for in essence by bartering away moral responsibility. The tangle grows more complicated: the loss of responsibility carries with it

in turn the loss of freedom because freedom has no ethical meaning. This is surely an ethical muddle.

Perhaps we can suggest a fresh start. If we note that when a person, on Kant's terms, adopts the moral law as a rule of life has he not done something he ought to do and is he not acting out of the constraint of this sense of ought? And when he does the opposite, he conducts himself on the basis of a different preference. There is no prior free will act to be sought here. In each case we have the present exercise of the will. However, the one we judge to be morally good and the other morally evil. When we make this judgment, we judge an existing preference. To say that the evil man is morally unable to be good is to simply say that he cannot prefer other than he prefers, that he cannot be other than he is. But when he performs actions that are his own, he is judged blameworthy if these actions are his and if they are worthy of blame.

Again we have marked contrast to the biblical literature. Kant would have the evil man choose to be other than he chooses to be; whereas, the biblical refrain consistently stresses the point that man as an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit. Can the leopard change its spots or the Ethiopian his skin? To this question is given the uncompromising answer: "no more can you bring forth good being evil."

However one may view the biblical pronouncements, one thing is clear in the biblical worldview, the evil man is in dire need of moral assistance and cannot rely on himself in any sense to obtain this assistance. In other words, in the biblical worldview, man cannot make himself worthy of moral assistance since being worthy involves conduct that is consistently good. The marred history of the human family and the testimony of experience confirm the trustworthiness of the biblical worldview.

Conclusion

If we were to grant to Kant that man makes himself worthy of divine assistance, it still remains for him to make sense of that which is involved in this assistance. His construction of the matter is that the good man's partial but earnest contending for good pleases God and thus the man is actually good. The gradually good but still markedly evil person is said to be actually good in the eyes of God.

Contrary to Kant, however, it should be pointed out that being pleasing to God and being actually good are distinct ideas. That is, one might please God in his limited and partial efforts at being good while at the same time he is in fact not actually good and God, we should expect, would be the first to recognize this. To conclude from the notion of God seeing man's moral progress as a unit that God views the person as actually good really amounts to an *overlooking* rather than a seeing of the true state of affairs.

In Book One of the *Religion*, Kant has tried to give us a meaningful account of becoming a morally good person. But a subtle transition has crept into the discussion with the failure to properly distinguish the notion of overlooking. Kant's next project will be to address the theme of becoming a legally good person which is, in effect, his effort to account for a just overlooking of man's evil by Him who sees the heart. That conception also has its ultimate basis in an autonomous free will, and that will be our next task for explanation and evaluation. 👑

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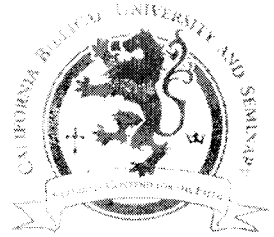
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The Quranic Doctrine of the Creation of World and Man

© *Vijay Chandra*

Introduction

This article is a Quranic study on the Islamic doctrine of man. I will discuss two issues: the creation of man and the creation of the world.

Is Islam Really Monotheistic?

The Qur'an claims that Islam is monotheistic.

"Say: He is Allah, the One! Allah, the eternally Besought of all! He begetteth not nor was begotten. And there is none comparable Unto Him." (Qur'an 112).

Many modern scholars have cast doubt on the purity of Islam's monotheism for many reasons.

First, Allah was only one of 360 gods worshipped at the Kabah.

Second, the creed of Islam says that Allah is "the greatest" among the gods.

Third, al Rub is at times distinct from Allah in the Quran.

Fourth, the daughters of Allah are mentioned in the Qur'an. Although the "Satanic verses" were removed from the text, the fact that they were in the original text is revealing.

Fifth, Adam is worshipped by angels and devils.

Sixth, Muslims live in fear of the Jinn and use magical amulets and spells for protection. These spirits are demi-gods.

Seventh, the Black Stone on the wall of the Kabah is clearly worshipped.

Eighth, Muhammad is portrayed by Islam as sinless and is treated as a demi-god.

The Creation Account in the Qur'an

Though the Qur'an offers no systematic account of the creation of the world, references to God as creator and maker of everything abound.

The Muslims claim 'He is One, the sole creator, Sovereign and Lord.

Say (O Muhammad): Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth?

Say: Allah ... Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the Almighty ... 13:6

He is Allah, other than whom there is no other God ... He is Allah, the Creator, the Shaper out of naught, the Fashioner ... 59:22-24

Such is Allah, your Lord, the Creator of all things. There is no God save Him ... 40:62; cf. 14:32; 3:189

He creates everything through His Word and Will. ... Allah createth what He will. Lo! Allah is Able to do all things (24:45). But His command, when He intendeth a thing, is only that He saith unto it: Be! And it is. (36:87)

He created the heavens and the earth in six days (7:54). He created them with truth (64:3), not in vain (3:191), faultlessly (6:73).

The Arabic word for creation is Khalqah.¹ The following are the allusions to the creation which occur in the Qur'an Surah 1:37.

"Of old we (God) created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six days and no weariness touched us." Surah XI: 8;

"Do ye indeed disbelieve in Him who in two days created the earth? Do ye assign Him equals? The Lord of the World is He."

¹ Dictionary of Islam: Ottawa, AES & Laurier Publication, 1996

According to the Traditions (Mish Kat 24:c.i pt3), God created the earth on Saturday, the hills on Sunday, the trees on Monday, all unpleasant things on Tuesday, the light on Wednesday, the beasts on Thursday, and Adam, who was the last of Creation, was created after the time of afternoon prayer on Friday. Hence, today, Muslims have their main prayer on Friday because of the creation of man.

However, the creation account is not according to the Biblical creation, as mentioned in Genesis 1&2.

First, the Qur'an contradicts itself as well as the Bible by teaching eight days of creation instead of six. Two plus four plus two equals eight, not six. The question is asked; How many days it take Allah to create the entire world?

Dr. Morey brings out the following issues. When you add up all the days mentioned in Sura 41:9,10,12, the Quran says that it took God eight days to create the world (4 days + 2 days + 2days = 8 days), but it took six days (Genesis 1:31). Here again the Quran begins its contradiction of the Bible. However, as Dr. Morey further says that Quran in Suras 7:51 and 10:3, "Surely your Lord is God, who created the heavens and the earth in six days." If six days is wrong, then eight days is wrong, and hence Sura 41 is wrong.

Using classic Muslim reasoning, they (scholars) respond by saying that the Quran did not say eight days, (then what do we do with Sura 41:9,10,12, "Say: What, do you disbelieve in Him who created the earth in two days.")? Verse 10 of Sura 41 says, "So He determined them as seven heavens in two days....") Islamic Invasion, pages 137-138 1992, Harvest House Publishing 1992.

The question is asked, Is the Qur'an trustworthy? Is the divine revelation, which Muhammad claims he received it directly from Allah, really divine?

According to Sura 7:156 which says,

"The book was sent down only upon two parties before us, and we have indeed been heedless of their study."

So the prophet was illiterate. As a merchant, he could probably count and make out letters but he could not read or write fluently.

However, Muhammad contented himself with the belief that his revelations alone were to be the measure of truth. Islam condemns itself with such a claim, calling the truth a lie reveals this religion to be a false one. Jesus called Satan the “father of lies”, (John 8:44).

The Qur’an is a masterwork of Satan, an ingenious mixture of Old and New Testament), of truth and lies that binds all its beliefs in a dangerous imitation of the truth. So, what can we expect from a hallucinating prophet? – A hallucinating Qur’an.

Second, the Biblical account of Creation does not mention specific days but only says that God created all things in six days, (Genesis 2).

Another interesting thing which Mish Kat brings, is that Adam was created on Friday, but this is not according to the Bible because naming of days are not mentioned in the creation account. Genesis 1:26 says, “Let us make man in Our image, according to our likeness; and let them rule....” (NASB).

Here, in this particular verse, the word ‘Saturday’ is not used, and so, how can the Muslim scholars say this? – They have lied to their fellow Muslims.

In Surah 30:8, it says, “Allah created not the heavens and the earth, and that which is between them, save with truth and for a destined end” (Qur’an 30:8).

Allah created the earth and universe through a long systematic process. The Qur’an describes the basic process of the formation of the universe in this way.

“Have not those who disbelieve known that heavens and the earth were of one piece, then We parted them, and We made every living thing of Water?...” (Qur’an 21:30-31).

These verses of the Qur’an indicate the evolution of the ordered world. The Qur’anic witness further testifies that God created the heavens and the earth and what is between them in six ‘periods’, (not six days as mentioned in Genesis 1&2), and no weariness touched Him (Qur’an 50:38). “Lo your Lord is Allah

Who created the heavens and the earth in six days."² In my view, the Qur'an contradicts the Bible in regards to the Creation account. The Scripture is very clear that God created all things in six days only and not in long periods as Muslims claim.

If one does not understand the Creation account of the world, then it is very hard for one to understand the Creation account of man. Both go hand in hand. No one can separate the Creation of the World and the Creation account of man from each other. It seems that Muslim scholars have a very vague notion of the creation account.

The Creation of Man

In this section, I will first give a Qur'anic account of the Creation of man, and then proceed to refute it with, and defend, the Biblical account of the Creation of man. My information of the Muslim account of creation will be solely taken from the Qur'an since the Muslims believe that the Qur'an is from Allah.

From scattered passages in the Qur'an, one can deduce something about the Creation of man, after Allah created man out of "potters clay of black mud altered", He breathed His spirit into him (15:26-29). Some canonical traditions speak of man being created in the image of God. He consists of body and spirit/heart/soul.

The Creation of Adam was, of course, unique. From his rib, his wife was made (39:6). Their descendants, each a Creation of God, are born in a natural way (16:4; 39:6). Both Adam and Eve lived in Paradise prior to the temptation by Satan.³ The question must be asked; What role has Allah given man as far as his Creation is concerned?

According to the Qur'an, Adam was created as a Khalifa, (vice regent), of God on earth. According to the Holy Qur'an, Allah said to the angels:

² Muslim commentators on the Qur'an feel the six days represent a metaphorical period. A day in the sight of God can range from 1000 to 50,000 years of our reckoning. These days of creation are in fact long periods numbering

³ Muslim theology is of the view that Iblis (Satan was not an angel, but a jinn/spirit) was a leader of a group of jinns who disobeyed Allah.

“And when thy Lord said unto the angels, ‘Lo! I am about to place a viceroy in the earth’, they said, ‘Will thou place therein one who will do harm therein and shed blood, while we, hymn Thy praise and sanctify Thee?’ He said, ‘Surely know that which ye know not.’”(Qur’an 2:30)

According to the Qur’an, another purpose of the Creation of man was: to worship Allah (51:56; cf.21:19), to be Allah's servant, and to perform his duty (31:33). Man demonstrates his power and authority on earth by learning from God the names of all Creatures on earth (2:31).

Allah then taught the names of all things and the knowledge of their properties. Although Adam had been taught the names of all things in the presence of angels, they could not recall a single name so they replied, “Be glorified! We have no knowledge saving that which Thou has taught us. Lo! Thou, only, art the Knower, the Wise.” (Qur’an 2:32).

However, Allah had granted man a limited autonomy and finally instructed him to live according to His guidance. As Allah has breathed into man His spirit there is, therefore something in man, which is special, something that man was at least bound to retain in some proportion. That special “thing” is:

- a. The intelligence (or knowledge) to discern between right and wrong, good and evil, real and illusory.
- b. The will to choose freely between good and bad, true and false, right and evil.
- c. The authority to acquire and make use of things around him.
- d. The power of speech – to be able to express his worship of his creator.

Some Muslims describe man as the most noble of creation and superior to the angels. Yet man is always subject to the will of God.

“We, even we, created them, and strengthened their frame. And when We will, we can replace them, bringing others like them in their stead.

Lo! This is an Admonishment, that whosoever will may choose a way unto the Lord.

Yet, ye will not, unless Allah willeth. Lo! Allah is known, Wise

He maketh whom He will to enter His mercy, and for evil-doers hath prepared a painful doom (76: 28-31).

Man's life on earth is a period of probation (76:2, 3). When he dies he "returns to God" (2:28; 21:35; 32:11) and must account to God for all he has done. Indeed God,

"...hath created life and death that He may try you, which of you is best in conduct...." (67:2)

For as a responsible creature, he must bear his own burden alone, not that of another man nor can any other bear his burden (17:15; 35:18). On the Day of Judgment Allah will justly judge all mankind and determine their future in either heaven or hell:

"Every soul will taste of death. And ye will be paid on the Day of Resurrection only that which ye have fairly earned...." (3:185)

A few Quranic verses deserve special attention in any consideration of its teaching about the creation and nature of man.

"Surely We created man of the best statue... (95:4).

So set thy purpose, (O Muhammad) for religion as a man by nature (fitra) upright – the nature (framed) of Allah, in which He hath created man. There is no altering (the laws of) Allah's creation. That is the right religion, but most men know not." (30:30)

It is also the Muslim witness that Adam, Allah's first Khalifa, on earth and the first man in Creation, was also the prophet set for the guidance of mankind.

Since Adam was Allah's first Khalifa, a prophet, and guide to man, the Angels, (according to Qur'an), are commanded to prostrate themselves before Adam.

"And when We said to the angels: 'Prostrate yourself before Adam,' they all prostrated themselves except Satan who in his pride refused and became an unbeliever." (Surah 2:32)

However, according to Qur'an, the angels are represented generally as God's messengers; they are like men, His creatures and servants, and worship Him continually. So, if angels are to worship Allah, why would they bow or prostrate themselves before Adam? Also, the angels intercede for man: and they celebrate the praise of their Lord. The question is asked; who is their Lord? Adam or Allah?

Again, the Qur'an is very vague. Iblees, (Satan), the father of the jinn when he (Satan) did not bow, Allah asked, "What hindered you from prostrating thyself? ..." the answer Allah received from Iblees (Satan), "I am better than he because thou hast created me of fire and Adam from earth." According to the Creed of Islam which says "I testify that there is no deity but God...." Then why would angels prostrate themselves before Adam according to the account of the Creation of man in Genesis. Adam was human, but the Qur'an makes him divine. Adam is deified and Allah is demoted as angels prostrate themselves before Adam.

Prophecy begins with the first man. The first man on earth is given clear guidance and the law to follow, and to pass on to his descendents. This law was, and still is, Islam - submission to Allah.

The first phase of life on earth did not begin the sincere Muslim witness in sin and rebellion against the Creator.

Although Adam and Hauwa were sent from the Heavenly Garden down to earth after Satan's temptation, they realized their sin and they sought forgiveness from God. They were given the necessary guidance.

Adam was a true Prophet of Allah. They were the first true Muslims. This is clearly revealed in the Qur'an. We now "They said: Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If Thou forgive us not and have not mercy on us, surely we are of the lost." (Qur'an 7:23)

The merciful Allah sent them down to earth with the words,

"And we said: Fall down, one of you a foe unto other!
There shall be for you on earth a habitation and
provision for a time." (Qur'an 2:36)

Nevertheless, man's presence on earth is not a punishment, but rather a test of his commitment to the will of Allah. Although, He sent them to earth after Satan's temptation, He certainly forgave them.

The Qur'an says,

"Then Adam received from His Lord words (of salvation), and He relented toward him. Lo! He is the Relenting, the Merciful." (Qur'an 2:3)

Because Allah is all loving and all merciful, in spite of man's mistakes, Allah assured him guidance. He said,

"Go down, all of you, from hence; but verily there cometh unto you from Me a guidance; and whoso followeth my guidance, there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve." (Qur'an 2:28)

Therefore, the first man was given both inspiration and guidance for the whole of mankind. Allah assures man that anybody who follows this guidance will be free from any fear for the present or the future and any grief for the past.

Now, since I gleaned from the Qur'an the creation account of the world and man, I will refute it.

Both Islam and Christianity recognize that nature is a wonderful creation of God. Nevertheless, there seems to be some differences also between the Muslim and Christian understanding of nature.

For example, in Islam we have seen that God taught man the name of all things; in the Biblical account we read that man was commanded to name the animals (Genesis 2:20).

In Islam, man is the Khalifa of God on earth; in Christianity, he is commanded to have dominion over the earth. Does this suggest that in the Biblical account, man is given considerable personal freedom, authority, and responsibility to use nature for his own good? However, the Bible does warn that man lives most joyously in his relationships to the nature when he is also living in a right and joyous relationship with God.

The Muslims must understand that the purpose of the Bible is to reveal the meaning of life; it is not a book of scientific information. In the Bible, we read that God commanded man to 'subdue; fill; till; rule, take care of the earth.' The Bible nowhere says that Adam was a Prophet, another contradiction.

What is man? That is the question. What does it mean for man to receive the "Spirit of God"? Certainly, it does not mean that man is the highest creation, just as Islam teaches (cf. Hebrews 2:7).

The Christian witness enlarges on the Islamic belief that man received the Spirit of God when he was created (Genesis 2:7, 1:27. Man created in the image of God does not mean that God looks like man or that man looks like God.)

The Islamic scholars have a faulty view of the Bible and they have put their own ideas and reasons into the Scriptures.

The Qur'anic creation account of the world and man is faulty. It should be rejected. 🕌

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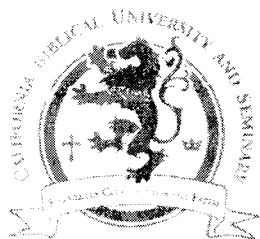
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The Renaissance of Natural Theology

© Teri C. Jacobsen

Introduction

In 2003, Dr. Robert Morey presented a groundbreaking series of lectures entitled, *Natural Theology: Is It Biblical?*¹ This material laid the groundwork necessary to help Christians understand the dangers inherent in the resurgence of Natural Theology.

At present, with over half of 2007 in history, let us ask some questions regarding Morey's lectures. Was he correct in his analysis of Natural Theology? Or was he just crying wolf in the land of fruits and nuts? Must we take Morey at his word? Can the common "Joe" validate Morey's arguments on his own? Answer: "Yes." And it's not difficult to accomplish. How?

There lies within the reach of the average Christian layperson a simple tool of technology by which a *litmus test* can be performed: the Internet. Through a quick web search, we can take a pulse check to determine if Morey was *hot or not* when he threw down the gauntlet on Natural Theology.

Let us briefly survey some books currently available on Natural Theology. Honestly, one needs to look no further than Christian Book Distributors to examine a legion of books. At *CBD* alone, a search on their website generated over 100 titles!!

¹ Morey, Robert A. *Natural Theology: Is It Biblical?* Study Outline from The Bellflower Lectures on Natural Theology, (Faith Defenders, 2004).

Yes, that's right; over one hundred books are presently available for purchase on this unbiblical subject.² These results provide us with empirical evidence of the popularity of Natural Theology. Sad to say, the *dead horse*³ of Natural Theology now possesses more ghosts than the Sons of Sceva.⁴

For example, at *CBD* we stumbled on a reprint of William Paley's book, *Natural Theology*. William Paley could be considered the Father of Natural Theology. His work predated that of Charles Darwin, and quickly died out due to the popularity of the latter's book, *Origin of Species*. In recent years, we have witnessed a revival of Paley's pagan polemic under the guise of the Intelligent Design Movement (IDM). Regrettably, many ignorant Christians believe that IDM is a "safe" and biblical vestige of Creation Science and discern no error in Paley's *dressed-up* arguments. We must clearly comprehend that IDM will never validate the Biblical creation account. Rather, it is a tactical scheme of the devil to get Christians to renounce creation and embrace evolution – not the other way around. Yes, we must *armor-up*, because like it or not, we are engaged in warfare.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.⁵

So do we still have some skeptics among us? Right. Oh yes, and we must acknowledge that *CBD* may not be *objective enough* since they also sell books appealing to Roman

² See: http://www.christianbook.com/Christian/Books/easy_find?Ntk=keywords&Ntt=Natural+Theology&action=Search&N=0&Ne=0&event=ESRCN&nav_search=1&cms=1&Go.x=0&Go.y=0&Go=Go

³ This idiomatic expression is attributed to Dr. Morey in his *Lectures on Natural Theology* to express the notion that Natural Theology has long been a dead concept, yet modern scholars and theologians continue to mount, and tirelessly ride it.

⁴ Acts 19:14

⁵ 2 Corinthians 10:3-6, NASB.

Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. Does this mega book house *alone* market books on Natural Theology? No. Unfortunately, some very fine Reformed booksellers peddle this same twaddle. Let's check out a few sites.

Reformation Heritage Books

This staunch Reformed bookseller offers many excellent titles. However, one intriguing title demands our attention: Stephen Grabill's *Rediscovering the Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics*.⁶ Dr. Grabill is currently a research scholar at the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty.⁷ And who might this Acton fellow be?

For those of us fuzzy on British History, allow us to connect a few dots. Lord John Emerich Edward Dalberg Acton (1834-1902) was denied an education at Cambridge because he was Roman Catholic. To no avail, one of Acton's most notable historical moments was his 1870 attempt to dissuade pope Pius IX regarding the dogma of papal infallibility. Despite this effort, Acton viewed "*communion with Rome as dearer than life*."⁸

According to Amazon.com,

Grabill's book attempts the treacherous task of reintegrating Reformed Protestant theology with natural law by appealing to Reformation-era theologians such as John Calvin, Peter Martyr Vermigli, Johannes Althusius, and Francis Turretin, who carried over and refined the traditional understanding of this key doctrine. *Rediscovering the Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics* calls Christian ethicists, theologians, and laypersons to take another look at this vital element in the history of Christian ethical thought.⁹

⁶

http://www.heritagebooks.org/bookstore/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=5988

⁷ According to the author bio. at: <http://www.amazon.com/Rediscovering-Reformed-Theological-University-Religion/dp/0802863132>

⁸ *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Vol. 1. (New York: Encyclopaedia Britannica Company, 1910), 160.

⁹ <http://www.amazon.com/Rediscovering-Reformed-Theological-University-Religion/dp/0802863132>

In other words, Grabill maintains that Natural Theology has a very long history. Does Grabill's work offer up yet another sacrifice to the Roman Catholic connection with Natural Theology?¹⁰

Solid Ground Books

From this Baptist and Reformed bookseller we unearthed this little jewel: *The Youth's Book on Natural Theology* by Thomas H. Gallaudet, "Apostle to the Deaf."¹¹ No joke. Written by the Founder of Gallaudet University and progenitor of American Sign Language (ASL), the book description yields the following information:

Natural Theology is not learned from the Bible. It is all that can be known about God, merely by examining the beings and things which he has made, without the aid of revealed Theology.¹²

Indeed! A book on Natural Theology with children as the target audience! Two concerns arise from this republication. First, it may encourage families to view "nature studies" as a paragon of piety, never venturing to explore God's sovereignty found in more complex scientific issues such as Deep Space Telemetry and wormholes. Secondly, -and more importantly- it appears that the author may have confused Natural Theology with *Natural Revelation*. This semantic obfuscation is nothing more than linguistic hopscotch played by Natural Theologians trying to validate Natural Theology as a biblical concept.¹³

There is yet another significant tidbit about Gallaudet. He graduated from Andover Seminary on September 23, 1814 in preparation for ministry. Professor Moses Stuart happened to

¹⁰ This conclusion is discussed in detail in *A Critical Appraisal and Evaluation of the Doxological Apologetic Approach of Robert A. Morey*, William J. Rudge, Jr., (Unpublished dissertation, 2007), 76ff.

¹¹ See book promo at: http://www.solid-ground-books.com/detail_533.asp

¹² Ibid.

¹³ For clarification on the distinctions between Natural (General) Revelation and Natural Theology, please see: Robert A. Morey, *Natural Theology: Is It Biblical?* Study Outline from the *Bellflower Lectures on Natural Theology*, (Faith Defenders, 2004), 52-53.

be one of the signatories on his diploma.¹⁴ As professor of Sacred Literature, Moses Stuart fervently embraced German Higher Criticism via his study and translation of Johann Gottfried Eichorn's *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*.¹⁵ The unbiblical theology of the Germans affected Stuart's opinions, writings, and lectures. Stuart questioned the divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, denied the doctrine of tripartite imputation,¹⁶ and expressed his fully preteristic eschatology in *A Commentary on the Apocalypse*.¹⁷ Since Andover was a small school, it is quite probable that Gallaudet was an unfortunate recipient of Moses Stuart's wrested and heretical doctrines.

Cumberland Valley Bible Book Service

At CVBBS, the reprinted *Works of John Witherspoon* is available. Witherspoon was not only an important figure of America's Founding Era; he was also the founding President of Princeton College & Seminary. His *Lectures on Moral Philosophy* are a tribute to the concepts that he fought against during his tenure in Scotland, yet later embraced in America: Thomas Reid's Scottish Common Sense Realism.

Witherspoon's lectures often were designed to disabuse his students of the "idealistic" philosophy that they had accepted through the legacy of Congregationalist Jonathan Edwards...

The sensible Witherspoon found philosophical idealism repugnant. He brought with him a new philosophy indigenous to his native land, called Scottish "common sense philosophy." Presbyterian ministers Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746) and Thomas Reid (1710-1796) articulated this new school of thought, intended as a rejoinder to the skepticism within idealism. It believed the dictates of common sense –the findings of empirical data from the senses, the moral sense, and practical reason all rolled into one –were reliable. "This moral

¹⁴ Edward Miner Gallaudet, *Life of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1888), 41. (Book reprint is available online as PDF file).

¹⁵ H. Rondel Rumburg, *Moses Stuart: The Sower of Tares Among the Wheat* (Unpublished essay, 2004), 6ff.

¹⁶ That being, threefold imputation: 1) Adam's sin imputed to man; 2) Our sins imputed to Christ; and 3) Christ's righteousness imputed to us.

¹⁷ Rumburg. page 14.

sense,” maintained Witherspoon in a Pauline moment, “is precisely the same thing with what, in scripture and common language, we call conscience. It is the law which our Maker has written upon our hearts, and both intimates and enforces duty, previous to all reasoning.”¹⁸

Perhaps not all historians are willing to place Witherspoon on a pedestal. Mark Noll, Professor of Christian Thought at Wheaton College, in *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* observes that,

He was a forceful, shrewd leader, but not a particularly astute philosopher. He composed his lectures in moral philosophy on the run during his first months in America, and he regularly used rhetoric rather than argument to overcome opposing views.¹⁹

Noll comments that Witherspoon coalesces so much of Hutcheson's work into his own writing that some have concluded that it “borders on plagiarism.”²⁰

Now, in the 21st Century, a new generation can experience Witherspoon's “common sense” doctrine, which planted the seeds of Natural Theology in the hearts and minds of countless American leaders and clergy including Woodrow Wilson and Charles Hodge.²¹ The words of Edmund Burke are ringing in our ears, “*Those who don't know history are destined to repeat it.*”

Conclusion

Word about Morey's aversion to Natural Theology has gotten out. With the inaugural *Bellflower Lectures on Natural Theology*, the pre-emptive inoculation has been launched and the counter-attacks are just beginning. Perhaps this is what Stephen Grabill had in mind when he acknowledged his personal objective of

¹⁸ Jack Scott, ed. *An Annotated Edition of Lectures on Moral Philosophy by John Witherspoon*, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1982), 78, in *John Witherspoon, An American Leader*, Matthew F. Rose, (Washington, DC: Family Research Council, 1999), 27.

¹⁹ Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 103.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 106.

²¹ See: Robert A. Morey, *Natural Theology: Is It Biblical?* (Orange, CA: Faith Defenders, 2004), Audio CD.

changing evangelicals' negative perception toward Natural Theology:

So starting now, and continuing for who knows how long, I plan to tell the story of the Protestant struggle over natural law, from complete rejection by Karl Barth in the 1930s to the recent hint of renewed interest among Protestant intellectuals. My view is that natural law is a forgotten legacy of the Reformation – one that contemporary Protestants desperately need to rediscover.²²

It is not difficult for us to imagine the following childhood interplay between Morey and Grabill:

Grabill: "Hi, Bobby! Wanna come play in my sandbox?"

Morey: "Sure, Stevie."

Grabill: "It's really neat and my friends really like to play in it. I just love this natural sand. It feels so good in my hands!"

Morey: "Eeeeeuuuwww!! This stuff is really stinky! Hey, Stevie! That's no sandbox! It's a ...catbox!! Yuk!!"

Grabill: "It is not, Bobbie. You're a meanie! You're not my friend anymore! Waaahhh, I'm...gonna go tell my mommy!"

...stomps off mad

Sadly, the stench of Natural Theology has become so embedded in academia and ingrained in intellectual thought that it is scarcely observed by American Christian society. It has become the unscrutinized plague in our midst. And if Dr. Grabill is correct, he plans to convince us that it's really not so bad after all.

The presence of such pseudo-theological *claptrap*, hawked by well-intentioned booksellers, is indicative that Morey's assessment of Natural Theology is correct. This theologically transmitted disease (TTD) has infected Christianity not only at the theological and academic levels but has also severely

²² Stephen J. Grabill, "Why Protestants Don't Like Natural Law: Part I," Online article: <http://commonnotions.blogspot.com/search/label/Natural%20Law>.

undermined the essential core doctrines that have caused many a Reformed believer to *die a thousand deaths*.

Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.²³ 🙌

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²³ 2 Peter 3:14-18.

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