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RVB *A Life of Transformation* A Festschrift for Colonel V. Doner
RVBINTERNATIONAL

A Life of Transformation

From Politician to Good Samaritan



*A Festschrift for
Colonel V. Doner*

Edited by
Thomas Schirmacher
Co-edited by
Kathleen „Wally“ McCall



Gebende Hände (Giving Hands)
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role here, and so this book is aimed at
stirring Christians to help themselves
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**A Life of
Transformation – From
Politician to Good
Samaritan**

A Festschrift

for

Colonel V. Doner

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Social Responsibility in the New Testament Church According to Acts 6

By Dr. Thomas Schirrmacher

Dear Reader,

Instead of the typical Foreword lauding the character and achievements of the object of the *Festschrift* (providing an introduction to the introduction, as it were), I have chosen to begin like Colonel would begin – with action, letting this first essay on the theological basis for social responsibility serve as the pat on Colonel’s back for his obedience to Jesus, and paving the way for further discussion later in this book.

Why do I say that I’m starting like Colonel might start, with action? As any *Festschrift*, this book certainly contains both the academic reflections and the personal recollections on the life and work of Colonel Doner which his friends and fellow laborers have provided.

Perhaps what makes this *Festschrift* a little more unusual is that it is written about a man who not only thought, spoke, or wrote; as are so many *Festschriften* – though he did all these things too – but is written in honor of a man who is primarily a man of action. Colonel’s book *The Samaritan Strategy: A New Agenda for Christian Activism* clearly expresses Colonel’s philosophy of life in writing. But long before the book was written, Colonel was already telling the world what he thought by his work.

From his involvement in politics to his present labors helping people help themselves on several continents, Colonel could not then and cannot now merely observe and comment on the situation around him. Although he would himself confess that he had much to learn then and perhaps still has a few things to learn now, his greatest satisfaction comes from being involved, doing something, helping people, and all this for the sake of his Savior.

There is an ancient prayer which reads in part: “[W]e bless Thy holy name for all Thy servants ... beseeching Thee to give us grace to follow their good examples” Although Colonel still has good years left in him by God’s grace, we are already thankful for the legacy which he has left us. May we have the grace to follow his good example.

A Festschrift for Colonel Doner

Dear Colonel,

Your appeal to *The Samaritan Strategy* brought us together. So I would like to begin this *Festschrift* with formulating the Biblical base for the importance of our social responsibility. We have to spread the Gospel and you never wanted to undermine this. But the Gospel has to take place in this real world and we have to prove that the new life in Christ does not begin in the world to come, but here and now. Thank you for reminding us again and again!

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

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

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

The command in Matthew 25:45 should also be understood in this sense. Jesus is speaking of believers, not of everyone. Were the "brethren" mentioned in verse 40 intended to mean all men, this would be the only text in the New Testament that uses the term figuratively to indicate anyone other than church members or fellow Christians.¹

A comparison with the question of peace-making will help clarify the matter. The Scripture obliges Christians to live in peace with fellow-believers. If they do not, then the church leadership is to interfere. As far as the relationship to non-Christians is concerned, Paul

Social Responsibility in the New Testament Church

says, “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18). The New Testament church is based on a covenant binding on all members. The expectation that the believer is obliged to care for all men stems from a false understanding of fairness and justice, for the Bible requires the believer to provide first for his own family, next for the members of the local congregation, finally for the worldwide church. Only when these obligations are fulfilled does he have any responsibilities for other people.

3) Acts 6 gives great priority to the social obligations of the church towards its members, but the responsibility for proclaiming the Word of God and prayer remains more important and is institutionalized in the offices of the elders and the apostles.

The apostles give the following reason for refusing to accept this “business,” “we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). Prayer and proclamation of the Word, which always belong together, have priority over social engagement and must never be neglected. The combination of prayer and teaching is not new. Long before, it had been the ministry of the prophet Samuel and other Old Testament leaders to “pray” and to “teach” (1 Sam. 12:23).²

The provision for the socially weak was also considered a matter of course in the Early Church, which universally reserved special funds for social purposes.³ Its provision for widows was exemplary.⁴ As a matter of fact, more money was spent on social concerns than on the salaries of the elders and pastors. According to the Church Father, Eusebius, the church in Rome in the year 250 A.D., for example, supported 100 clergymen and 1,500 poor people, particularly widows and orphans. Alois Kehl writes, “Never, in the whole of antiquity, had there been a society or a religious group which cared for its members as the Christian Church did.”⁵

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

Rev. Dr. Thomas Schirrmacher is Rector of Martin Bucer Seminary (Bonn, Germany) and Professor of Systematic Theology (Ethics) and World Missions. He is heavily involved with the Religious Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship in fighting the persecution of Christians. He is author and editor of 40 books on missions, social change and ethics. He has served together with Colonel Doner on the board of the German relief organization Giving Hands for years.

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Colonel V. Doner – Up Close and Personal

By Monte E. Wilson, III

The Young Statesman

By age 14, Colonel had consumed over 10,000 pages concerning the injustices and atrocities perpetuated worldwide by history's first self-consciously atheistic empire, *i.e.*, the many countries proclaiming themselves to be the heirs of Marx and Lenin. These revelations, shocking to a young boy's sensitivities, found their mark and led to a life-long quest to awaken the church, combat evil, and correct social injustice wherever it was found.

By age 18, he had become the national youth director for Christian Crusade, the nation's largest Christian anti-Communist organization which started in the 50s and was a precursor to Moral Majority. Christian Crusade sponsored a youth leadership-training institute where Doner (still a teenager himself) taught and from which he funneled his young conscripts into a far-flung activist network. As editor of *The Torchbearer*, a national youth magazine for Christian Crusade, he was the first "Christian Right-Winger" to accuse Lyndon Baines Johnson of being a cold-blooded murderer in sending 50,000 American boys to their deaths in Viet Nam with no intention of safeguarding their lives by aggressively pursuing an early end to the war.

By age 21, he was named editor of Christian Crusade's flagship weekly newspaper, *The Weekly Crusader*, at that time America's largest "anti-Communist" newspaper reaching over 250,000 families. In the intervening four years, he earned a degree in Political Science from California State University Fullerton, while maintaining a full-time political career as Staff Director and magazine editor for the Republican Party in Orange County, California's conservative bastion. Characteristically, during his Orange County tenure, he garnered more front-page headlines than did any member of the State Legislature or Congress from Orange County.

At age 22, he was named Associate Director of the Voice of Americanism's extensive radio network and organized American Cause, the nation's first Christian conservative lobby in Washington, D.C., headed by former U.S. Senator George Murphy in 1971.

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During his tenure at Voice of Americanism, he first became interested in social justice causes in Africa, particularly after watching the terrible debacle of genocide, which all too often was the normal aftermath of political unrest in so many African states.

His first role in Africa was as a volunteer mediator between the Christian nation of Rhodesia and its various adversaries in the U.S. Congress and State Department. Doner attempted to have Jimmy Carter's embargo against Rhodesia (the same sort of embargo we now have against Cuba) lifted. In this role he won accolades from both the white establishment of Rhodesia (including the Foreign Minister and various Cabinet members) as well as leaders of the Black business community.

At age 25, he founded Keystone Management Corporation and served as a strategist for the conservative political movement, including the American Conservative Union, headed by Congressman Philip Crane and Ronald Reagan, who was gearing up for his first serious presidential run in 1975.

At age 30, in 1978, he co-founded Christian Voice in Washington, D.C., which was to become the first organization of what was to be known as the Christian Right. By 1980, Christian Voice and its political twin, Moral Majority, enjoyed success beyond their wildest imagination, electing Ronald Reagan to the Presidency (Doner also founded Christians for Reagan in 1980, the nation's first and largest Christian political action committee) and electing for the first time in 20 years a conservative Republican majority to the U.S. Senate. Due to the unexpected victory of Ronald Reagan over a professed evangelical President, and the shock wave of a half dozen of the Senate's most established liberal leaders going down in flames, the Christian Right was voted by the nation's news media as the top story of the year. Consequently, Doner found himself featured on every conceivable news program, from Dan Rather and "60 Minutes," to Phil Donahue, to all network news programs, including those in Japan, Germany, and Sweden. The news media seemed particularly fascinated (and horrified) by the introduction of a "report card" by Christian Voice showing how congressmen voted on moral issues. It was this report card that the media credited with defeating over three dozen members of the House and Senate in 1980. It was also this concept and the "Presidential Biblical Scoreboard," which he introduced in 1984, that added new phraseology to the American political lexicon,

i.e., “scoreboard” and “report card.” These expressions are now used at least weekly by some major media publication in rating the various aspects of business, the economy, political life, etc.

By 1984, at the age of 35, he was recognized as the senior strategist for the Christian Right and was simultaneously named to three pivotal positions, including:

1) Chairman of the Evangelical Mobilization Task Force for the Reagan/Bush 1984 reelection effort;

2) Co-founder (with well-known Evangelical author, Dr. Tim LaHaye) of the American Coalition for Traditional Values. ACTV, as it became known, united 30 of the nation’s most prominent Evangelical leaders, including various denominational heads and major television ministries, for the purpose of registering Evangelicals to vote and mobilizing them to get out on election day. It was and remains the largest coalition of Evangelical leaders ever organized. Doner’s efforts were credited by Lyn Nofziger, Reagan’s campaign manager, with being instrumental in turning out millions of Evangelicals on election day; and,

3) Publisher of the *Presidential Biblical Scoreboard*, a glossy, full-length magazine, which provided a stark contrast between the philosophies and voting records of the Republican and Democratic candidates from President all the way to each congressional, senatorial, and gubernatorial candidate. With over five million *Scoreboards* in circulation in an election year, like the Report Card that preceded them, they were destined to become a focus of media attention. The *Scoreboard*, along with a number of TV commercials Doner had produced charging the democratic nominees with an anti-Christian bias, were the focal point of the media’s coverage of the Republican convention which predictably nominated Ronald Reagan in 1984 for his second term.

Parenthetically, Doner’s television commercials exposing the Democratic ticket’s pro-gay and pro-abortion positions were so controversial that each commercial was aired in full by every American network news program. The *Scoreboard*’s exposure of Democratic nominee Walter Mondale’s humanist, anti-family positions provoked a nationally televised outburst by Mr. Mondale wherein (following the example of an irate Jimmy Carter in 1980) he castigated Christian Voice (using particularly unsavory terms for a public official!) and defended his “Christian credentials,” by proclaiming his father had been a Unitarian minister. Doner’s response? “Thank you for proving my point.”

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At age 40, Colonel was fast becoming the preeminent leader of the Christian Right in Washington. All in one month, Doner appeared in a full color picture on the front page of the *Washington Times*, held a massive press conference on the steps of Congress, and was targeted by left wing television producer Norman Lear, who announced to the national media his one million dollar media campaign specifically attacking Doner's organization, Christian Voice.

Doner, however, had become increasingly dissatisfied with what he later termed "political salvationism." It was at this point that he began to suspect that no matter who was elected – conservative, liberal, whatever – it did not, could not, and would not provide the answers people were looking for. After leaving Washington, Doner began a period of study and reflection, the result of which was *The Samaritan Strategy, a New Agenda for Christian Activism*, which would soon become a handbook for a new breed of Christian activists, not only throughout America but Africa and Latin America, as well. During the same time period he became Chairman of the International Church Relief Fund (ICRF) now known as Children's Hunger Relief Fund, which over the last decade has successfully pioneered concepts of reconstructing Third World nations from the ground up. Such "reconstruction" involves the usual mercy works, community relief and development, and evangelism, but also adds new levels of economic development and Biblically-based community and political leadership. Of particular note has been ICRF's success in Nicaragua, establishing over 500 businesses and discipling leaders from Congress, the Supreme Court, and the business community.

At age 45, he was the catalyst for the founding of the Samaritan Group, an umbrella organization of over a dozen leading-edge ministries from North America, Central America, Africa, and Europe, working together for the purpose of discipling the nations to follow God's law (Matthew 28). Since penning *The Samaritan Strategy*, working through ICRF and the Samaritan Group, he has been responsible for providing over one hundred million dollars worth of aid to hurting people in over 40 Third World nations.

Up Close and Personal

After first meeting Colonel in 1986, I remember trying to describe him to a few friends back home. Part of the difficulty of doing this for those who do not know him is that one does not

merely “meet” Colonel, one “encounters” him. He exudes life, joy, commitment, devotion, and a real world wisdom that is so very rare today. I often think Colonel should come with a warning label: “Warning. For those who prefer a quiet, ho-hum, sedentary sort of existence, keep more than 100 feet away!”

It always amazes me when I hear people describe Colonel. Humans are complex beings and Colonel is very, very human. If you meet him in a social setting, you will see him as the consummate host who understands more than Martha Stewart about making guests feel comfortable. His love for parties, great restaurants, and beautiful scenery are renowned among those who know him. Yet, this *joie de vivre* is only a part of who the man is.

I have watched him in the Men’s Workshops he and I offer across the nation, weeping with young men whose lives had fallen apart. I have seen him in Board Meetings with tears streaming down his face as he listened to reports of poverty and social chaos. I have witnessed first hand the fire that erupts from the deepest parts of his soul upon hearing of injustice and cruelty. At such times, I have often thought quietly to myself that, if the monsters inflicting the pain could see the wrath in Colonel’s eyes, they would have a glimpse of what they will face on Judgment Day.

Colonel is more than a writer, thinker, gracious host, fund raiser, political strategist, or CEO of various charities. His life is not about raising money or getting some person elected to political office. These are secondary to his calling. His life is about getting the job done: and the job is to extend Christ’s kingdom – Christ’s righteousness, peace, and joy – in the earth.

Colonel is a prophet, not as Pentecostals would explain that gift, but as men like Malcolm Muggeridge and Chuck Colson have defined the office. His passion is to declare – through writing, speaking, and sharing one on one – “This is the Way of the Lord.” Moreover, “The Way” Colonel “prophecys” about is never merely theoretical or conceptual, but always as practical and real-world as the Bible upon which he has based his life.

Colonel holds tenaciously to Christian catholicity, orthodoxy, and the Reformed tradition. But he does so with refreshing humility. Unlike so many leaders, he is ready to be wrong. He has no problem considering alternative paradigms, other interpretations, and differing approaches: just make sure you know your Bible and

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your church history if you wish to challenge him. His commitment is not to “being right” but to discovering and following the Truth, no matter where it leads him.

Probably the greatest complement God ever gave Colonel is his wife, Miriam. As his close friends know, he could not accomplish even half of what he has done without her extreme devotion, diligent service, and Job-like patience. Her love for her husband, for their son C.J., for life, and for Christ and His kingdom are not only a constant source of strength for Colonel, but are of such incredible brightness that she inspires all those who know her to do more for God’s glory.

As with Job, Colonel’s mission and heart’s desire is to be eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, a father to the needy, and a defense for the disenfranchised and abused. I know very few men who have spent so much of themselves in service to others, fewer still who did so without sacrificing friends and family, and still fewer who did so without forgetting their *raison d’etre*, which is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. With great respect, warm affection and best wishes, we offer this *Festschrift* on Colonel’s fiftieth birthday.

“When I went to the gate of the city and took my seat in the public square, the young men saw me and stepped aside and the old men rose to their feet; the chief men refrained from speaking and covered their mouths with their hands; the voices of the nobles were hushed, and their tongues stuck to the roof of their mouths. Whoever heard me spoke well of me, and those who saw me commended me, because I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist him. The man who was dying blessed me; I made the widow’s heart sing. I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and my turban. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy; I took up the case of the stranger. I broke the fangs of the wicked and snatched the victims from their teeth.” (Job 29:1-17)

Dr. Monte E. Wilson, III, B.Th., MRE, D.Min., is a leading Reformed writer and lecturer who has served with Colonel Doner over a decade as Vice Chairman of the Board of Children’s Hunger Relief Fund, formerly International Church Relief Fund. He presently serves as Chairman of Global Impact, Editor of Classical Christianity and as an international Bible teacher.

The Samaritan Strategy

By Susan Burns

A Remarkable Beginning

Today many people do not put much stock in “Christian” tracts. They consider them an evangelism method from another century – a time when the printed word was a novel means of communication. There was one missionary tract, however, that started a fire that burns to this day. It will not be extinguished. Thousands are benefitting from the fruit that has blossomed as a result. It was 1962. Colonel Doner was a tender 13 years of age. A missionary to South Vietnam had written a tract describing how the godless Communists invaded missionary compounds and drove chopsticks into the children’s ears so they could no longer hear their Christian teachers. Young Colonel, filled with horror and righteous anger, resolved to resist this evil with all of his might. Thus began his lifelong quest to restore righteousness, justice, and mercy to a world sorely lacking all three.

Later, as a young man, and years before it was fashionable to be politically involved and conservative, Colonel began organizing conservative Christian youth chapters on high school campuses. In the mid 1970s, when South Vietnam and Cambodia fell to the Communists, he was involved in sending aid to refugees in war zones.

A pinnacle of his activism came in 1978 when he co-founded Christian Voice, which quickly became the vanguard of the Christian Right. Colonel and his organization ushered in the glory days of American conservatism and the Christian Right. Ronald Reagan was the quintessential success of these efforts, a self-consciously conservative president, who, as Colonel wryly notes, “... immediately surrounded himself with moderates, technocrats, liberals of all shapes and sizes, astrologers, effete social climbers, and assorted half wits... .”⁶

A mere eight years later, Colonel watched as the mighty Christian Right movement he spearheaded crashed and burned in the sea of political irrelevance.

Surveying the Crash Site

In April 1985, Colonel prepared to preach at a major church in the D.C. area. Emotionally and physically exhausted, spiritually spent, on his knees before God, he realized that he had nothing of real value to share with his listeners. His message was enthusiastically received, but as he left the pulpit, he vowed not to preach again until he had God's message – not his own – to share.

He walked away from the organization he had formed and the movement that had consumed the last ten years of his life. In 60s parlance, Colonel “dropped out.” For two years he sought the Lord, studied the Scriptures, prayed and waited for the Lord's message, the Lord's direction. He sought the counsel of Christian leaders across the country, asking again and again, “Where did we go wrong? Where do we go from here? What would Christ have His people do? How do we keep from repeating the mistakes of the past?”

Psalm 126:5

In March 1987, he and his new bride, Miriam, spent a week in the Northern California wilderness overlooking the stormy winter seas of the Pacific. Colonel desperately sought the Lord. Finally, the answer came. Colonel recalls the victory: “And then in a quiet but phenomenal way, God began leading me to Scriptures, dozens, then hundreds, all on service. I didn't understand why at the time, but I spent five solid hours taking notes on what I had read. Those notes later became the basis for a new vision birthed in my heart Finally I had the ‘weapon’ I so desired, the sword of truth to cut through the ‘Church's’ apathy and willful neglect of its duty”⁷

From Scripture and the example of Christ, Colonel learned that the true Kingdom man was the warrior/servant/steward who became eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and a father to the poor (Job 29:15-16). In fact, this revelation would later serve as the basis for a book (now half-completed): *Rediscovering the Purpose, Passion, and Power of Godly Masculinity*. He found in this Biblical concept the example that he and all people should aspire to.

Without Vision, the Christian Right Perished

However, the most immediate fruit of Colonel's sequestering himself was his profound analysis of the failure of the Christian

Right, recounted in *The Samaritan Strategy: A New Agenda for Christian Activism*. It is an excellent book and should be read by all Christians – young, old, and in between. Home schooling parents should make it required reading for their children. Briefly, Colonel concludes that the Christian Right failed because it lacked vision – a cohesive platform that tells the world what Christians can do and hope to do for our country. In Colonel’s words, “To many, it appeared that all the Christian Right had to offer was a negative/ reactionary collage of ‘don’ts’ rather than a comprehensive and constructive agenda of ‘dos.’ Worse yet, most Christians could not understand how all the issues connected to each other.”⁸ Colonel further points out that without a vision, there is no agenda, no direction, and “no effective mobilization of forces.”⁹

(Note: Colonel’s Chalcedon monograph, *The Late Great GOP and the Coming Realignment*, is also must reading for all Christians who take their roles as citizens seriously and who want to avoid our *faux pas* of the 80’s.)

With a Vision – WATCH OUT!

Having come to the understanding that a vision is essential for success in Christian endeavors, having committed to practicing what he had preached in *The Samaritan Strategy* – earning the right to community leadership (a key to discipling any nation) by serving our fellow man – Colonel established the International Church Relief Fund, which is now known as Children’s Hunger Relief Fund. He developed criteria for discipling the nations. The criteria are as follows:

1. *Spiritual Receptivity*. Colonel was looking for countries that were desperately seeking Biblical answers for their day-to-day survival. This immediately bumped slick, self-centered, fat-filled America out of the running. Countries that had recently experienced national calamities – whether war, famine, drought, etc. – were the best candidates.

2. *Friends in High Places*. Here Colonel was looking for the acquiescence of the leaders of the country, if not their full support. The leaders in such countries as Zambia, Russia, Nicaragua, and others ravished by political, economic, or natural disaster are receptive to any and all help to meet the critical needs of a suffering populace. In Nicaragua, the Congress unanimously granted ICRF’s

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affiliate FUNAD special tax-exempt status. Finally, leaders' openness to the gospel has resulted in many of Colonel's international board (Josue Lopez, Monte Wilson, Jay Dangers, Bill Mikler, and Mario Aviles) being able to spend time discipling them and teaching them specific Biblical answers to the problems they face as leaders.

3. *Location, Location, Location.* Following St. Paul's example, Colonel wanted to find nations that were strategically situated to influence their neighbors.

After assessing which nations fit the bill, Colonel and ICRF were able to begin implementing the Samaritan Strategy for discipling nations in the third millennium. Colonel soon saw that indeed the fields were white unto the harvest and, with Dr. Monte Wilson and Dr. Thomas Schirrmacher, formed the Samaritan Group – twelve international relief and ministry organizations that share ICRF's view of the Kingdom. With ICRF as its flagship, the Samaritan Group organizations now pool their financial resources and ministry skills to achieve optimal effectiveness as they reconstruct nations receptive to the gospel message. There is no top-down, head-heavy bureaucracy here, no centralized mission compound from which the troops emerge. Rather, these organizations (spanning North and South America as well as Europe) coordinate their activities and funding to maximize each overseas opportunity. A chief goal of the Samaritan Group is to identify, train, and supply indigenous teams in each target country so that these teams can disciple their home nations.

Strong Families, Strong Nations

In each country that has faced political and economic collapse, or where natural disasters have occurred, the family – the essential unit of society – is the element that suffers most. To rebuild a healthy nation, healing and health must flow first to the families. Most often ministry begins with meeting the immediate health and nutrition needs by providing food, medical care, and community water systems to those suffering in a ravaged land; ICRF also provides vegetable seed so that families can grow their own food.

In addition to this "critical care," ICRF seeks to provide families with a steady source of food and income so they can become economically self-sufficient. This is accomplished through ICRF's micro-enterprise loan program. Loans of between \$500 to \$1,000

are provided to recipients to start a family business and move toward self-sufficiency. Recipients of the loans also undergo a training program in which they are taught Biblical principles of running a business, economics, accounting, and tithing. (In other words, all who received the loans are *discipled!*) In addition to tithing, they are encouraged to use a portion of their profits to help widows and orphans in their communities – advice which many have taken to heart. For example, one recipient of a micro-enterprise loan, a lady in Nicaragua, whose seamstress business has become very successful, has taken it upon herself to start a feeding program which feeds 50 homeless children each day.

A final and very important phase of this strategy is discipleship of leaders for each nation. Potential candidates are selected from the larger pool that receives the micro-enterprise loans. They are carefully screened and then attend a rigorous six week program designed to prepare them for key positions in evangelism, discipleship, leadership, and establishing mercy ministries in their communities.

Strong Future Families

One of the most tragic consequences of man-made or natural disasters and the destruction of families is literally millions of homeless children. God is, and thus His people should be, very concerned about these little children. They remain an important part of the Samaritan Group's ministry strategy. Today, thanks to the efforts of the Samaritan Group's international team, thousands of children worldwide are being loved, fed, cared for, and educated by Christian caregivers. Because this ministry has spanned a generation, adult graduates of these programs and schools are moving into their cultures as productive citizens and establishing Christian families of their own, as well as beginning to disciple their own nations and moving into positions of leadership. For example, one successful businessman (the very first micro-enterprise loan recipient) has been appointed to a high office in Mexico.

Specific Results

It was during the late 80's when Colonel developed his mission strategy. After a decade of sowing, the reaping has begun. Below are a few of the first fruits of what promises to be a full harvest.

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Nicaragua: For decades, Nicaragua was ravaged by oppressive, godless dictators and the devastation of civil war. Somoza, the Sandinistas, and the Contras took turns raping this Central American country until it seemed as though, like the Levite's concubine in Judges 19, there would be no life left and the dead body remaining cut into pieces. As Nicaragua suffered, and tens of thousands died, Americans expressed a variety of useless opinions. Many supported the Communists and shrieked "bloody murder" at any who opposed the Marxist hell hounds; others hailed the Contras as the democratic saviors of Central America. Then Americans stomped their feet in disgust, but could not look away as the Iran/Contra scandal effectively ended Reagan's support of the freedom fighters in Nicaragua.

Nevertheless, in a sovereign act of God, the Marxist yoke was broken. In 1990, Violeta Chamorro, a Christian conservative, was elected to the presidency of Nicaragua. Through Mario Aviles, a childhood friend of Mrs. Chamorro, ICRF had an open door to minister among the ruins of the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. With the extremely talented Mario as their spearhead, ICRF selected Nicaragua to be a prototype for The Samaritan Strategy.

Beginning with its unique micro-enterprise fund strategy, ICRF began to award small loans of \$500 to \$1000 to families so they could start businesses. By American standards, these small amounts seem too insignificant to be of help. However, in Nicaragua it is enough to open up a fruit or vegetable stand or buy a sewing machine and fabric to start a seamstress business. One seamstress became so profitable, she was able to buy twenty more machines and hire twenty more seamstresses with her profits. One recipient opened a pizzeria; a young man who knew the family also received a micro-enterprise loan to buy a motorcycle so he could deliver the pizzas! Recipients of these loans have obviously shown great resourcefulness and creativity in choosing their businesses.

Currently, in Nicaragua alone, these micro-enterprise loans have created over 300 new businesses. Each year the program grows exponentially, creating thousands of jobs. Some enterprises now employ as many as 20 or 30 people. Loans are paid back in six months with 99% of the recipients repaying the loans. The money is then loaned to other entrepreneurs.

Loan recipients are required to attend weekly meetings where they are taught the ABCs of business and accounting and are disciplined in the Gospel and the Law of God. Mario's staffers also visit the homes of the recipients, give on-site advice, and answer any questions the recipients have about making their businesses successful. Mario asks the loan recipients to make a commitment to take 10% of their profits and put them back into their community – by supporting orphanages, medical clinics, and feeding the poor. The micro-enterprise program continues to generate 150 new businesses and 400 new jobs each year. Currently, the micro-enterprise loan program has a long waiting list and the Vice President of Nicaragua routinely calls Mario recommending individuals for consideration for a loan.

Having had the opportunity to get to know the loan recipients, Mario recruits the “cream of the crop” to enter into a more intensive leadership training program so that they can assume leadership roles in their local communities and country. Some of the men and women who have attended these weekly sessions now serve on the National Executive Committee of the Conservative Party of Nicaragua, one of the three major political parties. Mario is disciplining two Supreme Court members, several members of Congress, and a half dozen other political leaders every week in his home.

ICRF's team has built a large orphanage in Nicaragua and is supporting a half dozen other orphanages and feeding centers throughout the country caring for approximately 500 children every day in addition to distributing massive amounts of food and medicine.

Proving Doner's thesis that in the right context service provides the sort of national recognition that simultaneously bestows credibility and opens numerous doors, President Chamorro not only commended the ICRF team, but also wrote personal thank you letters to ICRF donors! The Nicaraguan Congress voted unanimously to give the charity exemption from all their normal taxes and custom fees. When ICRF built an orphanage out in the middle of a former war zone, Mrs. Chamorro and three cabinet members dedicated it and the cabinet members stayed overnight in the orphanage since it was the finest building in an area with a population of over 100,000.

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The Samaritan Strategy has captured the imagination of the entire country and opened the door for the gospel message. ICRF's lead man in Nicaragua, Mario Aviles, has been asked several times to accept the vice presidential nomination for the Conservative Party. He has refused because he believes the work the Lord has called him to do in reconstructing his nation is more important than being elected Vice President!

With the help of Mario and the Samaritan Group team, Nicaragua has experienced four years of economic growth. However, generations of work remain to be done to reclaim all that the years of violence have destroyed.

Mexico: For 30 years Rev. Josue Lopez labored to reclaim a garbage dump in Juarez, Mexico, which is one of the poorest and most dangerous cities in the country. His efforts have resulted in Hogar de Niños Emmanuel, an impressive complex consisting of a 10,000 sq. ft. orphanage which serves as home to over 100 children as well as a school, church, and a new 4,000 sq. ft. medical clinic, surgery unit, and dental clinic. In the early 1990's, R. J. Rushdoony and Colonel Doner dedicated the medical clinic. ICRF donated \$50,000 to build the clinic and staff it, and a number of churches volunteered construction labor. In the years since the initial clinic was established, with additional funding from members of the Samaritan Group, it has expanded to boast a medical laboratory, first-rate surgery unit, and dental facility.

The clinic donates medical care to 200 orphans and the poor. People from the surrounding community pay a modest fee for the clinic's services.

Josue's service to the children of Juarez has earned him an excellent reputation in Mexico. Today, he personally disciples 20 ministers from around the country, some hundreds of miles away from Juarez, and is also ministering to several congressmen in Mexico City.

ICRF has also established a small micro-enterprise program in Mexico. Almost a decade ago it loaned \$2,000 to Jose, a graduate of the orphanage, so that he could establish a business. Today this young man operates an entire floor of the central marketplace in Juarez. He regularly donates to the orphanage and has formed a group of orphanage graduates called Youth With a Vision. Youth With a Vision provides resources for the orphanage and its members also help by teaching classes there.

Jose now heads the Human Rights Commission for his state. The Human Rights Commission (HRC) is a powerful group composed of all Evangelical denominations and organizations in Mexico. The Evangelicals, numbering in the millions, formed the HRC to monitor situations in which Evangelicals' rights are impugned or they are discriminated against.

Once again The Samaritan Strategy demonstrates the effectiveness of earning leadership roles in society through service.

Africa: It is hard to comprehend the level of violence that has washed across Africa in one wave after another during this century as wicked dictators, Communists, Moslems, and tribal lords continue to kill millions of innocents. Recently, two terrorist car bombs exploded at two American embassies and civil war once again is destroying the Congo. The bloodshed has continued for decades. Africa will never know peace until she bows before the Peacemaker. Only the bravest of the brave dare travel there and proclaim this truth amidst the rubble, as they minister to the needy. Unfortunately, in an emasculated church such as exists today, there are not many Christian men who are that brave. But there are a few.

Kenya: Operating from its impressive base in Kenya, ICRF has inaugurated extensive programs throughout this vast country.

ICRF supports children's homes, manages child feeding programs in hunger stricken areas, and provides life saving immunizations to over 15,000 children every year.

ICRF also conducts many hygiene classes for mothers, instructing them in basic sanitation, nutrition, and cleanliness. There is a strong emphasis on precautions necessary for the use of local water – 80% of which is unfit for consumption.

ICRF has also provided cash grants for well construction and water distribution systems in over 50 villages. This program alone has provided thousands of children and their families with clean, disease-free water.

ICRF's clean water programs and immunization campaigns have spared the lives of thousands of children by protecting them from deadly diarrhea, cholera, and other life-threatening diseases. Often, ICRF provides clean water for Christian schools and assists the children who attend by providing food, as well.

ICRF's safe water program not only provided clean drinking water to villages in Kenya; it also made water available for irriga-

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tion. Community leaders suggested that ICRF assist families by providing vegetable seed and teaching families how to grow “kitchen gardens” to counter the severe malnutrition in the area. In the first year, 80% of the 2,500 participating families successfully started kitchen gardens that not only provided food for them but produce to sell. Working in partnership with Farming Systems Kenya, ICRF and Giving Hands continue to provide containers of seed to schools, farmers, and families who are taught the nitty-gritty “how-to” of planting seeds and caring for the plants.

ICRF’s educational programs increase literacy among disadvantaged children, increasing their rate of school attendance and helping prepare them for service. ICRF provides tuition so handicapped children can attend secondary school.

Rwanda: During a recent civil war, machete-wielding terrorists butchered hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children. As these depraved, murdering cowards roamed across the land, the only warnings were screams in the night and shouts of “Run!” “Run!” In seconds, whole families were decimated – mercilessly slaughtered as horrified children watched. Terrified survivors told of seeing their mothers and sisters raped, hacked into pieces, and beheaded. They watched as their fathers and brothers lay bleeding to death around them. Some hid underneath the bodies. Some, injured and bleeding, pretended to be dead. Some tried to outrun the hell hounds and never saw their families again. These deeply traumatized children do not know if they have any kin alive anywhere. Thus the devastation continues long after the blood has soaked into the earth and the rebel cowards have gone on their way. That’s when Rosamund Carr, an 86-year-old widow who had lived in Rwanda for 40 years, saw these children and did the only thing she could. She turned part of her property into an orphanage for them. Now as an ICRF project partner, she continues to care for the little ones who survived the slaughter, malnutrition, and disease. She currently cares for over 90 orphans. Mrs. Carr says of the children, “All came to us in varying stages of traumatization. Their greatest needs, plus physical care, are for love. They need more caresses and hugs than most children and a feeling of security.” For safety reasons the orphanage has been moved two times already but, thanks to ICRF, the children now have a safe place to call “home.”

ICRF also initiated another orphanage in Rwanda called Mpore Orphanage. “Mpore” means “my deepest condolences for the tragedy in your life.” Mpore cares for 60 orphans. Like Mrs. Carr, the staff and housemothers of Mpore have learned that these children need more than food and clothing – they need lots and lots of love. Mpore now provides the family love and support that the terrorist hordes tore away. The children help care for one another and help with chores such as cleaning, cooking, and sewing.

In addition to providing the “basic necessities,” both orphanages provide the emotional and spiritual support the children need to heal the spirit as well. Strong educational programs prepare the children for the day when they will leave the orphanage home to establish families of their own.

Uganda: In addition to the devastation of Idi Amin in the 1970s, Uganda has been decimated by the AIDS virus. Unlike America whose AIDS epidemic is in large part the result of homosexual activity, Uganda’s epidemic is a consequence of promiscuous heterosexual activity, contaminated blood banks, and contaminated dental instruments. As a result, an entire generation (ages 20 to 40) is being wiped out. The only ones remaining are grandparents (many of whom become infected caring for their dying children, and thus are also dying) and the surviving children. Out of a population of 10 million, 600,000 are orphans – a number expected to climb to 2 to 3 million in the next few years. One out of every 17 children in Uganda is an orphan, as compared to 1 out of every 1,000 in America.

In Uganda, ICRF partners with Jay Dangers, a committed Reconstructionist whose mission from God is to be a father to the fatherless and to train the fatherless to become fathers so they can disciple the nations. His goal is not to be a father like Robert Young in “Father Knows Best,” but to be a father after the pattern of our Heavenly Father. To this end, he has established New Hope Uganda and a remarkable method of equipping the orphans there for life.

The first step in the process is to establish a family structure for the children. To this end, Jay houses six to eight children in a hut with a “Mom” and “Dad.” Here the children learn the ins and outs of family life, and family government and family worship. They are taught to love and respect each member of the family unit and to work together at such household chores as cooking and clean-

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ing. Each family unit is given land which the children learn to cultivate; they also learn to trade the fruits and vegetables they produce for other varieties produced by other family units.

The New Hope Campus also houses a large school that provides elementary and secondary education as well as vocational training (both schools have been funded by the combined efforts of the Samaritan Group). When the new vocational training school was completed, the First Lady of Uganda (a Christian) came to dedicate it. Jay hopes to soon open a discipleship school for training young men and women and sending them throughout Africa.

Refugees: Often the only chance (and a slim one at that) a family has for survival in Africa is to flee – to just get up and go – take whatever you can carry and run for your life. Many perish in the exodus; the “lucky” ones end up in refugee camps across Africa where polluted water, disease, and near starvation await them. As of May 17, 1998, the United Nations reported that there were 307,137 refugees in Western Tanzania alone while estimates of total refugees in Africa are almost 4 million.

The refugees arrive at the camps, naked or wearing tattered rags. They are hungry, thirsty and often sick, greatly weakened by the ordeal they have been through. Instead of hope, they find desolate conditions. Carsten Hobohm, M.D., manager of Giving Hands, toured Rwanda, Kenya, and Tanzania in the summer of 1998. He reported that in Tanzania, each person receives 350 grams (approximately 12 ounces) of corn meal per week (less than 2 ounces per day). Occasionally each one also gets a small amount of oil and beans. This is too much to starve on, but not enough to live on. Some of the children are so malnourished by the age of 13 that their hair turns gray or red.

To ease the suffering, the Samaritan Group members have helped send food, clothing, medical supplies and equipment into refugee camps in the Sudan, Rwanda, and Uganda. In Burundi and Tanzania supplies are being distributed by Giving Hands. While continuing to meet the immediate needs of the suffering, Dr. Hobohm looks to the future: “The immediate need is great but we must also address the future. The country lies in ruins, the most important social institutions are destroyed. That is why, together with the government and local churches, Giving Hands supports the rebuilding of medical stations and schools.”

Become Part of the Solution

Like many ministries, the Samaritan Group and ICRF face severe financial challenges. Due to a combination of factors, income has dropped as needs and opportunities have expanded. To take their work to the next stage, Colonel estimates a need of a minimum of 100 new “silent business partners” who will donate \$500 to \$1,000 to ICRF’s small family business loan fund in Nicaragua. Each grant, loaned out and repaid every six months, can transform two desperate families every year into successful entrepreneurs employing and discipling another half dozen. Colonel reports that he is also looking for 1,000 new “child sponsors,” pointing out that for just \$25 a month ICRF can meet a parentless child’s physical and emotional needs, and train them to disciple their community as well.

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This article written by Colonel Doner was well received for its wise insights. We reprint it here because we believe it also exemplifies the leadership style Colonel Doner has brought to his many endeavors.

Developing Leaders for the Third Millennium

By Colonel V. Doner

Now that we've managed to stumble into the Third Millennium, those of us who have a little tread left may pause to wonder what sort of world we (or our children or grandchildren) will inherit.

Will Western Culture continue to root out the last scintilla of Christian influence on its headlong rush to self-immolation? Or will we witness a renaissance of Christendom – a culture broadly based on Christian principles?

Part of the answer will depend on the quality, quantity, character, and commitment of the next generation of leaders. The fundamental question is: will Western Protestantism resolve to produce cultural leaders...or will we continue to fall back on an unappealing mix of TV evangelists and politicians as our designated hitters in the culture wars?

Assuming that at least some elements of Western Christianity summon the resolve to produce such a leadership cadre, we might ask what qualities do we need to look for (or instill) in would-be leaders?

Mission and Vision

A leader is a man with a mission: to build a bigger church or a better product; to make a better world (or to find a new one); to defeat a threatening enemy: war, disease, famine, ignorance; to help the poor, sick, handicapped, or orphaned (to see that justice is done); to steward God's good creation (by stewarding a part of the creation: art, science, church, family, business, government, environment, etc).

To accomplish his mission a leader must also be a visionary. That is, he must provide followers with a vision of what can be – of

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a new possibility – that will ignite their energy and capture their loyalty. To do so leaders often have to think “outside the box”: seeing things in a new way, stepping out of the dominant paradigm that denied possibilities. Think about it: where would we be today if a few leaders hadn’t been able to defy their paradigm of the day? Consider:

- ♣ Columbus vs. The world is flat
- ♣ Galileo vs. The universe revolves around the world
- ♣ Pasteur vs. There are no such things as “germs”
- ♣ Edison vs. Electricity is impossible
- ♣ Luther vs. The Pope is always right
- ♣ Founders of the Christian Right vs. Dispensational Paradigm (political activity is a waste of time)

One could add hundreds of other examples, but you get the idea.

Strategy

The leader must not only present a vision, he must convincingly demonstrate it’s possible to realize, and generally, show how to get there, *i.e.*, how we get from “A” (where we are now) to “Z” (where we want to be). To do this the leader must act as a “Pathfinder” or “Pioneer,” charting a course through virgin terrain. This entails a strong gift for strategic analysis: a *realistic* assessment that counts the costs, identifies and analyzes obstacles as well as resources. This knowledge must then be painstakingly developed into a clearly articulated strategy. Otherwise, the vision remains a dream the old cliché addresses: “Good ideas are a dime a dozen.” How many men have had brilliant ideas for new products or causes, which failed to materialize? They lacked a strategic plan – or the ability to implement it.

Like the visionary, strategists must also think in new ways. How can a heretofore impossible objective be attained? History is rife with men who found a new “path” in pursuit of their mission:

- ♣ Hannibal taking an army of elephants over the Alps to attack Rome

- ♣ Ford inventing the assembly line to mass produce his product
- ♣ Calvin writing the *Institutes* as a new expression of historic orthodoxy
- ♣ MacArthur saving Korea by his Inchon landing
- ♣ Cromwell deposing the English Sovereign

While these examples represent a rather grand scale, the need to think “out of the box” to find the most effective path is the same no matter what the goal: building a local church or business, conducting a fundraising or political campaign, or garnering support for a cause, civic organization, or investment venture. By definition, achieving a vision which has never (or seldom) been realized presents a complex set of challenges. Thus, the strategist’s role is to solve complex problems in order to reach “the Promised Land.”

Courage

All of this talk about defying dominant paradigms or stepping out of the box implies some strong nonconformist tendencies (*i.e.*, as in conforming to expectations and assumptions of “the people” or “current wisdom”). Most people are externally validated; that is to say, they are dependent on the opinion of others for confirmation of their direction. “Others” provide key approval for everything from one’s career, “you’re doing well,” to appearance, manner of speech, and acceptable topics or attitudes. Talking, thinking or dressing like everyone else in one’s peer group in order to “fit in,” to avoid any criticism, is paramount.

In contrast, the healthy leader is internally validated. He knows within himself whether his work is excellent or mediocre. He knows what he’s a master at and what others are inferior at and weighs their opinions accordingly (just as important, he must also recognize the areas where he is weaker and seek out “masters” who can offer tasteful assistance for his overall strategy). A misstep here – overestimating one’s own competence – can be, and often is, fatal. So too, relying on other’s supposed “expertise” can result in disaster. It’s a difficult balance and takes decades to master the distinctions and nuances involved.

This is not to say a leader doesn’t want to be liked, approved of, commended, or agreed with. It’s simply that unlike Bill Clinton (or most politicians) he can live without it. When a leader receives

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such affirmation it is well received, but a little goes a long way. What carries him through is the courage of his convictions. Conversely, if he has not read widely, has not mastered his chosen field of endeavor or its requisite skills, has overlooked important advice from men of proven wisdom (definitely *not* your average Joe!), and has failed to learn from his own mistakes, his convictions will rest on some faulty assumptions – and his courage will drive him, his convictions, and his flock of lemmings right over the nearest cliff. In this century alone, witness the thousands of wacko cults (many of them self-proclaimed as Christian), malevolently insane utopian causes (communism, Nazism, etc.), and at least several crusaders within your own group of acquaintances whose vision crashed and burned (usually with a lot of other passengers on board).

Self-Awareness

A leader is only human (which he can often overlook) meaning he will be ignorant in many areas, some critical to his success (no one can be a visionary, teacher, scholar, people person, administrator, writer, speaker, cash flow manager, etc.). Most “leaders”, however, choose to remain blissfully ignorant of their ignorance (*i.e.*, they don’t know what they don’t know). Because the leader is usually brilliant in a few areas, he is tempted to cover his lack of knowledge with ignorance. He assumes that since he’s a genius at theology or physics or medicine, he must be adequate, if not exceptional in all areas of endeavors: from people skills to political strategies to investment analysis. In this case, the leader’s ignorance is only exceeded by his arrogance. Unfortunately this weakness is pandemic among leaders. How many Christian leaders do we know who have missed opportunities for true impact because of lousy “people skills” or “financial judgment,” missing links which they ignored or denied? How many political or Christian strategies have gone unfunded because erstwhile entrepreneurs think they’re also political or theological experts?

So what’s the remedy? While valuing one’s intuitive sense, the leader must be on guard against his most common enemy – hubris. A good place to start is recognizing one’s sinfulness and imperfection. Anglican scholar John Stott interprets Christ’s maxim, “Blessed are the meek,” to entail a “true estimate of one’s sinful nature and motives.” If one has difficulty conducting a realistic

self-assessment, consult your mate! Secondly, listen carefully for “feedback” from how you affect others. You think you’re a master organizer, scholar, gifted leader and saint. What is their experience of you? The dissonance may be sobering. For this reason, and the profound insecurity which drives many to “be leaders,” such revelations will be avoided at all costs – including the success of one’s own mission. When one’s fragile self-identity is at stake, too many leaders will choose “being right” or “saving face” over achieving the stated objective.

Motivation

This brings the question of motivation to the fore. Why do we want to be a leader? Power, glory, compensating for some internal insecurity? Or simply to get the job done and serve? Here’s one test: if you’re not as sure as you possibly can be (given that none of us can be totally objective in assuring our own motives) that a given course (political, theological, etc.) is in the best interest of the people you would lead, are you still compelled to lead?

A leader must mobilize people to overcome numerous obstacles to realize his vision. He must energize them through his *passion* which in turn is rooted in conviction. Today we seem largely to have many passionate leaders without conviction. Neither will do. Passion for new possibilities is contagious. Likewise is a lack of enthusiasm. If you’re not excited about the difference you can make, why should your audience be (a simple and clear definition of “enthusiasm” is “God” [*theos*] “en” [within]). People will be inspired by the godly vision or inspiration within the leader.

Yet a new vision of that future, no matter how passionately expressed, falls flat unless it connects with its intended audience. Consequently, the leader must not only have a profound knowledge of the hopes and desires, but also of the frustrations and bedevilmments of those he would enroll. He must, in fact, share a deep empathy with them.

Empathy

Empathy is not sympathy or even compassion. Empathy entails a “connection” which allows one not only to see through another’s eyes, but to “feel” what he feels. When we identify with people on a visceral level they intuitively “get it.” An astute audi-

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ence can tell whether your identification with them is authentic or opportunistic. If the leader is authentically empathetic, his words resonate within the hearer: “Yes, he’s right. This is the answer.” The leader must also value those he would lead. A leader like George Patton or Robert E. Lee could demand (and receive) superhuman effort from their men because at a gut level those men knew they were not reviewed as just cannon fodder (even though it may turn out that way). Conversely, when the flock figures out the shepherd really doesn’t care all that much about their personal welfare, they scatter. The old adage “people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care (about them)” would have saved more than a few pastors the loss of their parish.

Risks

A leader must be ever vigilant for any opportunity which allows him to advance or strengthen his cause, mobilize new resources, or exploit a new opening to circumvent troublesome obstacles. *Carpe Diem* (seize the day) – let no day or opportunity slip by – should be his morning mantra. Consequently he must constantly be willing to take risks, which alone may qualify one as a leader, in that as the vast majority of men are “risk averse” to the extreme. To be successful, however, the leader must learn how to carefully weigh each risk, to have a “contingency plan,” to take a prudent risk, if you will. The wisdom required (and the humility to obtain wise counsel) will once again set the successful leader apart from many who would lead but will fail because they never learned to calculate risk or pack an extra parachute.

Large Spirit

A leader needs to be generous in overlooking human frailty and in rewarding and acknowledging others’ contributions. In other words, he needs to be magnanimous. No one wants to follow a small-minded, mean-spirited, glory-hogging cheapskate.” And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and *largeness of heart* like the sand in the seashore” (1Kn. 4:29)

Readers

Another cliché, time worn but true: there’s simply no substitute for reading deeply and widely to understand your strategic

situation. How did your business, product, church, cause, etc. arrive at its current status? What historical, political, economical, sociological, or environmental factors play a role? What do your critics say, and why? What about opposing strategies? What sort of ideas are shaping those whom you want to influence? What insights can authors offer you about your general context, your own presuppositions, your opponent's worldview, etc? History repeats itself – every several generations. If we read widely (meaning not just the guys you agree with) we save ourselves a lot of wasted time, effort, and embarrassing miscalculations. Plus, we'd have the additional benefit of being well educated and well rounded. Ideas have consequences.

Service

As I wrote in my book, *The Samaritan Strategy*, many Christians, particularly those with strong theological or political orientation, are anxious to lead but unwilling to earn the right through service. They want a big following or to be elected to Congress because of their superior ideas. Unfortunately, most people are slow to recognize such “brilliance”. What they do notice is that you have your own agenda and don't seem particularly concerned about helping them formulate or advance their own. Leadership is earned through service. When we serve, we volunteer to take responsibility for whatever it is we've volunteered for. When we serve well with responsibility (ability to respond) to our tasks; we are awarded authority concomitant with our responsibility. Thus, the more responsibility we take and discharge well, the more authority we're granted. Sooner than we think, we work our way up from bus boy to manager, from club secretary to club president, from lowly volunteer to press secretary, from volunteering on city committees to being elected to the city council, from altar boy to pope (well, okay, there are some exceptions!).

Who is God?

Many leaders, in seeking to serve God, eventually tend to confuse their will with the Almighty's. A common joke among all too many Christian staffers goes something like this, “What's the difference between God and (name of the leader)? God doesn't think He's (name of leader).”

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Lest we think too much of ourselves and our mission, let us remind ourselves that we are but briefly passing and thus will be briefly used. Solomon, in probing the mysteries and meaning of life and calling, exclaims: “Let us state the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all” (*Ec. 12:13*). If we focus on Solomon’s advice, the rest will, in God’s sovereign hands, fall into place.

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Helping the Poor Without Feeding the Beast

by Greg L. Bahnsen

A Gracious End to Pursue

Those who have faith in Jesus Christ as their eternal Savior from the guilt, penalty, pollution, and power of sin have experienced grace in its most genuine and supreme sense – God’s lovingkindness exercised self-sacrificially for the redemption of His undeserving people. To put it in an economic figure of speech, God’s riches of grace have been freely used to relieve our hopeless spiritual poverty. As Paul said:

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9).

It is obvious from the context in which these words are found – viz., a discussion of giving an offering to minister to the needs of poverty-stricken saints – that Paul meant it to be more than a mere figure of speech.

The gracious behavior of our Lord Jesus Christ is to be emulated practically by those who trust in Him for salvation. Thus the use of our earthly resources (our riches) should manifest our experience of divine mercy by graciously relieving the poverty of others. This grace demonstrates the sincerity of our love:

But as you abound in everything – in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and all earnestness, and in your love to us – see that you abound in this grace also. I speak not by way of commandment, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity also of your love (vv. 7-8).

Just because it is grace that Paul is commending here, he makes a point of saying that charity¹⁰ must be an expression of sincere love from the heart, not something practiced due to external compulsion. So “I do not speak by way of commandment,” says Paul. Charity arises from internal constraint. Such constraint is necessarily felt by those who are transformed by the grace of God.

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It is inconceivable that a poor sinner could be enriched by the gracious salvation of Jesus Christ and not then show pity upon the economically poor. Doing so is a fleshing out of the gospel which he believes unto eternal life. “The righteous man shows mercy and gives” (Psalm 37:21). Anyone who claims God’s love, but who lacks compassion for the needy, has not really experienced that which he professes. The Apostle John wrote:

But whoever has the world’s goods, and beholds his brother in need, and shuts up his compassion from him, how could the love of God abide in him (1 John 3:17)?

God’s gracious love produces people who exercise gracious love toward others. No other power in the universe can produce such a heart. Grace always begets grace, and only grace begets grace.

We may take it as a Biblical starting point, then, that Christians should feel a responsibility to “work out their salvation” (cf. Philippians 2:12) in the economic realm by seeking to meet the genuine needs and relieve the misery of the poverty-stricken.¹¹ To feed the hungry among Christ’s brethren, to clothe them when naked, and to visit them when sick is to minister as unto Christ Himself: “Inasmuch as you did it unto one of these my brethren, even the least, you did it unto me” (Matthew 25:40). As Proverbs put it, “he who has pity on the poor lends unto the Lord, and his good deed will He repay him” (19:17). Charity shown to the needy honors the poor man’s Maker (14:31), whereas “he who mocks the poor reproaches his Maker” (17:5). The way in which we respond to the poverty-stricken, then, is an index of our relationship to God as Creator and Redeemer.

Proverbs teaches us that a godly woman “stretches out her hand to the poor” (31:20) and “he who gives unto the poor shall not lack” (28:27). Indeed, “he who has a bountiful eye shall be blessed, for he gives his bread to the poor” (22:9). Thus “he who despises his neighbor sins, but he who has pity on the poor, happy is he” (14:21). On the other hand, to oppress the poor and enrich yourself thereby will prove an expensive tactic that brings you into need (22:16) and will make for yourself a divine enemy (22:22-23). Likewise, to disregard the plight of the poor will render your own prayers ineffectual: “whoever stops his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself but not be heard” (21:13).

Biblical Means to the End

God's Word not only points us to the gracious end which we all should pursue (viz., relieving the needs of the poor), but it also has a great deal to say about the means by which the Christian graciously accomplishes that end. After all, not just any means-to-the-end carries divine approval. Robbing banks in order to give cash to the needy is one conceivable means of helping the poor that will incur the wrath and curse of God!

How, then, would God's Word direct us to show concern for the poor and needy?¹² First, by not hiding from their needs – isolating ourselves so that we need not encounter the cries of the poor. The Bible condemns “stopping the ears” and “hiding the eyes” (Proverbs 21:13; 28:27), not so subtle ways of remaining insensitive to the plight of the less fortunate around us. “The righteous takes knowledge of the cause of the poor” (Proverbs 29:7). Indeed, when he gives a dinner, he is acquainted with and able to invite the poor who cannot recompense him (Luke 14:12-14).

Second, and most obviously, we are urged to show neighborly pity to the poor (cf. Proverbs 14:21) by giving generously to relieve their specific needs – making direct gifts to buy groceries or clothes, pay utility bills, underwrite medical treatment, etc. (Matthew 25:35-39; Luke 14:12-14). “The righteous gives and withholds not” (Proverbs 21:26; cf. 22:9).

Third, God's law protects and provides favorable social arrangements for the poor and needy, such as the prohibitions on taking the necessities of life as collateral (Exodus 22:26-27; Deuteronomy 24:13-22) or charging interest on loans made to them (Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:35-37; Deuteronomy 15:7-11; 23:19-20). It sometimes happens that a person cannot afford a donation to a brother in need, but can loan him some money for a time. It is a Christian virtue not to turn away those who would borrow from us (Matthew 5:42), expecting nothing in return (Luke 6:35). In such a case, it would be immoral to profit from your brother's distress: the loan may not carry interest charges. God Himself will pay back such a good deed (Proverbs 19:17), whereas the violation of this command from God will lead you to lose your financial gain to someone else more gracious (Proverbs 28:8).

Fourth, the law of God also provides for the poor through the favorable social arrangement of requiring us to allow gleaning

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(Leviticus 19:9-10; 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19-20). The leftovers in our fields, the pickings which fall to the ground, and the unreaped corners of the fields are to be made available to those who are in need. The poor may hereby work to support themselves and may meet their families' needs with whatever they are able to carry away (thus placing natural requirements and restraints upon the scope of this provision). The application of this divine requirement outside of agricultural settings is not inconceivable (e.g., donation of our still-useable clothes, furniture, appliances, cash change from the market or restaurant, etc.).

Fifth, the Word of God offers us wisdom to see that it is inappropriate and worthy of disapprobation for someone to use his advantage in the free market to drive up prices on items which are basic necessities of life. "He who withholds grain, the people shall curse him; but blessing shall be upon the head of him who sells it" (Proverbs 11:26). The greed which would corner the market on some commodity which is a staple of life, calculating to withhold it from sale in order to make people desperate and increase the profit on its sale later, will be cursed.

Sixth, the Scriptures require us to protect the property rights of those in society who virtually have no voice, who are easiest to exploit, and who have the least political clout – people like the orphans and widows (Deuteronomy 10:18; Psalm 68:5; Proverbs 15:25; 22:28; 23:10-11).

Tampering with their boundaries or in other ways diminishing the use and value of their property and belongings – whether through legislation or deceptive contracts or manipulative lawsuits – provokes the vengeance of their Redeemer according to the Bible, and we should intercede to take their side as well. This is especially needful in a culture where it has become so costly (and tricky) in civil court to resolve disputes and guard one's rights.

Seventh, Christians who plead for the rights of the needy in lawsuits as well as those who are entrusted with judicial authority, such as judges in our courts, are especially commanded by God to relieve the easy social oppression of the needy and to guard against judicial prejudice toward them. God expects kings to "deliver the poor and needy" (Psalm 72:2-4, 12-14) – which means, according to the Biblical text itself, that they are to "break their oppressors" by securing fairness in the courts and protecting them from "bribes,"

“fraud and violence” (Leviticus 19:15; Exodus 23:3, 6; Psalm 82:1-4; Amos 5:11-12; cf. Proverbs 22:22-23; 29:14).

Eighth, another way in which those in need are defrauded is when wealthy employers take advantage of them by delaying or holding back the wages of their workers (Leviticus 19:13; James 5:1-6). In such cases the Christian must come to the worker’s defense and seek the fulfillment of obligations made to him, lest his economic condition be further worsened. Likewise, Christians ought to take a stand for protecting the freedom of the poor in the marketplace so that they are guaranteed an opportunity to compete for jobs (e.g., over against closed union shops, etc.; cf. Matthew 20:1-16) and to compete at a price that renders them more likely to be hired (e.g., over against wage requirements set by the state, etc.; cf. Revelation 13:17). To deny people the freedom to compete in the marketplace and thereby enjoy upward economic mobility violates the love we are to have for our neighbors and transgresses the golden rule.

Ninth, Christian families must make it a point to make provision for meeting the economic needs of their family members (1 Timothy 5:8), in particular those who fall upon hard times. This will call not only for industry and avoidance of sloth to take care of ordinary living expenses (e.g., Proverbs 6:6-11; 10:4; 19:15; 20:4; 23:21; 24:30-34), but also foresight and frugality to meet emergency needs which could not be predicted (cf. e.g., Leviticus 25:25, 49). Likewise, as an extension of such loving provision, families may show benevolence to fellow-believers who have become insolvent debtors by allowing the poor brother voluntarily to sell himself (actually, his labor) into their servitude, thereby coming to be treated and cared for as part of the household. His debts would be paid (Leviticus 25:39), he would learn responsible labor and financial saving (perhaps enough to buy his own release: Leviticus 25:49), and in time he would be given liberal provisions to start a new life (Deuteronomy 15:14).

Tenth and very importantly, the Christian congregation should corporately minister to the needs of the poor. The office of deacon was specifically ordained as a ministry of mercy to the needy, for instance the daily assistance to widows (Acts 6:1-6). Tithes and offerings which God calls for are regularly to be used for the relief of the poor (Deuteronomy 14:28-29).¹³ And special offerings are

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to be taken by the church to take care of Christians suffering from special hardships or emergencies (e.g., 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Romans 15:25-27; 2 Corinthians 8). The charitable agency of the church is one of the most enduring, powerful, and efficient means of distributing financial aid to people in need. Such distribution of charity is motivated by voluntary and divinely sanctioned sacrifices and offerings from God's people. Its resources ought to be a ten percent baseline of the earnings, however great or small, of all of God's people – then further fueled by the freewill offerings of grateful believers who have been blessed with enough to meet their own needs. The oversight and administration is local and accountable to the congregation, being far less vulnerable to freeloading, fraud, and the expenses of a top-heavy bureaucracy.

Even this very sketchy sample of the Biblical evidence demonstrates that God's Word has a great deal to say, not simply about the general aim of helping the poor and needy, but also about the specific means which God has approved and commanded for fulfilling that task. The Bible exhorts us to pursue the gracious end of relieving the poverty-stricken. It likewise reveals various gracious means for doing so. Certain recent suggestions have been made by some evangelical Christians which would supplement the means mentioned above by which believers should support the poor, and it becomes our assignment here to evaluate those supplemental means for their Biblical credentials (or lack thereof). Not every means to an end enjoys the approval of God, as we said above. It is important that we do God's work in God's way.

Betraying Grace

It is a tribute to Dr. Ronald Sider that his book, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*,¹⁴ has captured the attention of so much of the evangelical Christian world. He writes with conviction and compassion – a compassion for relieving the poor and hungry of this world which one could only wish more people shared, especially more financially comfortable Christians. From what has been said above, those who define their Christian perspective and ethic according to the Scriptures should have no difficulty endorsing the goal set forth by Dr. Sider: viz., that of getting Christians activated to meet the genuine needs of the poor. Our evaluation of the means advocated by Dr. Sider, however, cannot be as positive. I believe

that a proper reading of Scripture does not substantiate, but rather contradicts, many of Dr. Sider's proposals.

This is not the place to engage in a factual analysis of Dr. Sider's approach to helping the hungry of the world, although a significant critique could be undertaken here.¹⁵ It is rather our purpose to offer a normative, Biblical evaluation of his approach, particularly as he advocates the intervention and compulsive agency of the state to improve the outward economic circumstances of the poor. Such advocacy is on a collision course with the teaching of God's Word. This is evident first, and in the broadest sense, because it abandons the gracious character of Christian charity.

As we can see from the preceding list of means for helping the poor, there are some provisions which are a matter of justice – that is, protecting legitimate civil rights against those who would oppress the poor by taking advantage of them (e.g., fraud in the marketplace, prejudice in the courts). But other provisions are of a different character altogether, being a matter of grace (or charity) which proceeds from the heart and leads us voluntarily to feed the poor, lend to them, take up offerings, etc.

When someone possesses a right, he may claim justice by making a demand upon others; if he has a right (say, to freedom of worship), then the rest of us have a corresponding duty (here, to forbear his chosen liturgy) – and the state may impose punitive sanctions for my violating that duty. This is “justice.” Now obviously the scope of our moral obligation before God exceeds the scope of our enforceable duties within the civil order of the state. God may require me not to snub a grouchy neighbor (and will consider this in the judgment of the final day), but this does not turn a cheerful greeting into a matter of justice – as though it were my neighbor's right, and the state may punish me for depriving him of “justice”! It should rather be said that by snubbing the grouchy neighbor I have not been “gracious” to him (and have not treated him as God has treated me). The virtue which I lack will come only by the internal, sanctifying work of God; it will not be produced by the compulsion or threats of the state. The state is an agency of justice, not grace.¹⁶

Justice and grace (or charity) should also be distinguished when we are thinking of God Himself. The theological concept of God's essential character is logically different from that of God's eternal

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purposes. The latter denotes His good pleasure which is not constrained or necessary (and thus could have been otherwise) – such as His choice to send His Son into this world graciously to die for sinners. The former concept denotes what is always and necessarily true of God – such as His abhorrence of theft. The prohibition of stealing stems from God’s unchanging character; it is not an open question whether God might choose to condemn or rather condone stealing. On the other hand, the provision of a saving sacrifice or the granting of regeneration to a sinner stems from God’s eternal purpose; necessity did not (could not) constrain it, but God graciously chose it in His good pleasure. It is crucial that evangelical Christians draw a distinction between these two concepts of justice and grace, lest the nature of the gospel message itself be obscured.¹⁷

Unfortunately Dr. Sider has not been careful to do so. He advocates what he calls “structural change” such that the state would compel and enforce certain provisions intended to help the poor (like guaranteed income and prices, trade preferences, commodity agreements, land redistribution, foreign grants of economic aid, etc.).¹⁸ About these changes he writes: “Yahweh wills institutionalized structures (rather than mere charity) which systematically and regularly reduce the gap between the rich and the poor.” He is forthright by indicating that “what is needed is a change in public policy” – thus calling “on the government to legislate.” His thesis is pointedly stated: “The texts we have examined clearly show that God wills justice, not mere charity.”¹⁹ Dr. Sider is pressing for more than charity or grace. He is blunt that certain social policies preferential to the poor are a matter of justice – to be made a right which the state enforces with its awesome power to punish. Note the stress upon “justice” in this passage:

God wills prosperity with justice. But that does not mean that wealthy persons who make Christmas baskets and give to relief have satisfied God’s demand. God wills justice for the poor. And justice, as we have seen, means things like the Jubilee and the sabbatical remission of debts. It means economic structures that check the emergence of extremes of wealth and poverty. It means massive economic sharing among the people of God. Prosperity without that kind of Biblical concern for justice unambiguously signifies disobedience.²⁰

In the broadest sense, then, our objection to Dr. Sider's proposed means to the end of helping the poor is that it abandons the gracious character of Christian charity. By calling upon the state to enforce certain economic provisions, thereby compelling people to show preference for the poor, Dr. Sider is no longer talking about love which is practiced from the heart self-sacrificially. He has tried to turn grace into justice, only to distort them both.

Wresting Scripture

Beyond this, the "justice" which Dr. Sider proposes is fundamentally at odds with the Biblical concept of justice. He openly endorses economic policies enforced by the state which would show preference to the poor (and to poor nations). However God disapprobates the showing of any respect of persons in judgment (Proverbs 24:23; 28:21). According to His will, justice is supposed to be blind – not supposed to take account of a person's racial, social, or economic status. A private citizen may choose to exercise discrimination by offering charitable aid to one person instead of another, but the state is prohibited to discriminate or show favoritism. Indeed, God's Word explicitly forbids the showing of preference to the rich or to the poor: "neither shall you favor a poor man in his cause" (Exodus 23:3). God's normative view of justice precludes the preferential policies advocated by Dr. Sider from being deemed "justice." Thus saith the Lord: "You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you shall judge your neighbor fairly" (Leviticus 19:15).

The only cogent way to escape the above refutation would be to argue that God Himself, the One who determines the demands of true justice, has revealed in His Word that the kind of preferential economic policies advocated by Dr. Sider are required to be enforced by the state. If God's Word teaches (or implies by good and necessary consequence) that tariff preferences, guaranteed income, foreign aid, etc. are part of the legitimate duty of the civil magistrate, then such things become a right to be demanded by the poor (and part of God's conception of civil justice), rather than a preferential violation of the impartiality otherwise required by the justice of God. Has Dr. Sider exegetically demonstrated that his proposals enjoy divine sanction?

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Dr. Sider and the author of this essay share the same basic assumptions about Biblical authority in the area of economics.

According to Biblical faith, Yahweh is Lord of all things. He is the sovereign Lord of history. Economics is not a neutral, secular sphere independent of his lordship. Economic activity, like every other area of life, should be subject to his will and revelation.²¹

We agree that Scripture is our ethical norm for economics. Moreover, we agree that the whole Bible must be taken into account when determining what the will of God is on a question. Dr. Sider observes:

God gave Israel the law so that his people would know how to live together in peace and justice. The church is now the new people of God ... Certainly, as Paul and other New Testament writers indicate, parts of the Mosaic law (the ceremonial law, for instance) no longer apply to the church. But there is no indication that the moral law has ceased to be normative for Christians (Mt. 5:17-20; Romans 8:4). The Old Testament's revelation about the kind of economic relationships that promote love and harmony among God's people should still guide the church today.²²

He continues on to say of the Old Testament law: "It is the basic principles, not the specific details, which are important and normative for Christians today."²³ Moreover, the fact that Biblical authors did not hesitate to apply these revealed norms to societies outside the people of God supports the conclusion that we should apply them to our society today as well. "Following Biblical principles on justice in society is the only way to lasting peace and social harmony for all human societies."²⁴ In a nutshell, Dr. Sider has summarized my own basic understanding of the normativity of God's law for present day society.²⁵

Within the framework of these convictions about the normativity of God's Word in economics, however, Dr. Sider has fallen short of demonstrating in any exegetically cogent manner that Scripture supports the state's preferential policies toward the poor which he proposes. How does he attempt to enlist Biblical sanction for such things as tariffs, commodity agreements, enforced land reform, guaranteed income, foreign aid, etc.? By appealing to the "Jubilee" provisions of the Old Testament (Leviticus 25).²⁶ The reasoning he employs is exaggerated, to say the least.

In the first place, the provisions for the Jubilee were not a matter of state-enforced justice, but rather the moral obligation of a people who had enjoyed the saving grace of God. That is, the Jubilee was a picture of the “Gospel” (Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18). It displayed grace, not justice. There is no mention of penal sanctions brought by the civil magistrate for violating the Jubilee (although God clearly intervened to judge His people when they ungraciously disregarded it: cf. 1 Corinthians 11:17-32).

In the second place, the provisions for the Jubilee were not a part of that universal justice or righteousness which is known through general revelation as binding upon all mankind.²⁷ It was only within the “holy land” of Israel that God allotted inalienable family plots of land and then required that any plots which impoverished Israelites might sell (more akin to lease) would revert to the assigned family in the fiftieth year. This was a unique arrangement for God’s special people (thus categorized with the ceremonial law) – based on God’s direct granting of the land (Leviticus 25:2) and His work of gracious atonement (vv. 9-10), thus making Israel “holy” or set apart from other nations (v. 12).

In the third place, Dr. Sider has interpreted the Jubilee as a “model” of general economic redistribution meant to “equalize wealth” and “avoid the extremes of wealth and poverty.”²⁸ The actual text of Leviticus 25 does not support such a generalization, nor such an interpretation of divine intention. The stipulations of the Jubilee protected only the agricultural Israelites (not those within the cities) from irredeemable loss of their land; it did not provide for their sharing in the profits or assets of others. Indeed, during the time that a family’s land was alienated from them, they received no income from it at all – and did not share in the income of the temporary owner (lessor). Economic redistribution must be read into the text.

In the fourth place, Dr. Sider’s method of reasoning is exaggerated, even if we granted an redistributionary interpretation of the Jubilee text. How do we apply the “underlying principles” of the Old Testament laws? A good example is found in the requirement that a railing be placed around the flat roof of the Israelite’s house (Deuteronomy 22:8) on which visitors were entertained. From these we learn the general moral principle that we should provide safety precautions to protect human life, and we could readily apply this

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principle by requiring fences around backyard swimming pools. The connection is not hard to see here. Dr. Sider's method, however, renders any specific connection between his preferential economic proposals and the provisions of Jubilee dubious, and he does this by over-generalizing the intention of the text. He moves from the specific provision of restoring family lands to the highly abstract and undefined notion of economic "redistribution," and then applies that abstract notion to any kind of redistribution imaginable – e.g., pooling and equally dividing all of our assets, institutional policies such as guaranteed income, commodity agreements, foreign aid, etc. This is a long, long stretch of the imagination from the Biblical text. One might just as creatively apply the rooftop railing legislation to the modern state, via a abstract notion of safety precautions, by making it a law that everyone must wear scuba gear in case he falls into a backyard swimming pool!

If the Jubilee provisions warrant just any and all schemes of economic redistribution, then they justify robbing banks and dividing up the spoil among the poor. This *reductio ad absurdum* is intended to point to the absence of any reasonable hermeneutical control in Dr. Sider's use of the Biblical text to make economic judgments for the modern world. Obviously, our use of the underlying principles of God's law should not bring us into conflict with the clear teaching of God's Word elsewhere. It is just here that we come to the greatest difficulty with Dr. Sider's economic proposals for helping the poor. By advocating that certain preferential economic policies be legislated and enforced by the civil magistrate, he puts himself at odds with the Biblical view of the state and its proper limits.

Dr. Sider has correctly stated that the right of private property which is guaranteed in God's Word is not absolute, but subject to qualification.²⁹ We would certainly agree, but add that only God has the right to abridge the right of private property by prescribing the qualifications upon it through His revealed Word – not by human speculation or the application of abstract principles. Moreover, those qualifications or limits upon the right of private property may be enforced by the punitive power of the state only where God so authorizes. By not showing divine authorization for the state-enforced abridgements of private property and preferential economic polities he proposes, Dr. Sider has urged the evangelical world in the direction of feeding "the Beast."

Unleashing Leviathan

We take it as a Biblical starting point that all civil magistrates today are under moral obligation to be guided and regulated by the law of God (throughout the Bible), where and when it speaks to political matters. The specification and qualification at the end of that sentence is crucial, or else we are deprived of any objective regulative principle for limiting the authority of the state. Without a clear view of the state's function and limits, the Christian cannot develop a Biblically grounded position regarding rights, equality, liberty, loyalty, dissent, or the proper balance between security and privacy (order and freedom) within the state. If we cannot establish boundaries for the state's authority, we will have no logical and principled defense against the growth of the state into Thomas Hobbes' "leviathan" – an allusion to the beast from the sea (cf. Revelation 13:1).

We must mark off, within the context of public moral duties and responsibilities, a delimited realm where the state has authority to enforce civil sanctions against misbehavior. Not all sins against the law of God are properly to be treated as crimes, and therefore we must circumscribe the authority of the state to inflict punishment upon its citizens and do so in a way which is open to public scrutiny. Were the sphere of sin (even public or interpersonal sin) to be equated with the sphere of the state's legal prerogative to impose punitive sanctions, the state would be placed in the position of God Himself, leaving it to act (by contrast) like a beast. God has not authorized the state to scrutinize and judge every social misdeed, nor has He granted it the responsibility to produce every social virtue. The state is neither competent nor empowered to judge the private lusts of an individual's heart or even his selfish use of money in light of a neighbor's need.

According to Paul, the special characteristic which marks off the state from other institutions within society is its moral authority (not simply raw power) to inflict public penalties for disobeying civil statutes. It is an institution distinguished by coercive authority – "bearing the sword" as a "terror" and "avenger of wrath" to evildoers (Romans 13:4), a prerogative denied to both the family (Deuteronomy 21:18-21) and the church (2 Corinthians 10:3-4). Because the state possesses this awesome prerogative to use compulsion in enforcing its dictates (whether by threat of death,

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monetary fine, or imprisonment), the state must be carefully and ethically limited in its proper jurisdiction. If the state lacks moral warrants for imposing a civil penalty upon someone for violating a public statute, its punitive action would be indistinguishable from murder (called “capital punishment”), kidnaping (called “imprisonment”), or theft (called a “fine”). Therefore, there must be objective limits to legal coercion – a law above the civil law to which appeal can be made to warrant encroaching upon a person’s life, liberty, or property, as well as appeal made against injustice and oppression. This objective criterion is the revealed law of God as it prescribes civil penalties for misdeeds. God’s law enables us to distinguish consistently and on principle between where the state may properly legislate and where it may not interfere.

Evangelicals sometimes wander from this revelational, objective and absolute criterion in favor of a humanly devised guideline which produces relativistic results. For instance, David Basinger³⁰ faults the law of God as the standard for determining what the state may and may not enforce on the rather superficial ground that sincere Christians disagree in interpreting what the Bible defines as punishable crimes. (When school students disagree over an answer to their math homework, we do not usually contemplate throwing out the rules of mathematics as a remedy.) Basinger’s own suggestion of a political standard is those values which all men, believers and unbelievers, propound in common. But this criterion collapses under his own line of censure: it is surely not a “common value” among men that political power should be restrained by values that are agreed upon by everyone! As long as Atilla the Hun, Marquis de Sade, Idi Amin, and Hitler are counted in the polls, agreed upon values will not be agreed upon as the standard of political ethics.

Dr. Sider would attempt to dodge this dilemma – as well as taking the law of God as our political standard – by suggesting, instead, that the principle to be used for distinguishing between social sins to be dealt with solely by the church and crimes to be punished as well by the state is the libertarian ideal: “persons should be free to harm themselves and consenting associates ... as long as they do not harm others or infringe on their rights.”³¹ Such a principle is not only ambiguous, arbitrary, and inconsistently applied,³² it is simply not exegetically derived from the text of the Bible.

This is a fatal defect for any purported Christian position. Not surprisingly, it leads Dr. Sider to a complete reversal of the explicit teaching of God's law: he would apply to the state what is appropriate only to the church (e.g., penal redress of racial discrimination in a matter of private property), and he would restrict to the church what God's law actually requires of the state (e.g., redress of adultery and homosexuality).

It should be observed that evangelical ethicists of both politically conservative and politically liberal varieties have transgressed the principle that God's law determines the limits of the state's authority. Those with conservative leanings have tended to promote ethically commendable goals (sobriety regarding alcoholic beverages, restriction of smoking tobacco, intervention to curtail the geopolitical spread of Communism) by less than ethical means, calling upon the state to exercise its power of compulsion where no Biblical warrant for it can be cogently adduced. Likewise, those with liberal political leanings have tended to promote ethically commendable goals (racial integration, food or medical care for the poor, public education) by less than ethical means, calling upon the state to exercise its power of compulsion where no Biblical warrant for it can be cogently adduced. No matter how ethically good these various projects may be, attempting to get the civil authorities to enforce them without warrant from God's Word is to capitulate to the unprincipled position of Thrasymachus, who taught that what counts as "justice" is simply whatever happens to be in the interest of the stronger faction in society. Ironically, when the strong arm of the state is courted in the name of "public justice," as defined by some evangelical's personal opinion (whether conservative or liberal), it is usually at the cost of depriving others of their justice – their genuine rights (e.g., to choose to which causes to contribute their lives or earnings), as revealed by the just Judge of all the earth (cf. Genesis 18:25; Deuteronomy 2:4).

The state which overextends its authority, to promote or enforce whatever aims it wishes, however otherwise commendable (e.g., sexual harmony between husbands and wives, prudent financial savings plans, regular brushing of one's teeth), is a state which has abused its power – a power which has, after all, been delegated to it from God (Romans 13:1; John 19:11). And God clearly, explicitly forbids kings to swerve to the right or to the left

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from the well-defined path of His law (Deuteronomy 17:18-20). Indeed, the memorable words of our Lord in Matthew 22:21 inescapably teach that there must be a defining limit upon “the things which belong to Caesar.” When Caesar demands of his subjects more than what is his – more than what is “due” to him (Romans 13:7), Caesar’s government inevitably acts as a “throne of wickedness ... which frames mischief by a law” (Psalm 94:20). The fact that the civil magistrate makes something a law does not confer the sanction of God upon it. When the civil magistrate (God’s “minister”) exceeds the limits of delegated power, enforcing laws which are not authorized by God, he comes under God’s wrath and curse: “woe to those who enact evil statutes” (Isaiah 10:1).

The proper domain and divine calling of the state is that of civil justice, protecting its citizens against violence – whether in the form of foreign aggression, criminal assault, or economic fraud. In order that men may live together in tranquility and peace (1 Timothy 2:2), the state has been empowered with “the sword” for the specific purpose (note the telic construction and divine commission in 1 Peter 2:14) of “avenging wrath” against those who do evil (Romans 13:4). “For this cause,” God says, taxes may be legitimately collected (v. 6). Beyond this the magistrate may not go. He is to establish the land by justice which is steadfastly followed in the courts (Proverbs 29:4; Amos 5:15). God’s Word does not, however, authorize the civil ruler to be an agent of charitable benevolence, financial welfare, education, and mercy. Scripture suggests nothing of state-enforced welfare programs or state interference in the free market. The state’s way of dealing with social evils must be limited to those marked out by God’s revealed law.

We conclude, then, that Dr. Sider’s advocating of state-enforced, preferential economic policies for the poor overturns the distinction between grace and justice, as well as disregarding the proper separation of church and state. He has taken the ethical goal of helping the poor which is exegetically addressed to, and intended appropriately for, the church (a redemptive institution characterized by mercy and persuasion) and applied it to the state (a natural institution characterized by justice and coercion). The moral obligation of caring for the poor which God lays upon His church in light of the grace which believers themselves have experienced has been emptied of its gracious character and transferred to the

civil state in general – thus unleashing and encouraging “the Beast” to intervene in the economic marketplace contrary to God’s law (Revelation 13:17; cf. Deuteronomy 6:8; Revelation 12:17; 14:12).

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Transcendental Apologetics

By Henry Krabbendam

A. Contours of Transcendental Apologetics

I. Introduction

Transcendental apologetics aims to be a fully *Biblical* apologetics. It is thoroughly and unashamedly presuppositional (1 Pet. 3:15), makes copious use of historical as well as factual evidences (Acts 2:22-23), engages in informal as well as formal logical argumentation (Acts 24:17-20, 25:8-11), and shares unique as well as common experiences (Acts 2:24-32, 26:9-23). However, it distances itself from any and all evidentialist, rationalist, and experientialist apologetics that presumes a *neutral*, common ground with the unbeliever on which jointly and pre-evangelistically to canvass evidences, to construct arguments, and to assess experiences both with the (misguided) aim of building (at least) a halfway house to God, and with the (mistaken) notion that this is achievable. At the same time it is to be distinguished from, and moves beyond, any and all possible apologetics, whether evidentialist, rationalist, experientialist, or presuppositionalist, which, consciously or not, regards the capture of the *mind* as “the great prize” in apologetics. In the footsteps of Peter (Acts 2:37), and Stephen (Acts 7:54) transcendental apologetics goes after the *heart*, with a vengeance. (This may mean conversions, as in Peter’s case. It also may mean death, as Stephen found out.) Consequently it is not and cannot be satisfied with a nod of agreement by the intellect and does not make its presentations to that end. To the contrary, it aims at the submission of the heart and, therefore, has the summons to repentance as the (only acceptable) methodological objective of any and all its presentations. (This is fully in line with Peter in Acts 2:38 and Paul in Acts 17:30.)

II. Backdrop

1. Transcendental apologetics is predicated upon the truth of Colossians 2:8 in the larger context of both Colossians and Ephesians. Here Paul antithetically pits man against God. On the one hand, there is the empty and deceitful, all too human, philosophy that endeavors to put the basic building blocks or ABCs of reality (*stoicheia*) together according to the thought patterns and

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traditions of apostate man in a sophisticated, rationally compelling accounting that leaves no loose ends. On the other hand, there is the simple profundity of the Person of Christ. Human philosophy invariably launches an independent and autonomous effort from the bottom up to make total sense of all human experiencing. This is evidence of a staggering pride and is contrasted with humble dependence upon Christ. The all too human effort fails, according to Paul. It is empty. It does not deliver. It is also deceitful: it claims it does. However, since it does not, it pulls the wool over the eyes of all its originators, its champions as well as its adherents. On the other hand, dependence upon Christ as the God-man cannot miss! After all, His credentials are impressive, to say the least. He is the creator and the sustainer of the universe (Col. 1:16-17). He is the embodiment of all knowledge and wisdom (Col. 2:3). He is the guarantee of glory (Col. 1:27). In short, He is the Great Sustainer and Source and, therefore, spells Strength and Success. He is, and can be all this, because He is God incarnate (Col. 1:19)! The go-it-alone philosophy, however sophisticated and profound it may seem, does not merely pale in comparison. It is suicidal, as will now be demonstrated.

2. In the context of Colossians (at least some of) the basic building blocks or ABCs of everyday reality are shown to consist of one-and-many spheres (Col. 3:12-17) and authority structures (Col. 3:18-4:1). (Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians runs parallel to Colossians in Eph. 4:25-5:20 and Eph. 5:21-6:9.) Both these spheres and these structures constitute the warp and woof, the "deep structure," of all of creation, including the society of man and are, therefore, inescapable and unavoidable. At any given time or place, all humans always find themselves within one or more of these spheres or structures. This is not an evolutionary fluke. Created reality reflects the Uncreated (and Co-ultimate!) One-and-Many, and mirrors the Uncreated (and Co-functional!) Authority-and-Subject relationship in the Triune God. He has put the imprint of His very Being indelibly upon His creation. In this light it is hardly surprising that many thinkers and philosophers, as well as theologians, have come to the conclusion that all of philosophy, in fact all of life, is one long series of attempts to solve the one-and-many problem and to settle the sovereignty-responsibility issue. What else can we expect? It is the most fundamental and all-encompassing "raw" material of creation

and its history. Everyone is structurally part and parcel of it, comes by definition face to face with it, and, therefore, must come to terms with, whether eagerly or reluctantly!

3. Any encounter with the all-encompassing creational spheres and structures from an apostate starting point and perspective, whether in thought or action, invariably reveals a fundamental dialectic. In the present context, the term “dialectic” stands for an “entity” that consists of two poles, such as the “one” and the “many,” or “authority” and “subject.” The rub is that in the setting of unbelief these poles mutually and simultaneously both presuppose and exclude each other, and will do so permanently as long as the dialectic prevails. This dialectic, which is God’s judgment and Satan’s tool, governs and directs all apostate thought and action. The mutual *presupposition* sets them in motion. The poles *must* be *thought* together by philosophy, economic theory, theoretical physics, etc. and *brought* together in the family, the school, the business, etc. Otherwise life stagnates and self-destructs. However, the mutual *exclusion* only produces, and cannot but produce, failure. The mutual exclusion renders it by definition impossible to think or bring the poles together in a synthetic, peaceful, coexistence. It is no wonder that all of the history of fallen man proves to be a total frustration! It has been astutely observed that it has only two prospects to offer: extinction when the one pole succeeds in eliminating the other, or warfare when they tenuously coexist. In short, fallen man never succeeds in making either the created one-and-many co-ultimate, or the created authority-subject relationship co-functional. Still, due to the mutual presupposition of the two poles, apostate man never gives up hope that “one day” he will succeed in the synthesis, and consequently will launch attempt after attempt to reach it. (He is like a small child who in “infinite” patience again and again endeavors to put a square peg in a round hole.) But due to their mutual exclusion, his attempts are shattered again and again. He always ends up with a relationship of antagonism, violence, warfare, if not destruction and death, at times more and at times less civil. The airlines industry with its continuing battle between management (the “one” and the “authority” poles) and union (the “many” and the “subject” poles) is only one telling illustration. In fact, the warfare in Eastern Airlines in the early 1990’s brought about its demise. The antagonism was so deep-

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rooted and so great that both poles were willing to self-destruct, as long as they could strike a mortal blow against the other! At any rate, the middle name of all humans without God is Sisyphus and their “way” is and remains a never-ending dead-end street. This fully dovetails with Paul’s insistence that an all too human philosophy is both deceptive in its semblance of wisdom and empty in its proposed solutions. It does not, cannot, and will not deliver, ever!

4. But Paul takes one additional step. According to him, this philosophy, victimized by the dialectic, is rooted in blindness of heart, which is accompanied by a darkened understanding, and is evidenced by debauchery of the basest sort (Eph. 4:17-19; Col. 3:5-7). In Johannine terms, the victims of the dialectic are blind and rebellious (John 3:3, 5), and walk in darkness (John 3:19-20). Only a “new heart” in regeneration can remove the blindness and the rebellion, and so pave the way to the light (John 3:3, 5, 21). Clearly until the issue of the heart is settled, there is no hope for one’s intellect or one’s ethics. It is hardly surprising that Paul brings this into focus as the first order of business in his interaction with both the Ephesians and the Colossians. The new man or heart is the originating point of all of the Christian life in all its facets and dimensions (Eph. 4:20-24; Col. 3:9-10) and, not so incidentally, the *conditio sine qua non* to counter the tyranny of the dialectic and its devastating effects. This does not only put in perspective the apologetics that is exemplified by Peter, Stephen, and Paul. It also vindicates the thesis of transcendental apologetics, modeled after Scripture, that a Biblically acceptable apologetic method does and must target the heart if it is to go anywhere and, therefore, does and must culminate in an inevitable call to repentance. In conclusion, it should be noted that the dialectic is not a metaphysical, creational factuality that serves as a challenge to be solved by believers and unbelievers alike, and ultimately even by God. It is an evidence of epistemological rebellion against God and to be repented of by man.

5. Once the issue of the heart is settled, however, and the rebellion against God renounced, there is remarkable daylight! The dialectic is in principle dethroned and its effects (begin to) vanish. “Sanity” returns. Antagonism, warfare, destruction, and death are (progressively) replaced by love, peace, harmony, and prosperity. All this is predicated upon man’s heart transplant in regeneration.

But it is also its normal outflow. The regenerate no longer loves sin, and no longer hates God and the neighbor. He now hates sin and loves God and the neighbor. This is implemented through the renewal of the mind (Rom. 12:2), as every thought is made captive unto the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). In other words, the intellect submits itself to God's interpretation of all of reality. However, in the process it does not merely recognize that the one-and-many spheres and the authority-subject structures are anchored in God as a reflection of His being. It also acknowledges that the only way to make them functional is by reflecting the conduct of God. This conduct consists of self-denial in the one-and-many spheres and sacrifice and submission in the authority structures. Paul indicates this when he deals with both the Ephesians and the Colossians regarding their conduct both in these spheres and structures. He insists on self-denial in love and holiness in the former (Eph. 4:25-5:20; Col. 3:12-17) and on sacrifice and submission in the latter (Eph. 5:21-6:9; Col. 3:18-4:1). When all this is practiced in dependence upon Christ as the source of holiness (Col. 3:1-3) and upon the church as the pipeline of holiness (Eph. 4:11-17) through the agency of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18) and the instrumentality of the Word (Col. 3:16), the one-and-many poles become (increasingly) co-ultimate and the authority-subject poles (increasingly) co-functional. Life's prospect is no longer extinction or warfare, but "shalom" in the full Biblical sense of the word!

III. Definition

All this puts the definition of transcendental apologetics in the proper perspective. It is the discipline that inquires into:

1. The (sufficient and necessary) conditions that determine the world and life (view) of both the believer and the unbeliever (Col. 2:8), in short, what makes them tick, with a view to:
 - a. Acquiring a radical understanding of the Christian position
 - b. Plumbing the depth of the non-Christian position, and
 - c. So paving the way for presenting a perceptive and skillful "defense" of the faith that joins the most fundamental issues, and for mounting a probing and effective "offense" for the faith that meets the most basic needs.
2. The principles, methods, and strategies of the defense of and the offense for Christian truth in word and deed, that both confirm and strengthen Christians in their stance for that truth,

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and equip and prepare them to give a knowledgeable, reasoned, dignified, appropriate, and pointed response in the face of skepticism, opposition, or attack with a view to:

- a. The conversion (repentance and faith) of unbelievers: 2 Tim. 2:25,
- b. The silencing of unbelievers: 1 Pet. 3:16, and
- c. The acknowledgment of any and all truth by believers: John 6:66-68

IV. Setting

It also puts the setting of a Biblical apologetics in perspective. The various apologetic proposals pay hardly any attention to the framework within which the apologetic enterprise does and must take place. (This may be due to the fact that the capture of the mind is so much regarded as the grand prize in the apologetic enterprise, that the honing of the intellectual weaponry becomes the near exclusive focus.) Apart from Frances Schaeffer, apologists of whatever persuasion by and large either ignore, overlook, or fail to emphasize the issue. This is passing strange in the light of 2 Tim. 2:16. The “highway to souls” is paved with the “tarmac of godliness.” This has implication for the trajectory of all “Christian education.” With a life of holiness as necessary backdrop, Biblical apologists must from their hearts and through their minds address the hearts of their hearers through their minds with a view to their life. Following the Biblical model, therefore, the apologetic setting is an extremely significant issue for the transcendental apologist. This model calls for the presence of at least the following elements:

- a. Consecration of Christ as Lord (1 Pet. 3:15). He is the reason for the opposition, the source of strength, and the guarantee of victory.
- b. Presence of the Spirit (Luke 12:11-12; Acts 1:8). He supplies the power and the insight.
- c. Holiness of life (1 Thes. 2: 10; 1 Tim. 4:15; 1 Pet. 3:16). The life of the speaker must overflow in the hearer.
- d. Identification with the unbeliever (Rom. 9:1-3, 10:1). Self-denying compassion is often the only “argument” that gets through. “When everything else fails, put yourself in the Gospel gun” (Spurgeon).
- e. Love as dynamics and model (John 13:34-35; 2 Cor. 5:1). The love of Christ in us must set us in motion. The love of Christ on display among us must be the attraction.

- f. Dependence upon grace in prayer (Rom. 15:30-32). It is not in the power of the speaker to convey salvation, neither is it in the hands of the hearer to appropriate it. Prayer is indispensable. Only a sovereign God can “overcome” total depravity!

B. Elements of Transcendental Apologetics

Every apologetics, whether evidentialist, rationalist, experientialist, or presuppositional, always does and must answer four questions: What is its point of departure, what its point of contact, what its method, and what its authority? The same applies to transcendental apologetics.

I. Point of Departure

To transcendental apologetics, the point of departure is the presentation of and the confrontation with truth, no less and no more, with a view to submission. In this it follows the model of Christ, Who came to “bear witness of the truth” (John 18:37c). Apologetics is to be distinguished from preaching and evangelism. But they cannot be separated. They are perspectively related, since they all share the common denominator of “bearing witness to the truth.” In doing so the apologist is not simply confident that anyone who is “of the truth” will hear the voice of Christ (John 18:37d). There is more. He consciously and deliberately resorts to the truth, and the truth only, in his apologetic endeavors because he recognizes that this is the sole instrument “to create the ears” necessary to hear the voice of Christ (Jam. 1:18). The Gospel of Truth may seem to be foolishness to the unbeliever, but it is the wisdom and the power of God unto salvation (1 Cor. 1:18, 21). The apologist must (be willing to) become a “fool for the sake of Christ and the unbeliever.” To insist on a neutral territory in which “to do apologetics” is to fall short of that. In fact, to insist on a neutral ground is both to be wiser than God *and* to deprive unbelievers from a challenge with the only power tool that can effect their salvation. The scriptural model is self-evident, as we now shall see.

1. Historically, Christ presents the truth of the divine self-disclosure in His Person to His contemporaries (John 4:26, 5:17-18, 8:58, etc.), Peter presents the truth of the divine self-disclosure in Scripture to the Jews (Acts 2:14-36), and Paul presents the truth of divine self-disclosure in nature to the Gentiles (Acts 17:22-34). All

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three confront the unbeliever with the self-disclosure of God. They also anchor the truth of that self-disclosure in creation and history, as well as experience. Truth is, indeed, self-attesting, but in a context and not in a vacuum.

2. After the Ascension of Christ, the transcendental apologist seeks to follow this model and present Biblical truth, as well as creational truth, historical truth, and experiential truth with the understanding that Biblical truth always functions as the foundation, the dynamics, the framework, and the guide for all other truths. No truths or facts, events or experience have regenerating power. But as supporting cast of the truth of Divine Revelation, they make a vital contribution to the process that produces regeneration.

3. Biblical truth is threefold. Doctrinally it is the truth of Biblical theology, factually the truth of Biblical history, and practically the truth of Biblical ethics. As Biblical truth, it has absolute authority, inner coherence, correspondence with reality, and value for human experience.

4. Creational truth is twofold. Factually it is the truth of nature and of history. Rationally it is the truth of logic.

5. Experiential truth is twofold. Personally it is the truth of the presence and impact of the Triune God upon one's life. Practically it is the truth of harmony, peace, and prosperity in creation and history. In short, it is the truth of the Living Epistles Paul is speaking about in 2 Corinthians 3:1-3.

II. Point of Contact

1. To transcendental apologetics, the Point of Contact is the Point of Rebellion or Suppression. This is centered in the heart, but may manifest itself in a great variety of ways, such as hatred and hostility of the heart, blindness and darkness of the mind, culpable ignorance of the mind, suppression of God's manifestation, rejection of God's revelation, self-deception due to hardening, programmatic misinterpretation of the truth, disinterest due to self-sufficiency, disdain by virtue of a conviction of superiority, opposition on display in confrontation, mocking on display in ridicule, destructive attack, consciously or not, in the areas of thought, life, and culture, etc.

2. According to transcendental apologetics, whatever the "conclusion" is that unbelievers reach, or whatever the position is that they take with regard to the God of truth and/or the truth of God, unless they recognize and acknowledge fully the God of Scrip-

ture and/or the Scripture of God from God's self-disclosure, either in manifestation (nature, history, and the human constitution) or in revelation (Scripture), it invariably constitutes a knowledgeable "rebellion" or "suppression," whether to a lesser or greater degree. There is, therefore, always culpability involved. Acts 17 and Romans 1 do not allow for any other interpretation. Therefore the call to repentance and faith is not only warranted, but also always necessary. In fact, in the footsteps of Peter (Acts 2:38) and Paul (Acts 17:30), the objective of every God honoring apologetics always is and should be conversion and, therefore, such apologetics will methodologically always seek to pave the way to a summons to repentance and faith as the sole means to that end. This is necessitated by the point of contact and, therefore, must be pursued by the apologetic method.

3. Besides, there is no such thing as a "natural theology," a "natural metaphysics," a "natural epistemology," a "natural ethics," or a "natural anthropology," that all men have in common and, therefore, can function as a universally agreed upon point of departure. The dialectic precludes any such kind of universality. Among non-Christians there is constant warfare in all these realms of human endeavor. Those who favor the pole of the "one" are invariably pitted against those who favor the pole of the "many," and vice versa. (If there is any agreement between them, it is purely formal without any substance.) And both are pitted against Christians and their views. All this should underscore the contention that any one who falls short of a fully Biblical theology, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, or anthropology is by definition a suppressor of the truth and, in the light of Romans 1, culpable.

4. To be sure, unbelievers may nilly-willy come up with some truth(s). In fact, they invariably will do so, whether in terms of facts, logic, achievements, or otherwise. But this never constitutes a "natural edifice" of whatever sort that is laudable and functions as a halfway house to God. It is and remains a guilty distortion of the full truth. To the extent that it is not as serious a distortion as it could be, it is at best indicative of the restraint of "common grace." But even the latter is specifically designed to lead to repentance (Rom. 3:3). In short, just like the antithesis does not (necessarily) exclude common grace, so common grace never excludes antithesis and, therefore, requires a call to repentance.

5. The relationship between common grace and antithesis can be best formulated as follows. By virtue of God's "self-disclosure," in the broadest sense of the word, all of created reality reflects Him in the sum-total of His being and His perfections. With regard to rebel man, there is a "deposit" in terms of being (including traits and talents), knowledge (including insight and skills), and morality (including behavior principles and patterns). As a result of the cultural mandate, which is both commanded and inbred, this "deposit" leads to "progress" and "accomplishments" across the length and breadth of human endeavor, such as architecture, art, biology, business, and all other areas of life.

6. To the extent that these are "enriching," they are for 100% expressions of God's "common grace" and manifestations of His "truth," and must be honored as such. This includes acceptance and enjoyment. But to the extent that they are inextricably intertwined with the rebellion of the unbeliever, they do not only serve practically as "stolen goods," but – irony of irony – as such are also fully part of the framework of the suppression of God's truth. In that framework they function as lies on the most fundamental level and are, therefore, equally and simultaneously 100% unacceptable and under the judgment of God. "Even the lamp of the wicked is sin" (Pr. 2:4). This can be paraphrased to say that even the "light" of the wicked is "darkness." And, "Whatever is not from above, is earthly, sensual, and devilish" (Jam. 3:15). That is to say, anything that starts from the bottom up is basically inanimate. It is lifeless like a rock. At the same time it is very much alive. It is "bestly" like an animal. Finally, the gloves come off. Every bit of human "wisdom" originates in the Enemy. As the consummate liar and murderer, he put his imprint upon it.

7. Common grace has been compared to embalming fluid in a corpse. It keeps it from producing a stench, but certainly cannot give it life. An "exclusive" or even "unbalanced" embrace of common grace, therefore, is naïve and opens one up to a spiritual "infection" of whatever sort and seriousness. This eventually produces "sickness" ("spiritual HIV") and ultimately death. At any rate, it constitutes an invitation to be "swallowed up." On the other hand, the exclusive embrace of antithesis indicates a ghetto mentality and prevents Christians to be salt and light.

8. However, it is an equally serious error to construe the common grace-antithesis relationship in terms of a “balanced” 50%-50% relationship, or any such linear, “one dimensional” configuration. First, to the extent that one element in the life of an unbeliever is clearly a “gift” of God’s truth, but is seen *only* as a “common grace,” there is not much choice other than applause as exclusive response. Frankly, too often too many believers tend to be uncritically and undiscerningly enthusiastic about achievements by unbelievers, especially in academia, and end up by only applauding them. This short-circuits any sort of call to repentance. Incidentally, in scholarly works such calls are simply not being contemplated. That indicates that the interaction remains on the level of the intellect, and that the “playing field” is restricted to that aspect of man. Second, to the extent that another element is clearly a suppression of God’s truth, and viewed in terms of antithesis only, there is often a wholesale denunciation, if not condemnation. In that case communication simply ceases and is bound to be non-existent.

9. The long and the short of it is this: only non-linearity that acknowledges any “entity” of common grace as simultaneously both a “gift” and a “suppression” of God’s truth ($100\% + 100\% = 100\%$) will produce results. The recognition of the antithesis will safeguard one from being “swallowed up.” The acknowledgment of common grace will prevent one from marginalizing oneself into a ghetto mentality. Of course, this formula does not fit into the human brain. But it is Biblical and lodges snugly in the believer’s heart. Further, it produces a Christian apologetics that transcends the purely rational and the purely factual, does not make the intellect of the opponent the great prize, and prepares the way to a summons to repentance on every “playing field.”

III. Methodology

1. Transcendental apologetics seeks to escape the two Achilles’ heels of Absolute Proof and Probability Arguments.

- a. Absolute proof is *not* in man’s jurisdiction nor at man’s disposal, not ever! Man can aspire to, but never arrive at ultimacy, neither metaphysically, nor epistemologically, nor ethically. As finite creature he is always Number II in every area of life, thought, or action. If he refuses to be a servant of God, he will end up as a slave of Satan. That implies that the mind does not and cannot have the final

word. Whether consciously or not, any ambition to produce absolute proof, *i.e.*, a discursive argument that is universally compelling, is idolatrous in that it seeks to achieve ultimate certainty apart from God, any protest to the contrary. Such achievement is simply impossible! Thankfully there is a growing recognition that certainty in knowledge is not coextensive with proof. Ironically and regrettably, this recognition may be more due to the common grace achievements of Thomas Kuhn and his paradigm shifts or Godel and his famed theorem, than to the contributions of Christian apologists. Therefore, to yield to the demand for absolute proof or to pursue absolute proof is to acquiesce in, if not pander to, the claim of human ultimacy, whether explicitly or implicitly, whether consciously or unconsciously. At the same time, it is to squander a precious opportunity to challenge the proud rebellion of man in his insistence that he is like God, fully capable of determining truth. In short, any apologetics that concentrates upon absolute proof is always after the mind as the great prize, operates on that level, and aims at agreement. This is decidedly not the Biblical model!

- b. Probability arguments are equally unacceptable. They are *ultimately* an affront to God, since they end up by allowing the possibility of an *objective* uncertainty in the unbeliever, of whatever kind and to whatever degree. Such arguments, therefore, do and must fly in the face of Romans 1:18-21. This passage insists that the evidence of God's presence and nature is fully clear and needs to be suppressed in order to be denied!
2. Transcendental apologetics has the following aspects:
 - a. The Diagnosis. The first order of business is to determine what makes the "blind rebel" tick in terms of the position, motivation, and direction of his thought, life, culture, activity, etc. What shows up is the truth of Colossians 2:8ff. As has been argued already, what comes into view is an empty and deceitful philosophy, rooted in the fundamental dialectic, that victimizes and directs the thinking of all apostate humans by definition. But it victimizes their actions as well. Any morality apostate mankind can

offer is, at best, the things or work of the law written on the heart (Rom. 2:14-15), not the law itself (Jer. 31:31ff.). That kind of morality is only formal in nature. Ultimately it has no Biblical substance, since ultimately it has no absolute content. It proves to favor either the “one” or the “many” pole in the one-and-many spheres and either the “authority” or “subject” pole in the authority structures. In other words, it never opposes sin in the name of holiness, but always the “one” in the name of the “many” or vice versa, and “authority” in favor of the “subject” or vice versa. “Modernity” typically opts for the “one” and for “authority,” since it embraces the universal as “savior.” “Post-modernity,” just as typically, throws in its lot with particularity and comes down on the side of the “many” and the “subject.” Unbalanced and naïve “common grace” proponents frequently laud either one of them for its “splendid insights,” and join the fight against the apostate particular in the name of the apostate universal or vice versa. In the meantime, they overlook that both modernity and post-modernity are apostate, seek to suppress the God of truth and the truth of God, and are at best two defunct clocks that are each right once a day. Second, in doing so they confuse the “embalming fluid” of common grace, that merely keeps down the stench of the “corpse” of mankind, with the “fresh water” of special grace, that produces life, health, and growth. Thirdly, in their enthusiasm they forget that any and all achievements of an apostate ideology are no more than “stolen goods” from the truth of God that they ultimately use to suppress the God of truth. Fourthly, in the process they appear to be quite satisfied to enlist in a questionable program with questionable objectives by turning into the tail that is wagged by the dog of an unclean ideology. Finally, all this makes the possibility remote that they ever function as the head that purposefully and systematically sets out to lay the foundations for a summons to repentance.

- b. The Truth. Truth is to be presented for what it is, the *only* liberating Cure for a perishing mankind (John 8:32, 17:17, 18:37). Such presentation, as long as it starts with, and

takes place on the bedrock of revealed, Biblical truth, should branch out in all relevant rational, factual, and experiential truth as its supporting cast.

- c. **The Spirit.** There is no such thing as an area of neutrality, a common ground. Virtually all apologists recognize that all argumentation that holds to such area or ground only leads at best to probability. Having arrived at that point, they invariably refer to the necessity of the illuminating and convicting work of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Holy Spirit functions as a last resort, at the end, when human apologetic efforts fall short of the mark. However, the presence of the Spirit is necessary from the outset. He is the origin of all power, clarity, boldness, love, and effectiveness (Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:4; 2 Tim. 1:7), and must be both acknowledged and experienced as such from the very outset!
- d. **The Approach.** The approach must be characterized by the gentleness of “grace,” the precision of a “surgeon,” and the carefulness of a “rescue” operation (2 Tim. 2:24-26).
- e. **The Attitude.** The attitude must be one of compassion for lost sinners (Matt. 9:35-36) as well as courage toward rebel sinners (John 5:15ff.; 8:31ff.).
- f. **The Procedure.** The procedure has both a negative and positive side with two aspects each.

Negatively: With regard to the “product” of unbelief, the superstructure of the thinking, willing, feeling, speaking, acting, etc. of the non-Christian must be shown to be logically incoherent, and/or factually non-correspondent and/or personally unsatisfactory, and, therefore, false, self-defeating, and self-destructive, which includes the *reductio ad absurdum*. This was part of the agenda of most recent apologists, such as Schaeffer, Clark, and Van Til. Recently this is competently done by Zacharias, in *A Shattered Visage* and *Can Man Live Without God*. It ought to be noted, however, that not too much stock should be placed on immanent criticism. Over two thousand years of the history of thought and action has shown that unbelievers are masters of immanent criticism. The history of philosophy is a prime and telling example. Every philosopher

was eventually relegated to the scrap heap by his successor based on demonstrated inconsistencies in his metaphysics, epistemology and/or ethics. Immanent criticism can destroy a system by calling attention to logical inconsistencies, lack of factual correspondence, or fatal implications, but it can never point in the right direction. Neither, incidentally, can transcendent criticism. The latter can only pontificate, however properly or improperly. What is needed is the transcendental critique of a transcendental apologetics. Only that goes to the roots of life, thought, and action. Only that lays bare the most fundamental issues. Only that can knowledgeably and persuasively steer in the right direction.

With regard to the “root” of unbelief, it has already been argued that the fundamental dialectic of heart, life and/or method, with its rebel origin, its rebel catch-22, and its rebel consequences must be transcendently exposed.

Positively: With regard to the “Biblical fruit” of faith, the personal and corporate “shalom,” by means of the presentation of the ever broadening circles of such shalom, in contrast with the fall-out of the dialectic, in terms of love, holiness, joy, peace, harmony, and prosperity in Christ and through the Spirit should be emphasized.

With regard to the “Biblical root” of faith, the foundation as well as the framework and the crowning piece of the shalom vis-à-vis God should be presented and argued. First, the origin, nature, need, and fruit of the new heart in regeneration should be set forth lucidly and cogently. Further, the same should be done pertaining to the new record in justification and the new life in sanctification.

- g. The Tools. All truth, Biblical, rational, factual as well as personal truth, with all necessary and possible means to convey it, should be used to the utmost. Furthermore, it should be pressed home “carefully,” but nevertheless “relentlessly.”
- h. The Method. The truth should be used as the key to the Kingdom. That is, it should be pressed home to the heart (Acts 2:37, 7:51, 54) in a discriminating and applicatory way. Non-Christians should have no doubt about their eternal plight at the conclusion of the presentation; while

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Christians should have no doubt about their shortcomings before God.

- i. The Aim. The aim is *not* agreement, as if the intellectual level is ultimate. As has been observed, such an approach always leads invariably to probability apologetics with its inherent failure; and, upon recognition of this fact, to the belated introduction of the Spirit as a stop-gap measure. Rather, the objective is repentance and submission of the heart. In short, in a Biblical apologetics, the great prize is never the mind. It is the heart of man. “My son give me your heart” (Pr. 23:26), for “Out of it are the issues of life (Pr. 4:23).
- j. The Focus. The focus should be Christ as Lord and Savior.
- k. The Avenue. The avenue to effectiveness is the call to faith and repentance, explicitly (Acts 2:38) or implicitly (Acts 7:51ff.) after the foundation for it has been properly laid.
- l. The Summary. A Biblical apologetics should be perceptively, knowledgeably, truthfully, lovingly, compassionately, courageously, fearlessly, methodically, and uncompromisingly confrontational.

IV. Authority

For transcendental apologetics, the authority rests with the truth, only with the truth, and with all of the truth. God is truth, so is Christ and so is the Spirit. What they are, say, and do is the absolute standard for and, therefore, has the absolute authority over all of life. God discloses Himself, and therefore His truth, in His revelation in Scripture, and in His manifestation in creation, history, and the human constitution. All truth is God’s truth, whether it is thankfully acknowledged as such, or ends up as “stolen goods.” Transcendental apologists should feel free to avail themselves of all of it. In fact, they would do well to “take in and digest” all truth as extensively and thoroughly as possible. This could only enhance their effectiveness.

C. Conclusion

1. In the final analysis transcendental apologetics is neither linear nor circular. Presuppositional apologetics is accused of being ineffective and without serious discussion partners, precisely because it is linear. After all, no one will listen, when you start your apologetics with your conclusion. (This is what spawned the evidentialist, rationalist, and experientialist [also called classical] types of apologetics that opted for a common ground, a neutral

territory.) The typical presuppositional response is that no one can escape circularity. Rationalists, so proceeds the argument, assume their rationalism from the very outset; similarly, irrationalists assume their irrationalism. There is hardly any ground, therefore, to condemn the presuppositionalist! Ultimately there is no functional *tabula rasa* anywhere! The recommended procedure, then, is to be as broadly circular as possible in one's apologetics so as to encompass and account for as many data of reality as feasible. In this way it could be shown that the message of the Gospel is superior, in fact, "outperforms" any other ideology, philosophy, or religion. This could conceivably make such an impression that the truth claims of Christianity would be acknowledged.

2. There is no doubt that presuppositionalists more than hold their own in this exchange. However, it is about time for all apologists to recognize that, in the final analysis, the opponents and proponents of presuppositionalism are "kissing cousins." The very terms, linear and circular, betray that the protagonists of both of these apologetic modes are still operating on the level of the intellect only! For both the linear and circular approach have in common that they regard the intellect as the "grand prize," and argue unto agreement. A Biblically informed apologetics transcends the dilemma of circular versus linear. It locks in on the heart, seeks it out, and challenges it with the truth of God. It does not restrict itself to immanent criticism. By itself this stays too much on the surface. Neither does it confine itself to transcendent criticism. By itself this displays too much detachment. No, it is transcendental in its approach. It truly communicates. It lays bare the deepest movements of the heart in both a gentle and surgical fashion. Then it applies the cure in a personal, variable manner. This requires painstaking involvement, fervent prayer, careful diagnosis, and skillful treatment. In short, it is hard work! In the final analysis the transcendental apologist will not be satisfied until and unless it is evident to unbelievers that he or she loves them more than they love themselves.

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ProLife Work in the U.S.: The National Right to Life Committee (NRLC)

By Susanne Lux

The ProLife scene in the U.S. is confronted with the same difficulties and arguments as the German one. Just like in Germany, liberal (Protestant) churches support pro-abortionists in the U.S. In the conservative evangelical or Catholic churches and congregations that are in principle ProLife, little or nothing is being preached about this topic. The example of the U.S. shows, however, that it is possible to reverse developments. There, the number of abortions performed has receded in the last years, thanks largely to the work of different well established institutions with a large permanent staff like the “National Right to Life Committee” (NRLC) or “Rachel.”

The picture that many Germans have of the U.S. ProLife work is wrong. The assassins who shoot and kill doctors and women at abortion clinics are mentally disturbed people who are not related to the ProLife movement. The press likes to report such incidents, because in the U.S., like in Europe, sensational reporting sells more papers than legislative changes. In reality, ProLife work in the U.S. is based on ...

... Lobbying for Life

The “National Right to Life Committee” is a special-interest group for life that sensitizes the public to the facts regarding abortion by professional lobbying and providing information on questions pertaining to the Right to Life movement. NRLC’s ProLife work is done by a constant presence in the press (e.g., with comments on legislative changes), collections of signatures, postcard campaigns to the members of Congress, presentations in local churches, nation-wide radio shows, weekly information on TV, newsletters to pastors (e.g., with prayer requests), teenager-projects, and many other projects.

National Right to Life

NRLC	What? Information/education lobbying public relation / media contacts
financing? gifts/donations	How? grass root organization interdenominational all-party independent

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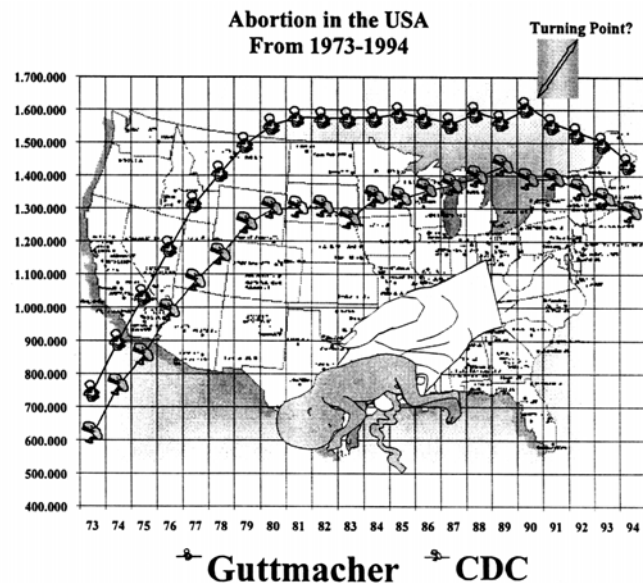
The NRLC ranks tenth among the most influential lobbies in the U.S. In comparison, Planned Parenthood, the American counterpart to the European ProFamilia, holds a place way down on the list in 65th place on a hit list of lobbyists compiled by an independent institution.

History of Abortion as a Constitutional Right of American Women

At the end of the sixties, pro-abortionists in the U.S. started a campaign for legalizing abortion. They invented wildly exaggerated numbers about women allegedly killed during illegal abortions and about the “severe cases” (health-risk for the mother, incest, etc.). They mobilized the liberal press, law faculties and ministers (mostly liberal Protestants). The pro-abortionists were surprised at the results of their campaign themselves, and in 1973, the decision of the Supreme Court regarding the case *Roe v. Wade* guaranteed abortion as a constitutional right of women in the U.S.

As an answer to the ruling in the case of *Roe v. Wade*, a handful of ProLifers founded the National Right to Life Committee in 1973 – at a kitchen table! Today, NRLC is an organization that – directly or indirectly – reaches over eight million people through over 2,500 local groups. It is solidly grounded in the grass roots and works closely together

with other ProLife organizations. Fifty-five employees work in its headquarters in Washington, D.C. and in four regional offices. The budget amounts to \$16 million, mostly coming from small donations. Over 400,000 people donate on a more or less regular basis.



Success Factors of American ProLife Work

NRLC is a non-partisan organization. It seeks and supports ProLife-oriented candidates of both big American political parties.

ProLife Work in the U.S.: The National Right to Life Committee (NRLC)

NRLC regularly informs the public about the positions of candidates and of the parties on this topic and it puts together and distributes election campaign brochures through ProLife-oriented churches.

The most important partners of the ProLife movement are the congregations of all denominations. In the beginning, it was mostly the Catholics who supported NRLC. In the eighties, more and more evangelicals got involved. NRLC runs an extra branch in order to support those groups. Their leader is the president of the *National Pro-Life Religious Councils*, an institution that can be compared to the “*Treff Christlicher Lebensrechtsgruppen*” (TCLG). Unlike in Germany, the American ProLife work is also supported by the conservative churches, by distributing election campaign brochures. In order to win as many groups as possible, NRLC concentrates on the topic, “Right to Life.” Their emphasis is on influencing the public’s formation of opinion and political decisions.

Administration	NRL News	Political Action Committees
Information Technology	Communications	Federal Legislation
Legal	Conventions	State legislation
Membership Development	Education	State Organizational Development
Major Gifts Development	Outreach ³³	Volunteer Identification
Financial Services	Medical Ethics	

Various NRLC areas of involvement

“What is permitted by the law is also ‘right’ in the eyes of many people,” says Dr. Wanda Franz, NRLC. Since legislation does form people’s consciousness, NRLC focuses on putting through legislative changes, whether big or small, e.g., cutting tax money for abortions among socially disadvantaged women. After decades of lobbying, the NRLC achieved one goal when federal funding for abortions of welfare recipients ceased.

Further topics on the agenda in various states include: the requirement of parental consent for teenage abortions, partial birth

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abortion (see below), and the threat of involuntary euthanasia. NRLC does not have mother/child houses or crisis pregnancy centers, but some of their associated local groups do.

The headquarters in Washington, D.C. stays in close contact with the more than 2,500 local groups. In order to maintain the flow of information to 3.5 million Americans who were identified as anti-abortionists, channels outside the established media have to be built. The local supporters are asked to write letters to newspapers or members of Congress, call in radio or TV shows, support politicians who have a ProLife attitude, or donate money.

NRLC stands out due to its professionalism. NRLC is an important, objective source of information for the press. NRLC publishes scientific studies about medical and psychological consequences of abortion. It uses the modern media such as radio, TV and the internet. It does market research and has a professional donor development program and it has founded a youth organization.

NRLC has recognized the importance of working together with the victims of abortion instead of simply making victims feel guilty; they work with victims through their branch The American Victims of Abortion.

Excursus: NRLC against Partial Birth Abortion (PBA) The Effect of a Campaign against Inhumanly Killing

In the U.S., babies are aborted using an especially cruel method in the last months of pregnancy. Since babies are only considered born when the head emerges from the mother's womb, birth is induced in a way so that the head comes last. But before the head actually comes out of the womb, the unanesthetized baby is pierced in its brain through the back of its head with a cannula. Then the brain is sucked out so that the baby is born dead.

Without bloody pictures, NRLC has changed public opinion, influencing the whole abortion debate. The key thrust is to call abortion what it really is: the killing of babies. In 1996, the public support of unrestricted abortion sank 10 percent from 33 percent to only 23 percent, especially among groups that were traditionally considered pro-choice.

As a "by-product" of this campaign, anti-abortionists lost a great deal of credibility. NRLC and independent journalists were able

to repeatedly prove that PBA supporters grossly lied, both to the press and also to Congress, in an attempt to play down PBA. “Expertise, balanced judgement and honesty are indispensable for a ProLife lobbyist,” adds Dr. Wanda Franz, NRLC.

In Germany, more and more viable babies are aborted, too. Experts say that in abortions after the 20th week, about every third baby is born alive. In order to prevent such high survival rates, German doctors “play safe”: before the birth is induced with prostaglandins, they kill the baby in the mother’s womb with deadly potassium-chloride injected into the heart.

Since the latest change of §218 [the German law for abortion] in June of 1995, there has been a significant increase of late stage abortions. While there had “only” been 26 in 1994, the number of abortions after the 23rd week grew steadily. In 1996, 159 viable babies were registered, in 1997, 190. According to Frank Montgomery, the president of the “Marburger Bund,” 800 babies are aborted each year – after the 20th week. (Campaign: www.Timlebt.de; Stiftung Ja zum Leben [“Yes to life”])

There Is No Comparable Institution in Germany

Germany lacks an organization like the “National Right to Life Committee.” We can also do something and there are initiatives to reverse developments. There are aspects of this struggle which would even make the Americans envious. In some ways, their starting point was more difficult than the German situation. For example, advertisement for abortion clinics is forbidden in Germany, while clinics advertise in the Yellow Pages in several states in the U.S. Sensitizing the public is easier in Germany, because there are radio and TV stations that are willing to show broadcasts about the consequences of abortion.

Success of US ProLife Work

Passed by Congress and signed into law

No taxpayer funded:

- physician-assisted suicide
- Medicaid abortion-on-demand through HMO programs
- Military abortion-on-demand
- abortion-on-demand for D.C. employees
- abortion-on-demand for D.C. Medicaid recipients
- embryo research
- cloning research
- abortion in prisons
- abortion litigation by Legal Services Corporation

and a conscience clause for federal prison employees who desire to avoid assisting in prisoner abortion details.

Passed by Congress and vetoed by the President.

- A ban on Partial-Birth Abortions, except to save the life of the mother

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The example of the U.S. also shows, however, that professional ProLife work has to have a structure in order to be successful. Americans who have already helped to found ProLife work in many countries of the world consider the establishment of an organization like NRLC possible in Germany. “National Right to Life Committee” is willing to support Germany with some people from their team.

Is Successful Lobbying for Life Possible in Germany?

The basic requirements for a German “lobbying for life” effort are different, both in the state and church. Unlike in the U.S., Germans only elect a portion of their candidates. Their main vote goes to a party, which in turn sends in representatives. Thus, Christians have to get involved in the parties in order to influence the election of the candidates. But the unwillingness to get involved, and the fear of “dirtying one’s hands in politics” keeps many from becoming active.

One of the main pillars of the ProLife movement in the U.S. is the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church in Germany is drawn into the problem of killing babies because of the state-sponsored counseling system and the requirement for a “counseling certificate” prior to obtaining an abortion. Women who want to have an abortion are required to have a session of counseling. Since the Catholic Church provides counseling services in Germany, it must provide the counseling certificate. That is why the ProLife groups in which mainly Catholics (and of course also Protestants from the State Church) are involved are disappointed with the Catholic Church.

Since the eighties, Christians in the U.S. from various confessional backgrounds have been working closely together within NRLC on the basis of their common faith. While NRLC was shaped by the Catholics in the beginning, now there are also evangelical and charismatic Christians active under a non-denominational roof. There is no such unity in Germany – yet. The reservations between evangelicals and Catholics are clearly greater. Many Catholics are prejudiced against evangelical Christians, speculating that they might be a sect. On the other hand, the evangelicals are also reluctant to work with groups that are dominated by Catholics because of a deeply rooted prejudice among evangelical churches that Catholics are not “real Christians.”

Furthermore, there is little involvement in the evangelical world with the ProLife movement. What is the reason for little interest in

ProLife work in the evangelical churches? Fundamentally, a long-taught belief in situational ethics is common in the Protestant state churches. “Situation ethics” is the view that there are no ethical absolutes, only case-by-case solutions derived from one’s personal conscience.

There Is Hope for Germany

For the most part, in places where Christians have founded ProLife organizations in Germany, they already work on a cross-denominational basis. Examples include the “Haus Heisterbach” in Königswinter, Alpha-groups, and “Rachel.” But unlike the U.S., most groups lack the support of their own churches and congregations. And the picture is changing in Germany. Christians move between the denominations and towards one another. Is the common topic of ProLife work able to unite us – even if we have different opinions on the Lord’s Supper or spiritual gifts?

“Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering towards slaughter. If you say, ‘But we knew nothing about this,’ does not he who weighs the hearts perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done?” (Prov. 24, 11-12)

The author wants to thank the NRLC, especially Dr. Wanda Franz, and the CDL for their support.

Dr. Susanne Lux has a doctorate in agriculture and founded and runs “MEC – Marketing and Ethics Consulting,” an independent consulting firm near Bonn, Germany. She is also the Vice President of ProMundis, a Christian political and ethical think tank and political action committee, and edits its newsletter. She is heavily involved in the ProLife movement in Germany and in Europe.

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Discipling the Nations

By Joseph R. McAuliffe

For several years it has been my privilege to observe and report on a significant work in the country of Nicaragua. Nicaragua was subjected to a brutal civil war in 1979 that deposed Anatonio Somoza and brought Daniel Ortega and his Sandinista comrades to power.

The Sandinistas, backed by Jimmy Carter, Fidel Castro, Leonid Brezhnev, and the Democratic Congress, succeeded in turning this garden-variety banana republic into a hell hole. Once Americans began to realize that the Marxist revolutionaries were far more tyrannical than Somoza, the U.S. Congress unwittingly passed the infamous Boland Amendment which prohibited U.S. military and financial aid to the Contra freedom fighters. This ludicrous piece of legislation is why Colonel Ollie North committed the unpardonable sin of lying to Congress. One wonders how these political paragons of morality would relate to Rahab, the prevaricating woman whom God honors as an exemplar of faith in Hebrews 11 or the Hebrew midwives who God rewarded for lying to the Egyptian authorities.

Despite the U.S. sellout of Nicaragua, the valor of the Contras and the rapacious policies of the Sandinistas enabled Violeta Chamorro to astonishingly win the presidency in 1990, eleven years after the Sandinista coup.

Chamorro's greatest asset was the collective memory of Sandinista rule. She also made modest advances in educational reform, currency stabilization, privatization, and property rights. With reform came growth; there are numerous building projects under construction throughout the country – schools, bridges, hospitals, and roads – most financed by the American taxpayer through the U.S. Agency for International Development. Still, the unemployment rate is high, and the United Nations ranks Nicaragua the second poorest country in the hemisphere after Haiti.

Colonel Doner, the former executive director of Christian Voice, a conservative political action organization, and present chairman of Children's Hunger Relief Fund (CHRF), has borne a deep concern for the people of Nicaragua since the Sandinista revo-

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lution. “Once democratic elections were held,” said Doner, “I knew a window of opportunity would open the nation up to our work.” Doner’s work has changed in the mid-eighties from political activism to humanitarian outreach. He developed CHRF into a multi-million dollar relief agency that has assisted Third World countries in Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe with food, medicine, clothing, agricultural resources, and the good news of the gospel. “CHRF’s mission is to promote practical works of mercy to create a platform for the message of Christ’s Lordship.”

The window of opportunity in Nicaragua in 1990 coincided with an intellectual and theological shift in Doner’s thinking. “Having distributed millions of dollars worth of resources to the poor,” Doner remarked, “I began to consider the need for CHRF to serve more as a wealth creator than a resource dispenser. Various authors writing on the dominion mandate as it pertains to work and callings helped me to see that the long term economic interests of the Third World necessitated the development of individual and family businesses.” Soon the CHRF staff began researching the germinating field of micro-enterprises, also known as family business enterprises.

In 1991, CHRF began its pilot micro-enterprise project in Managua and Nueva Guinea, Nicaragua. Nicaragua was chosen because of the availability of former Contra officer Mario Aviles to serve as CHRF administrator in Managua. Aviles is an astute businessman with excellent political contacts and is well known in the evangelical community. “What impressed me about CHRF was the breadth of their theological vision for implementing the Kingdom of God in Nicaragua,” said Aviles. “Other relief agencies have generously distributed goods to our nation, but CHRF is committed to teaching our people how to produce and distribute our own goods.”

The micro-enterprise program targets poor but industrious men and women who have a good business idea and work ethic, but lack the collateral to qualify for conventional financing. This condition applies to nearly seventy percent of the adult population since there is not much of a middle class in Nicaragua. Prospective candidates for CHRF financing are recommended by church leaders to Aviles and his staff, who then conduct an extensive interview stipulating the spiritual and training requirements for receiving assistance.

In 9 years the loan pool has grown from \$25,000 to over \$100,000 through grants and repayments. CHRFB has provided the financing and training that launched 400 successful new enterprises which presently employ thousands of people. CHRFB reports that 92% of the businesses have reported profits and only 2% of the loans were uncollected. “The program has had an evangelistic impact as well,” says Doner, “We have witnessed over 100 business owners give their hearts to Christ through the micro-enterprise project.”

CHRFB has built a resource center in Managua where theology and economic courses are taught. Aviles leads a 2 1/2 hour class on Biblical economics each Monday evening for dozens of political leaders and businessmen. The ministry is constructing a Refugee Center in Nueva Guinea in eastern Nicaragua. This impoverished area was decimated by the Sandinistas which led to over 100,000 Nicaraguans fleeing to Honduras or Costa Rica.

I was reminded of Ezekiel’s phrase “can these bones live” when I first visited Nicaragua in 1991. While the political, economic, and spiritual problems that plague the nation are still considerable, they are not insurmountable. There is clearly a consensus in the nation to rebuild. Fortunately, Nicaragua’s rendezvous with Marxism lasted only eleven years and its debilitating philosophy does not appear to have penetrated the hearts and minds of the majority. Nevertheless, the governmental transition has created something of a vacuum in terms of providing a spiritual vision for the future of the nation. It is at this point that CHRFB is offering a message of hope and rebuilding.

Rev. McAuliffe is a pastor and former Publisher of Businessgram. Rev. McAuliffe made several trips to Nicaragua for this article.

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On Developing God's Earth – Taking Dominion as Disciples of Grace

By William Mikler

“The earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.” (Psalm 24:1)

I am writing on the subject of development because of personal involvement with Christians in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa who are earnestly seeking God for solutions to severe economic problems that face them and their people. When you love people, you tend to take on their burdens.

My friends and I believe that God made the material universe to be stewarded by man (cf. Genesis 1:27-28, 2:15) and that the long term solution to poverty is development, not charity. We also share the conviction that honest development of the earth’s resources glorifies God the Creator.

I’ve been around for awhile, traveled more than most, and seen more than many. Over the years I have met and fellowshiped with ministers and congressmen, captains of industry, and hard working day laborers. I have been both appalled and thrilled at what I’ve seen (and sometimes both at the same time); I have met doctors in Bolivia who worked for \$15 a month during a time when a small bottle of aspirin cost \$9 and surgeries couldn’t be performed because anesthetics weren’t available. I’ve met school teachers in South America and East Africa who earned less than \$20 a month and loved their jobs because they loved the children they taught. I’ve seen the seeming hopelessness of Brazilian *favelas* (shanty towns) like the one that spills 12 year old prostitutes and teenage drug runners and thieves down the hill into Rio’s ritziest neighborhood and onto the Copa Cabana. I’ve seen enough to make me know that God has something better for mankind than man has been able to find in and of himself.

Yesterday a letter came to me from a young Christian lady in Uganda who feels a keen sense of guilt because she is unable to help her brother with his school fees for technical college – and she didn’t ask me for money, she asked me for advice and prayer. Today a letter came from a congressman in a developing nation outlining development and investment opportunities in his nation,

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and asking me to find Christian investors whose motives for development would be God honoring and mankind serving.

I've listened to my elders over the years, having been taught to do so by my father and uncles in the community where I was raised. Listening has etched God-wrought lessons on my heart. Once I listened as a Ugandan bishop recalled to me his first days as a young priest when his bishop took him on a journey around the young priest's newly assigned parish. They came upon a young mother with two starving infants sitting beside a thatch-covered mud hut. Next to the woman was a pile of beans. "I realized then," said the bishop, "that within arm's reach was the solution to her children's hunger. It was a journey of but 18 inches and the woman could not comprehend it or make it. It was then that I realized what the real problem was." (This experience and countless more like it have made my bishop friend passionate about development, and he finds the subsistence mentality loathsome because it is unchristian and destructive.) The same bishop told me recently how he had handled a beggar in the city where the diocesan offices are located. Upon being approached by the beggar for a handout, he asked the beggar, "Did you have food in the countryside?" The beggar nodded affirmatively. "Then why," asked the bishop, "did you move to the city where you cannot grow food and, as a result, must go hungry? Go back to the countryside and grow food." This bishop is one of the reasons I believe Uganda will one day be the garden the Creator intended it to be when He gave it abundant water, rich soil, wonderful climate, and people with marvelous potential to subdue it.

Once I visited with an elderly Brazilian billionaire, the father of a good Christian friend. We visited in one of the billionaire's many homes, a spacious farmhouse located on a 30,000 acre sugar plantation. After a mid-day dinner of grilled tenderloin steak, fried potatoes, rice and beans, green vegetables, and tropical fruit, the maids cleared the table and set the *cafezinho* before us. It was then the billionaire asked me why the United States, with its hard climate, was so prosperous, while Brazil, with multiple growing seasons, was so poor.³⁴ My answer to his question: *Because of the religion of the people.* He asked me to explain, so I did. The Protestant founders of the United States, I offered, taught their people to think for themselves with an open Bible and a direct channel to

God; they taught them the work ethic; they taught them to keep their word in their dealings with their fellow man; they called for religious liberty and just, but limited, civil government; and they set before their people an eschatological dream which obligated the people to vision, forethought, planning, industriousness, and multi-generational objectives. Your nation, I added, had none of these religious advantages. I don't know if the billionaire comprehended all that I said, but he listened intently. He died a year or so later, I hope in the faith.

Once I was in the town square of Kampala, Uganda, sitting on a platform built by the Church of Uganda sponsored Decade of Evangelism³⁵ program. There was a rally going on; young people were playing Western musical instruments and singing Scripture songs. During a lull, or perhaps it was after the rally – I don't remember which – one of the young musicians turned to me and stated with animation, "I can't wait to visit Europe and the United States!" "Why?" I asked, I hope not unkindly. "Because things are so developed there," he stated. To which I replied, "Well, one day Uganda can be just as developed as those parts of the world. There is no reason Uganda couldn't become the Germany of East Africa." He looked at me with incredulity. "How can that ever be?" he asked. I answered along the following lines, "With Christians taking the leadership responsibility to develop this country. If you go far enough back, my European ancestors were backward pagans of the worst sort. But Christianity changed the inhabitants of Europe, and eventually this led to the development of a pretty rugged part of the world. When discovered by Europeans, my continent was a wilderness hardly developed by its inhabitants. Christians settled it to develop it and build a Christian nation. Christianity is the key to development of your country." I have the hope that my words plowed the heart and planted a vision in my young friend.

So I've traveled and observed and read my mail and listened. And my tutors have often been preachers and Bible-educated laymen rooted in the realities of God and in the realities of time. I write on development for them, the rebuilders of the nations, men and women converted by Christ, disciples upon whom the Spirit of God rests. *"They shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities, the desolations*

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of many generations" (Isaiah 61:4). Lives transformed and empowered by grace are the earth-stationed transformers of planet earth. As such find in Christ the answers they seek and, in turn, proclaim them, it is my conviction that the overpowering force of the Gospel will begin to shed its light on the economies of their respective nations. As a result, God will be glorified through Christ, and men and nations blessed.

On Development and Non-development

There is a stretch of highway that intersects the San Joaquin Valley desert north and west of Bakersfield, California. On one side of the highway are productive irrigated fields, and on the other a tumbleweed-strewn desert. You can see both sides of the development coin on that stretch of highway. Man has made a garden of one side of the highway, he has left the other side a desert. Yet both sides of the road have the same desert soil and benefit from the same California sunlight. What makes one side of the road desert and the other side of the road farmland? Farmers – farmers who have given themselves to developing one part of the desert and not the other. With good farmers in a Christian culture, any desert can blossom like a rose.

I've seen what good farmers and irrigation experts have done in the desert around Bakersfield. They have made the desert bloom. I have to believe that God is pleased with that. I've also seen what my Slovak grandfather and his fellow immigrants and their children did with Florida swamp land. They drained it and made it abundantly productive. (Cousins now manage one of the world's largest family run farming concerns.) I have to believe God is pleased with what immigrants did with Florida swamp land. I've seen what Brazilian farmers have done with the rich earth of western Parana State, and have driven for hours through farm country, where, as far as the eye could see, rolling hill after rolling hill, were well tended fields, vineyards, and orchards. I have to believe God is pleased with what the Paranaense farmers have done with the earth they steward. I've seen what my friend, the aforementioned African bishop, has done with the bushland near his private home: After being made bishop and working some years to build diocesan headquarters, he built for his countrymen a model of what can be done with bushland if men will but attempt it. What he did

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was build, acre by acre, and with his own hands, a 180 acre dairy farm. (The bishop has offered cows to any clergyman in his diocese who will develop a dairy farm for his own parish.) I think God is pleased with the bishop's dairy farm.

Ugandan friends joke that their earth is so rich you can plant a fork and food will grow from it; and a friend who would know tells me that there is earth in Uganda which world agricultural specialists believe to be the richest in the world. Uganda could feed Africa. Or Europe. Or both. But it doesn't – not yet at least. But someday it will be able to, because there are Christians in Uganda who are determined to see it happen. (If I was a wagering man – which I'm not – I'd bet on Uganda in the long haul to be one of the world's great nations. It is rich in natural resources and many of its present Christian leaders are Christian thinkers of the first rank. The future is brighter than the past in this African nation.)

I once met in Bolivia a Guatemalan who had earned his doctorate in agriculture at Mississippi State University. Some mission or another, perhaps it was the U.N., had sent him to Bolivia on a long-term agricultural assignment. He told me, "Bolivia could grow enough wheat to feed Latin America." But it doesn't. But one day I believe Bolivia will be able to feed Latin America because there is a Christian revival in Bolivia that is changing things. In seven years, Bolivia has gone from having the worst currency in South America to having the most stable currency. And it has become – as of this writing [1992] – the safest place in Latin America to live. These things are no accident – Bolivian Christians have been praying'.

The reasons the earth doesn't bring forth its fruit in abundance are many. For one, many men don't know it is God's will to develop the earth – blame *ignorance*. For another, men who do know it is God's will to develop the earth don't even try – blame *laziness*. For another, modern statist run economies stifle the free markets (and free marketeers) necessary to development – blame *arrogance*. For another, many parts of the developing world are still recovering from selfish colonial overlordship that provided neither education nor opportunity for indigenous development, production, and reward – blame *greediness*. There are other reasons why the earth isn't as productive as it should be, but they each have this in common with the above mentioned foursome: They're all rooted

in sin. Sin – rebellion against God’s commands – is the real reason we don’t live in a developed world that abundantly provides for her children and brings God glory as she does so.

The reasons for development are the opposite of ignorance, laziness, arrogance, and greed; they are: *knowledge, hard work, humility, selflessness*. And these are qualities Christians should be noted for. Faith and obedience to Christ and His Word are the long-term solutions to global economic development.

So I come back to an oft mentioned theme in my life and ministry: evangelism is the key to the developing of the nations. I can’t say it any plainer than that. Where genuine Christianity takes root, the economy of the region will ultimately blossom.

Christology and Development

“They’re so heavenly minded they’re no earthly good,” goes the oft repeated phrase regarding Christians and Christianity. Well, after nearly a century of separating Christ and His Word from many issues pertaining to everyday life, Christianity is beginning to wake up to the fact that sound theology is foundational to good government, civil peace, and economic opportunity and development. I’ve observed this awakening among Fundamentalists, Charismatics, Pentecostals, Protestants, and Roman Catholics at home and abroad as more and more Christians dust off their Bibles, dig in them for truth, and draw conclusions which insist on practical issues. Sound theology is making a comeback.

As the “Word made flesh” (cf. John 1:14), Jesus is the revelation of God to man. Christology, which is the study of Christ, is therefore the proper place to begin any journey into theological understanding, including the journey that leads man to an understanding of his responsibility to steward the earth for the glory of God and the good of his fellow man. Jesus really *is* Lord, and the implications of this truth go a long way towards explaining what is and what ought to be in the world of economics and development.

What follows are three Christological pillars upon which much of my own understanding of development rest. The pillars are these: (1) *Christ made the material universe*. (2) *Christ made the material universe for His own purposes*. (3) *Christ manages the universe as an absolute Lord*. I’ll list the pillars for you, and then opine as to some of the implications that attach to them.

1. Christ Created the Material Universe. “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made,” wrote the Apostle John (John 1:3).

The Bible's first revelation of God reveals Him as the Creator of the material universe. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” recorded Moses (Genesis 1:1). The New Testament affirms Moses' record in a number of places, informing us as it does so of the integral role of the Eternal Son in the creation acts. John, for instance, opens his gospel with the following words: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:1-2). The “Word” of Whom John speaks is Christ. The Apostle Paul asserts Christ's preeminence in creation in detail: “He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born over all creation. For by Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him” (Colossians 1:15-16). The Bible is clear: **The Word of God, now revealed to us in the Person of the Word Incarnate, Jesus Christ, created the heavens and the earth.**

When Christians act as if Christ is not the Creator, they tumble out of the gravitational field of truth and spin nearly uselessly, like so many meteorites tumbling aimlessly in outer space. The Christian is heaven bound, but as long as he has breath he is stationed on planet earth. The earth is the arena for Christian thought, focus and development – no space cadets needed. Christians who truly believe Christ is the Creator are obligated to relate to the creation on the basis of truth – Christ's truth – in the here and now of earthly existence.

2. Christ Created Creation for His Own Purposes. “All things were created through Him and for Him,” wrote the Apostle Paul (Colossians 1:16).

Creation, of which man is a part, exists for the glory of Christ. The world is designed for Christ's government, purposes, and glory. The Creation is important to Jesus. He didn't make it for frivolous purposes. And He didn't make it for man, not primarily at least. He made the world for Himself.

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When a believer fails to appreciate creation as a special object of Christ's concern, it usually follows that he holds Christ's will for creation in low esteem. Christians who lightly regard Christ's purposes for the earth are generally negligent to exercise their God-assigned roles as the salt of the earth and the light of the world (cf. Matthew 5:13-14). The absence of Christian involvement in our world creates a vacuum into which anti-Christian evolutionists and social theorists gladly step to set up economy ruining heresy mills and ecology destroying enterprises. One of the primary reasons our planet and its peoples are in such bad shape is because Christians have left the garden to squatters and destroyers.

Church leadership must declare and reflect a God glorifying appreciation of God as the Creator. They must also declare and reflect an understanding that creation exists for the purposes of God. The twenty-four elders pictured in the Revelation model just such an understanding. Note the following passage, which contains the praise accorded to God the Creator:

“You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by your will they exist and were created” (Revelation 4:11).

When Christian leaders begin to widely declare that creation itself exists for the will and glory of God, a renewing reality will breathe through the Church and freshen its life and message. As a result, the Gospel message and administration will take on the problems of planet earth in a relevant manner. This will lead to better stewardship of the earth and its resources, resulting in more prosperity for more and more people. And God will be glorified.

3. Christ Manages the Universe: “That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ,” wrote the Apostle Paul (Ephesians 1:10).

I believe the above quoted Scripture refers to the administration of Christ during the New Testament era, the era of world history which began during Christ's first advent and which will terminate with His final advent. R. C. H. Lenski, noted Lutheran scholar, wrote about Ephesians 1:10: “Christ is now the great *oikonomos*, administrator or manager.”³⁶ John Calvin, commenting on the clause “that he might gather together in one,” writes, “the meeting appears to me to be, that out of Christ all things are distorted, and through Him they have been restored to order.”³⁷ The point is, Christ governs all things *now*.

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In Ephesians 1:10, the word “dispensation” is translated from the Greek word *oikonomian*. The root of this Greek word is the word from which we derive the English word “economy.” What the Apostle is saying is that in the economy of the fullness of times – the New Testament era – the Father put all things under Christ’s supervision. Paul adds a few verses later that Christ is seated at the right hand of God “far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but in that which is to come. And He put all things under his feet” (Ephesians 1:20-22). Christ Himself claimed supreme power when He stated “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me in heaven and earth” (Matthew 28:18). The Scripture, then, teaches this: **The One who assumed control of the economy of the New Testament era is the Universal Manager; it is His will which reigns supreme among men.** Thus, all of the world is under the supervision of Christ. Nothing is excepted from this supervision, including the economies of men and nations.

When nations believe and obey Christ’s truth (which includes what the Bible has to say about good government and economic law), Christ’s blessing comes upon those nations. When nations refuse to obey Christ’s economic laws, Christ’s judgments are poured out and sorrow abounds. No nation (or civilization) can escape Christ’s supervision of their economy.

Given the evidence, most nations are having to learn the hard way that Christ rules them. During much of the 20th century, Christ’s judgments have as often as not been the schoolmaster whose lessons have proven His management of the earth and its economies. His judgments are a stern tutor. There is no escape from the governing hand that visits bad consequences on bad policies. However, the judgments of Christ can prove redemptive in the long run. The prophet Isaiah wrote, “for when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isaiah 26:9). One way or the other, nations will have to learn Who Jesus is and what He expects of them.

Christ is a merciful God. As His judgments warned man, His Gospel offers him hope. The Lord Who judges can also pardon; the Judge Who inflicts disciplinary blows can also heal. The Judge is also a Savior. Indeed, Jesus is Lord. In Him alone is there hope for the nations.

Practical Steps

The world is a big place and we each occupy a very small part of it. So how are we, as individuals and members of small companies and churches, to relate to the big picture of developing a very large planet? In answer to this question I offer a life-governing principle that I find very workable. It is this:

Embrace a big vision; begin to work a small garden.

Adam was given a large vision and the stewardship of a small garden. “Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it,” said God to Adam. That was a big vision; one Adam could only begin to fulfill by procreating with his one wife and tilling within the confines of his own garden. “Go disciple the nations,” said Christ to eleven apostles. That was a big vision to give to so small a company of men. But that is God’s way with us. He gives us big visions and small gardens. Big trees come from small seeds. Big orchards come from small ones.

What I’ve discovered over the years is that without the big vision, the small garden diminishes for lack of vision. Without the small garden, the big vision evaporates for lack of a localized workshop. The truth is, we need both a big vision and a small garden. I pray God bless each of my readers with both.

Conclusion

We live in an imperfect world. I’m not so naïve as to believe that widespread prosperity can come in a developing nation overnight. Nor am I so naïve as to believe that economic blessings such as are generally enjoyed in the developed nations (for now, at least) are an indication of spiritual well-being in those nations. But I do believe that eventually, the Gospel will not only convert vast portions of the world’s population, it will also lead saved men into the wisdom that will in time make their countries developed and prosperous places to live.

A pastor in our area tells of a sign in a local garden shop that reads:

*The best time to plant a tree was 25 years ago;
The next best time to plant a tree is today.*

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My friends, it is time to plant the tree. It is time to tell Christians to develop the resources within their national boundaries and to build honest economies under the blessed governance of Christ. It will take solid theological undergirding to support and motivate what needs to be done, and doing what needs to be done won't be easily or quickly accomplished. But with faith in Christ and clear vision, we can and must get started. Over time, with and by the grace of God, we will succeed. And all to the glory of God, and for the good of our fellow man.

May each of us work our own gardens, ever keeping the bigger picture in mind. “The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein” (Psalm 24:1).

Jesus is Lord.

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Ethos: Living Out an Inevitable Idea

By Garry J. Moes

Life magazine once noted that “every age or epoch is inspired by what may be called its inevitable idea – the ethos of the century.”

Ethos: a fascinating and powerful word! A direct adaptation from the Greek word of the same spelling and meaning, its English definition is “character or moral nature” – “the guiding beliefs, standards, or ideals that characterize or pervade a group, a community, a people or an ideology; the spirit that motivates the ideas, customs, or practices of a people, an epoch, or a region.”

The Christian camp my wife and I manage recently hosted a youth retreat for which the leaders had designed a special T-shirt reflecting the theme of the weekend. On the front was that word: ETHOS. On the back, was the amazingly simple definition: “Live what you believe.”

From this word ethos we also get the word “ethics.” Ethics, of course, is the discipline dealing with what is good and bad, right and wrong. It is the system of moral duties and obligations we have, our standards of behavior, our system of moral principles, our set of values.

When we codify our ethics, we call the result “law.” When codified by God, His laws become “divine Scripture” and are enforced by whatever means God chooses to work His will in our world. When ethics are codified by the state, the laws are enforceable through the state’s police power, a comforting arrangement when our laws grow out of a just and righteous ethos, but a frightening prospect when they spring from an evil one.

It has been said, vainly, that morality cannot be legislated. But that is patent nonsense. All law is morality legislated – ethics codified.

Ethics, then, is exactly what our campers’ T-shirt said: “Living what we believe.” To not live what we believe (or profess to believe) is called “hypocrisy,” the one sin which virtually everyone professes to be intolerable these days.

In one sense, however, it is unnecessary to call people to live what they believe. People do live what they believe. Their behav-

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iors almost inevitably reflect their system of morality, *i.e.*, their ethics, the “inevitable idea” of their age. The question is not so much whether we will act out what we believe. The more important question is what, indeed, will we believe?

Someone once said, “Ideas have consequences,” and that is precisely the point. Our ideas, our beliefs, will always work out in the real world as consequences, as behaviors.

Our civic life in America is reflecting this reality and, due to the subversion of our ethos, it is an ever more frightening reality.

The poet/essayist T. S. Eliot, perhaps unwittingly foreshadowing and explaining the sordidness which has characterized our political scene in recent times, once wrote that the behavior of politicians is determined by “the general ethos of the people they have to govern.”

Former Republican Party strategist Colonel V. Doner wrote recently, “It doesn’t take a membership in Mensa to realize that social policy and law eventually reflect the moral concepts held by the ruling elites, whether liberal Democrats or establishment Republicans. Clearly, the context of this morality, and hence the resulting public policy, flows from certain presuppositions about God (does He exist?) and His law (is it applicable?).”

All of the above is set forth to provide context to what I believe is one of the most remarkable messages to enter our nation’s political dialogue in several decades. It was delivered on February 16, 1999 as an open letter to the nation’s conservative movement by one of its central architects, Paul Weyrich, head of the Free Congress Foundation.

In his widely reported message, Weyrich, in effect, declared that the so-called cultural war between the defenders of America’s Christian ethos and the forces of secularism/socialism has been lost by the former.

There has been a sea-change of historic proportions, he said.

“Suffice it to say that the United States is very close to becoming a state totally dominated by an alien ideology, an ideology bitterly hostile to Western culture,” Weyrich argued.

“[I]t is impossible to ignore the fact that the United States is becoming an ideological state. The ideology of Political Correctness, which openly calls for the destruction of our traditional culture, has so gripped the body politic, has so gripped our institutions, that it is even affecting the Church. It has completely taken over the academic community. It is now pervasive in the entertainment industry, and it threatens to control literally every aspect of our lives.”

What was so unusual about Weyrich's message was that he did not call for rededication by the forces of righteousness to engage the battle.

He did not call for redoubling our efforts to retake the battlefield.

What astonished the political world and media was his proposal that Christians and other traditional moral conservatives disengage from the established order, bypass established institutions, and create their own countercultural institutions – including educational endeavors, courts, and entertainment avenues – and re-evaluate their faith in reformation of the country by political means.

“I think it is fair to say that conservatives have learned to succeed in politics. That is, we got our people elected,” he said.

“But that did not result in the adoption of our agenda. The reason, I think, is that politics itself has failed. And politics has failed because of the collapse of the culture. The culture we are living in becomes an ever-wider sewer. In truth, I think we are caught up in a cultural collapse of historic proportions, a collapse so great that it simply overwhelms politics.”

Weyrich's new position came as a shock to many well-intended reformers who remain certain that harder work in politics and cultural engagement can still reverse the apparent trends – the “inevitable idea” of our epoch.

The hard work to date was largely inspired by reconstructionists of one ilk or another who were certain that our cultural/political deterioration was the result of Christians having abandoned the battlefield, beginning perhaps a century ago, in pursuit of a quiet pietism, spiritual sanctuary, and personal salvation. Re-engage the battle, they argued. Take back God's territory.

It was and is a compelling argument. Yet some of us who took up that challenge have come to sense that something is yet missing. Or, perhaps, a time has arisen in which a strategic battlefield retreat is indicated to allow God, Whose battle it really is, to accomplish some wise purpose unique for our time. I submit that that purpose may have something to do with judgment.

(A personal note: I have sensed that my intercessory prayers for our nation and world in recent years have met with negative responses at Heaven's Throne. So much so that I have felt led to all but cease such intercession and bow temporarily to what I am perceiving to be God's unfolding cycle of judgment.)

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To assume that some common ground can be found on which both the City of God and the city of man can be built, to use Augustine's construct, is no doubt folly. There can never be a political or cultural consensus among these two populations in our world, and, insofar as politics is the art of compromise, it can never be a vehicle for building the City of God.

The February 1999 edition of Ligonier Ministries' devotional booklet *Tabletalk* examines the unending historical war between these two cultures, showing from the prophecies of Isaiah "how God deals with rebellious nations that refuse to honor Him and how He deals with His own people who become faithless as they are seduced by the city of man."

From Isaiah, for example, we see how God, from time to time, turns our sins back upon us, forcing us to live with the consequences of our ideas, giving us rulers who govern according to the principles of our own perverted ethos. As explained in a phenomenon known as the doctrine of concurrence, God, Who does no evil, works His good and just will through the evil schemes of fallen men.

"We see how God uses His enemies as tools to carry out His purposes. Though wicked men act according to the evil schemes of their own hearts, God uses them to serve His purpose, *i.e.*, to bring judgment on the world and to chastise His people," says R. C. Sproul.

In the meantime, how can we be sure that our ethos and consequent behaviors will be right and pure, in line with the perfect will of God? Ephesians 5:1 puts it as simply as it can be put: "Be imitators of God." We must live and fulfill His Great Commission according to the standards of His Word, our perfect law.

And rest in His sovereign control, fearing Him, but never fearing men.

Journalist Garry J. Moes, a professional journalist with major news bureaus and former theological journal editor, is currently President of the Graybrook Institute. Graybrook Institute is an educational and publishing endeavor dedicated to the advancement of Biblical doctrine and the Christian worldview.

Matthew 18:20 – God’s Authority in Heaven Administered on Earth

By Mark E. Rudolph

Introduction and Abstract

What does Matthew 18:20 mean? Does it primarily have the purpose of granting the comfort of God’s presence in a worshiping congregation, as it is most often understood? Or does it primarily have another purpose? It is my conviction that Matthew 18:20 primarily serves the purpose of broadly establishing the authority of the church to act judicially, since God Himself establishes the validity of the church’s proceedings by His own presence.

“Two or Three”

Using BibleWorks for Windows, I performed a word search with the criteria of finding all verses with the words “two” and “three” in the same verse.³⁸ Twenty-two verses were found, fourteen of which I deemed applicable to this study. Verses which are not applicable included 1 Kings 2:39: *“But it came about at the end of three years, that two of the servants of Shimei ran away...”*

All applicable phrases used the pattern of “two or three,” including two or three witnesses, officials, olives, cities, and prophets. The one exception was Ecclesiastes 4:12, which nevertheless reflects the power inherent in two or three things together being more powerful than one thing by itself. There are several verses which do not have a direct judicial purpose, but nevertheless seem to indicate the value/power/credibility of two or three people or things together serving as a type of witness. See the table on this page for all the verses found using the above search criteria. All applicable texts are cited in full in Appendix A. It is recommended that the reader review these texts before proceeding.

Applicable Verses
Deuteronomy 17:6, 19:15; 2 Kings 9:32; Ecclesiastes 4:12; Isaiah 17:6; Amos 4:8; Matthew 18:16, 18:30; Luke 12:51-52; 1 Kings 14:27-29; 2 Kings 13:1; 2 Timothy 5:19; Hebrews 10:28
Not Applicable Verses
Joshua 7:3; Judges 15:4; 1 Samuel 2:21, 11:11, 30:12; 1 Kings 2:39; Proverbs 30:15; Ezekiel 41:22

The Text Itself – Exegetical Considerations

Does verse 20 belong together with the previous verses on discipline? Some have suggested that verse 20 ought not to be joined together with the previous verses. In this theory, verses 19-20 are a separate text on prayer.³⁹

However, the words of the text do not permit this interpretation. There is an unbreakable logical connection between verses 18-20 and the previous section on discipline.

Verses 15-17 describe the process of discipline, from the least invasive and strict measures to the ultimate measure of considering a formerly confessed believer to be an unbeliever. It is particularly important for our study to take note of the citation of Deuteronomy 19:15 in verse 16: *“A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.”*

Verse 18 reads: *“Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”* This text is commonly accepted to be a confirmation of the church’s authority under God to bind and loose, permit and forbid, absolve and condemn. Therefore, verse 18 belongs with the process of discipline described in verses 15-17. The words “binding” and “loosing” when used to describe what takes place in heaven, are participles in the perfect tense coupled with the future of the verb “to be,” indicating action which has already occurred before binding or loosing, rather than action which follows in the future after an earthly binding or loosing. This tense usage hints at the fact that God acts together with the earthly authorities. It implies that God is not merely confirming the actions of those on earth, but is participating in those actions, if not anticipating the actions beforehand.

Verse 19 reads: *“Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.”* The word “again” indicates a repetition of the oath formula of verse 18 *“truly I say to you.”* It is clear that verse 19 is attached to verse 18, meaning that both verses 18 and 19 belong to verses 15-17 and are therefore specifically about discipline, not specifically about prayer. Verse 19 also repeats the minimum number of two witnesses required to bind or loose.

Verse 20 then reads: *“For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.”* The word “for” translates the word

“gar” (ga,r) which is a subordinating conjunction. A subordinating conjunction introduces a clause which describes or modifies a main clause. Since verse 20 cannot refer to the verses which follow, it must refer to the preceding verses. Verse 20 therefore belongs to verse 19 and to the disciplinary text of verses 15-17. Verse 20 serves as a further commentary on the binding and loosing in verses 18-19.

The second question in view is the proper meaning of verses 18-20.

Verse 18 finds parallel passages in Matthew 16:19 and John 20:23. In Matthew 16, Jesus blesses Simon Barjona for his simple but powerful confession. He tells Peter that the church will be built on the solid rock of his confession. Discipline is not precisely in view in Matthew 16 as it is in Matthew 18, but the power and authority of the church is in view. Even if Peter himself is the “rock” to which Jesus refers, Peter himself is not the exclusive bearer of the rights and responsibilities of binding and loosing, since the same rights and responsibilities are given to other disciples in Matthew 18 and John 20. The tense of the verbs is the same as in Matthew 18.

In John 20, the resurrected Christ appears to the disciples.

Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.” (John 20:21-23)

Notice: a) The disciples are being sent as Christ’s representatives; b) as Christ’s representatives, they are being sent with God’s Spirit; c) and with the presence of God’s Spirit, they exercise the authority of Christ in forgiving and retaining. The verbs “forgiving” and “retaining” are again in the perfect tense, indicating already accomplished action.

Verse 19 continues with a paraphrase and strengthening of verse 18. Verse 18 speaks of the exercise of the church’s authority on earth and the confirmation of that authority by God in heaven. Likewise, Jesus says that “*if two of you agree on earth about anything,*” then “*it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.*”

What has led some people to conclude that verses 19-20 are speaking in general about prayer or public worship is the phrase “... *anything that they may ask ...*”. What is it that the disciples are asking for or about?

There are basically two ways to understand this phrase about asking. One way is to understand it as prayer or worship in gen-

eral. If this is true, the text implies that if one prays alone, that is an insufficient number to obtain what is desired or necessary. This would be contrary to other texts of the Bible such as:

“When you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.” (Matthew 6:6)

And what would the interpreter do with the phrase *“Again I say to you”*? Any interpretation which makes verse 19 speak about prayer in general ignores the necessary connection between the binding and loosing of verse 18 and the meaning of verse 19. They would have to ignore the obvious parallelism in the use of the words “earth” and “heaven” and the minimum number of two required witnesses.

The second way to understand verse 18 is to see that the asking has to do with asking God’s wisdom in a judicial matter. It is asking God to bind what those on earth have bound, or to loose in heaven what those on earth have loosed. The reason that asking is in view is because we must remember that the authority to admonish or absolve ultimately belongs to God alone, and the church’s rights and responsibilities are delegated. Asking has to do with prayer of a specific nature in a specific context. Calvin writes:

... not only will God bestow the spirit of wisdom and prudence on those who ask it, but he will also provide that not one thing which they shall do according to his Word shall want its power and effect. By uniting agreement with prayer, he reminds us with what moderation and humility believers ought to conduct themselves in religious acts. The offender must be admonished, and, if he does not receive correction, he must be excommunicated. Here it is not only necessary to ask counsel at the sacred mouth of God, so that nothing may be determined by his Word, but it is proper at the same time to begin with prayer ... men are not allowed the liberty of doing whatever they please, but that God is declared to have the sole claim to the government of the Church, so that he approves and ratifies the decisions of which he is himself the Author.⁴⁰

Now let us consider verse 20. First, I readily concede the idea that God is present when His people are gathered together in prayer or worship. The doctrine of the omnipresence of God by itself sufficiently argues God’s presence in worship. It can further be argued that God has a special regard for the public worship of His

people, especially when considered in the light of the doctrine of the church and the sacraments. Therefore, the principle behind this text can also be applied to general circumstances. What I argue against is the idea that this text is only or primarily a general promise about God's presence in prayer or worship. Let us examine the verse phrase by phrase.

"For": as indicated above, the word "for" translates the word "gar" (ga,r) which is a subordinating conjunction describing or modifying a main clause. That is, whatever has been said before in verses 18-19 is true because of the facts in verse 20. If one denies that the purpose of verse 20 is to undergird the authority of the church in binding and loosing, then the basis of the church's authority is completely removed.

"Where two or three have gathered together": As was suggested by the data gathered in the section "Two or Three," the phrase "two or three" always has either the literal sense of witnesses in a judicial proceeding, or the figurative sense of the presence of a sufficient "witness" to declare the credibility of a matter. In all the applicable texts in which this phrase is found, there is not one case in which worship or prayer alone is in view. Furthermore, the argument that Jesus is introducing a new use of the phrase in this text seems very unlikely in view of the fact that Deuteronomy 19:15 is cited in verse 16, paraphrased in verse 19, and again paraphrased in verse 20.

"In my Name": This phrase is used in a representative sense. That is, prophets speak in God's name (sometimes falsely, sometimes rightly), representatives speak in the name of another, children are received in the name of Jesus, some represent themselves as being Christ (coming in His name), deeds are done in the name of Christ, and the Holy Spirit comes in the name of Christ.⁴¹

It is particularly interesting to see that this phrase is also used in a disciplinary case outside of Matthew 18. Paul writes about the man who was living in immorality in 1 Corinthians 5:

For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. (1 Corinthians 5:3-5)⁴²

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Besides Matthew 18:19-20, asking in the name of Jesus is discussed only by John.⁴³ In each of the texts in John's gospel, Jesus is saying that we are Christ's own representatives, even when we come to the Father. What we ask the Father, we ask with the expectation that we will be answered as Christ Himself is answered; either to do the same works as Christ (14:12-13), or to bear abiding fruit for Christ (15:16), or to receive joy from the Father as Christ has received it (16:22, 26-27). In all three texts, the idea that asking in the name of Christ is the same as being His representatives is strengthened by the requirement to keep God's commandments (14:15, 15:17, and implied in 16:27). We must be holy as Christ is holy in order to be able to ask in His name and in order to be His representatives before the Father.

"There I am in the midst": Again, I do not deny that God is always in the midst of His people. But Matthew 18:20 specifically teaches that God is particularly in the midst of His people when they meet together to act with authority. Acts 15 is a wonderfully clear passage on this point. After the conclusion of the first "ecumenical council" in Jerusalem, the apostles issued a letter with several commands, citing as their authority someone no less than the Holy Spirit himself.

Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. (Acts 15:27-29)

God's own presence gives the apostles authority to act in Acts 15. In the same way, God's own presence when two or three meet together gives authority to them to carry out the judicial process of Matthew 18:15-17 against the rebellious person.

One final note about the relationship of verse 20 to the disciplinary process. The theme of discipline does not cease with verse 20. Verses 21-35 continue with Peter's question: *"Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"* Peter's question suggests that he is searching for some limitations to Jesus' teaching about discipline. If he goes to his brother and his brother repents, how many times must he allow the brother to repent before he can call him a tax gatherer and a Gentile anyway? Jesus shows that the judicial process is always to be tempered

with patience and mercy by answering: “*I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.*” Jesus illustrates this idea with the parable about the king “*who wished to settle accounts with his slaves.*” Jesus continues His teaching on discipline in verses 21 and following, teaching which actually commenced at the beginning of the chapter and continues to the end of the chapter. Discipline is certainly in view in verses 18-20.

Some Notes from Commentaries

Not all commentaries agree with the conclusions of this essay. For example, I have already cited *The Interpreter's Bible*:

... is it a claim ... that the present Christ ratifies the decisions and authority of the church? In our time vs. 20 is more regarded as a true and well-loved expression of a prime spiritual fact: that the real presence of Christ dwells with and empowers faithful corporate prayer and love.⁴⁴

No basis is given for this view. It is simply asserted.

In order to show that my position is not without precedent in the church, I cite several sources here which are in agreement with my position. For example, Calvin writes:

... not only will God bestow the spirit of wisdom and prudence on those who ask it, but he will also provide that not one thing which they shall do according to his Word shall want (lack) its power and effect. By uniting agreement with prayer, he reminds us with what moderation and humility believers ought to conduct themselves in religious acts. The offender must be admonished, and, if he does not receive correction, he must be excommunicated. Here it is not only necessary to ask counsel at the sacred mouth of God, so that nothing may be determined by his Word, but it is proper at the same time to begin with prayer ... men are not allowed the liberty of doing whatever they please, but that God is declared to have the sole claim to the government of the Church, so that he approves and ratifies the decisions of which he is himself the Author.

The *Wycliffe Bible Commentary* says this:

The promise that prayer will be answered if even two agree provides additional proof that the prayerful decisions of the congregation

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in the disciplinary actions will be divinely honored. This promise pertaining to united prayer must be considered in the light of Christ's other teaching on the subject (cf. 1 John 5:14-15).⁴⁶

The *New Bible Commentary* says this:

Verse 19 is one of the great gospel promises with regard to prayer. But note the close connection of the verse with those that precede and that which follows. The promise is specifically given to a gathering of disciples with Christ in the midst (20), called to discipline an erring brother (17). Their authority to do this is restated (18) and the promise can be claimed because they are acting on behalf of the Father, in the name of the Son. In my name (20); i.e. claiming and using My authority.⁴⁷

R. V. G. Tasker writes:

The Jews believed that the Shekinah or divine presence rested upon those who were occupied in the study of the law. Christians are here given the assurance that Christ is present with those who are diligently concerned with understanding His mind and will.⁴⁸

Edersheim's comments on this text are stronger:

Discipline so exercised (which may God restore to us) has the highest Divine sanction, and the most earnest reality attaches to it. For, in virtue of the authority which Christ has committed to the church in the persons of her rulers and representatives, what they bound or loosed – declared obligatory or non-obligatory – was ratified in heaven. Nor was this to be wondered at. The incarnation of Christ was the link which bound earth to heaven: through it whatever was agreed upon in the fellowship of Christ, as that which was to be asked, would be done for them of his Father Which was in heaven. Thus, the power of the church reached up to heaven through the power of prayer in His Name Who made God our Father. And so, beyond the exercise of discipline and authority, there was the omnipotence of prayer – 'if two of you shall agree ... as touching anything ... it shall be done for them' – and, with it, also the infinite possibility of a higher service of love. For, in the smallest gathering in the Name of Christ, His Presence would be, and with it the certainty of nearness to, and acceptance with, God.⁴⁹

Like Calvin, Edersheim is willing to see a general application of the principle in verse 20, but only after asserting the primary purpose of the text, namely, that God Himself endorses and gives His stamp of approval to those proceedings which are properly and Biblically conducted in His name.

Practical Comments

Why do I think this is an important topic? There is one basic reason: the authority of the church which has in past years been abused, is in these days diffused and unexercised. The church needs to recognize that God is involved in its considerations and proceedings. This fact should guard the church from abuse (God will hold the church accountable for abuse of authority) and also establish the authority of the church in the affairs of its people (God speaks through the authority of the church to His people).

Matthew 18 is a key passage on the authority of the church to rightly regulate the lives of its members. It connects New Testament ethics with Old Testament ethics, the church of the apostles with the church of the prophets, and the authority of God in heaven with the body of His people on earth. Seeing verse 20 only as a text which teaches that God is present among his people when they pray (in numbers of two or more) takes away the authority of the church to exercise its responsibilities with confidence, discretion, and care. However, the interpretation of verse 20 which I have supported here gives the ground and reason why the authority of the church is coupled with the authority of God in heaven – God Himself is in the midst of such proceedings from the very beginning.

Appendix A

All Applicable Verses – Full Text

Deuteronomy 17:6: *“On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.”*

Deuteronomy 19:15: *“A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.”⁵⁰*

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2 Kings 9:32: “Then he lifted up his face to the window and said, ‘Who is on my side? Who?’ And two or three officials looked down at him.”

Ecclesiastes 4:12: “And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.”

Isaiah 17:6: “Yet gleanings will be left in it like the shaking of an olive tree, two or three olives on the topmost bough, Four or five on the branches of a fruitful tree, declares the LORD, the God of Israel.”⁵¹

Amos 4:8: “So two or three cities would stagger to another city to drink water, but would not be satisfied; yet you have not returned to Me,’ declares the LORD.”⁵²

Matthew 18:16: “But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.”

Matthew 18:20: “For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.”

Luke 12:51-52: “Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division; for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three.”

1 Corinthians 14:27-29: “If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret; but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.”⁵³

2 Kings 13:1: “This is the third time I am coming to you. Every fact is to be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”

1 Timothy 5:19: “Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.”

Hebrews 10:28: “Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.”

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The *Right* Social Gospel

By P. Andrew Sandlin

Those who have followed Colonel Doner's career with even minimal interest recognize his unflagging commitment to Christianity as a *relevant* religion. In the 60s, while men like Jerry Falwell were still roundly opposing Christian political involvement, Doner was on the vanguard of conservative Christian activism. He was one of the architects of the burgeoning Religious Right of the 70s. He founded Christian Voice in the 70s and invented the political "report card," making various candidates' positions on crucial issues quickly and easily apparent to voters – much to the chagrin of the liberals. In the 80's, disillusioned with a right-wing political machine that cared more for political pragmatism than Biblical truth, he abandoned active politics to write *The Samaritan Strategy*⁵⁴ and founded the International Church Relief Fund. He increasingly committed himself to Biblical justice manifested in godly charity to the weak, oppressed, poor, and needy. His Chalcedon monograph, *The Late Great GOP and the Coming Realignment*, is a searing and scintillating exposé of an inane and treacherous political party for whom conservative Christians in the United States have been played as stooges. The present essay is dedicated to Colonel Doner on his 50th birthday and with profound appreciation for his commitment to relevant religion, what we may accurately term the *right* Social Gospel.

The First Social Gospel

It is difficult to understand why the Social Gospel emerged in the first place if we lack a basic grasp of the ethos of nineteenth-century England and the United States. The eighteenth-century European Enlightenment had influenced both nations, though not nearly so deeply as it had France, Germany, and other countries on the continent. Nonetheless, the various Protestant orthodoxies which, by and large, had retained continuity with ancient catholic orthodoxy,⁵⁵ lost their hegemony in the major denominations of both major English-speaking countries by the second half of the nineteenth century. The rationalism of the Enlightenment, rationalism which began in the church,⁵⁶ initially reduced Christianity

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to a rationalistic Deism or Unitarianism, stripping almost all of the supernatural elements from Christian orthodoxy. This subverted and emasculated historic Protestantism, and eventually produced a rival religion – Protestant liberalism.

This “Age of Reason” soon encountered an opponent in romanticism, the worship of emotion, feeling, intuition, the mystical, and even the demonic. Romanticism in the church manifested itself in revivalism. Historic, confessional Christianity was cast aside in favor of a warm, enthusiastic, and experiential religion which the acidic effects of a cognitively top-heavy Enlightenment assertedly could not efface. The religion of the heart was separated from the religion of the head. Real religion was increasingly limited to one’s individual, subjective relationship to God. Reason could not combat this! Thus the church went in one of two directions – rationalism in the church led to Deism and Unitarianism, while romanticism produced a passionate revivalism that gradually undercut the objective basis of the Faith. Both directions had little use for orthodox, creedal Christianity.

The Reformation had helped spawn, though unintentionally, modern capitalism. This is an issue on which the medieval church, and even many of the Reformers, had generally been on the wrong side. Free-market economics is simply a consistent response to the Biblically required protection of private property, though most of the *laissez faire* Enlightenment figures did not espouse it for this reason. As is always the case, the adoption of free enterprise in England and America generated a level of prosperity unprecedented under re-distributionist economic systems. The Protestant idea of the sacredness of one’s vocation was a factor in creating a climate amenable to free-market economics. This climate in turn generated a favorable environment in which the Industrial Revolution began and flourished. It radically altered the older European class system and created a new class of wealthy businessmen. Wealth, rather than royalty, pedigree, and intelligence became the new social standard.

Unfortunately, while the Industrial Revolution was generally grounded in the proper Biblical mechanism of wealth creation – the free market – it had largely bypassed Biblical premises in terms of which the mechanism of free market economics should operate. Overall, nineteenth-century Christianity was a generic, latitudinar-

ian affair which made its peace with the sinful realities of nineteenth-century culture. Despite exceptions like the Salvation Army, much of “establishment” Christianity was interested only in preserving the bland *status quo* and not addressing the particular needs and burdens of the working classes. Marxism and other forms of socialism, in fact, gained a hearing not because their views were tenable, but because the Christian church was, by and large, mute in the face of obvious social problems. In the United States, Charles Finney and other abolitionists addressed mounting social problems; but, interestingly enough, it was generally those of questionable orthodox credentials or the outright heterodox who fell into this socially activist class.

This was no less true of the so-called Social Gospel. The ideational engine powering the Social Gospel movement was Walter Rauschenbusch. His *Christianity and the Social Crisis* set forth the notion “that the essential purpose of Christianity was to transform human society into the kingdom of God by regenerating all human relations and reconstituting them in accordance with the will of God.”⁵⁷ It was while pastoring among the working classes on the west side of New York City that Rauschenbusch developed his recognition that Christianity must apply in the broader society, not just the church. The Social Gospel movement essentially became the Christian adjunct of the secular socialist movements of the day. Rauschenbusch’s *A Theology for the Social Gospel* repudiated the doctrine of Christ’s substitutionary atonement, defined “sin [as] essentially selfishness,” and endorsed “the redemption of society from private property and the natural resources of the earth, and from any condition in industry which makes monopoly profits possible.”⁵⁸ Rauschenbusch’s theology was in no sense orthodox, and he reoriented Christianity to conform it to the mold of nineteenth-century socialism.

The twentieth-century reaction came mainly in the form of fundamentalism, which rightly perceived in the theology of the Social Gospel a denial of orthodox Christianity. Unfortunately, in its zeal to defend “the fundamentals of the Faith,” it overlooked the full range of Biblical teaching. Fundamentalism was essentially a *reductionist* religion,⁵⁹ limiting the Faith to a few of its essential doctrines and shunning the entire “counsel of God” (Acts 20:27), particularly as it applies to society. The work of Doner and others

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has been to recover the older, Reformed and Puritan idea of the application of the Bible to all spheres of life. Twentieth-century fundamentalism and its “kissing cousin” evangelicalism had in fact developed a specific theology to justify this truncated view of the Faith. This we today generally call Pietism, the religion of the heart, originally a Lutheran reaction to Protestant scholasticism. More recent Pietism is a carryover from romantic revivalism like John Wesley’s. This theology, often wedded now to a dispensational eschatology of predestined cultural defeat prior to the Second Coming, cut the nerve of the application of the Faith to society, and thus a genuinely Biblical Social Gospel.

When evangelicals *did* finally recover the notion of the social dimension of the Faith, it was not anchored in recognition of an explicitly Biblical program, but at best in “Biblical principles” and at worst in downright socialism. Thus, ironically enough, the reaction of the “new evangelicals” to fundamentalist opposition to the Social Gospel was, in many quarters, to revive the tenets of the earlier socialistic Social Gospel!⁶⁰

The New Old Social Gospel

Doner has identified himself with those who have recovered the older, more Biblical, Puritan position: the Bible itself is the guidebook to all areas of life and society.⁶¹ This means first, that Biblical law should govern in society, including the state, no less than in the family and church. Vocation, economics, science, the arts, technology, and so forth all must find their structural starting point in the Bible. This was the teaching of leading Reformed apologist Cornelius Van Til⁶² on whose views Rousas John Rushdoony erected the theology of Christian Reconstruction. God’s law, including Mosaic law, remains in force for modern man. To say anything else is to deny the full authority of the Bible.

Second, this entails a highly decentralized socio-political order and Christian libertarianism, maximum individual freedom under God’s law. It connotes the Biblical doctrine of government. The family, the school, the church, business, and other private institutions are all governments, the state being only one government among many. These are all independent spheres which nonetheless work together informally, all directly under God’s authority. In this way, the application of the Bible to society generates great individual freedom.

Third, because the Bible respects private property, any form of socialism is not an option. The Bible does not, of course, set forth a highly developed form of free-market economics, but nonetheless furnishes theological justification for such a system. An explicitly Biblical social religion necessitates free-market economics, though all free-market economic systems are certainly not Christian.

Fourth, applying the Bible to society requires care for the poor, the weak, and the oppressed. This is not done by means of coercive wealth distribution, the fundamental error of socialism. Rather, families, churches, and individual Christians are responsible to care for the needy and less fortunate. The family is the chief charitable institution; and the church plays a secondary, though vital, role in this task. In a Biblically ordered society, there is little or no place for nursing homes, for example. Families are to care for their members (1 Tim. 5:4). Food producers and distributors are required by God to distribute a portion of their goods to the poor and foreigners (Lev. 19:10). It is not, of course, the responsibility of the state to coerce obedience; God reserves to Himself the right to judge those who unlawfully withhold from those in need (Pr. 21:13; Am. 4:1-3; Zech. 7:8-13). The Biblical system is a compassionate, free-enterprise system anchored in Biblical law with the family as the chief agency of charity.

Finally, an explicitly Biblical faith requires a Christian Social Gospel. Christ's ministry as outlined by the prophets is couched in such terms (Lk. 4:16-21). To say that the Gospel is only about "life in heaven" is a pietist blasphemy. It is to cut the heart out of Biblical religion. This is one of the chief heresies of fundamentalists and evangelicals who despise, along with the liberal Social Gospel, the authority of the Word of God to govern every area of life and society. It is a treacherous surrender of society to Satan.

A Social Gospel means that while man is saved solely by the grace of God on the grounds of Christ's redemptive work and that the salvation He accomplishes is appropriated by faith alone (1 Pet. 3:18; Eph. 2:8-9), it means, in addition, that the redemption accomplished by Christ is not designed merely for the individual in his "private" life, but for the gradual sanctification of all areas of life and society in terms of the Bible (Ps. 2:6-8; Is. 2:2-3; Mt. 28:18-20). This is the *right* Social Gospel, and it is only when the church

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recovers this full-orbed Gospel that she can expect victory over the forces of evil which today engulf our society. Colonel Doner's unflagging work has contributed greatly to this recovery.

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Human Rights and the Persecution of Christians in Islam

by Christine Schirrmacher

When Christians are persecuted for their faith in Moslem countries, or when Moslems converted to Christianity are threatened with the death penalty, the Western press accuses the Islamic state of human rights violations. At the same time, most Islamic states have ratified declarations such as the United Nations 1948 General Declaration of Human Rights.⁶³ How can they justify this contradiction?

In the last decades, various Islamic organizations have themselves formulated declarations of human rights. They have one basic difference to those of Western statements, however. Because they give priority to the Koran and to the Sharī'a (Islamic law), human rights can only be guaranteed in these countries under the conditions imposed by these two authorities and their regulations. Article 24 of the 1990 Cairo Declaration of Human Rights, for example, states that, "All rights and freedoms mentioned in this statement are subject to the Islamic Sharī'a," and Article 25 adds, "The Islamic Sharī'a is the only source for the interpretation or explanation of each individual article of this statement." This emphasizes the "historic role of the Islamic Umma,⁶⁴ which was created by God as the best nation, which has brought humanity a universal and well-balanced civilization, in which harmony between life here on earth and the hereafter exists, and in which knowledge accompanies faith."⁶⁵

What is the significance of the priority of the Koran and the Sharī'a? These two authorities insure that in the Islamic states, human rights only exist within the limits of the religious values of Islamic revelation and are guaranteed only within the framework determined by the Koran and Islamic law. The secularized Westerner, molded by the Enlightenment and accustomed to separation of church and state, has difficulties understanding that a country's political and social standards, as well as private and public life, are determined by the standards of religion.

Human Rights or Duties?

For this reason, Islamic Apologetes (defenders of the faith) are generally convinced that, while God has rights in regard to man,

man has only duties towards God. Man must, for example, submit to God's will and fulfill the Five Pillars of Islam (Confession, Prayer, Fasting, Giving Alms, and Pilgrimage).

Civil Rights for Moslems and Non-Moslems

Islamic culture has never known any sort of separation of religion and state, or of politics and religion, while, in the Old Testament, a certain division of authority between the king and the high priest did exist. In Islam, Mohammed had unified both aspects in his own person, being simultaneously the religious and political leader of the first Islamic community. His immediate successors, the Caliphs, also carried out both offices.

In the Islamic states, Islam is the state religion, to which all citizens are assumed to belong, and which is considered to be the "principle on which the state is built. The state is bearer of a religious idea and is, therefore, itself a religious institution. It is responsible for the worship of God, for religious training and for the spreading of the faith."⁶⁶ For this reason, the law must distinguish between the civil rights of Moslems, who can fully enjoy legal protection because they prove their loyalty to the state by their adherence to its religion, and the rights of non-Moslems, who, as traitors, forfeit their right to state protection because of their "unbelief." In these countries, Moslems always have more rights than non-Moslems. A non-Moslem can usually not inherit from a Moslem, for example.

Change of Religion = High Treason

To be a Moslem means to be a citizen imbued with all legal rights, whereas to become an unbeliever is to commit high treason, for Islam is an "essential element of the basic order of the State."⁶⁷ When a Moslem repudiates his faith, he rebels against that order and endangers the security and the "stability of the society to which he belongs."⁶⁸ Martin Forstner concludes, "Only he who believes in God and the divinely revealed Koran, and who obeys the Sharī'a, is able to become a competent citizen, whereas the ungodly are enemies of society. The repeated duty to confess the faith – by fulfilling the five daily prayers, by fasting during Ramadan ... is the medium by which the citizen's morale is conveyed, so that the Islamic State links full civil rights to the confession of the true faith."⁶⁹

When Islamic law is interpreted in its strictest sense, this “watchman” function of the state over its citizens’ religion, makes it impossible for human rights to be given priority over Islamic law when a Moslem gives up his faith, in spite of human rights declarations. When a Moslem commits high treason – according to the Moslem point of view – religious law must be obeyed and that requires the punishment of the renegade. On the other hand, a non-Moslem can only enjoy those rights given him by the Koran and the Sharī’a.

Freedom of Religion for Non-Moslems

Although the constitutions of many Islamic countries provide for freedom in exercising religious beliefs, non-Moslems almost always have great difficulties practicing their faith. Moslems who have become Christians may even lose their lives. Still, Islamic countries claim to be tolerant and to guarantee freedom of religion.

In spite of the fact that freedom of religion is part of the law in most Islamic countries, their constitutions declare Islam to be the state religion. A few other faiths, such as Judaism and Christianity, are allowed a certain right to exist so that their members are not required to convert to Islam even if they live in a predominantly Islamic area; but they are never equal to Moslems before the law. They remain “second-class citizens” with limited legal rights and are subject to the Islamic state, which defines the limits of their religious freedoms very strictly (which includes the building of churches or matters of dress, for example). In most cases the Jewish or Christian faith must be lived quietly, for “a Moslem citizen can not be expected to endure and continually resist the missionary activity of other religions.”⁷⁰ Non-Moslem faiths, which are only tolerated and supervised, may exist only under the conditions imposed by the law, otherwise they cannot exist at all.

It is forbidden for non-Moslems to insult or disparage Islam, the Koran, or the prophet Mohammed, which according to Moslem opinion, automatically occurs in Christian evangelization. Moroccan law, for example, requires a prison sentence of six months to three years in addition to a fine of 200 to 500 dirham for proselytizing a Moslem to another religion.⁷¹ Repudiation of Islam is still considered to be a crime worthy of death, whereas the Moslem has the right to proselytize others.

Conclusion

Islamic human rights declarations of all kinds continually insist on the authority of the Islamic faith and can therefore only guarantee civil rights which respect Islam and its principles. This automatically restricts the rights of non-Moslems so that under Islamic law, only the Moslem can enjoy all rights, for only he is considered to be a loyal citizen. Non-Moslems have limited rights, but are allowed to exist. The Moslem who repudiates his faith loses all his rights, for he is considered a traitor to his country and to the state and may be subject to the death sentence either under the legal system or by his neighbors. This is emphasized in the “Draft for an Islamic Declaration of Human Rights,” which was composed by the Islamic Conference in Jidda in 1979.⁷² This statement forbids the Moslem to ever change his faith. It would be an offense against the Sharīʿa not to condemn the renegade to death and, thus, safety for non-Moslems cannot be guaranteed, even within the framework of a human rights declaration.

When Moslems Convert to Christianity Apostasy and the Death Penalty in Islam

Does a Moslem have the right to desert Islam and turn to Christianity? Is faith a private matter or do the state and its organs have the responsibility to monitor and control it? Christianity and Islam view this question quite differently. In our “enlightened” Western world with its separation of church and state, the individual’s personal belief is one of the most private areas of life – many are unwilling to even share the details of their faith. Many contemporaries consider their personal faith, which they have formulated according to their own convictions, independent of the Church, for the “true faith” is a religion more valid than the faith of those who “are always running to church.” The Islamic view is quite different: faith and religion are basically public affairs subject to the control of the state, although the measure of the control varies from country to country. Wherever Islam is the state religion and the very pillar of state order, the good citizen is expected to cling to Islam; apostasy is treason.

The Koran on Apostasy: Wrath and Punishment

According to Islam, the mere unbelief of a man who denies God and refuses to submit to Him is a serious sin. Whoever knows the Islamic faith but rejects it is guilty of an even more serious sin.

The Koran discusses apostasy in several places. Surah 16:106 mentions God's wrath and the "grievous chastisement" which a defector may expect. Surah 2:217 warns against leading believers into apostasy, for this offense is "graver than slaughter." The good works of the apostate count for nothing, for the sin of apostasy will not be forgiven and he will be thrown into hell. Surah 3:86-91 describes the reward of the apostate: the curse of God, of men, and of angels is on him (3:87; 9:67-68); there is no redemption, mediation, or aid for the accursed. God can in no way forgive apostates (4:137), for they are unbelievers who have made themselves particularly punishable. It is interesting, however, that beyond eternal damnation, the Koran defines no concrete worldly penalty and no judicial procedure for the punishment of the apostate.

Apostasy "In the Full Possession of One's Mental Faculties"

"Apostasy from Islam" (Arabic *'irtidâd*) means the proven, deliberate defection from Islam by a person either born Moslem or later converted to it. He must be in the full possession of his mental faculties and act of his own free will, not under coercion, before he can be condemned. Apostasy means the denial of the one true God, Allah, and of his Prophet, Mohammad.

Islamic theologians, however, do not agree on the practical definition of apostasy. The Koran teaches the fact of apostasy, but fails to define it more clearly. Is the failure to perform the Five Pillars of Islam (confession, prayer five times a day, fasting during Ramadan, giving alms, and pilgrimage to Mecca) apostasy?

If one has no legitimate reason for failing to pray five times a day, and shows no intention of improving, the Malicians, Shâfi'ites, and Hanbalites (three Sunni legal schools) consider him apostate, since the deliberate failure to pray is considered one of the gravest of sins. Abû Hanîfa (father of the Hanafite school) believes such a person to be still a believer, but suggests imprisonment for his betterment until the sinner is prepared to pray.⁷³

Should the individual unintentionally fail to fulfill the requirements of Islam, he is not apostate. His omission is still sin, to be penalized at the judge's discretion.⁷⁴ The sentence of apostasy depends on the sinner's deliberate refusal to obey.

Apostasy Is Treason

Apostasy thus occurs not only when the confession of Islam is theoretically denied, but also when the practice of the faith is neglected. To depreciate Mohammad, to abuse a Koran (by burning or dirtying it, for example), or to revile one of the 99 most beautiful divine names are also apostasy.⁷⁵ The practice of magic or the worship of images is also considered apostasy since these are acts of idolatry. The belief in the transmigration of souls can also constitute apostasy for it denies the resurrection. Even entering a church can be considered apostasy.⁷⁶ To invent the idea that Mohammad had any physical defects; to question the perfection of his knowledge, his morality or his virtue; or to defame the angels⁷⁷ also constitute apostasy.

Since apostasy in Islam is not merely a private or ecclesiastical affair (by withdrawal of church membership, for example) as it is in Western society, the state must act. Apostasy is treason towards Moslem society (*umma*) and the undermining of the Moslem state, for Islam is the buttress of society and the state itself. Apostasy erodes and shakes the foundations of the order of society; because it is treason, it must be avenged by the state.

Islam Requires the Death Penalty for Apostasy

The Koran has little to say about judicial penalties for apostasy, but Islamic theology has, on the basis of Koranic warnings against apostasy and the background of Islamic tradition, formulated directions for the treatment and punishment of apostates. Only a minority of theologians believe the Koran's warnings to appeal only to private conscience, for which the state has no responsibility.⁷⁸

Surah 4:88-89 warns against hypocrites led astray by God. Such people have no hope of repentance and represent a danger for the Moslem fellowship, for: "They desire that you should disbelieve as they have disbelieved, so that you might be (all) alike" (4:89). The text continues, "but if they turn back then seize them and kill them wherever you find them, and take not from among them a friend or helper."

Imprisonment as an Opportunity to Repent

This verse, generally interpreted to be a concrete commandment on the treatment of the apostate, requires the death penalty for the offence. The renowned Karine theologian, Mohammed Mohammed

Abû Zahra (1898-1974), speaks of three cases in which a Moslem may be punished by the death penalty: apostasy, bawdiness following a properly legal marriage, and any murder except family vendettas.⁷⁹

The commandment to execute the apostate is, however, derived not so much from the Koran as from Islamic tradition, for the traditions from Mohammed's lifetime are much more explicit: "Kill anyone who changes his religion,"⁸⁰ and "He who separates himself from you (or repudiates the faith) must die."⁸¹ Tradition relates that Mohammed himself illegally mutilated and killed apostates who had killed some of his followers. J. Schacht discusses the Islamic attempt to justify Mohammed's action,⁸² for which the Koran offers no clear revelation that would have commanded such a course of action. Other traditions exist as well, in which Mohammed at the end of his life, following the capture of his family's city, Mecca, executed two apostates who had killed a Moslem, as well as another who had done nothing illegal.⁸³

Judging by the sources, the death penalty seems to have been carried out on apostates after the prophet's death,⁸⁴ and modern Sunni and Shiite law generally agree that apostasy, blasphemy, ridicule of the Prophet or of the angels are to be punished by death. The accusation of apostasy must, however, be clearly proven, for example by the fact of blasphemy, ridicule of the Prophet, denial of the necessity of practicing the Five Pillars of Islam, or if the accused has participated in actions such as idolatry, magic, the abuse of the Koran, or desertion to Islamic enemies.

Persecution by the Family

Apostasy is basically an offence to be prosecuted by the state once charges have been brought. Sometimes the relatives prefer to wash away the "shame" of apostasy itself with an alternative "solution" such as casting the offender out of the family, driving him out of the country, or even killing him.

When a case of apostasy is brought before a judge, it usually must be confirmed by two male witnesses.⁸⁵ In order to determine the defendant's guilt, the judge may require him to repeat the Confession of Faith ("There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is His prophet"). Refusal to pronounce the confession can be considered proof of apostasy.

The apostate must be in full possession of his mental faculties if he is to be condemned, and cannot have given up Islam under

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coercion or intoxication. Children and the mentally retarded can, therefore, not be condemned of apostasy at all, and women only under particular circumstances, although the various judicial schools disagree on the liability of women.

The three Sunni schools, the Shâfites, the Malicites, and the Hanbalites, do not distinguish between men and women in this matter. The Malicites demand postponement of penalization if the woman is pregnant or nursing. The Hanafites allow the death penalty for male Moslems. In analogy to Surah 24:2 and 4:15, they and the Shiites insist on a procedure by which an apostate woman is imprisoned and beaten every three days, or even daily, until she recants⁸⁶ – at least in theory.

In practice, the courts seldom deal with cases of apostasy. When Moslems convert to Christianity, they seem to be punished unofficially by their families or by onlookers instead of fearing the conviction of a judge. Private revenge does seem to frequently follow a Moslem's declaration of his apostasy. Besides, judicial proceedings on apostasy provoke unwelcome attention in the Western press.

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On Swearing

By Thomas Schirrmacher

1. The Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:33-37) and James 5:12

Most theologians agree about the expectations Jesus intends in concrete examples in the Sermon on the Mount, but not on His attitude towards Old Testament law. Do His commandments confirm Old Testament law or change it? All concur that He condemns adultery in the heart, for example, but did the Old Testament do so, as well?

By providing a criterion for Jesus' attitude towards Old Testament law, the issue of swearing oaths demonstrates how His instructions are to be understood and applied today. Did He confirm its commandments or alter them? In modifying the Law's rules on this issue, He would have abolished the Old Testament's closely defined usage of oaths.

Few Christians who prohibit swearing practice accordingly. Otherwise, no believer could serve as a government official or representative or could give evidence in a court of law. Why should we allow ourselves to make an exception in this matter? Why should state affairs be different?

If we assume that Jesus is contrasting Old Testament Law with the Pharisees' and scribes' use of oaths, then we discover that the oaths themselves are not the problem, but only those oaths already forbidden in the Old Testament.⁸⁷ The Old Testament permitted only and solely oaths made in God's name. Moses had commanded, "You shall fear the Lord your God ... and shall take oaths in His name" (Dt. 6:13, 10:20). At the same time, this was a command to make oaths. This is even clearer in Psalm 76:12: "Make vows to the Lord your God, and pay them," or in Psalm 63:12, "Everyone who swears by Him shall glory." Is this no longer valid for New Testament believers?

A "vow"⁸⁸ is a voluntary oath (Dt. 23:23) which was not required, although God preferred it. Once made, however, an oath must be kept (Dt. 23:22-24; Ec. 5:4-5). There were obligatory oaths, as well. Vowing ("binding oneself") was a kind of "swearing" or "oathmaking" (synonymous expressions), for Psalm 132:2 and Numbers 30:3, 14 use the term as a parallelism for oaths and swear-

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ing (see Gn. 28:20-22; Num. 21:2; Jdg. 11:30 ff.; 1 Sa. 1:11, 14:24; Jon. 1:16, 2:9, 2:20; Acts 18:18, 21:23, 23:12ff.).

In Jesus' day, however, people swore by everything imaginable and qualified the validity and earnestness of the vow by the thing sworn by. Jürgen Kuberski sums up the errors in Jewish-Pharisaical practice as following:

1. The Pharisees differentiated between oaths which had to be kept and those which did not, a distinction unknown in the Old Testament.
2. They avoided using God's name, although the Old Testament required it.
3. They employed substitutes, which, according to Jesus, made no difference: an oath must be kept, whether God's name is mentioned explicitly or not.⁸⁹

When the oath has to do with persons or things other than God, Matthew 5:34-35 should be translated, "You should not swear by Heaven at all ... or by the earth" James 5:12 would then mean, "Do not swear by heaven nor by earth"⁹⁰ The complete text of Matthew 5:34-37 would be, "I tell you, however, you should not swear by heaven at all, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King; nor should you swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Your words should be Yes, yes! or No, no! Anything else is from the Evil One." James 5:12 reads, "Above all, brothers, do not swear either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath (or with an oath by anything else). Let your yes be yes and your no be no, so that you not come under judgement."

The parallel in Matthew 23:16-22 expresses this idea more clearly: "Alas, you blind leaders, who say: if someone swears by the temple, it is not binding, but if he swears by the gold in the temple, it is. Fools and blind men! What is greater, the gold or the temple which makes the gold holy? And, if someone swears by the altar, it is not binding, but if he swears by the offering which lies on the altar, it is. Blind men! What is greater, the offering or the altar, which makes the offering holy? If a person swears by the altar, he swears by it and by everything lying on it. Whoever swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him Who lives there. And when someone swears by Heaven, he swears by the throne of God and by Him Who sits upon it." Jesus does not object to oaths themselves, but criticizes those which were made on things other than God and whose obligatory force was classified according to the things sworn by.

An oath must always be made by something higher than oneself, God being the only exception. He swears by Himself, because “there is no one greater to swear to” (Heb. 6:13). Because every oath automatically recognizes the one sworn by as Lord and as superior authority, God forbids swearing by other gods and takes all oaths seriously, even those not made in His Name. He either considers the oath maker bound or, should the oath require evil, punishes the person especially for not only desiring, but also vowing to do evil.

German law permits the leaders of the State to decide for themselves whether they want to make their oath of office with or without a religious affirmation (Grundgesetz § 56 and 64). From a Christian point of view, however, an oath which refers to no higher authority is unthinkable. Helmut Thielicke has demonstrated that an atheist cannot make any oath at all, since an oath made without calling on God’s Name has no validity.⁹¹ Nevertheless God will judge politicians by their oaths.

Jesus pointed out that the Pharisee’s oaths must always reflect the truth; that their statements must always be “Yes, yes! No, no!” (Mt. 5:37), which James renders, “Let your Yes be yes, your No be no!” (Jas. 5:12). If God requires the truth for everyday speech, how much more must oaths be truthful!

As a matter of fact, the words “Yes, yes!” (Gr. *Nai, nai!*) and “No, no!” (Gr. *Ou, ou*) may themselves be oath formulas. The Greek term “Nai, nai” may be the translation of the Hebrew “*Amen*,” in Revelation 1:6 and 22:20,⁹² for example, where “*Nai*” (New King James: “*Even so*”) is parallel to “*Amen*.” In 2 Corinthians 1:17, “that with me there should be Yes, Yes and No, No” (NKJV). Paul uses the same phrase as in 2 Corinthians 1:20,⁹³ where the expression indicates the unequivocal fulfillment of God’s promises in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:17-22; compare the mention of the sealing in verse 22). In Matthew 5:18, Jesus used the expression “*Verily, verily*” or “*Amen, amen*” which are oath formulas. Assuming that “Yes, yes” and “No, no” were indeed oath formula, their usage here confirms our proposition. Jesus then forbids us to swear by things and substitutes a simple oath with “Yes, yes” and “No, no” without ulterior motives or restrictions.

Luke T. Johnson and Walter C. Kaiser have ascertained that James’ epistle is primarily an exposition on Leviticus 19:12-18 and

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may include a sermon on this text. A comparison of the two texts shows that James 5:12 refers to Leviticus 19:12, the Old Testament commandment against swearing falsely, but not against swearing at all. James does not alter the Old Testament Law, he applies it.

Parallels between Leviticus 19 and James	
Leviticus	James
19:12: "You shall not swear by My name falsely ..."	5:12: "... do not swear..."
19:13: "You shall not cheat your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning."	5:4: "Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."
19:15: "You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor."	2:1: "My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality." 2:9: "But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors."
19:16: "You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people."	4:11: "Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law."
19:17: "You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him."	5:19-20: "Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way, will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins."
19:18: "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people."	5:9: "Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned."
19:18: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."	2:8: "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well."

Jesus' use of the Old Testament to contradict the scribes can also be seen in the quotations in His evaluation of the things sworn by. In verse 34, He quotes Isaiah 66:1: "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool." Verse 35 recalls Psalm 48:2, which describes Mount Zion as the "City of the great King."

Note that few of the interpreters who believe that Jesus prohibits swearing altogether are willing to apply the restriction to all cases. Walter Künneth, for example, considers the Sermon on the Mount an "indication that a completely new pneumatic situation has begun for those who are determined to follow Him,"⁹⁴ but considers the political oath indispensable. Adolf Schlatter believes that Matthew 5:33-37 forbids swearing but allows a return to the Old Testament position under critical circumstances.⁹⁵ Arthur Volkman rejects New Testament oaths altogether, but tells government officials who are to be sworn in, "it would be a misunderstanding of Jesus' purpose to feel oneself bound to a new law."⁹⁶ Is Jesus forbidding swearing or not? If there is no restriction for government officials, why then for others? Why shouldn't the individual take an oath under certain circumstances?

Volkman has great difficulties in proving that the New Testament contains no oaths. On Jesus' response to the Council, he writes, "Jesus answers with a simple 'As you have said,' which confesses and confirms but does not swear."⁹⁷ The fact is, however, that Jesus is under oath and employs the usual formula in His reply. In reference to Paul, although he admits that, "Paul uses expressions similar to oaths," Volkman insists that the apostle is not actually swearing, but merely underscoring his statement for pastoral purposes.⁹⁸ Are there "non-actual" oaths? And what evidence have we for the idea that an oath made for pastoral purposes is no longer an oath?

Ashley Montagu, who has studied swearing in many cultures in the world, believes that the practice, which is common to Western society, reflects a strong Old Testament influence.⁹⁹ Christian cultures were responsible for bringing the Old Testament concept of the oath to the rest of the world.

In his discussion of the Sermon on the Mount, August Dächsel concludes that, "...the Law and the One Who fulfilled it (Mt. 5:33 ff.) forbid only perjury and thoughtless, vain oaths."¹⁰⁰ Ernst Luthardt comes to a similar conclusion, that the early Church mis-

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understood the Sermon on the Mount when it interpreted Christ's Words to intend an absolute, although restricted prohibition of oaths, even in the legal regulation of civil life.¹⁰¹

Even Martin Luther taught that Jesus had not forbidden swearing,¹⁰² and, prevailed against the Anabaptists, who rejected not only oath taking but any other religious activity undertaken for the state. In his comments on Deuteronomy 6:13 ("You shall take oaths in His name."), Luther writes:

*There are two things to be observed. First, that Christ prohibits swearing completely in Matthew 5:34; here God commands it. But we have said elsewhere that the use of oaths is twofold; one by which we swear lightly without cause; Christ forbids this usage entirely; the other, when we swear out of faith and love for the glory of God, the well-being of our neighbor or for confirmation of the truth.*¹⁰³

Luther never admits any possibility of any sort of contradiction between Jesus and the Old Testament, but refers to Matthew 23:16, 22 and explains in detail the extent to which an oath can serve God.¹⁰⁴

Not only Luther, but other Protestant theologians of the Reformation expressed similar ideas about oaths. Article XXIX of the Anglican Church's *Common Book of Prayer*, 1549, says:

*As we confess that vain and rash Swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ, and James his Apostle, so we judge that the Christian Religion doth not prohibit, but that a man may swear when the magistrate requireth in a cause of faith and charity, so it be done according to the Prophet's teaching in justice, judgment and truth.*¹⁰⁵

Article 22.1-7 of the *Westminster Confession*, 1647, concludes:

A lawful oath is a part of religious worship (Deut. 10:20), wherein, upon just occasion, the person swearing solemnly calleth God to witness what he asserteth or promiseth; and to judge him according to the truth or falsehood of what he sweareth (Exod. 20:7; Lev. 19:12; 2 Cor. 1:23; 2 Chron. 6:22, 23).

The name of God only is that by which men ought to swear and therein it is to be used with all holy fear and reverence (Deut. 6:13); therefore, to swear vainly or rashly by that glorious and

dreadful name, or to swear at all by any other thing, is sinful, and to be abhorred (Exod. 20:7; Jer. 5:7; Matt. 5:34, 37; James 5:12). Yet, as in matters of weight and moment, an oath is warranted by the Word of God, under the New Testament as well as under the Old (Heb. 6:16; 2 Cor. 1:23; Isa. 65:16); so a lawful oath, being imposed by lawful authority, in such matters, ought to be taken (1 Kings 8:31; Neh. 13:25; Ezra 10:5).

Whosoever taketh an oath, ought duly to consider the weightiness of so solemn an act, and therein to avouch nothing but what he fully persuaded is the truth (Exod. 20:7; Jer. 4:2). Neither may any man bind himself by oath to anything but what is good and just, and what he believeth so to be, and what he is able and resolved to perform (Gen. 24:2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9). Yet it is a sin to refuse an oath touching anything that is good and just, being imposed by lawful authority (Numb. 5:19, 21; Neh. 5:12; Exod. 22:7, 8, 9, 10, 11).

An oath is to be taken in the plain and common sense of the words, without equivocation, or mental reservation (Jer. 4:2; Ps. 24:4). It cannot oblige to sin; but in anything not sinful being taken, it binds to performance, although to a man's own hurt (1 Sam. 25:22, 32, 33, 34; Ps. 15:4); nor is it to be violated, although made to heretics or infidels (Ezek. 17:16, 18, 19; Josh. 9:18, 19; 2 Sam. 21:1).

A vow is of the like nature with a promissory oath, and ought to be made with the like religious care, and to be performed with the like faithfulness. (Isa. 19:21; Eccl. 5:4, 5, 6; Ps. 61:8; Ps. 66:13, 14)

It is not to be made to any creature, but to God alone (Ps. 76:11; Jer. 44:25, 26): and, that it may be accepted, it is to be made voluntarily, out of faith, and conscience of duty, in way of thankfulness for mercy received, or for the obtaining of what we want; whereby we more strictly bind ourselves to necessary duties, or to other things, so far and so long as they may fitly conduce thereunto (Deut. 23:21, 22, 23; Ps. 50:14; Gen. 28:20, 21, 22; 1 Sam. 1:11; Ps. 66:13, 14; Ps. 132:2-5).

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No man may vow to do anything forbidden in the Word of God, or what would hinder any duty therein commanded, or which is not in his own power, and for the performance whereof he hath no promise of ability from God (Acts 23:12, 14; Mark 6:26; Numb. 30:5, 8, 12, 13). In which respects Popish monastical vows of perpetual single life, professed poverty, and regular obedience, are so far from being degrees of higher perfection, that they are superstitious and sinful snares, in which no Christian may entangle himself (Matt. 19:11, 12; 1 Cor. 7:2, 9; Eph. 4:28; 1 Pet. 4:2; 1 Cor. 7:23).¹⁰⁶

The Heidelberger Catechism, after rejecting all false oaths (Questions 99-100), expressly refers to Matthew 5:34-36 and James 5:12 in Questions 101-102:

Question: May a pious man swear an oath in God's Name?

Answer: Yes, when the authorities require it of their subjects, or when otherwise necessary in order to maintain and foster the glory of God and the well-being of one's neighbor. For the swearing of such oaths is established in the Word of God, and is therefore rightly employed by the saints in the Old and the New Testament.

Question: May one swear by the saints or by other creatures?

Answer: No, for a lawful oath is an appeal to God, the only examiner of the heart, to testify to the truth and punish me, when I swear falsely; no creature merits such reverence.¹⁰⁷

2. God swears

If, since we are always to tell the truth, oaths are unnecessary, why does God make them so often in the Old Testament (Gn. 22:16; Mi. 7:20; Ex. 6:8; Ezk. 20:5; Ps. 95:11)? Or why does the angel in Genesis 12:7 swear "by Him who lives forever," an expression also used in Revelation 10:6?

George Giesen classifies the 215 Old Testament citations of the word "to swear" (Heb. *sb*) into four groups.¹⁰⁸ In 75 cases, the word designates secular oaths between human beings,¹⁰⁹ in 14 cases judicial-religious oaths in legal matters or vows,¹¹⁰ in 41 cases covenants made to God by individuals,¹¹¹ and in 82 cases covenants made by God.¹¹² Three citations belong to none of the above classes. Giesen calculates that God Himself made 38% of the Old Testament oaths. There are many other divine oaths designated by other terms. God observes His own rule by swearing only in

His own Name, as explained in Hebrews 6:13, “For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself”

To whom does God swear?

Texts which mention God “swearing” an oath:

God swears to Noah that He will let the earth endure: Isaiah 54:9.
 God swears to bless Abraham because of his willingness to sacrifice Isaac: Gen. 22:16.

God establishes the Covenant with Abraham: Gen. 26:3; Ps. 105:8-9; Lk. 1:73; Heb. 6:13.

God establishes the Covenant with Isaac: Ps. 105:9-11; 1 Ch. 16:16.

God establishes the Covenant with the patriarchs: Mi. 7:20; Je. 11:5: “...that I may establish the oath which I have sworn to your fathers ...”

God swears to give Israel the Promised Land: Ex. 6:8; 32:13; Ezk. 20:5-6.

God swears that the unbelieving Israelites will not enter the Promised Land: Dt. 1:34-35; Num. 32:10-11; Ezk. 20:15; Ps. 95:10-11; Heb. 3:11; 4:3: “I swore in my wrath....”

God swears that the house of Eli will not be forgiven: 1 Sa. 3:14.

God swears to David that his descendants will sit on the throne forever: Ps. 89:4-5, 36-39; 132:11-12; Acts 2:30.

God swears to judge Samaria: Am. 4:2.

God swears to judge Jerusalem: Am. 6:8: “The Lord GOD has sworn by Himself, The LORD God of hosts says: “I abhor the pride of Jacob, and hate his palaces; Therefore I will deliver up the city and all that is in it.”

God swears to judge Israel by scattering the peoples into the whole world: Ezk. 20:23.

God swears to gather Israel from out of the nations: Ezk. 36:7-8.

God “swears” a covenant with Jerusalem: Ezk. 16:8.

God swears to give His Son an eternal priesthood: Ps. 110:4; Heb. 7:21, 28: “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

God swears that all will swear by His name one day: Is. 45:23-24: “I have sworn by Myself; The word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return: That to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath. He shall say, “Surely in the LORD I have righteousness and strength.” To Him men shall come, and all shall be ashamed who are incensed against Him.” Rom. 14:11 cites Isaiah, adding the introduction, “As I live....”

Texts in which God raises His hand to take an oath¹¹³

God swears that Israel will inherit the land of Canaan: Ex. 6:8; Nu. 14:30-31; Ezk: 20:5-6 (3x); Ezk. 20:28; 47:14.

God swears to judge the heathen: Ezk. 36:7: “Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: ‘I have raised My hand in an oath that surely the nations that are around you shall bear their own shame.’”

God swears to judge His enemies. Dt. 32:40: “For I raise My hand to heaven, and say, ‘As I live forever.’”

God swears by Himself

Gn 22:16-17: “By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son – surely I will bless you...”

Heb. 6:13-14: “For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, ‘Surely blessing I will bless you and multiplying I will multiply you.’”

Je. 44:26: “Behold, I have sworn by My great name.”

Ex. 32:13: “Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self...”

Am. 6:8: “The Lord GOD has sworn by Himself...”

Am. 4:2: “The Lord GOD has sworn by His holiness...”

Dt. 32:40: “For I raise My hand to heaven, and say, ‘As I live forever...’”

1 Sa. 2:30 “But now the LORD says: ‘Far be it from Me...’”

Rom. 14:11: “As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me ...” (citation of Is. 45:23; see above).

“I have sworn by Myself” Is. 45:23; Je. 22:5; Je. 49:13; “but truly, as I live ...” Numbers 14:21, 28; Dt. 32:40; Is. 49:18; Je. 22:24; Je. 46:18; Ezk. 5:11; Ezk. 14:16, 18, 20; Ezk. 16:48; Ezk. 17:16, 19; Ezk. 18:3; Ezk. 20:3, 31, 33; Ezk. 33:11, 27; Ezk. 34:8; Ezk 35:1, 6; Zp. 2:9; Rom. 14:11: (See further examples in the Table “Names of God in oaths.”)

3. Jesus and Paul Swear

The fact that oaths are made for spiritual reasons corroborates the theory that neither Jesus (Mt. 5:33-37) nor James (Jas. 5:12) forbid swearing itself, but only swearing by anything or anyone but God Himself. Jesus swears frequently, for the expression, “Verily, verily I say unto you,” is an oath formula (see the table “Oath Formula” below). When the High Priest put Jesus under oath, He answered immediately (Mt. 26:64-65). Paul also made frequent oaths,

not only to the state, *but to other Christians*, as well (2 Cor. 1:23; Phil. 1:8; 1 Thes. 2:5, 10; Rom. 1:9; Acts 21:23ff.). Oaths will also be sworn during the Millennium, “And he who swears in the earth shall swear by the God of truth ...” (Is. 65:16; similarly Is. 19:18).

Jesus Swears

“*Verily, verily*”: Jn. 1:51, 3:3, 5, 11, 5:19, 24-25, 6:26, 32, 47, 53; 8:34, 51, 58, 10:1, 7, 12:24, 13:16, 20-21, 38; 14:12, 16:20, 23; 21:18

“*Verily*”: Mt. 5:18;26, 24:2;34; Mk. 13:30; Lk. 21:32.

Mt. 26:63-65: “*But Jesus kept silent.* (Jesus remained silent until He was put under oath.) And the high priest answered and said to Him, ‘I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘It is as you said.’” (Once He was under oath, He immediately answered. His “confirmation” of the accusation makes the evidence of witnesses unnecessary.)¹¹⁴ “What further need do we have of witnesses?”

Compare *Dn. 12:7*: Some theologians believe the Angel who swears to be the Angel of the Lord, is Christ before His Incarnation.

“To charge someone” is another term for “putting someone under oath.” An example can be found in *Cant. 2:7; 3:5; 5:8-9* and *8:4*: “I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem ... Do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases.” When a wife was suspected of adultery, the priest was to “put the woman under the oath of the curse” (*Dt. 5:21*), which means the same as if the woman had spoken the words herself.

Paul swears and charges others

2 Cor. 1:23: “Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth.”

Rom. 1:9; Phil. 1:8: “For God is my witness”¹¹⁵

1 Thes 2:5: “nor a cloak for covetousness – God is witness.” (The hyphen is often used, because the oath formula stands outside the sentence.)

1 Thes. 2:10: “You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe...”

1 Thes. 2:11-12: “just as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God.”

“Certainly not!” (actually “May it not happen!”): Rom. 3:4, 6, 31, 6:2, 15, 7:7, 13, 9:14, 11:1, 11; 1 Cor. 6:15; Gal. 2:17, 3:21, 6:14 (in this case with the addition “from me.” For the basis that this is an oath formula, see the following box).

Nazarite Vows

Acts 18:18: “He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow.” Paul had taken a Nazarite vow (Nu. 6:1-21), which was initiated by an oath.

Acts 21:23-24: Paul was arrested in Jerusalem because of the Nazarite vow, which he had taken with four other Jews, paying the fees for having their hair cut. The Jews assumed that he had done this for Gentiles (Acts 21:27-29). Acts 21:27: “Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him,”

4. Oath Formulas and Practices

In order to demonstrate that all texts mentioned above indeed involve oaths (see the summary in the tables below),¹¹⁶ we must now investigate Old Testament oath formula:

Oath Formulas¹¹⁷

“If” (Hebrew ‘*Im*’ or ‘*Im Lo*’) *Ezk.* 36:7; *Is.* 22:14 (both spoken by God); *Gn.* 14:23; *Nu.* 14:28; *Jb.* 27:4-5. (“If my lips will not speak wickedness, Nor my tongue utter deceit.” The sentence is not continued, but the next verse begins with the oath formula, “Far be it from me!”).

“Far be it from” “you,” “me,” “us,” etc.: *Gn.* 18:25; *Gn.* 44:7; *Jos.* 22:29; *Jos.* 24:16; 1 *Sa.* 2:30; 1 *Sa.* 12:23; 1 *Sa.* 20:9; 1 *Sa.* 22:15; 2 *Sa.* 23:17; *Jb.* 34:10 (about God); 1 *Ch.* 11:19; *Jb.* 27:5; 2 *Sa.* 20:20

“The LORD forbid that I should do this thing....” 1 *Sa.* 24:6; 1 *Ki.* 21:3; 1 *Sa.* 26:11.

“Far be it” and the formula “As the Lord Lives”: 1 *Sa.* 14:45;¹¹⁸ 1 *Sa.* 26:10-11.

“Certainly not!” (literally “may it not be!”) *Lk.* 20:16; *Rom.* 3:4, 6, 31, 6:2, 15, 7:7, 13, 9:14, 11:1, 11; 1 *Cor.* 6:15; *Gal.* 2:17, 3:21, 6:14 (here “from me”). Paul’s expression, “May it not be!” corresponds to the Old Testament expression “Far be it from me!” The Septuaginta translates “May it be far from me!” with “*me gonoito*” in *Gen.* 44:7, 17; *Jos.* 22:29; 24:16 and 1 *Ki.* 21:3 (LXX 20:3). Otherwise it uses “*medamos*,” “not at all,” etc. The formula “amen” is translated “*genoito, genoito*” (*Ps.* 72:19; LXX 71:19). The Old Testament expression “far be it” is derived from the word “to desecrate” and means, “May it be desecration for me before God, if”¹¹⁹

“*As the Lord lives.*”: Jdg. 8:19; Ru. 3:13; 1 Sa. 14:39, 45, 19:6; 20:3, 20:21, 25:26, 34, 26:10, 16, 28:10, 29:6; 2 Sa. 4:9, 12:5, 14:11, 15:21; 1 Ki. 1:29, 2:24, 17:1-12, 18:10-14, 22:14; 2 Ki. 2:2, 4, 6; 3:14; 4:30; 5:16, 20; 2 Ch. 18:13; Je. 4:2, 12:16, 16:14, 20, 23:7-8, 38:16, 44:26; Ho. 4,15.

“*As God lives.*”: 2 Sam. 2:27; Job 27:2.

“*As the Lord God lives.*”: Je. 44:26; similarly 1 Sam 1:26.

“*As the Lord of hosts lives*”: 1 Ki. 18:15.

These expressions are used 44 times.¹²⁰

The heathen version: “*As your god lives.*” Am. 8:14 (2x). Similarly in Gn. 42:15-16 “*By the life of Pharaoh*” (The Egyptian Pharaohs were considered divine).

See the references above to God’s oaths, “*As I live.*”

“*The LORD do so to me and more also, ...*”: Ru. 1:17

“*... so do God to me ...*”: 1 Sa. 3:17; 14:44; 2 Sa. 3:35; 1 Ki. 2:23; 2 Ki. 6:31; compare “*May God do so to Abner, and more also,*” in 2 Sa. 3:9; to Jonathan 1 Sa. 20:13; to David’s enemies 1 Sa. 25:22

The heathen version: “So let the gods do to me, and more also,” 1 Ki. 19:2; 20:10

“*Truly*” (“*Amen*” or “*lulam*”) in combination with other formula: 1 Sa. 20:3; 1 Sa. 25:34

“*Truly*” “*If*” (Hebrew “*Im*” or “*Im Lo*”) Ezk. 36:5; The formula used in Gn. 22:16 “By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD” is rendered with “Amen” in Heb. 6:14, which designates the statement following (vs. 14-15) an oath (vs. 16).

“Amen was the answer of the person being sworn in; he swears in saying ‘Amen’.”¹²¹

“*I have raised My hand in an oath,*”: Ezk. 36:7; “Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “I have raised My hand in an oath, that surely (“*Im Lo*”) the nations that are around you shall bear their own shame” (See further examples above).

The most common oath practice was to raise one’s hand toward Heaven (Gn. 14:22; Ex. 6:8 [in original]; Nu. 14:30; Dt. 32:40 [in original]; Ne. 9:15; Ezk. 20:5-6, 15, 28, 42; Ezk. 36:7; 47:14; Dn. 12:7; Rev. 10:5-6, see boxes above). Another possibility was to lay one’s hand on the loin or hip (Gn. 24:2-3, 9; 47:29).

Some texts include the reason for the oath. God swears “*in His wrath*” (Ps. 95:11. Cited in Heb. 3:11; 4:3. Compare Nu. 32:10; Dt. 1:34; 4:21). On the other hand, Ps. 89:49 speaks of the “*grace which you swore to David in your truth.*” In 1 Sa. 20:17 Jonathan has David vow, because of his love. Oaths, described with a variety of designations in the Bible, could only be taken in God’s Name.

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Besides the expressions listed above in the tables, “God swears by Himself” and “Oath Formulas,” oaths employed expressions which describe His activity or character more distinctly.

Examples of Designations for God in Oaths

(Besides the commonly used names, “God”, “Lord” etc.)

God Describes Himself

Is. 62:8: “The LORD has sworn by His right hand and by the arm of His strength.”

Je. 51:14: “The LORD of hosts has sworn by Himself ...” (Literally, “by His life”) (Compare *Am. 6:8*).

Am. 4:2: “The Lord GOD has sworn by His holiness”

Ps. 89:35: “Once I have sworn by My holiness”

Je. 44:26: “Behold, I have sworn by My great name”

Am. 8:7: “The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob” (God is Himself the pride of Jacob)

Human Designations of God’s Attributes

Gn. 31:53: “‘The God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, and the God of their father judge between us.’ And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac.”

Gn. 24:3: “and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth.”

Je. 38:16: “As the LORD lives, who made our very souls”

1 Ki. 1:30: “by the LORD God of Israel”

1 Ki. 17:1; 1 Ki. 18:15; 2 Ki. 3:14, 2 Ki. 5:16: “As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand ...” (Elijah)

Angelic Descriptions of God’s Attributes

Dn. 12:7; Rev. 10:6: Angels swear “by Him who lives forever and ever.”

In contrast to oaths in the Name of the Lord, the Bible definitely forbids taking oaths in the name of other gods, which implies submission to their lordship.

Prohibition to Swear by Other Gods

Prohibition

Jos. 23:7: “and lest you go among these nations, these who remain among you. You shall not make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause anyone to swear by them; you shall not serve them nor bow down to them.”

Disobedience of the Commandment

Je. 12:16: "And it shall be, if they will learn carefully the ways of My people, to swear by My name, 'As the LORD lives,' as they taught My people to swear by Baal,..."

Je. 5:7: "Your children have forsaken Me and sworn by those that are not gods."

1 Ki. 19:1-2: Jezebel on the judgement at Carmel, "So let the gods do to me, and more also" (Heathen variation of Israelite oath formula, see above)

Zeph. 1:5: "Those who worship and swear oaths by the LORD, but who also swear by Milcom ..."

Am. 8:14: "Those who swear by the sin of Samaria, who say, 'As your god lives, O Dan!' And, 'As the way of Beersheba lives!'" (The sin of Samaria is the false god worshipped by Israel.¹²²)

Ezk. 21:23: "And it will be to them like a false divination in the eyes of those who have sworn oaths with them." The Babylonians believe their oaths to be more effective than the prophesy of divine judgment, which they consider "a false divination."

5. The Meaning of "Oath"

What significance does an oath have? Since the vow is a typically Jewish-Christian convention, we must seek the answer in the Bible. In his study of oath-taking in the various cultures of the world, the anthropologist Ashley Montagu has discovered that swearing is not at all universal. Neither the Japanese, nor the American Indians, nor the Melanesians use oaths. And even where you find similar rites, the vows of many cultures are not absolutely binding and appeal to no deity. *If most of the oaths taken in the Bible are made by God or Jesus, then an oath's significance cannot lie in the distinction between truth and falsehood.* The statement, "An oath is only necessary when the speaker's truthfulness is in question,"¹²³ contradicts everything Scripture has to say about the question. God Himself swears oaths most of all, followed by the greatest men of faith in both Old and New Testaments. Must we therefore question the truthfulness of God's assertions? Where does Scripture advise us to use oaths only when the truth is unclear?

But what does an oath mean? Let us look at a few examples. Whereas the Old Testament Levitical priesthood was not based on an oath (Heb. 7:20-21), the eternal priesthood of Christ, according to the order of Melchizedek, was (Ps. 110:4). "And inasmuch as He

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was not made priest without an oath (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: The LORD has sworn and will not relent, “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek”), by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant” (Heb. 7:20-22). The Levitical priesthood could end because it was not instituted by oath; but Jesus’ priesthood cannot end, because it is sealed by an oath.

The same writer explains God’s oath as following: “For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. *Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath*, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us” (Heb. 6:16-18).

In Isaiah 45:23-24, God defines His oath as: “The word” that “shall not return.” Psalm 110:4 tells us, “The LORD has sworn and will not relent.” Psalm 132:11 says, “The LORD has sworn in truth to David; He will not turn from it,” and in Psalm 119:106, David states, “I have sworn and confirmed”

God may change His mind, even after He has made a pronouncement, as the Book of Jonah demonstrates. Once He has sworn, however, He will not alter His Word!

Prophetic announcements not bound with a divine oath could be annulled or changed. Jonah’s prophecy that Niniveh would be destroyed in forty days (Jonah 3:4) was annulled by the people’s repentance. In spite of his annoyance, Jonah had been perfectly aware that God acts in this manner, “Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm” (Jon. 4:2). Similarly God tells Eli, “I said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever. But now the LORD says: Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed” (1 Sa. 2:30). God’s promise was conditional, but at this point, He swears an oath (“Far be it from Me”) that Eli’s house must irrevocably come to an end.

God’s unfathomable grace is expressed in the fact that He seldom seals His announcements of judgment with an oath, but

announcements of grace all the more, not only in the Covenant with Noah, that such judgment would never visit the earth again (Gn. 8:20-9:17). The same principle applies to the history of the people of Israel. Isaiah 54:9-10 relates the two to each other, “For this is like the waters of Noah to Me; For as I have sworn that the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall My covenant of peace be removed,” says the LORD, who has mercy on you” (Is. 54:9-10).

1. In the first place, an oath is distinguished from a normal statement of truth in that it creates irrevocable facts and includes the requirement to precisely examine the past or the future.

An oath is not given merely in order to authenticate the truth, for then God would never need to swear. An oath, in contrast to a simple statement of truth, creates immutable truths and institutes irreversible responsibilities.

Let’s assume that some unforeseen accident prevents someone from fulfilling a mere promise to provide a life-essential medication. The failure to fulfill a simple promise is not the same as if the promise had been confirmed by oath. Before swearing an oath, one must carefully consider the possibility of mishap. At the scene of an accident, a witness may state that he saw a red car out of the corner of his eye; but if he swears to the statement in court, the driver of the red car could be convicted on that evidence.

An oath can thus only be annulled by confession of guilt and forgiveness, as Lv. 5:4-6 instructs us:

Or if a person swears, speaking thoughtlessly with his lips to do evil or to do good, whatever it is that a man may pronounce by an oath, and he is unaware of it – when he realizes it, then he shall be guilty in any of these matters. And it shall be, when he is guilty in any of these matters, that he shall confess that he has sinned in that thing; and he shall bring his trespass offering to the LORD for his sin which he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a kid of the goats as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin. (Lev. 5:4)

A covenant based on an oath could also be “broken” – if one party failed to keep the conditions of the agreement (See Jos. 2:20

on the conditions to the agreement with Rahab), or if the conditions of the oath did not occur (see Gen. 24:8, 41), the other party was released from his obligations.

God's oath to make Jesus' priesthood an eternal one demonstrates the eternal nature of the oath. In the same way, the vow between Jonathan and David calls on the Lord to be an eternal witness: "Go in peace, since we have both sworn in the name of the LORD, saying, "May the LORD be between you and me (as witness, author's note), and between your descendants and my descendants, forever" (compare 2 Sa. 21:7).

2. "An oath is the invocation of a curse upon one if he breaks his word (1 Sa. 19:6) or if he is not speaking the truth (Mk. 14:7-11)." This definition from a Bible dictionary corresponds to the results of Ashley Montagu's anthropological study: "Oaths are used as a precaution against a curse, which might explain the general tendency to confuse swearing with cursing."¹²⁴ The nature of the oath formula as a precaution against a curse is particularly evident in the expression, "The LORD do so to me and more also," or "May God do this with me and add that to me." (1 Sa. 3:17; 1 Sa. 14:44; 1 Sa. 25:22; 2 Sa. 3:35; 2 Sa. 19:13; 1 Ki. 2:23; 2 Ki. 6:31. See specific examples in the tables above. With "Lord" see Ru. 1:17. With the names of specific persons, see the table above.) The expression, "If not" is generally used with an incomplete sentence (Ezk. 36:7; Is. 22:14; Gn. 14:23; Nu. 14:28; Jb. 27:4). Altogether, there are twenty-six examples which call for judgment without defining a specific punishment for breaking the covenant.¹²⁵ The formula, "May it be far from me!" is used in a similar fashion (see tables above), particularly when "... if I ... " is added without ending the sentence (1 Sa. 14:45; Jb. 27:5; 2 Sa. 20:20).

In cases of suspected adultery, "then the priest shall put the woman under the oath of the curse, and he shall say to the woman – 'the LORD make you a curse and an oath among your people ...'" (Nu. 5:21), should she prove to be guilty. The curse was fulfilled in physical disability (Nu. 5:11-31).

1 Sa. 4:24-28 quotes Saul's oath four times with the word, "Cursed" In Ne. 10:29, Israel "... entered into a curse and an oath" Nehemiah later "... contended with them and cursed them ... and made them swear by God" (Ne. 13:25). In Jos. 9:20, the leader suggests, "We will let them live, *lest wrath be upon us*

because of the oath which we swore to them.” Dn. 9:11 confesses, “Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; *therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us*, because we have sinned against Him.” God’s enemies will “leave your name as a curse to My chosen; For the Lord GOD will slay you all” in opposition to those who “blesses himself in the God of truth ...” (in Is. 65:15-16).

The idea of cursing oneself in an oath can also be found in the New Testament. Paul calls “... God as witness against my soul ...” (2 Cor. 1:23). The Jews “bound themselves under an oath” to kill Paul (Acts 23:12) and in denying Jesus during His trial; Peter “began to curse and swear, *saying*, ‘I do not know the Man!’” (Mt. 26:74; Mk. 14:71). Of course, both of these last citations refer to oaths taken with sinful intentions, but they clearly illustrate the fact that an oath implied a curse upon oneself.

Dt. 19:16-19 illustrates the seriousness of a false or broken oath. A perjurer is to receive the same punishment which the defendant would have suffered as a result of the false evidence. The Bible also relates examples of people who cursed themselves rashly or under coercion. The Jews, for example, declare, “His blood be on us and on our children” (Mt. 27:25), and experience the fulfillment of the curse in the Jewish wars and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Other texts describe people cursing themselves through parables. When David, the highest judge in Israel, condemns his own crimes of adultery and murder, Nathan, the prophet, replies, “You are the man!” (2 Sa. 12:5-7). After narrating the parable of the traitorous vinedressers, Jesus asks the priests and the Pharisees what they would have done with the wicked stewards. Not until they have suggested the death penalty do they realize that they have condemned themselves (Mt. 21:33-45; Mk. 12:1-12; Lk. 20:9-19).

Self cursing played an important role in cases in which no witnesses could be found to testify to the events. If something a man had been keeping for another were stolen, the keeper had to swear to his own innocence (Ex. 22:9-11). When the dead body of an unknown victim was found close to a city, the elders had to testify under oath that they knew nothing about the matter (Dt. 21:1-9).

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Paul also calls God as witness to invisible facts, such as his prayers for the chance to visit the church in Rome (Rom. 1:9) or his attitude toward the church in Philippi (Phil. 1:8).

The ancient Germanic oath can be defined as following: “The oath was originally a conditional curse over oneself, made according to a ritualistic, sacral-magical form.” For this reason, Germanic society had no difficulties in accepting the Christian use of oaths.

3. An oath always ratifies a covenant, bringing the rights and obligations defined specifically in the oath or those already set by God.

No covenant is made without an oath (see the covenants in Jos. 9:15; 2 Ch. 15:12-15). Some texts use parallelisms to equate “covenant” with “oath” (Gn. 26:28; Dt. 29:11, 13; 2 Ki. 11:4; Ps. 105:9; Ezk. 16:59; Ezk. 17:13-19). Others equate swearing with the covenant (Dt. 4:31; 7:12; 8:18; Ps. 89:3; 105:9; Ezk. 16:8: “*Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you.*”).

We can see the relationship between covenant and oath where a representative swears a covenant for others. In Jos. 9:15-16, for example, the elders swear to a covenant which binds the people as a whole.

Marriage is also an oath and a vow and a ratification of a covenant (Pr. 2:16-17; Mal. 2:14; compare Ezk. 16:8; Je. 5:7). The difference between marriage and living together is the difference between simply announcing one’s intentions of staying with one’s partner and making a covenant based on an irrevocable oath before God and man. *Those who deny that the New Testament teaches swearing oaths must therefore also abolish marriage ceremonies and substitute a simple promise for the marriage vow.*

Only when we forget the vital significance of Biblical covenants sealed by oath (relationship with God, marriage, Israel, church, state, work contract), can we condemn swearing. I believe that Christians would do well to reclaim the oath, to remind politicians and government officials of the weight of the inauguration oath, which can only be made before God.

The oath made by officials in Nord-Rhein Westfalen, for example, runs, “I swear, that I will administer the office bestowed on me with the best of my ability and to the best of my knowledge, that I will obey and defend the law and the Constitution, conscientiously fulfill my duty and exercise justice towards all. So help me

God.”¹²⁶ The last statement is not required. Should the official prefer not to swear due to religious convictions, he can substitute the formula, “I promise ...” for “I swear ...”¹²⁷ which means the very same, according to Biblical principles! What counts in God’s eyes is not the formula, but the solemn commitment.

The Old Testament lays particular value on the inauguration based on God’s law (Ezr. 10:5; 2 Ch. 15:12-15; 1 Ki. 2:43; Dt. 29:10-15. See all references to the 10 Commandments.). This vow to keep the Law could be made by an individual, “I have sworn and confirmed that I will keep Your righteous judgments” (Ps. 119:106). A group could also ratify a covenant for a nation by taking such an oath, as in Ne. 10:28-29, “Now the rest of the people ... and all those who had separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, everyone who had knowledge and understanding – these joined with their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse and an oath to walk in God’s Law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and His ordinances and His statutes.”

The eighteenth century American revivalist and Calvinist theologian, Jonathan Edwards, considered the believer’s first confession of faith to be an oath according to Dt. 6:13 and Dt. 10:20.¹²⁸ *I believe that the actual oath is taken in baptism which ought to immediately follow the first confession of faith:* “There is also an antitype which now saves us – baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer¹²⁹ of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 3:21).

One Old Testament prophecy connects repentance with an oath: “If you will return, O Israel, ... And you shall swear, ‘The LORD lives,’ in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; The nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him they shall glory” (Je. 4:1-2). Ruth also emphasizes her conversion to the People of Israel (“Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God”) with the oath: “The LORD do so to me, and more also ...” (Ru. 1:16-17).

The swearing of oaths to God can thus be considered a mark of the People of God. Dt 6:13 and 10:20 use the swearing of oaths in God’s name as a parallel to “serving” and “fearing” Him. Is. 48:1 correlates “swearing by the Name” of the Lord with “confessing the

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Lord.”¹³⁰ In the same way, the worship of false gods can be defined as confessing their names, swearing by them, serving them or bowing down before them (Jos. 23:7). Swearing by other gods is considered idolatry and defection from the Lord (Je. 5:7; Zp. 1:5-6; Am. 8:14). The prophets warn all who serve other gods, not to “swear an oath, saying, ‘As the LORD lives.’”

Even if the Pharisees erred only by swearing by other things, it is not enough to simply swear in God’s Name. The oath must be sincere. Swearing falsely profanes the Lord’s Name (Lv. 19:12) as God’s Name must never be misused at all (Ex. 20:7; Dt. 5:11). This automatically means that all oaths must be taken in the Lord’s Name; false oaths are no alternative!

An oath should be made “with all one’s heart “ (2 Ch. 15:15), “in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness” (Jer. 4:2). It is a terrible thing to swear, “But not in truth or in righteousness” (Is. 48:1). Swearing “rashly” or “deceptively” is condemned repeatedly (Lv. 5:2-4; 19:12; Je. 5:2; Je. 7:9; Ze. 5:3-4; Mal. 3:5), for it profanes the Name of God. No one who swears falsely is permitted to enter the Temple (Ps. 24:3-4; Ps. 15:1, 4). Scripture continually condemns “perjurers” (Je. 7:9; Ze. 5:3-4; Mal. 3:5; 1 Tim. 1:10). Jürgen Kuberski writes:

Bearing false witness is strictly forbidden in Old Testament law: Ex. 20:16 (one of the Ten Commandments!); Lv. 19:11-12; Ps. 15:4; Je. 5:2; 7:9; Ho. 10:4; Ze. 8:17; see the perjury against Jesus in Mt. 26:59 ff.

*Mosaic law required that a perjurer (who bears false witness against another person) receive the same punishment as that innocent party would have received, had he been condemned as a result of the evidence: Dt. 19:16-19. Perjury could thus be very severely punished! (The people who gave false evidence in Jesus’ trial should therefore have been crucified!)*¹³¹

The Ninth Commandment, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor,” (Ex. 20:16) refers to giving false evidence under oath in a court of law.¹³² The verb used means “to answer” or “to testify in reply to a question.”¹³³ Ex. 23:1 expressly forbids perjury as well as slander: “You shall not circulate a false report. Do not put your hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.”

Calling Witnesses (Examples)

Dt. 4:26; 30:19; 31:28: “I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day ...”

Joshua 24:22: “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD for yourselves, to serve Him.”

2 Cor. 1:23: “Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth.”

Rom. 1:9: “For God is my witness ... that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.”

1 Thes. 2:10: “You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe.”

Further Examples: *Dt. 31:19;26; Jos. 22:27;34; Ru. 4:9-11; Jb. 16:19*

Keeping an oath is naturally essential (Nu. 30:3; 6:1-21; Lv. 27:2-25; Dt. 23:22; Jdg. 11:35; Ec. 5:3-4). Ps. 15:4 permits “He who swears to his own hurt and does not change,” to enter the Lord’s presence (see also 1 Samuel 25:22 and 32-34).

*The abuse of oaths does not nullify its usage.*¹³⁴ Whoever swears righteous oaths in the Name of the living God with his whole heart, can be sure of God’s approval, for it is “the righteous” and “the good” who “takes an oath” and “the wicked” and “the sinner” “who fears an oath” (Ec. 9:1-2). Je. 5:1-2 equates “executing judgment” and “seeking truth” with swearing sincerely¹³⁵ (see also Ze. 8:16-17¹³⁶). He who does not swear, cannot “swear loyalty to God” (Is. 65:16).

“Then they took an oath before the LORD with a loud voice, with shouting and trumpets and rams’ horns. And all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart and sought Him with all their soul; and He was found by them, and the LORD gave them rest all around” (2 Ch. 15:14-15).

6. Amen

“Amen” is actually an *oath of affirmation*, which confirms the statement preceding it (see 1 Ki. 1:36, for a good example) and is usually translated, “so be it.” A better translation would be “It stands firm and is valid,” (according to H. Schlier).

“Amen was the answer of the person over whom the oath was made. He confirmed the oath by saying ‘Amen’.” “Amen” as an

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oath formula has been proven already. It has been mentioned that the oath formula in Gen. 22:16 is given as “Amen” in Heb. 6:14. It is called an “oath” in Heb. 6:16. In the Old Testament, “Amen” is used to ratify divine curses (Nu. 5:22; Dt. 27:15-26; Je. 11:1-5; Neh. 5:13), and to confirm praise to God (1 Ch. 16:36; Ne. 8:6), particularly at the end of individual books of Psalms (Ps. 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48).

In the New Testament, Jesus uses “Amen” to introduce many of His discourses (“verily, verily” or “truly, truly I tell you”¹³⁷). In the same way, the church uses the term as a response to prayers (church on earth *1 Cor. 14:16*; church in Heaven *Rev. 5:14*). The apostles use it to conclude their books (Rom. 15:33; 16:27; Gal. 6:18; Rev. 22:20) and their doxologies (Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:27; Gal. 1:5; Eph 3:21; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16; 2 Tim. 4:18; Heb. 13:21; 1 Pet. 4:11; 5:11; Jude 25).

Jesus Himself is called God’s “Amen” (2 Cor. 1:20; Rev. 3:14; compare Isaiah 65:16) because He is absolutely true and faithful (trustworthy) and because His is the one “faithful witness” (parallel to “Amen” in Rev. 3:14, confirmed by “Amen” in Rev. 1:5-6). All of God’s promises are fulfilled in Him. It is thus a perfectly Biblical custom for the congregation to respond with “Amen” to the “Amen” at the conclusion of a prayer and for the church to respond to the reading of the consecration of the elements in Communion with “Yes, Amen,” as is the custom in some congregations. In doing so, the church confirms that it believes what has been said and claims the power of the sacrament for itself; a custom described by Justin Martyr (circa 100-165 AD). The “Amen” is particularly appropriate in Communion, a covenant sign, for Old Testament covenants were always sealed and renewed by oath. Jesus identifies Communion as a sacrament in the words of consecration, “This is the new covenant in my blood” (1 Cor. 11:23-26; Mt. 26:26-28; Mk. 14:22-24; Lk. 22:19-20). Baptism is the sign of the beginning of our covenant with God, and the Lord’s Supper is the sign of the continuing covenant.

7. Benediction

Because a benediction¹³⁸ also includes an oath, it is generally concluded and confirmed with an “Amen.”

Benediction Formula, Benedictions and Blessings in the Bible (examples)

Gn. 48-49; Dt. 33:1-7: Jacob's and Moses' last blessings on the tribes of Israel.

Numbers 6:23-27: "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel.' Say to them: 'The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.' So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them."

Ruth 2:4: "Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, 'The LORD be with you!' And they answered him, 'The LORD bless you!'"

Psalms 129:8: "The blessing of the LORD be upon you; We bless you in the name of the LORD!"

Hebrews 13:20-21: "Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

Philippians 4:7: "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Further examples: 1 Thes. 5:23-28; 2 Thes. 3:16-18 are frequently used as greetings at the beginning or the end of New Testament epistles.

Rev. Dr. Thomas Schirrmacher is Rector of Martin Bucer Seminary (Bonn, Germany); and Professor of Systematic Theology (Ethics) and World Missions. He is heavily involved with the Religious Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship in fighting the persecution of Christians. He is author and editor of 40 books on missions, social change and ethics. He has served together with Colonel Doner on the board of the German relief organization Giving Hands for years.

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Profile in Church History: Puritan Mistakes and Future Grace for Christian Movements

By John T. Stemberger, Esq.

Let's face it, for many folks the topic of history can seem pretty uninteresting. Studying a bunch of dead guys from the past, during times and cultures which we can't relate to, doesn't light many people's fire. Yet as Christians, one way we can find a fresh perspective on history is to consider the history of God working in and through His people. Church history can actually be a fascinating look at the "cloud of witnesses" upon whose shoulders we stand as a church.

Many independent and Reformed movements are trying to impart their beliefs and the quality of life they enjoy to future generations of believers. Such a task can seem overwhelming. Many Christian leaders have failed to pass the baton beyond their own lifetime. Nonetheless, we can still benefit from those who have gone before us by studying them and learning from their mistakes. One such movement is the Puritans.

What Do Dinosaurs and Puritans Have in Common?

Like the dinosaurs, Puritans were the spiritual giants of their day. They roamed the newly discovered America and established what is still known today as New England. And like the great reptiles of old, one is struck with amazement that these stalwart people actually existed. While the Puritans have gotten a "bad rap" historically, these were actually a group of very mature believers who were very serious about establishing God's kingdom and living all of life to the glory of God. One can't help but be deeply moved while reading about their character, sound doctrine, and passion for God. One of the reasons they are respected by many Reformed Christians today is because of their relentless pursuit of personal piety combined with their commitment to Biblical theology. Theologian J. I. Packer has called the Puritans "great thinkers ... great worshipers ... great hoppers ... and great warriors

....”. Yet in spite of their greatness, the New England Puritans also eventually became “extinct” after about the third generation in the late 1600s.

Passing the Torch

It goes without saying that God is sovereign over history. Men and movements are ultimately made great or destroyed at His bidding. But why did such an effective people of God fail to pass the torch to their great grandchildren? What did they do – or fail to do – to impart the purpose of God to future generations? The answers to these questions are the focus of this article. It would serve those of us who have a long-term vision for the future to examine what is known as the “Puritan Declension” and humbly learn the lessons from this providential chapter in church history.

It appears there are two primary reasons for the disappearing of the New England Puritans: 1) straying from sound doctrine and 2) a lack of genuine conversions among the children and teenagers.

Influenced by Secular Philosophies and Worldly Practices

Leland Ryken, author of *Worldly Saints: The Puritans As They Really Were*, believes “New England Puritans fell into apostasy because they drifted from their doctrinal underpinnings. Deism was a strong and significant force in their day which contended with their theology.” Deism is a false theological view that holds that God is not sovereign or even active in the affairs of men. Deists strongly believe in the laws of nature and “nature’s god” but deny the present day supernatural power of God and the existence of miracles. This is clearly not the God of Scripture.

Additionally, many English settlers who relocated after the Puritans sharply disagreed with them and brought immoral lifestyles and irreverent practices with them. Among these practices included various forms of licentious sensuality, gambling, animal fights, and generally wild living. Thus, Puritan young people were suddenly exposed to and influenced by both antinomian ideas and pagan lifestyles. Historical commentator David Fritz indicates that around the year 1660, groups of second and third generation Puritans be-

gan to establish new townships in Western Massachusetts like Deerfield, North Hampton, and Middleburg. When establishing these new towns, the church meeting house was no longer located in the center of the town like the ones built by their forefathers. Fritz believes this repositioning of the church gathering place was significant because it reflected the decline of the centrality of God in the Puritan community.

Failure to Evangelize Puritan Children and Teens

The second reason for Puritan declension is closely related to the first. The second and third generations of children simply did not encounter God in the way their parents and grandparents did. As a result, these teenage and young adult Puritans did not present themselves for church membership. The concern was so great for the survival of the Puritan congregations, that elders and pastors held a special conference devoted to the problem. Further, a specific book entitled *Evangelistic Sermons to Children* was written to address the issue.

The first major evidence of Puritan decline was an implemented practice known as the “Half-Way Covenant.” This doctrinal practice allowed unconverted children to enjoy the benefits and covering of the local church through their believing parents without actually presenting themselves for church membership. Ryken believes the “Half-Way Covenant was a significant sign of the waning of the Puritans. It was an accommodation in response to what they were experiencing – namely a dropping off in church membership and concern for trying to keep the numbers up and trying to maintain an appearance.”

Rather than confronting the problems forthrightly and finding a way to properly convert and catechize their children, Puritan leaders apparently opted for the quickest – and easiest solution. Unfortunately, things only deteriorated.

According to Eerdman’s *Handbook of Christianity in America*:

Increasingly, sons and daughters of the first-generation settlers failed to experience the marks of conversion, as that first generation had defined the experience. Consequently, fewer and fewer of the second generation presented themselves for church membership.... (Even worse were the prospects for the third generation.)

Hard Lessons Learned

Critiquing the Puritans is surely a thing which must be done with considerable humility. Ultimately it is only by God's grace that we will avoid the same enticement and error. Yet my study of this topic yields the following counsel on how we can avoid the mistakes of the New England Puritans:

1. We must learn to live in the world but avoid being stained by its false teachings, deceptive philosophies, and immorality. In the beginning, the New England Puritans were well protected from outside influences living their entire lives in towns which they completely ran (from the government to the church). They were literally referred to as Separatists. However, when these Separatist Puritans were forced to interact with other non-Christian settlers, they seemed to lack the necessary defenses to avoid being influenced and overtaken by their sin. Similarly, in our diverse society we must be prepared to both confront and protect ourselves from the intellectual error and immorality of our post modern, humanistic, and godless culture. We cannot merely set ourselves apart from unbelievers and live isolated in the sheltered safety of Christian fellowship. We must learn to meaningfully engage the surrounding culture and liberate those caught in its snare. As for our children, the saying "build in and block out" serves us well in the earlier years in preparation for the time when they will be released into the world to spiritually stand or fall on their own.

2. We should have an unselfish, long-term perspective that is multi-generational. It appears that the Puritans did not conscientiously concern themselves with the issue of passing down their beliefs and way of life to future generations. Consequently, the lack of conversions among their children seemed to catch them off guard. Today, many Christian leaders and movements are so pre-occupied with promoting themselves – in the context of their "own ministries" – they can't get beyond thinking past their lifetime. Typical of this shortsightedness, Christian leaders are failing to disciple younger men and instill in them a common vision to take their place. This deficiency is often rooted in poor eschatology ignoring the clear possibility that Jesus just may not return until we are long gone (as the actor Robin Williams put it in the movie *Dead Poet's Society* – "fertilizing dandelions"). Shortsighted perspectives like this can also be rooted in the subtle pride of a leader overes-

timating his importance and simply assuming that the Second Coming “surely will happen during my lifetime.” We should not presume upon the timing of God. We must be committed to passing on the truths of God to multiple generations yet unborn. For some it may even entail being willing to sacrifice individual callings and personal opportunity for the larger purposes of God.

3. We should adjust our perspective on how we approach our young people after they have fallen into sin. Puritan parents were very strict. They could fairly be described as often legalistic and controlling of their children’s behavior, resulting in a fear of church discipline for even the “smallest of sins.” In retrospect, the fear of serious “external” punishment from the community of believers seemed to be much greater than the fear of God Himself and His discipline. God can and often does use sin to reveal the power of the Gospel and the reality of His forgiveness. We must adjust our perspective “God-ward” after our young people fall into sin. Seasons of rebellion and incidents of moral failure among our children should be seen with eyes of faith and, therefore, met with prayer and anticipation. God can and often does show Himself powerfully during these times. These types of failure are allowed ultimately for God’s glory and hopefully to show us the real depravity of our hearts and our need for a Savior. Where sin abounds, grace does even more abound. We must remember what the Puritans apparently forgot. We (and our children) are sinners, saved by grace, who are progressively being sanctified. It should not come as a surprise to us when our cute, but corrupt, children grow into the need for serious discipline and counsel. Expect it and be prepared for such a time as this.

4. We must remember that salvation ultimately comes from the Lord and not our efforts as parents. Thank God! Puritan parents felt directly responsible for ensuring the salvation of their children. While the Bible strongly teaches the parental responsibility to train and nurture a child in the admonition of the Lord, it does not require parents to guarantee the conversion of children. Salvation is of the Lord. We should recognize the limitations of parental responsibility and remember that justification is an exclusively supernatural event proceeding from the heart and mind of God. No works – including parenting – can add to God’s election to ensure salvation. We are called to be faithful not successful.

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Parents should be diligent and wise in their efforts and then rest in the sovereign purpose and plan of God.

5. We must get our theological house in order. Today, many subtle heresies have seeped into modern evangelicalism. In some cases, the error has infested the heart of the Gospel message itself. Among such ideas are the presuppositions of modern psychology, a functional deism in our view of Christian ministry, and the subjectivization of our theology and religious experiences. These heresies, if not rooted out, will undercut any effort we make to provide our children with a Biblically sound foundation.

Conclusion

We must pray for the wisdom of God in planning a strategy for the future of the churches and movements we are related to. We must petition the sovereign Lord of the Universe to visit future generations of children and grandchildren by opening their eyes to the Gospel and granting them gifts of faith and repentance. While we must be faithful to do our part, any success we achieve is only a reflection of the unmerited favor of God in the midst of our families and churches. We need future grace to avoid the mistakes of our Puritan forefathers. In the final analysis, we have no other viable starting place but to cry out to God for His grace and mercy.

John Stemberger is an internationally renowned attorney and political activist from Orlando, Florida.

Personal Notes and Letters

Editor's Note: Colonel's life and influence have touched a broad spectrum of people throughout the world for nearly four decades. We present here letters which have been written by a variety of people over a number of years.

These letters are divided into the following sections: Africa, Latin America, and the United States. The section containing letters from United States is subdivided under the following headings: Pastors, Politics, and Personal Friends.



Africa

One of the most striking examples of how Colonel's work has touched the lives of others far from American shores can be seen in the following letter from the King of the Zulus (the Zulu Nation is the largest tribe in South Africa).



**King Goodwill Zwelithini Ka Bhekuzulu
Kwakheth' Omthandayo
Royal Palace
Nongoma, Kwazulu, Africa**

I greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This note is written to express my sincere appreciation for the assistance you and your organization have rendered so generously to the poorest of the poor of my people in KwaZulu, through the Harvest Christian Fellowship and Family Focus. Please convey my heartfelt thanks to all who have been involved in sending the clothing and vegetable seeds for the benefit and upliftment of the poor in KwaZulu.

Besides the much needed clothes, the gift of the seeds was extremely timely and beneficial in helping the hungry to feed themselves.

Doug Andre informs me that you will be visiting South Africa and I would welcome a visit from you, if you have the time.

I wish you and all at ICRF ongoing success in your great work to countries in need throughout the world.

Yours sincerely,

**King Goodwill Zwelithini Ka Bhekuzulu
King of the Zulus**



**Further evidences of Colonel's work in
Africa can be seen in some of these letters.**

**Doug Andre
The Harvest Church
South Africa**

The Harvest Church and the Zulu Networking Ministry join in wishing Colonel Doner a blessed happy 50th birthday and in honoring him for the mighty work he has performed and continues to perform for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Colonel Doner, through ICRF, funded shipping and donated cargoes to our ministry, established in mid-1981, and this vital assistance and encouragement continues to this day. With this support as an essential base, and with the great assistance of other allied aid organizations in the USA, such as World Emergency Relief, Universal Aide Society, and others, the ministry expanded quickly, particularly when additional aid cargoes commenced to come out of Europe.

To date, about 131 container shipments have been received with aid cargo of all kinds and distributed by the Zulu Networking Ministry to the poorest of the poor in South Africa and, on occasion, to adjacent countries like Mozambique and Swaziland.

It is estimated that more than two million poor and suffering individuals have received material and spiritual comfort since the ministry was established. As a direct result of this, many new churches have been planted.

From our hearts and on behalf of those millions of grateful unfortunate souls, we thank God for Colonel Doner and the key role he has played in aiding the hungry and poverty stricken in our land.

Harvest Church

Doug Andre

Doug Andre is a retired South African business executive who has dedicated his life to helping the African people.

Jay Dangers
New Hope Uganda Ministries, Inc.
Kampala, Uganda

Dear Colonel,

Greetings and “Happy Birthday” from the bush of Uganda! I trust this birthday will be the beginning of a very fruitful season in your life and that God will continue to bless you and your family and the ministry which He has entrusted to you. May you be blessed as you have been a channel of blessing to many others in many countries.

Your life has been a blessing and a challenge to me. There are a number of things that I believe have set you and your ministry apart from others. Probably one of the most obvious is your unique combination of vision and practicality in living out your theological convictions. I know of very few people espousing a theological understanding of the Kingdom of God being a present reality and it being the role of the Church of Jesus Christ to bring about the visible reality of that truth, who have a vision for doing anything about it other than debating it or teaching it. The debates and the teaching have their place in influencing people. You have influenced my life by your generous donations to my personal library which have helped me formulate a Biblical understanding of the Kingdom of God. (I have Rushdoony’s *Institutes of Biblical Law* which you gave me, right beside me as I write.) But it has been a unique blessing to find a like-minded friend who puts his money where his mouth is.

Your financial support of New Hope Uganda is enabling us to further the Kingdom of God here in Uganda and, in particular, in the lives of fatherless and orphaned children. We have seen a number of children’s lives changed significantly and permanently. We are training these children (some are now young adults) to think generationally, to take their responsibility to raise up godly generations after them, and to reach out in tangible ways to those more needy than they.

Thank you for the role you have played in building the Kingdom of God in Uganda through the lives of these future Ugandan leaders! Be encouraged that there is fruit from your labor. God has used your life and will continue to use it.

In Christ,

Jay Dangers

Jay Dangers is an American who has committed his life to helping the people of Uganda through the founding of New Hope Uganda Ministries, Inc., an orphanage, school and vocational training center ministering to over 200 children.

Derek Hammond
Faith in Action
South Africa

It was during the summer of 1996 that I received a box of books from my brother, Peter Hammond. At that time I was in the printing and publishing business.

As I scratched through the box, one book caught my eye, it had a picture of gloved hands holding a spade, but it was the name of the author that caught my attention, “Colonel Doner.” Being a military-minded person, I thought, “Great, here’s something by an officer, a Colonel who gives things away, ‘donates.’” You might laugh, but that’s what happened.

I kept the book, *The Samaritan Strategy*, by my bed and would read a chapter or so each night with my respect for this “military officer” growing rapidly, even though I could not find the chapter on his career or how he might have won medals in combat. But by now I was hooked and God was speaking in a very loud voice through the Colonel’s writings.

During that period, I was one of those Christians who was assured of salvation and basically biding my time here on earth being a good person and generally “waiting for Heaven.” That was until I read that book and realized that as James 2:17 says, I need to put action to my faith. As a direct result of God speaking to me through *The Samaritan Strategy*, I realized that there can be no greater investment than in the Kingdom of Heaven. I dropped everything in June 1997 and went into full time service for God. I now run a ministry that reaches out to the persecuted, suffering, and poor in Africa. Another aspect of our ministry is to challenge Christians to a life of action and service for the Kingdom of God, the message of *The Samaritan Strategy* (and I don’t even get a percentage of the book sales!).

In November 1997, I was in Sudan on a mission trip and happened to be sharing “quarters” with a certain Monte (the mass insect killer) Wilson. During our interesting time together, the Colonel’s name came up and I discover that these two are good friends. Wonderful, now I can get the details on this war hero, “No, no, no,” says Monte, “Colonel is his first name.” “Too late,” I thought to myself, “the damage is done.”

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The following few days Monte related a number of stories involving Colonel that had us rolling around in laughter. The legend had started to grow.

As the months went by and I communicated from Africa with his office in the US, I got a feel of the man's heart and concern for the suffering and starving. Here was someone who put his money where his mouth was and actually did something more, he put actions to his talk and faith! As the months went by the "Colonel legend" grew and grew as I learned of his involvement in projects to assist the suffering around the world; he almost didn't seem real.

Then came the time to actually "meet the man" and what an evening we had. I soon discovered a big man with a big heart and a big laugh, a man who not only has a wonderful sense of humor and the ability to encourage and lift those around him, including complete strangers, but also has a compassion for the poor and suffering, and a genuine love for people. A man who has motivated, supported, and enabled many folk around the world to put actions to their faith.

The full story and the implications of all that Colonel has done for eternity, as well as the lives he has touched, could not be possibly told in one book; that will come one day in the Kingdom of Heaven.

This world desperately needs another 50 years of Colonel.
When I grow up, I want to be a Colonel!

Derek Hammond

Derek Hammond is President of Faith in Action, based in South Africa, and specializes in life-risking missions to bring God's truth and physical aide to persecuted Christians in the Sudan war zone.

David W. Maina
The Lifewater Limited
Nakuru, Kenya

Dear Colonel,

People in Kenya will live to remember you for all that you have done for them through your ministry of minding about others. When I was looking in our records, I found that our first project which you supported was done in 1989 and was a 10,000 gallon masonry tank for roof catchment at A. I. C. Rolchorai. It is now 10 years since we started working together. Since that time, to date you have continued to sponsor over 100 other projects in Kenya, namely:

–Health Program (immunization, Hygiene Seminars, HIV/Aids Seminars)

–Water Projects (Drilling water wells, construction of tanks for roof catchment, and funding of major projects)

–Mercy works, relief programs, feeding programs, and supporting Lifewater staff

Thousands of children and grown-ups have been helped by your extension of the “Samaritan Strategy” to them. We also requested emergency relief in support of war victims and you acted immediately. We are so grateful!

We have no good words to express our gratitude for your commitment in helping the poor and the needy people. BUT all that we can say is to wish you “GOD’S BLESSINGS” and especially this time you are celebrating your 50th Birthday on September 23, 1998.

May God open more doors for you to fulfil your call to support the poor and the needy throughout the world.

May you receive favor from God, your family, friends, and all people.

Yours in Christ,

David W. Maina
Managing Director

David Maina is Director of Lifewater Ltd. Kenya who, funded by ICRF, has provided community water systems for over 50 villages and immunizations for over 50,000 children.

Claude Möller
Gesinsfokus / Family Focus
Pretoria, South Africa

Dear Colonel,

Brother, thanks for your continuous support over the years. It must be close to 10 years since the first shipments arrived here. You kept your word; you stood with us even though you got almost no feedback from us. And even though you went through difficult times yourself. You know, Miriam once said that she told her father that you are one in a million. I think she was probably right. I listened to the tapes you sent Lizel Wolmarans earlier, and I just stood amazed at your diligence, vision, passion, commitment, endurance, and unequalled capacity to communicate.

Let me share a little (magnificent) story with you about the influence that you have on us and many millions of South Africans without your realizing it.

Many years ago, I went to visit you in the States after receiving substantial assistance from you in the form of all sorts of practical aid. I had \$250 in my pocket when I arrived in the USA. In spite of this, I felt urged to visit you; I did so and I never felt sorry.

Apart from your warmth, generosity, kindness, and hospitality, you also recommended that I visit Dirk-Jan Groot of Dorkas in Holland. You also opened the way for me to him. I then went to Holland (now with NO money in my pocket, but with a lot of faith in my heart) and, through a series of miraculous events, a stream of unforeseen incidents and meetings, landed up in Andijk where I was warmly received by Dirk-Jan and his people.

Years before that, however, I gave people in SA some of the seeds and clothes that ICRF had sent us. Those people knew people in Holland who were on Dorkas' Board. They told Dorkas about our assistance.

When I thus came to Andijk, the door of generosity and goodwill swung wide open for Family Focus. That led to Dorkas shipping many, many containers to Southern Africa; over the years, sending delegations here, opening an office here, and, in that way, brought hope to the lives of many people. That assistance is still continuing today.

All because God told you, Colonel, to do one little thing for an insignificant child of His here in South Africa. And you obeyed.

Colonel, influence is a higher power than power itself. In certain circles you might not be seen as a man of power, but let me assure you: You have in the past, and are still influencing the lives of many millions of people. Who cares about power if you can be used by God to serve His people?

There are no words powerful enough to describe what you've meant to us over the years, Colonel. It is not possible to thank you in any appropriate manner.

But here's a little comfort: Your beautiful family picture hangs in our home. We see you every day. We love you because your very existence reminds us of the unfailing goodness of the God of the universe. And the thought outweighs the millions of dollars worth of assistance you've given to us over the years.

I am announcing this in the strongest prophetic terms: Your eternal reward will be great. One has not lived fully until you've done something for someone who will never be able to repay you.

We'll never be able to repay you. You've discovered the meaning of life ... and your children's children will benefit from that.

Let the name of God be honored. With warmest greetings,

Your brother

Claude Möller

Claude Möller is President of Family Focus in South Africa, which ministers to the poor and forgotten in South African townships.

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Nathan Rasmussen
Mpore PEFA Children's Home
Rwanda, East Africa

Dear Colonel,

I would like to thank you on behalf of all the orphans and refugees here in East and Central Africa that you have ministered to with both help and hope. Although I have met your staff, I personally have never met you and neither have the thousands of desperate refugees and orphans that you have so generously assisted through Gebende Haende, International Church Relief Fund, and American/African Self-Help Foundation. Through your commitment to living out your faith by helping the poor, these organizations have been able to really make a difference in the lives of literally thousands of hurting people. Thank you for being there for them.

The people you have helped are not among the elite of this world. Many of them have very little of what this world values. They are the dirt poor, the people of this world whom the rest of the world has forgotten. They will never be able to repay you. They will probably never get the opportunity to meet you and say thank you. I would like, however, on this your 50th birthday, to take this opportunity to thank you on their behalf. Thank you for giving of yourself so that each one of them might see faith in action.

I count myself privileged to have had the opportunity to see the faces of so many light up as they have received your kindness in a hot meal, a bar of soap, or a bag of rice. Thank you for caring for each and every one of them. May the Lord continue to bless you as you continue to bless those who in this life seem to be the least blessed.

Thank you for caring!

Rev. Nathan Rasmussen

With funds from the Samaritan Group, Nathan Rasmussen formed an orphanage in Rwanda in addition to overseeing major ministry and relief work in eastern Africa.

P.K.F.V. van der Byl, GLM, ID
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Rhodesia

Dear Colonel,

I would like to express my gratitude for your many efforts on behalf of the free people of Rhodesia. Your crucial and timely work contributed substantially to the realization and success of Prime Minister Smith's recent visit to the United States.

You and your colleagues are to be congratulated for your most vital assistance in presenting the Rhodesian story to the American people.

Sincerely,

The Hon. P.K.F.V. van der Byl

P.K.F.V. van der Byl was the minister of foreign affairs of what is now known as the nation of Zimbabwe.

Latin America

Additionally, Colonel and his work have had a significant impact in Latin America. Here are a few letters of appreciation from that corner of the world.



Mario Aviles
Foundation for the Development of Nicaragua
Managua, Nicaragua

On the 50th anniversary of the birth of Colonel Doner
John 13:34-35

For the last nine years I have personally known a “Colonel” who should be called “General.” These years in which we have walked with a clear vision of what God wants from us during our stay on planet earth, I have seen him full of sadness, shedding tears for the children who are hungry in Africa, Nicaragua, and anywhere else on this planet.

Colonel, your faithfulness and love for God and your fellow man have been an example for my life and have allowed this little corner of the earth (Nicaragua) to go on, following the orders of our Supreme Commander, Jesus Christ. Your wife Miriam has comforted me during sad moments and I have learned, through your example, how to disciple the nations.

It is difficult to talk about a man of the magnitude of Colonel Doner in one sheet of paper. I want you to know that what unites us the most is our friendship.

Thank you, Colonel, for trusting in me and for being my friend.

Mario Aviles

Mario Aviles, a business leader and former Contra commander, is president of FUNAD, the Nicaraguan Foundation for Relief and Development.

Michael Bresnan
CHRF and FUNAD Board Member
San José, Costa Rica

Celebrating 50 Years on the Earth

I've known Colonel for about 15 years. On a personal level, my life has been enriched by our relationship. I believe that is one of the things that all his friends would say. This is a man whose life makes a difference. A serious scholar who loves a good joke. A man of wisdom who appreciates acts of love and kindness. A strategic thinker who worries about how to feed the widows and orphans. A leader of importance who makes time for his family.

My friend, Colonel Doner.

Michael Bresnan

Michael Bresnan, former pastor and Peace Corps trainer, is currently proprietor of Costa Rica's leading inn and reigning golf champion in Costa Rica. He serves on the boards of numerous ministries including Children's Hunger Relief Fund and FUNAD in Nicaragua.

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Josue Lopez

Latin American Christian Covenant Fellowship Inc.

Juarez, Mexico

Dear Brother and Friend Colonel Doner:

In this celebration of your 50 years, 30 of which have been in faithful ministry to the Lord, it is a joy to be able to write a few lines in which I share my *admiration and respect* for your life. I want to tell you that I thank the Lord for a *gifted man like you* whom He has placed on the earth to give us great *impulse*. Men like you are like *instruments of God* who make possible the realization of our dreams and desires for our ministerial work.

To know you is of great significance because in you I can see a man whom the Lord is using not only to talk about Him, but to make His work a reality in many places of the world, among them my dear Mexico.

Many of the things that we use to minister to others remind me of *your work and your love*. Our clinic is an example of this. This clinic was an answer to our hopes and you were an instrument of God for this great work.

When I remember your book *The Samaritan Strategy*, I can see that you not only write about this essential part of the Word of God, but you have made it a reality and materialized what the Lord gave us in this beautiful teaching.

I am so proud to be your brother and friend and to have the joy of fellowship with a brother of the quality that God has made you. Regardless of your humanity you have learned to honor the name of the Lord and glorify the King of Kings Who as an extra token has given you the privilege to understand the depths of the kingdom of God.

Receive the love from me, the least one of your friends and brothers, and from the community of the North of Mexico, Cd. Juarez, Chihuahua.

With love,

Josue Lopez and Family

Josue is founder of Hogar De Niños Emmanuel, a growing ministry complex consisting of a church, school, childrens' home, surgery unit, medical clinic, and micro-enterprises in Juarez, Mexico.

William Mikler
Emissary Ministries
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

One always looks for a point of entry to a letter like this. Mine is this: Colonel, I want to grow old with you. Your most profoundly developed virtue is *loyalty*, and it is what has glued me to you. I think it took me some years to figure this out about you, but when I did, it gave me the “Colonel Paradigm.” All of a sudden I understood your world, and the gifts and graces that flourish in it. I understood the ground upon which our friendship stood. And I understood why I wanted to grow old with you, and the reason why, I should add, that your lovely Miriam and promising young C. J. are so important to me. Loyalty is a rare thing in the world that has developed beyond the borders of post-modernism, and when you find it in a friend, you do not leave it. Ever. Over the years your loyalty has proven itself to me in listening, encouraging, giving, rebuking, and celebrating. It has proven itself in your willingness to lend your shoulders to the plow I was attempting to pull across my field. It has simply become the foundation of our friendship, and one of God’s most gracious gifts to me.

Thank you.

But if loyalty defines what you are to me, *mining* defines what you do for me. You are simply one of my two favorite contemporary miners. (Our friend Monte is the other.) You have a rare ability to analyze a mountain of historic or theological truth, find a valuable vein of ore in it, and then mine that ore for the rest of us. The ore is of value. I’m still spending things you mined years ago. I confess, however, that I wish you had more time to research, write, and speak. And on good days I remember to channel that desire in prayer. I nurture a prayerful hope that the publication of your most recent monograph is but the beginning of a regular publishing current. I need it. I am convinced that others do as well.

There is one more thing that needs saying, and it is this: Having prayed with you a few times – not enough, but that was my fault, not yours – during your brief time in Orlando gave me a view into your soul that simply couldn’t have been seen any other way. I’m sure your enemies would be shocked if they knew how tender is the soul that bows childlike before God in prayer. I would

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even go so far as to say that my favorite moments with you have been in prayer. I want your son to read this some day, and to know that at the core of his brilliant, witty, well-read, world-changing father is a man who fears God and depends on Him in all that he does. But then again, maybe C. J. already knows that. Even so, it bears repeating.

I need to close. Pardon my shortcomings in expressing myself. You deserve better from me. Thank you for your friendship, for your gifting, for your gifts, for your life. I love you.

In the Lord,

William Mikler
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Bill Mikler is an internationally renowned evangelist and Bible teacher and founder of Emissary Ministries.

United States

Colonel's work and recognition not only extend overseas, but also at home. He has worked with a variety of church leaders and pastors throughout the United States. Here are a few of their letters.



Pastors:

Ron Boehme
Youth with a Mission
USA

Dear Colonel,

I'll never forget the first time we met – when you arrived at our Capitol Hill offices at 133 C. Street in the early 80's – to ask forgiveness for your years of being an insensitive conservative people-basher! When humility is your first “taste” of a person, it lingers in your mouth a long time.

I'm grateful to have known you over the past two decades – and the great taste of our friendship is still very savory. Though our paths haven't crossed much in the past few years, I still remember fondly the many meetings, conferences, prayer times, and strategy sessions that we've enjoyed together. Based on their number, the world should have been changed by now! I've also enjoyed being on the advisory board of ICRF, if even from a distance.

I've always appreciated your intellect, your incredibly dry sense of humor, and especially your passion for Christ's cause which has grown deeper over the years. Your marriage to Miriam has only broadened your character and success in ministry. She was one of the BEST choices you ever made.

As you approach this funeral ... er ... 50th Birthday, know that out in the Pacific Northwest, trying to bring revival to America, is a long lost friend who loves and appreciates you dearly. Thanks for being the man of God that you are. You have my highest respect and deepest love.

Happy birthday. The best days lay ahead.

Your brother in Christ,
Ron Boehme

Ron Boehme is the former Washington Director of Youth with a Mission and is currently active as one of their leaders on the national level.

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**Halden Curtiss
Eastgate Academy
Montana, USA**

I have known Colonel Doner for a number of years, having first met him in Washington, D.C. I was immediately impressed by his energy and passion, and by the vision he carried within his soul. I met a world changer when I met Colonel! Whereas his enthusiasms and great devotions have remained, his compassion has deepened.

Colonel is a man driven by a heart that encountered Christ in the forever high places of Colorado when he was a youngster. The vision he caught there put faith in his heart and any looking back has only increased his desire to carry and serve the purpose of God throughout the earth – a bridge between our hand and the world.

All of us who know Colonel enjoy him. Not only do I enjoy this man, friend, and brother, but I have benefitted from his vision grounded in loving kindness. Happy 50th Colonel!

Halden Curtiss

Hal Curtiss is a pastor and Director of the Eastgate Academy which disciples young men into Christian manhood.

Bruce Dayman
Reformed Episcopal Church
Victoria, B.C.

Dear Colonel:

Happy Birthday! Fifty years is half a century. Though I have known you for less than 10 years, I must say I am impressed by the opportunities God has given you to minister. Such a wide range of ministry! You have been able to cross the lines between the civil, ecclesiastical, and family spheres without losing your sense of calling. I think this is remarkable. Others who have had the same privileges ended up in the ash heap of history or sold their soul for a mess of pottage. Not you. As we have corresponded and talked over the last few years I have always sensed the sincerity from which you live. That sincerity is rooted and grounded in the living God and in His Word. I am always encouraged when I receive any communications from you. In fact, I am humbled. I am grateful to have such a good friend. My prayer is that God will expand the opportunities for future ministry and that His blessing will continue on you, Miriam, and C.J.

Happy Birthday!

Bruce & Leslie Dayman & Family

Bruce Dayman (B.Th., MTS) is a writer, college lecturer, and pastor in the Reformed Episcopal Church.

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Thomas W. Hickey
Palm Harbor Grace Brethren Church
Palm Harbor, Florida

Dear Colonel,

Though my contact with you has been limited to one project, I must confess that you have left an indelible impression on me. And to be perfectly honest, I don't even know half of what you do. All I know is that the answer to the question "Where is Colonel today?" involves probability quotients. Here are some of the indelible impressions you have made on me in the times that you materialized before me out of the cloud of activity that makes up your life:

What kind of person sets up meetings in hotel lobbies ... where he is not even a guest? (Is he homeless, or hunted?) What kind of person can call names in the news his personal friends ... and yet takes the time to help a couple of "nobody" pastors plan a Christian Reconstruction conference? (Is he headstrong ... or hallucinating?) What kind of person has the moral courage to face the fact that many years of his life have been plowed into fruitless furrows of political insincerity ... but still exudes boundless joy and enthusiasm? (Is he hurt ... or high?) What kind of person knows enough to dissect the Republican Party and identify its case of terminal aimlessness ... and then has the fortitude to say so in writing? (Is he haughty ... or heedless?) What kind of person wears socks that elicit a salute?

What kind of man is this indeed? Here's what I have learned: He could never be homeless, for thousands would open their doors to receive him in thanks for his selfless efforts to aid those in need. And he is only hunted by those who value his advice and enjoy his company. He is not headstrong, but determined, and there is a difference. Nor is he hallucinating; it's better called "vision." No, he is not hurt, though he could nurse old wounds if he chose to. And the only high he needs is his understanding that God's kingdom triumphs over all in the end. He is not haughty, and a little time with him will convince you of that. Nor is he heedless of the personal loss he has incurred in saying what needed to be said.

To the man who gives the word "unique" a whole new meaning:

Colonel Doner, I salute you ... and your socks!

Thank you for your friendship and encouragement.

In Christian brotherhood,

Tom Hickey

Tom Hickey is a Reformed pastor in Tampa, Florida and was formerly a missionary to France.

Dr. Tim La Haye
Best-Selling Author
Washington, D.C.

Dear Colonel:

Congratulations are in order for achieving the BIG 5-0. The fact that Miriam has let you live this long indicates you must treat her the way I instructed you on your wedding day. Next to Jesus, she is the best thing that has ever happened to you – and that handsome son is icing on your cake.

How well I remember working with you in Washington during the 80's. You were a blessing to me in getting me acquainted in D. C. and in the development of ACTV, our American Coalition for Traditional Values.

You obviously made the right decision to spend your life helping the unfortunate. No doubt there will be many in heaven because you cared and reached out to them in Jesus' name.

Happy Birthday and may God continue to richly bless your ministry!

In His Love,

Tim La Haye

Dr. Tim LaHaye, former pastor and evangelical leader (who performed the wedding of Colonel and Miriam Doner on October 12, 1985), is a best selling author with over 30 books in print, including his record-breaking Left Behind series.

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Joseph McAuliffe
Writer and Pastor
Tampa, Florida

Dear Colonel,

I wish I could be with you on the celebration of your fiftieth birthday as I know it will be a deservedly festive affair. It's something of a challenge to say something serious about a person who has helped so many others not take themselves so seriously. You have that remarkably rare ability to get people to do what we hear so little of these days and that is make people smile and even laugh. You truly are one of the funniest people I have ever listened to and especially to look at.

I will always treasure the memories of your "Sandanista" paranoia in Managua and your stint as the "Skipper" on Lake Tahoe where we ran out of gas.

Aside from your inimitable humor beneath that jocular veneer, is a man of uncommon compassion and godly conviction. I am so grateful that in God's providence He has granted me the privilege of befriending one of this century's "great" ones. Colonel – You are the Best!!!

Your pal

Joseph McAuliffe

Joseph McAuliffe is a writer and pastor from Tampa, Florida.

Dennis Peacocke
Strategic Christian Services
Santa Rosa, California

Colonel Doner is an extraordinary man. Bright, talented, funny, and energetic, his contributions to various political, spiritual, and philanthropic works have been significant. As an author and motivator, he is a force to be reckoned with. To those of us who know him well, it is impossible to not acknowledge his wife, Miriam, and her tireless supportive efforts which have greatly added to Colonel's effectiveness.

We wish Colonel a continued long and fruitful life and ministry and count it a blessing to know him and to have been a part of some of the projects which he has done. Congratulations, Colonel and Miriam, on your many successes and Happy Birthday to the half-century man!

In Christ,

Dennis Peacocke

Dennis Peacocke is an author and international lecturer, as well as the President of Strategic Christian Services.

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Mark Rushdoony
Chalcedon Foundation
Vallecito, CA

Dear Colonel,

Our association over the past few years has been so enjoyable and constructive, I am very honored that it has grown into friendship. Your charismatic sense of humor draws people to your joy in life and makes them want to share it. Your ability to engage strangers in conversation and your openness to dialogue is a gift I envy. I think much of what you have accomplished is because you put people at ease – not in a practiced salesman-like manner – but in a natural way. Not that you wouldn't be a great salesman, I must add. You would be great at anything dealing with people. I think your family's talent in show business was passed on to you. I have often thought you would be a natural on the stage (and you already have the wardrobe for it).

But your talents are much more valuable than that and you have put them to good use. You moved from the profitable realm of politics to Christian service because you saw the need to put your faith into practice. Your charitableness of character is what led you to charity work.

The world is full of intelligent, capable men. Most do not have the skills to make their abilities available to others. Few have the personality, character, and temperament to make others feel at ease while working in concert. Some men think they are helping when they say, "Do it my way because I know I am right." You choose a more constructive tact that is without smugness, self-righteousness, or condescension. I am grateful for the help and friendship you and Miriam have shown me in the last few years. I hope someday I can return all your kindnesses.

Happy 50th birthday!

Mark R. Rushdoony

Mark Rushdoony is president of Chalcedon Foundation, a Christian worldview think tank.

Dr. Rousas John Rushdoony
Chalcedon Foundation
Vallecito, CA

Colonel V. Doner, Man of God

There are vast millions of Christians, many of them earnest believers, but none too many for whom Jesus Christ and the Triune God has priority. But for Colonel V. Doner, this is the case. His total commitment is without qualification. This was true during his political career. When he realized that politics wanted no more than a surface changing of the world, he abandoned it at once for missionary activity of a total sort. His wife, Miriam, is with him in this. After winning two elections for President Ronald Reagan (1980 and 1984), he left politics for a missions task that called for changing men, their vocations, their way of life, and their responsibilities.

Colonel's work is a pioneering, reformational task that is changing the face of missions and the futures of men.

It is easy to become fooled by Colonel's wit and humor and fail to discern the high level of dedication and concern that marks his own work. *In his own way, he is a miracle-working man, routinely doing things seemingly too ambitious.*

Here is a man of God. Make note of him. God certainly has.

Rousas J. Rushdoony is a noted theologian with over 70 books and Bible commentaries in print. He is the founder of the Chalcedon Foundation.

P. Andrew Sandlin
Chalcedon Foundation
Murphys, CA

Godly Uniqueness

Colonel Vaughn Doner is unique not only in his calling, but also in his character. His calling, first as a great proponent and defender of American liberties against communism in the 60s through the 80's, and, subsequently, as vocal protector of the poor, weak, and oppressed in *The Samaritan Strategy* and in the Samaritan Group, were never academic or abstract positions. They sprang from a unique – and, unfortunately, increasingly rare – character. This character is one which is forged with the unshakable knowledge of the reality of God and of His truth in the world. To use modern parlance, Colonel Doner is an authentic man. Of course, liars, rapists, and tyrants can also be “authentic”; authenticity is a virtue only when it blooms from the stem of Biblical godliness. Colonel Doner despises falsity – false premises, false answers, false solutions. He abhors the artificial. He is a flawed man, and he freely acknowledges his flaws; in fact, he is perhaps the least self-deceived man I have ever met. Perhaps this is one reason God has granted him such success in his work. He is not afraid to acknowledge his flaws and he does not tolerate disingenuousness in himself any more than he does in others.

A. W. Tozer, the great Christian and Missionary Alliance preacher and writer, once wrote an essay on honesty with God. His theme was that deception before the Triune God is absolutely unforgivable. Tozer's is the spirit in which Colonel Doner lives and the air which he breathes. Now in his fiftieth year, he has already accomplished much more than most men do in an entire lifetime. This is due, as in all other cases, to God's abundant grace. In a subordinate sense, however, it is due to his authentically Christian character.

Men like Doner come along in the Christian church once every few hundred years – courageous, astute, charitable, faithful, bigger than life. Lesser and less gifted and courageous men often never forgive men of Doner's character and caliber. The lesser men are not equal, and they despise the divinely created inequality. But others are grateful to God that He has gifted us with men unafraid to go against the tide, men who make their mark on an entire generation before they go on to their reward.

Colonel Doner is such a man, and I am privileged to call him my friend and compatriot.

P. Andrew Sandlin

P. Andrew Sandlin, is a renowned theologian, author, and conference speaker, Executive Director of Chalcedon Foundation and Editor of the Chalcedon Report.

Dan Tocchini
Mashayach Ministries
Michigan, USA

Colonel Care

I met Colonel Doner in 1991. My first impression of him was that he was brilliant, a visionary, a bit eccentric, and as authentically human as any person I had ever had the pleasure of meeting. After our first meeting I felt like we had grown up together in the same neighborhood and that we were just getting reacquainted.

I will never forget the day I discovered the depth of his character. The day he became “Colonel Care.” We were driving home from a trip to Los Angeles. I don’t remember why we were there, but I do remember the five-hour long drive home. We talked with great anticipation about dreams we both had regarding our respective ministries.

After about an hour there was a news flash on the radio. The reporter announced that a tragic event had taken place. I don’t even remember the specific event as much as I do Colonel’s response. He was silenced for the longest time. I really did not know why. The report struck me as unfortunate, but I didn’t allow it to bruise my mood because I was enjoying myself too much to allow myself to be awakened from the aesthetics of being with my friend.

So, when Colonel spoke from his own suffering and passionate outrage concerning the event, he shook me. I imagined he was just trying to make himself appear noble or holier than God Himself. I found out some days later that my judgment of Colonel was really a confession of my own spiritual state.

Days later I was in my office and Colonel came by to visit. He had a newspaper in his hand. He said, “Here, read this!” I read the headlines and said, “Yeah, it is a tragedy.” Even today I am ashamed that I can not remember the exact specifics of the tragedy with the clarity that I remember Colonel’s response of suffering and passionate outrage. Even writing about it arouses my sense of needing the Savior to deliver me from my own cynical indifference. I believe a young boy and girl were very ill with AIDS. Their father had somehow lost everything and could no longer provide for them. Colonel said: “I want to do something to help

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take care of this family.” I remember Colonel’s response because it was a sobering wake-up call about my indifference. I had two young children. This was too close to home to allow it into my world for too long.

I found myself asking God in prayer moments after Colonel exited my office; “What is caring?” I realized how ambivalent the word had become for me and for our culture in general! I realized that in America when somebody says, “I will take care of him,” they are most likely announcing an impending attack! Or the word is used more often than not as a negative retort: “Would you like coffee or tea?” “I don’t care.” “How about we go see a movie?” “I don’t care.” It can be a common place expression of indifference that communicates the isolationism that God was revealing through Colonel’s courage to let the suffering of these souls into his own life.

Only days after this encounter in my office, I received a letter from Colonel’s ministry about giving to this family. I promptly wrote a check. Then, some weeks later, Colonel came by to thank me for giving and to share his experience of meeting the family (the young mother had died of AIDS). As he shared what a powerful experience it was to share in a small part of their suffering, I was deeply convicted of my need to have a “care free” life rather than a careful one.

Colonel, you demonstrated that real care is not ambiguous. Real care interrupts indifference and is the opposite of apathy.

Thank you, Colonel, for fighting the fear to run away, for caring enough to be true to God, to His people and to yourself. Thank you for standing in the light and speaking your heart through your humanity. Thank you Colonel! My life will never be the same because of you. Thank God!

Respectfully,

Daniel L. Tocchini

Dan Tocchini is an author and Chairman of the Board of Mashayach Ministries which conducts discipleship training seminars internationally.

J. R. Young
Santa Rosa Christian Church
Santa Rosa, CA

Colonel Doner has been a true friend. Several years ago, I was going through a particular trial with the church that I pastor. The situation involved several conflicts and many accusations; my character and integrity were under attack. I knew in my heart that I had been obedient to the Holy Spirit. My wife and my children supported me and the elders of the church supported and stood with me against this attack, as did the vast majority of the congregation. Nevertheless, I still was shaken by the constant warfare and the bitterness of those attacking me.

It was during that time that Colonel called and suggested that we meet for dinner. That evening we met at his “other” office (a.k.a. the Flamingo Hotel). Over a glass of wine and a good meal, Colonel proceeded to encourage me and tell me that I wouldn’t understand the nature of this attack until after it was over. Well, his “word” set me free and as time has passed, I can see what he meant, but at the time I could not and I needed to hear what Colonel said to me.

There is an old saying, “A friend in need is a friend indeed.” This was a time that I needed a friend and Colonel was there for me with a word of wisdom and encouragement that really got me through the crisis. I deeply appreciate Colonel, his family, and the ministry of ICRF and I am proud and thankful to call Colonel Doner my friend.

Sincerely,

J. R. Young

J. R. Young is the Senior Pastor of Santa Rosa Christian Church.

Politics:

Of course, as one has already read in this book, Colonel's early life was largely in the political realm – and he has had impact there, as well.

**Gwendy “GW” Hays
Wife, Mother & Community Activist
Duncanville, Texas**

To Colonel Doner: A Man Who Stands Strong

I recall the first time I heard the name Colonel Doner. In my mind's eye I envisioned a short little man with a white beard, dressed in a military uniform. By no means did he fit that description at all. Beard yes, but in no way short, not in height nor in stature. Of course, we all know he wasn't literally in the military, but if and when you got to know him or worked for him, you felt like *you were* in the military. Not only is Colonel a man of great stature in character but he is also a man who stands firm in his commitment to service.

I, too, was one that served under the *command of Colonel* in Washington, D.C., as he attempted to save our country by having President Reagan re-elected for his second term. I must say that those were three of the most exciting years of my life. Not only did I learn the importance of speaking out for what I believe, but I also learned much greater things by watching the life of Colonel Doner.

Our time on Capitol Hill was nothing short of crazy. Non-stop meetings with Senators and Congressmen, recording radio broadcasts for hours on end, working from sunup to sundown on project after project, trying every tactic to get constituents to respond to the call.

Not only were we under fire from our opponents, but we as staff members also had to watch out for our leader: being “yelled at” by Colonel when he had had too much caffeine – nothing a little fruit or a nice lunch couldn't subdue. Speaking of eating, I believe to this day that Colonel can still recall what restaurants we ate at in Washington and even what entrees we ordered. What a memory!

One particular incident that occurred, I can't help but mention. I arrived at the Washington National Airport just in time to

pick Colonel up from an all night flight from the West Coast. As I pulled up in his 280ZX turbo sports car and realized that Colonel didn't recognize me, I knew then there was trouble. Colonel had to cross one lane of arrival traffic to get to the car, but unfortunately there was a guardrail between him and the car. Colonel proceeded to walk directly into the guardrail and flipped over the rail onto the ground. I rushed to help him to his feet, assisted him into the car, threw the luggage in the back and took off for his D. C. residence. On the drive home Colonel informed me that he had taken one too many sleeping aids during the long all-night flight on an empty stomach! After a quick shower and several cups of hot tea, he was fired up and ready to go. You see, he was scheduled to give a National Press Conference on the Capitol steps at noon. I was truly amazed at the awesome performance Colonel gave that day and much to my surprise, the next day on the front page of the *Washington Times* was an oversized color photo of our fearless leader, *Colonel Vaughn Doner*, holding forth.

As I have written this letter, I realized I did just what Colonel would do. I escaped from my busy life as wife and mother and found a quiet place to collect my thoughts. Colonels' example of retreating to the beautiful coast line of Carmel or sitting by the Potomac showed me that in the midst of it all, we can find a refuge to get close to God, enjoy His creation, and make the most of what life has to offer.

Colonel, I would not miss this opportunity to wish you a most **Blessed 50th Birthday**. I love you, my dear brother, and wish you 50 more years to serve our Lord and Savior. Thank you for being used of Him and standing strong.

Forever Your Friend,
Gwendy "GW" Hays

"GW" was Colonel's "right hand man" managing the "Christian Voice" network of political organizations from their National Headquarters in Washington, D.C. She is currently busy as a wife, mother of two, and community activist.

Ingrid Lundberg
Lundberg Farms
Sacramento, CA

My first “paid” job in politics was in the summer of 1985 working for Ray Allen and Colonel Doner at Christian Voice, in the beautiful 19th century, four-story townhouse in Alexandria, Virginia. I thought, “Wow, these Christians have class!” They also had a delicious sense of humor, and I laughed that summer as much as I ever have. Fifteen years later, Colonel is still making me laugh, all the while encouraging me toward what the Father has for me. Colonel and Miriam have been my beloved partners in friendship and prayer, and still have not given up that one day I *will* have a marriage and children. (I had *no* intention of topping Miriam’s bridal age of 34, but alas)

I am so glad that Colonel has returned to the unparalleled northern California coast for his second half century. I missed them terribly when they lived in Florida. I’m currently enjoying *The Late Great GOP and the Coming Realignment*. One of the things that I love about Colonel is his ability to offend everybody, when he chooses. He is piercingly and comically relevant, and I am very proud to call him my friend.

Ingrid Lundberg

Ingrid is a marketing executive and former GOP candidate for Lt. Governor in the State of California.

Lyn Nofziger
Former Press Secretary for President Ronald Reagan
Washington, D.C.

Dear Colonel:

I know this is late, but it occurred to me that I had never properly thanked you for the great job you did as Chairman of the Reagan-Bush Christian Liaison Committee in motivating and coordinating Christian activity for the President.

Your role in structuring the American Coalition for Traditional Values and its voter registration campaign was outstanding and certainly played a significant part in the President's overwhelming victory in November. The job you did in motivating fundamentalist Christians and in making them aware of their political obligations to the country, I'm sure, will have long range effects that go well beyond the 1984 election.

Colonel, as always, it was a pleasure and a privilege to work with you. I hope that you will continue your work for God and country in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

Lyn Nofziger

Lyn Nofziger served as Press Secretary, Political Director, and Presidential Campaign Manager for Ronald Reagan from 1966 to 1986. He is currently a political consultant and author.

A Festschrift for Colonel Doner

Mark D. Siljander
Former U.S. Congressman
Washington, D.C.

The Hon. Colonel Doner:

I have known Colonel for many years. In 1981, he visited me as a new “wet behind the ears” member of the U.S. Congress. He was rather “wet” himself back then, but demonstrated an uncanny enthusiasm and commitment to his Christian conservative causes. He was convincing that I should be a standard-bearer for pro-family issues.

His advice was accepted and it catapulted me into a social/political arena that consumed most of my three terms. While one always hopes to make a positive, “distinguished” impact on our society and world, it ultimately made me an “extinguished” career. However, the blessing of leaving the U.S. Congress (with the consent of my voters), was to come to know the Jesus of the Bible, rather than the one defined by our culture and, particularly, by the Christian political movement.

Colonel has the ability to motivate and instruct those willing to listen. Being a prolific writer, his readers become engulfed in a systematic clarity of how to function as a follower of Jesus, superb husband, outstanding father, and being a manly man. Since reading his work, my wrists have strengthened greatly and my wife loves me all the more!

Creative, compassionate, caring, entrepreneurial, and daring are but a few adjectives to describe the character of Colonel Doner. Anytime one needs advice, or direction on complicated personal, spiritual, or marketing issues, Colonel is the precise choice.

I wish him and his wonderful and patient wife, Miriam, and his handsome son, C. J., the fullness of life and blessing of Christ. Now for Colonel: since he is a ripe old 50 and can get discounts at most restaurants and hotels, we should hang around with him more!

Most Sincerely,

The Hon. Mark D. Siljander

The Honorable Mark Siljander served several terms in the Michigan Legislature and six years in the U.S. Congress before he was appointed by President Bush as a delegate to the United Nations with Ambassadorial rank. Currently he is a successful entrepreneur, “international ambassador for Christ,” and lobbyist, as well as a loving husband and father of four children.

Carolyn Sundseth
Popular Author & Conference Speaker
Sierra Vista, Arizona

Dear Colonel:

When I was on President Reagan's staff, I had no idea you were so young! You and your "Christian Voice" were so innovative, vocal, and strategic in your effective battles to educate the public (and the powers in Washington) on the danger of abortion to our nation, voter ignorance, and apathy. I remember particularly the part you played in the brainstorming sessions we had prior to the Senate vote on school prayer. No one will ever know how many Christians were activated to vote intelligently and run for office in your effort to turn our country to righteousness. The seeds you sowed are still bearing fruit.

It has been such a pleasure to see you mature in the faith and the use of your many talents. It is an honor to serve on your advisory board for ICRF and to wish you a blessed birthday!

Carolyn Sundseth

Carolyn served in the Reagan White House as liaison to the evangelical community during the time that Colonel was a leader of the Christian Right in Washington. She is a popular author and conference speaker.

Personal Friends:

Of course, even though the previous letters have been written by colleagues who are the friends of Colonel – or are they the friends of Colonel who are his colleagues? – there are letters which don't fit any other category, and we add them here – last, but certainly not least. The first letter is from Mrs. Wally McCall, who has served with Colonel for 6 years as Vice President of Children's Hunger Relief Fund, formerly International Church Relief Fund.

Wally McCall
Children's Hunger Relief Fund, Inc.
Santa Rosa, California

Happy 50th Birthday, Colonel!

I have thought long and hard of what to say to you on this special occasion. You know that I've been blessed with the gift of gab but feel less than adequate in expressing my thoughts on paper. But here it goes:

Six years ago, it was my desire to quit the workforce and stay at home. When I was asked to work for you and your multi-faceted organizations, it took some prodding for me to even consider going for an interview.

Do you remember that luncheon at Lisa Hemenway's when, after much discussion, and my fear that you would hire me, you seemed unfazed by my comment that I didn't even know how to turn on a computer? That was the beginning of an incredibly interesting, challenging, personally developing phase of my life – and all that after I turned 50!! Turning 50 is not all that bad! Is it?!

These have been six great years. I have learned so much from you. You have been my mentor. You have been patient with me in developing and encouraging me. Your high level of confidence and trust mean so much.

I have also learned the following things about you:

- That *The Samaritan Strategy* is more than a book. It is the measure of the man who wrote it, an extraordinary man who lives with vision, with passion, with energy.
- That you are a man “chosen by God to bless nations.” This is the phrase Mario Aviles of Nicaragua uses to describe you. He is so right!

- That you are a man full of compassion for the needy. Your compassion has touched many refugees, orphans, and destitute all over the world as well as that lonely man knocking at our office doors in need of a meal or a place to sleep.
- That you are a true and loyal friend. I can always count on you and Miriam to be there, to pray, and to understand when I, Bill, and my family have needs. I know we will be friends for life.
- That you are a man who loves God's creation more than anyone else I know on this earth, basks in His beauty, and captures it in photos. Traveling with you is quite an experience. Remember that dilapidated boat we saw in Washington, D.C.? To me it was a piece of junk – to you a piece of art.
- That you are a man who is highly respected in the political, spiritual, and philanthropic arena. How many men have had audiences with Presidents of countries and determined the outcome of an election in this great country of ours?
- That you are a man who never lets me travel without an extensive list of great places to stay, wonderful places to see, and exquisite places to eat. You've not been wrong!
- That you are a man who wears great ties and crazy socks – at the same time and can get away with it!!
- That you are the man who got me to turn on a computer and use it!

Colonel, I want to thank you for being the greatest boss I've ever had. Your confidence means so much! I respect and honor you and love you too! Bill and I count it a blessing to have you and Miriam in our lives and "thank God upon every remembrance of you" *Phil 1:3*.

Bill joins me in wishing you God's blessing on this milestone in your life. Happy 50th Birthday.

Love,

Wally McCall

Wally McCall is currently Secretary/Treasurer of Children's Hunger Relief Fund's Board and a member of its Executive Committee. She also serves on the board of America's leading coalition of Christian charities – Christian Service Charities – as well as on several other charity boards in the U. S. and Europe.

A Festschrift for Colonel Doner

**William A. Ashe, Director
Lifewater International
Irwindale, California**

Thank you for the opportunity to express my words of appreciation for the partnerships we have had with Colonel and ICRF. Please add my name to the list of others expressing the spiritual blessing of our relation. He has been a Matthew 25 Christian of the first order on many of our projects.

The visionary genius of Colonel Doner came to Lifewater in the 80's. His energy to help the rural poor with basic human needs led him to our door. Colonel's eyewitness of their plight gave him the desire to support an effort to help them learn how to provide clean, safe water. Contaminated water was everywhere he went.

Thanks to his insight, we were able to develop a Kenyan national team to address this issue. In the dozen years since, these dedicated people have been supported by ICRF and have made great strides in helping their people.

My hat's off to you, brother, may the Lord give you another Happy 50.

William A. Ashe

William Ashe is President of Lifewater International which dispatches volunteers around the world to drill water wells where clean water is not accessible.

Tom Ertl
Church Elder & Business Leader
Tallahassee, FL

To my good friend Colonel:

Colonel, when I think of you, your life of 50 years and of your many accomplishments, my very first thought is “you don’t deserve Miriam.” I am sorry, but it is the first thing that comes to my mind whenever I think of you. Maybe this is why you are such a strong Calvinist – because you daily experience “the unmerited grace of God.”

God has indeed given you His grace and strength to accomplish much in your life. A man who has vision and who is productive is always a man with many unseen inner qualities that allow him to see the fruits of his labors.

The one thing I most admire about you is the desire to use your life to make a difference in the world for the kingdom of God. I do appreciate your vision, perseverance, and courage to use your gifting to serve and further the kingdom of God.

As a personal friend, I have long enjoyed our fellowship, complete with lively discussions, arguments, and laughter. Having a friend with a likemindedness in the faith and in the pursuit of the kingdom of God is not easily found. Because of our mutual desire to serve Him I know that wherever God leads us as individuals we will always be connected in the future.

May God grant you 50 more years of His favor in your service to Him.

God Bless,

Tom Ertl

Tom Ertl is a church elder and a business leader in Tallahassee, Florida.

A Festschrift for Colonel Doner

Fawn Gilmore
Children's Hunger Relief Fund
Santa Rosa, California

Colonel Doner is a man of great compassion and energy. As Program Coordinator of Children's Hunger Relief Fund, I have had the privilege of working closely with him for two years now. When I first joined the team, I was surprised to find Colonel more concerned about fitting my job to me than making me fit my job. He has a peculiar knack for drawing out each person's gifts and opening opportunities for those gifts to be developed. He comes into the office like a hurricane and freely dispenses insults as well as compliments. At first, I was taken aback by his brash manner, but I immediately began to see the heart of this generous and humorous man.

With all that he's involved in, he continually surprises me with his ability to remember even the smallest detail from three months past about some obscure project in Africa. He genuinely cares about the people we serve. Colonel has built this charity around relationships of trust and faithfulness. He is as intolerant of dishonesty as he is generous to those who genuinely care about the poor and needy. I respect him for putting feet to his philosophy. Not only did he write a book about the need for Christians to be servants to the poor, he dedicated his life to doing just that, and empowering others to do the same. Inch by inch, child by child, he is changing the world.

Happy 50th birthday, Colonel. May your second 50 years be as productive and fruitful as the first.

Fawn Gilmore is Program Coordinator for Children's Hunger Relief Fund.

**Shirley Gremyachev
Universal Aide Society
Canada**

To me, Colonel Doner is a man of “heart” and that is a rare find in today’s world of politics and materialism! His emotions are not set in concrete but move toward the hurting and those seeking happiness. Colonel’s ability to be vulnerable made me feel that this is a friend who laughs with me ... and has no hidden agenda! May he ever remain unique and daring. May he be surrounded by those who love him, protect him, cherish him, and understand him! Our Colonel Doner!

Happy Birthday from

Shirley Gremyachev

Shirley Gremyachev is President of Universal Aide Society in Canada which annually provides over 100 million dollars worth of relief supplies to charities around the globe.

A Festschrift for Colonel Doner

Donna Guevara
Children's Hunger Relief Fund
Santa Rosa, CA

Dear Colonel,

I remember my very first conversation with you nine years ago. I was a brand new employee, and had been working with your organization for only a week. You were out of town, and I hadn't met you yet. One of the girls in the office told me you had an eccentric sense of humor and to keep that in mind when I met you. That afternoon the phone rang, and it was you. I hesitated as I answered the phone, and I proceeded to apologize to you as a new employee. You responded with "Well, I'm the boss, and you're fired!" I exploded into laughter and am still laughing today. From that day forward the game was on. We have been harassing each other ever since. You are the most demented, oh... I... I mean craziest and most fun person I have ever worked with. I must say with all that aside, you are also the most compassionate and energized person I have ever known.

Colonel, you are love and compassion, intensity and drive, focus and accomplishment. You are a visionary and realist. You are full of life and you evoke life from those who come close to you. If you don't, they're dead! Colonel, you have touched lives near and far, large and small, rich and poor. You are a vibrant force gifted by a mighty God. You are a sharp tool of the Most High God and you know where your power comes from.

Colonel, you have influenced many lives for the Lord, and there are so many more waiting for you. I will be amazed, I'm sure, at what you do with the next 50 years.

Donna Guevara

Donna is mother of two, a grandmother, writer, photographer, web developer and web development coordinator for Children's Hunger Relief Fund.

Camille Ortiz
Past Executive Secretary for Colonel
Burbank, California

Dear Wally,

I worked with Colonel as his secretary during the Reagan campaign era and the early days of ICRF. He is without a doubt the most unique boss I've ever encountered. I loved reading the other letters that were sent to you as it's been a long time since we have worked together and they stirred up many hysterical circumstances that we shared over the years. His writing was so illegible that he himself compared it to a chicken walking around making tracks on a piece of paper. I had the honor of being the only one able to decipher it, after turning it sideways and upside down. He came in the office every morning with his famous statement: "I've just fallen in love." This could be anyone that he met on the elevator riding up to our suite. His other famous statement was that "he was going to save the world." I know he said it in jest but after awhile he actually had me believing it! I always felt that he respected me and my opinion – way before "women's lib" even became an issue. He certainly opened my mind about religion and politics. My years with him were rewarding and I'm not giving up that some day "he will save the world."

Love and my very best wishes,

Camille Ortiz

Camille Ortiz was Colonel's executive secretary in the heyday of his "eligible bachelor" years in the mid-70s, when Colonel and a staff of 12 managed national charitable and political causes as well as a wide variety of business interests.

A Festschrift for Colonel Doner

Phil Sheldon
Survivors and Victims Empowered
Lancaster, PA

Colonel,

You are a special friend. You are a great man. While I mean all that and more, it is hard to give you compliments alone. You are someone it is so easy to joke and kid with. There are few people as intelligent as you are, who are also caring and compassionate. I believe 100 years from now, if our society falls, historians will find *The Samaritan Strategy* and realize that if Christians had listened and stayed a part of this society, we might have held it together for a few more years. Your leadership and vision made the Reagan Victories of 1980 possible. It is sad they did not accomplish more. I do think that everyone who had a part of that can feel we at least helped bring down “the (Berlin) Wall.”

I know you do not want blame for my mistakes but I still thank you for the mentoring. I thank you for the trust.

I am so happy for you that God has blessed you with your wife and son. They will continue to give you joy for the journey. Kathleen and Philip join me in wishing you Happy Birthday at this special time.

Your Friend,

Phil Sheldon

Phil Sheldon, President of Survivors and Victims Empowered, is publisher of the Children’s Protection Guide, America’s largest pro-family magazine, and a longtime political collaborator with Colonel.

Joseph Spiccia
African American Self-Help Foundation
Atlanta, GA

For Colonel Doner on his 50th Birthday:

After spending the past several years getting to know Colonel and seeing his life up close and personal, there are many thoughts that come to mind.

It is very uncommon for us to not feel uplifted and certainly a lot happier after having spent time with the man. Not only do I find myself enjoying the diversity of being with such a unique individual, even thinking about Colonel and the times we recently spent together will almost always bring a smile to my face, if not hearty laughter.

Very few people are gifted like Colonel to reach so many people. Whether he's speaking with the power people ... "the movers and shakers" of the world or dealing with common people of lowly position, there is always a side of Christ that he exemplifies. We have always been impressed with Colonel's ability to walk into a restaurant and command so much attention from the maître d'hôtel, waiters, chefs, bus boys, and even the people who sit within 20 feet of his table!

Colonel captivates all of us because his bottom line concern is for people. He is a person of deeds, a true warrior who heeds his own call to action by helping those less fortunate than himself. Without exception, Colonel lives up to what others only dream about accomplishing with their lives.

Nancy and I cherish our friendship with Colonel and Miriam. They are truly lifelong friends and an adventure to be around. Happy 50th birthday to our dear brother and friend.

Love,

Joseph and Nancy Spiccia

Joseph is a director of the African American Self-Help Foundation, Global Impact, Inc., as well as a church elder and a senior executive in the computer industry.

John T. Stemberger, Esq.
Attorney & Political Activist
Orlando, Florida

An open Letter to those who know and love Colonel V. Doner:

There is perhaps only once in a lifetime that an individual such as this presents himself in time and space to terrorize the forces of darkness in the earth. Colonel is just such a man. He is the Rush Limbaugh of modern evangelical theology, the P. J. O'Rourke of political commentary, the Francis Schaeffer of clear thinking, and the Mother Teresa of the Religious Right. In short, he is a postmodern prophet called to proclaim God's law to the western world.

Much could be said (jokingly) in passing about Colonel's jolly personality and cutting edge sense of humor. However, much more should be said (seriously) in church history about Colonel's contribution to the way we think about doing the work of reforming society to the glory of God. His book *The Samaritan Strategy* was a unique work for a unique time in our country which expresses both the heart of the Father and the mind of Christ concerning social action. For this, the movement that many of us represent should be forever grateful.

In my judgment, it would be a mistake to honor Colonel without also honoring his God-fearing and beautiful wife, Miriam. It goes without saying that Colonel definitely got the better end of this deal ... She represents to their union the very mercy of God to Colonel and is a woman uniquely designed with the character and patience to be his helpmate and to tolerate him all these years!

We see in part and know in part and much of life is a mystery which is only partially revealed. We constantly yearn for more and more in life and often God protects us and preserves us by not giving us the very things we desire the most. As we all take this opportunity to express our respect for the life of Colonel Doner, I pray that Colonel will symbolically take these crowns of honor and lay them at the feet of our Sovereign King and feel the pleasure of our God.

May God bless the days that he has numbered for Colonel Doner and his family making them productive, wise and powerful for the Kingdom of God.

With Warmest Regards, I Remain,

John T. Stemberger, Esquire

John Stemberger is an internationally renowned attorney and political activist from Orlando, Florida.

Endnotes

- 1 Kurt Hennig, “Beim Wort kommt es auch auf die Worte an,” *Das Fundament*, (DCTB) 1, 1991, pp. 9-24 (particularly pp. 22 and 19-24).
- 2 Compare the combination of prayer and watching in Neh. 4:9.
- 3 Adolf von Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (VMA-Verlag: Wiesbaden, O. J., reprint 1924), pp. 178-183, and the chapter, “Das Evangelium der Liebe und Hilfsleistung,” pp. 170-220.
- 4 *ibid.*, pp. 184-186.
- 5 *ibid.*, pp. 182-184.
- 6 Colonel V. Doner, “A Personal Word,” *Chalcedon Report*, No. 352, November, 1994, p. 6.
- 7 Colonel V. Doner, *The Samaritan Strategy: A New Agenda for Christian Activism* (Brentwood, Tennessee, 1988), p. 109.
- 8 *ibid.*, p. 37.
- 9 *ibid.*, p. 39.
- 10 The word “charity” is cognate to the Greek word *charis*, meaning “grace.”
- 11 The expression “poverty-stricken” is valuable in reminding us that many who are poor and needy are not so because of their own choices and irresponsibility. On the other hand, those who refuse to work – and thus should suffer the consequence of not eating (2 Thessalonians 3:10) – are not “stricken” with their poverty, but have brought it about in a most predictable fashion. They too need our help, but of a much different kind.
- 12 Cf. my lessons entitled “Imitating the Father’s Tender Mercies,” “The Paradox of Liberality,” “Widows and Property Rights,” “A Godly Attitude Toward Money,” “A Righteous View of Riches,” etc. available from Covenant Media Foundation, 4425 Jefferson Ave., Suite 108, Texarkana, AR 71854, (800) 533-3938.
- 13 A comparison of the beneficiaries of the tithe mentioned in Deuteronomy 14:28-29, the “third year” tithe, with those in other passages (Deuteronomy 14:27; 16:11, 14; 26:11-13) demonstrates that the uniqueness of the third year tithe was not that it supported the poor in a special way. It did aid the needy, but not distinctively or exclusively.
- 14 Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1977.
- 15 One way to evaluate an ethical opinion is to scrutinize the factual claims which are made in support of it or to look into the practical consequences which result from it. Dr. Sider’s polemic can be readily faulted for its inaccurate claims about the actual workings of economic systems – for instance, unscientific claims about Western affluence “causing” Third-world poverty, or misunderstandings about the alleged evil effects of the “profit” motive in the marketplace. From the standpoint of consequences, the proposals of Dr. Sider compare unfavorably to the research-backed conclusions about the kind of poverty programs he advocates: e.g., George Gilder, *Wealth and Poverty* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), or Charles Murray, *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950-1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).
- 16 It is characterized by vengeance (Romans 12:19; 13:3-4) not mercy (Deuteronomy 19:13, 21; 25:12; Hebrews 10:28).

A Festschrift for Colonel Doner

- ¹⁷ “The Lord is merciful and gracious . . . He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (Psalm 103:8, 10). “By grace you have been saved . . . it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- ¹⁸ Sider, chapter 9.
- ¹⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 209, 205, 95 (in each case emphasis is mine).
- ²⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 128-129.
- ²¹ *ibid.*, p. 115.
- ²² *ibid.*, p. 93.
- ²³ *ibid.*, p. 94.
- ²⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 205-206.
- ²⁵ See Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (2nd ed., Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, [1977] 1984), and *By This Standard* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985).
- ²⁶ For instance, *ibid.*, pp. 129, 209. Dr. Sider also mentions the Pauline collection and the remission of debts in the sabbath-year, but the former was a voluntary offering within the church (not relevant to state-enforced redistribution) and the latter (which never did carry a penal sanction within the state) should still be practiced in our interpersonal affairs, I believe.
- ²⁷ e.g., a Chinese family living at that time could not have learned from natural revelation that a particular plot of real estate belonged to their family by divine right.
- ²⁸ Sider, pp. 87-88, 89-90, 109, cf. 115, 129, 205, 209, 213.
- ²⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 115-116, 130.
- ³⁰ “Voting One’s Christian Conscience,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 15, 2 [1986], 143-144.
- ³¹ “An Evangelical Vision for Public Policy,” *Transformation* 2, 3 (July/September, 1985), 6.
- ³² As I show in chapter 6 of my book, *Homosexuality: A Biblical View* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978).
- ³³ e.g., *American Victims of Abortion* and *National ProLife Religious Councils*.
- ³⁴ Brazil boasts the 8th largest economy in the world and a growing middle class. Still, there are vast numbers of urban and rural poor.
- ³⁵ The Decade of Evangelism program has been implemented by a number of national churches within the world Anglican communion. As implemented in Uganda, the *Decade of Evangelism* involves evangelism, lay and clergy renewal, advanced leadership training and youth mobilization. Its present head is the Rev. Stephen Mungoma, Provincial Mission coordinator of the Province of the Church of Uganda.
- ³⁶ R.C.H. Lenski, *Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians* (Columbus: The Wartburg Press, 1946), p. 371.
- ³⁷ John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, Vol. XXI: *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, reprinted 1981), p. 205.
- ³⁸ BibleWorks™ for Windows™ Version 3.5, HERMENEUTIKA™ Computer Bible Research Software, P.O. Box 2200, Big Fork, MT 59911-2200, USA, Copyright ©, 1996 Michael S. Bushell. The BibleWorks search string follows within the curly brackets: {*.two three*}. A search was also done looking for the words “two” and “three” within any two verses {*.two three; 2*}. However, no additional significant data was gathered.

- ³⁹ For example, see *The Interpreter's Bible*, Volume VII, p. 474:, "... is it a claim ... that the present Christ ratifies the decisions and authority of the church? In our time vs. 20 is more regarded as a true and well-loved expression of a prime spiritual fact: that the real presence of Christ dwells with and empowers faithful corporate prayer and love." No basis is given for this view "in our time."
- ⁴⁰ *Calvin's Commentaries*, Volume 7, The Gospels (Associated Publishers and Authors Inc., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49315), p. 364. Calvin does apply the text to the general principle of God's presence in worship: "So then, as God frequently promises in other passages that he will graciously listen to the private requests of each individual, so here Christ makes a remarkable promise to public prayers, in order to invite us more earnestly to the practice of them."
- As I have already remarked, God is certainly present in the public worship of His people. Like Calvin, I do not take this to be the primary meaning of this text.
- ⁴¹ See Deuteronomy 18:19-20, Jeremiah 14:14, 1 Samuel 25:5, Matthew 18:5, 24:5, Mark 16:17, John 14:26, 16:26 respectively.
- ⁴² See also Colossians 3:17.
- ⁴³ John 14:10-15, 15:14-17, 16:23-27. See also 1 John 5:14.
- ⁴⁴ Volume VII, page 474.
- ⁴⁵ "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."
- ⁴⁶ *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, Edited by Charles F. Pfeiffer, Everett F. Harrison (Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 1972), p. 962, col. 1.
- ⁴⁷ *The New Bible Commentary*, Edited by Professor F. Davidson, A. M. Stibbs, and E. F. Kevan, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, MI, 1963), p. 795, col. 1.
- ⁴⁸ *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, General Editor: Professor R. V. G. Tasker, M.A., D.D., "The Gospel According to St. Matthew" (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1961), p. 177.
- ⁴⁹ *Life and Times ...*, Book IV, Chapter III.
- ⁵⁰ Many things can serve as "witnesses" in the Bible, among them can be seven lambs, heaps of stones, more than one miraculous sign, multiple human witnesses, heaven and earth, the words of a song, the words of the book of the law, and of course God Himself (Genesis 21:30, 31:44; Exodus 4:8; Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 4:26, 31:19, 31:26; Judges 11:10, respectively.). Of all these, what is most important to observe is that human witnesses must be multiple, one person is not a sufficient number of witnesses for judicial purposes or for purposes of establishing the credibility of a matter.
- ⁵¹ One must read the context to understand that God is referring to a remnant of those left over in the condemned nation, a "gleaning" who can bear witness to God's faithfulness and mercy.
- ⁵² The two or three cities seem to be "bearing witness" to the judgment of God through their admitting that they need the water of another city.
- ⁵³ The two or three speakers in tongues, or the two or three prophets, are all engaged in what had been questionable activity in the Corinthian church. The credibility of their activity is established by the two or three who together are speaking or prophesying. In other words, the number of speakers or prophets bear witness to their own credibility when they speak in tongues or prophesy.

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- ⁵⁴ Colonel Doner, *The Samaritan Strategy: A New Agenda for Christian Activism* (Brentwood, TN, 1988).
- ⁵⁵ See Jaroslav Pelikan, *Obedient Rebels* (New York and Evanston, 1964).
- ⁵⁶ Frederick Beiser, *The Sovereignty of Reason* (Princeton, 1996).
- ⁵⁷ Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (Louisville [1907], 1991), xxxvii.
- ⁵⁸ *idem.*, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Nashville [1917], 1981), 245, 47, 143, respectively.
- ⁵⁹ Andrew Sandlin, "The Truncated Vision of Modern Fundamentalism: A Review Essay," *Chalcedon Report*, January, 1997, 27-30.
- ⁶⁰ Clark Pinnock, "A Pilgrimage in Political Theology," in ed., Ronald Nash, *Liberation Theology* (Milford, MI, 1984), 105-119.
- ⁶¹ Rousas John Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law* (no. loc., 1973).
- ⁶² Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Phillipsburg, NJ, 1967 edition).
- ⁶³ Saudi Arabia is an exception, as it did not ratify the Declaration.
- ⁶⁴ "Umma" (Arabic) is the community, the congregation. It indicates the universal fellowship of all Moslems.
- ⁶⁵ The Cairo Declaration of Human Rights was published, for example in: *Gewissen und Freiheit*, Nr. 36 (1991), pp. 93-98. See also: Osman El Hajje, "Die islamischen Länder und die internationalen Menschenrechtsdokumente," *Gewissen und Freiheit*, 36 (1991), pp. 74-79, and the critical analysis by Martin Forstner, "Das Menschenrecht der Religionsfreiheit und des Religionwechsels als Problem der islamischen Staaten," *Kanon, Kirche und Staat im christlichen Osten Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für das Recht der Ostkirchen* (Wien, 1991), pp. 105-186. See also the publication of the "General Islamic Human Rights Declaration" of the Islamic Council for Europe in Paris, September 19, 1981, in *Cibedo*, (Documentation) Nr. 15/16 (Frankfurt, 1982).
- ⁶⁶ O. Spiess and E. Pritsch, "Klassisches Islamisches Recht. 1. Wesen des Islamischen Rechts," *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, E. J. Brill (Leiden, 1964), p. 220.
- ⁶⁷ Forstner, *Menschenrecht*, op. cit., p. 116.
- ⁶⁸ O. Spies and E. Pritsch, "Klassisches Islamisches Recht. 1. Wesen des Islamischen Rechts" in *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, Section 1. Vol. 3, Orientalisches Recht (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964) pp. 220-343 (here p. 220).
- ⁶⁹ Forstner. op. cit., pp. 116 and 138.
- ⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 114.
- ⁷¹ *ibid.*
- ⁷² *ibid.*, p. 109.
- ⁷³ J. Schacht, Katl, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. IV (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), p. 771.
- ⁷⁴ Adel E. Bardie, *Gottes-Recht und Menschenrecht. Grundlagenprobleme der islamischen Strafrechtslehre* (Baden-Baden, Germany: Nomos, 1983), p. 124.
- ⁷⁵ ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Djazīri, *kitābu l-fiqh ʿala l-madhābihi l-ʿarabi* (Cario 1934/1987/8). German: *Die Strafen für den Abfall vom Islam nach den viere Schulen des islamischen Rechtes*, Aus dem Arabischen übersetzt von Ishak Erson (Villach: Licht des Lebens, 1991), pp. 11-12.
- ⁷⁶ ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Djazīri, *kitāb*, Vol. 5, pp. 422-440. Cited in Erson, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
- ⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p. 12.
- ⁷⁸ Heribert Busse, Martin Honecker, *Gottes- und Weltverständnis im Islam und Christentum*. EZW Texte, Informationen Nr. 123 IX/1993 (Stuttgart, Germany: EZW, 1993), p. 18. The Ahmadiya Movement, which is persecuted as a sect in Pakistan, opposes the death penalty for apostasy.

- ⁷⁹ Mohammed abû Zahra, *al-ugûga*, p. 172. See also Ibrâhîm Ahmad-al-Waqfi, *hudûd.*, p. 269. Cited in the Koran translation of Khoury, Vol. 1, p. 94.
- ⁸⁰ According to the tradition of Buhâri. *sahîh*, Vol. IV, p. 126. Cited in the *Koran Arabisch-Deutsch*. Translation and commentary by Adel Theodor Khoury, 10 Vols., Vol. 2, Surah 2:75-2:212. (Gütersloh, Germany: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1991), p. 94.
- ⁸¹ Schacht, Katl, *op.cit.*, p. 771.
- ⁸² *ibid.*, p. 771.
- ⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 771.
- ⁸⁴ Koran translation of Khoury, Vol. 2, p. 95.
- ⁸⁵ Koran translation of Khoury, Vol. 2, p. 95-96.
- ⁸⁶ Koran translation of Khoury, Vol. 2, p. 96.
- ⁸⁷ Theodor Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus* (Leipzig, Germany: A. Deicher, 1922. repr. Wuppertal, Germany: R. Brockhaus, 1984), pp. 243-249. For excellent arguments on oaths in the Bible see: Walter C. Kaiser, *Towards Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1983), p. 65; John Bunyan Shearer, *Sermon on the Mount* (Richmond, Va.: 1906), pp. 70-74.
- ⁸⁸ See the laws on vows in Numbers 30:1-16; Gordon J. Wenham, *Numbers, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* (Leicester, England: IVP, 1981), pp. 205-209.
- ⁸⁹ Jürgen Kuberski, *Darfein Christ schwören? Bibel und Gemeinde*, 91 no. 2 (1991), p. 148. See also: Klaus Bockmühl, *Christliche Lebensführung: Eine Ethik der Zehn Gebote* (Gießen, Germany: TVG. Brunnen, 1993), p. 87. Bockmühl writes, "He addresses the complicated casuistry and the laxity in the misuse of oaths by Jews who (like children who cross their fingers behind their backs when they make promises) developed all sorts of evasions and exemptions into their oaths in order to break their binding power." Bockmühl fails to draw the logical consequences of this view, but insists that Jesus forbids all kinds of swearing. If the problem is false casuistry, why should all oaths be prohibited, not just false swearing? Besides, Bockmühl applies Jesus' prohibition to private oaths, made in reference to the future, not to public oaths about past affairs. I find however no scriptural distinction between these aspects.
- ⁹⁰ See Robert L. Dabney, *Systematic Theology* (1875, repr. Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner of Truth Trust, 1985), p. 365. See also pp. 364-365.
- ⁹¹ Helmut Thielicke, *Theologische Ethik*, Vol. II, Part 2: *Ethik des Politischen* (Tübingen, Germany: J. C. B. Mohr, 1958), pp. 462-464.
- ⁹² Walter Bauer, Kurt and Barbara Aland, *Griechisch-deutsche Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments* (Berlin, Germany: de Gruyter, 1968). Col. 1078 defines the "Yes" in Rev. 1:7 and 22:20 as a ritual pledge.
- ⁹³ *ibid.*, col. 1079.
- ⁹⁴ Walter Künneth, *Politik zwischen Gott und Dämon: Eine christliche Ethik des Politischen* (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1954), p. 367.
- ⁹⁵ Adolf Schlatter, *Die christliche Ethik* (Stuttgart, Germany: Verlag der Vereinsbuchhandlung Calwer, 1914), p. 120, note 1.
- ⁹⁶ Arthur Volkmann, "Was ist Schwören," *Die Wegweisung* 29 no. 10 (1989), pp. 407-410.
- ⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 408.
- ⁹⁸ *ibid.*

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- ⁹⁹ Ashley Montagu, *The Anatomy of Swearing* (New York: Macmillan, and London: Collier-Macmillan, 1967), p. 20. Montagu has found evidence of oaths and swearing in the whole world, including “primitive” cultures, but with great differences in its meaning. He discusses the history of oath taking in Great Britain in great detail.
- ¹⁰⁰ August Dächel, *Das Neue Testament mit in den Text eingeschalteter Auslegung, Die Bibel ...* Vol. 7 (Leipzig, Germany: Justus Naumann, 1881), p. 6.
- ¹⁰¹ Chr. Ernst Luthardt, *Kompendium der theologischen Ethik* (Leipzig, Germany: Dörffling & Franke, 1921), p. 287.
- ¹⁰² Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law* (Phillipsburg NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973), p. 287.
- ¹⁰³ Martin Luther, “Anmerkungen zum fünften Buch Moses” *Martin Luthers Sämtliche Schriften* Vol. 3 (ed. Joh Georg Walch, 1910. repr. Groß Oesingen, Germany: Verlag der Lutherischen Buchhandlung H. Harms, 1986), col. 1429.
- ¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, col. 1428-1430.
- ¹⁰⁵ “The Articles of Religion,” *The Common Book of Prayer* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, LTD 1956).
- ¹⁰⁶ *Westminster Confession of Faith* (M. S. Bushell electronic version, 1991).
- ¹⁰⁷ Reformierter Bund, ed. *Der Heidelberger Katechismus* (Neukirchen, Germany: Buchhandlung des Erziehungsbundes, 1934), pp. 56-57.
- ¹⁰⁸ Georg Giesen, *Die Wurzel sb’ “schwören”: Eine semasiologische Studie zum Eid im Alten Testament*, Bonner Beiträge 56 (Königstein, Germany: Peter Hanstein, 1981), p. 2.
- ¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p. 113.
- ¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 377.
- ¹¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 224.
- ¹¹² *ibid.*, p. 368.
- ¹¹³ Some translations eliminate the expression “to raise the hand.”
- ¹¹⁴ See Theodor Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus, op. cit.*, pp. 248-249, 705-706, 244 note 15.
- ¹¹⁵ This formula was influenced by Old Testament usage, not by rabbinical practice. Paul Billerbeck, *Die Briefe des Neuen Testaments und der Offenbarung Johannis erläutert aus Talmud und Midrasch: Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch 3* (ed. Hermann L. Strack, Paul Billerbeck. Munich: C. H. Beck, 1926), p. 27.
- ¹¹⁶ Otto Michel affirms “May it never be” to be an oath formula in *Der Brief an die Römer*, Vol. 4 *Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), p. 138, note 6. See also: John Murray. “The Epistle to the Romans,” Vol. 1, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmanns, 1968), p. 94, note 1; Friedrich Blass et. al, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), p. 311, note 2 (Compare Paul Billerbeck, *Die Briefe des Neuen Testaments, op. cit.*, p. 133.); with restrictions; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 Vols., Vol. 1, *The International Critical Commentary 11* (1979 repr. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), p. 181.
- ¹¹⁷ Verses which expressly mention oaths, and can be used as proof that they refer to oaths and oath formulas.
- ¹¹⁸ The people’s oath invalidates the oath made by Saul in 1 Sam. 14:24.
- ¹¹⁹ Georg Giesen, *Die Wurzel sb’ “schwören.” op. cit.*, p. 43.

- ¹²⁰ Jerzy Wozniak, “Bedeutung und Belege der Schwurformel *haj Jahwe*,” *Biblische Zeitschrift* 28 (1984), 2:245-249.
- ¹²¹ Adolf Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Matthäus* (Stuttgart, Germany: Calwer, 1948), p. 155.
- ¹²² *ibid.* In The Song of Solomon 2:7 and 3:5 vows are taken by the “gazelles or the does of the field.” According to Schlatter, *ibid.*, this may be a poetic allusion to God, since the words closely resemble divine Names.
- ¹²³ Arthur Volkmann, “Was ist Schwören?,” *op. cit.*, p. 409.
- ¹²⁴ Ashley Montagu, *The Anatomy of Swearing*, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
- ¹²⁵ *ibid.*
- ¹²⁶ Quoted from *Praxis der Verkündigung* 2-1984: 10, Oncken, Kassel, 1984.
- ¹²⁷ *ibid.*
- ¹²⁸ Peter Kawerau, *Amerika und die orientalischen Kirchen: Ursprung und Anfang der amerikanischen Mission unter den Nationalkirchen Westasiens*. Vol. 31 *Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1958), pp. 42-45.
- ¹²⁹ Or “covenant,” see Alexander Schweizer, *Hinabgefahren zur Hölle als Mythos ohne Biblische Begründung durch Auslegung der Stelle 1.Petr. 3:17-22 nachgewies* (Zürich, Switzerland: Friedrich Schultheß, 1868), p. 36. Schweizer translates the Greek term “eperotema” with “oath.”
- ¹³⁰ Although in this text their oaths and confession are not sincere and are, therefore, sinful.
- ¹³¹ Jürgen Kuberski, “Darf ein Christ schwören?,” *op. cit.*, p. 147.
- ¹³² Klaus Berger, *Die Gesetzesauslegung Jesu*. Part I: *Markus und Parallelen*. Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament (Neukirchen, Germany: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972), pp. 332-341.
- ¹³³ *ibid.*, p. 333.
- ¹³⁴ James Henley Thornwell, “Vows,” *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell*, Vol. 2., *Theological and Ethical* (1875/1974. repr. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1986), p. 596. Thornwell writes on vows, “The Church of Rome has perverted, and Protestants have neglected, them.” His treatment of the subject is an excellent study of the significance of vows for modern ecclesiastical practice.
- ¹³⁵ Georg Giesen, *Die Wurzel sb’ “schwören,” op.cit.*, p. 39, with the reasoning “that the prophet’s polemics oppose perjury.”
- ¹³⁶ *ibid.*
- ¹³⁷ In the Gospels, 25 double Amens and about 50 single ones.
- ¹³⁸ See Friso Melzer, *Unser Sprache im Lichte der Christus-Offenbarung* (Tübingen, Germany: J. C. Mohr, 1952), pp. 420-425.

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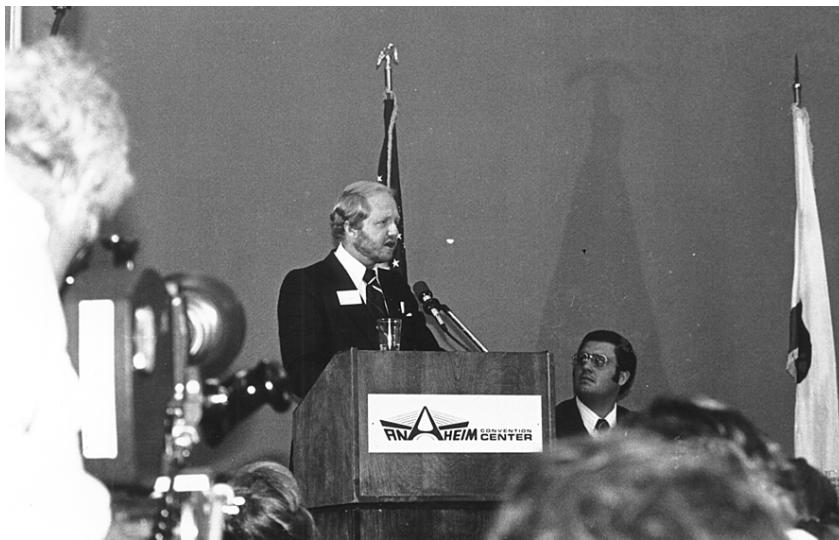
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