

A Plea for Authentic Christianity

(Why I left 'Evangelicalism')

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*And from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely.
They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, saying,
'Peace, peace!' when there is no peace.*

Jeremiah 6:13-14

Preliminary Thoughts

Enough is enough! For too long I have held my peace. For too long I have suffered fellow Christians expressing dismay at the Theonomic worldview I have come to espouse. It is time to challenge the very ground *they* stand upon and call *them* to repentance. They are the ones holding down God's truth in unrighteousness. They are the ones who have betrayed, perhaps unwittingly, the Lord Jesus Christ and have compromised their testimony among the covenant breakers alongside whom they seek to live 'peaceably'.

My goal in this booklet is to establish the case for authentic Christianity – a Christianity which will usurp that form of 'ecclesiolatry' which now so universally prevails – even within that faction of the visible Church which regards itself as evangelical, reformed and orthodox. Here I simply seek to lay bare how the general features of contemporary evangelicalism are a shallow imitation the true 'Gospel of the kingdom' and why, therefore, it's message is compromised to the core. God helping me, I will set forth in broad brush-strokes what authentic Biblical truth looks like. As with any counterfeit, familiarity with the real deal is crucial. Let's go!

Let me immediately reassure you, my reader, that the Scriptures of the OT and NT are exclusively the rock & foundation for everything I shall assert. I will seek to justify all points with Scripture references. If they seem scant, it will be because of my failure to marshal them efficiently from my failing memory. God knows how I lament



not acquainting myself more closely with His Truth in former years!

Moreover, what I seek to promote is nothing new or esoteric. Rather, it is the true orthodoxy which has been believed for centuries. Just as individual Christians are progressively sanctified over a lifetime, so too is God's Church - over centuries! We ought not to be surprised therefore by the prevalence of this historical struggle. Orthodoxy among God's people was always meant to be progressively 'honed and fine-tuned' as faithful expositors and teachers grapple honourably with the texts. (Eph 4:11-16).

Worldview Considerations

As already stated, the position I am advocating – Theonomy – represents no minor adjustment to the prevailing outlook held by the great majority of contemporary evangelicals. Rather, it is a much different paradigm – a holistic, comprehensive worldview whose foundational principles and presuppositions are grounded in Scripture. Worldliness has ever been the great enemy of the Christian Church. Worldly thinking, arising from autonomous, humanistic impulses, has characterised covenant-breaking scholarship since the dawn of time. As Christ’s disciples, we need to be self-consciously Biblical, bringing EVERY thought captive to Jesus Christ (2Cor 10:5). May it please God to supply His Spirit and, by His grace and mercy, break open hard hearts to the true Gospel – comprehensive, world-wide redemption in Christ!

Key Elements

There may be others beyond those listed below but summarily Christian Reconstruction (Theonomy) advocates the following:

- Reformed Soteriology
- Historic (young earth) ‘*fiat*’ Creation
- Comprehensive Covenant Theology
- Postmillennial Eschatology
- Theonomic Ethics
- Presuppositional Apologetics

Collectively, these components are mutually interdependent and harmonious features of a comprehensive Biblical worldview. Contemporary Christians who identify with this perspective are sometimes called ‘Theonomists’ since it is their goal to promote the Christian Reconstruction of the whole of human culture and civilisation in accordance with God’s own blue-print – the Law of God. Christian Reconstruction is a sort of Christian Education for grown-ups providing the glasses by which we view and appraise all of life! Let me attempt to un-pack each component. For a more rigorous exposition of any of them please refer to the real experts whose writings are easily discoverable on line. ‘Seek and ye shall find!’ (Mat 7:7)



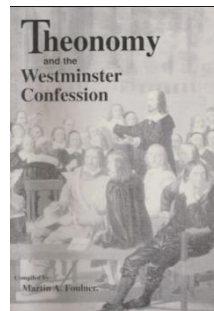
1. Reformed Soteriology

Theonomy identifies with the great traditions of the Protestant Reformation. It maintains that the generality of Reformed theologians (including Calvin) throughout the 16th and 17th centuries were essentially Theonomic in outlook. Their overarching concern during that epoch was the reformation of the Romish traditions which had long since supplanted Biblical authority with papal authority sullied with various doubtful human traditions. Luther (1483-1546) is perhaps the most famous name identified with this era. The publication of his Ninety-Five Theses (1517) triggered a spat with Papal Rome which sent shock waves throughout Europe. The Five Solas (see below) summarise the distinctive features of the ‘Protestantism’.

The Five Solas are:

1. **Sola Scriptura** (“Scripture alone”): The Bible alone is our highest authority.
2. **Sola Fide** (“faith alone”): We are saved through faith alone in Jesus Christ.
3. **Sola Gratia** (“grace alone”): We are saved by the grace of God alone.
4. **Solus Christus** (“Christ alone”): Jesus Christ alone is our Lord, Savior, and King.
5. **Soli Deo Gloria** (“to the glory of God alone”): We live for the glory of God alone.

John Calvin (1509-1564) is most closely identified with this tradition. Apart from extensive published expositions of the Scriptures, he furnished the 16th century Church with a glorious syllabus of theological orthodoxy in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ICR) which went on to influence generations of Christians throughout Christendom. A century later an august assembly of pious scholars summoned by parliament crafted what has come to be known as *The Westminster Confession* (WCF). Written from a Puritan viewpoint, it was originally drafted to reform the Church of England and to unify the various Christian sects in England/Scotland at that time. Theonomy sits very comfortably with both great historic standards – i.e. ICR & WCF. Martin Foulner¹ has convincingly demonstrated that Theonomy was alive and well back in the 17th century and was conscientiously adhered to by many if not most of the WCF authors!



The sovereignty of God dominates Reformational thought. God is the uncaused first cause behind everything. His decrees are from everlasting (Eph 1:11); nothing happens apart from His determination. The great struggle in the 16th century was over ultimate authority. Is man the captain of his destination or is God in charge? Scripture is plain,

The preparations of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. (Pr 16:1)

St Paul rehearses something of this great struggle in the 9th chapter of his letter to the Romans (9:16-18):

It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." Therefore, He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

We don't instinctively like this idea. It offends our natural, but fallen, autonomous outlook. We must hear Paul's rhetorical question again to his Roman audience:

O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honour and another for dishonour? (9:20-21)

Allied to this struggle was the related question of who was in charge *practically* on a day to day basis. Subtly, over the course of centuries Church bureaucrats acquired more and more controlling power. The Bride of Jesus Christ had morphed over centuries into harlotrous Papal Rome. Luther famously declared, 'my conscience is captive to the Word of God'. Tyndale's ambition was to return the Scriptures to the people. The same struggle for ascendancy prevails today. Too often a single church officer or, more frequently, an elite cabal dominate the pulpits offering no significant opportunity for their pontifications to be questioned or challenged in open discussion. Commitment to the local 'assembly' is equated with loyalty to Christ. But (i) liberty of conscience and (ii) the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers emerged from similar machinations for control during the Reformation era.

It is patent to any scholar casually surveying Reformation history that the Anabaptists posed just as much a threat to doctrinal integrity during that period as did Papal Rome. Among other serious errors, the Anabaptists denied the sacred status of the State and the covenantal unity of the family. In doing so their outlook was excessively individualistic. This, in time, gave rise in to Pietismⁱⁱ and the simplistic identification of the kingdom of God with the local visible Church!

2. Historic (young earth) 'fiat' Creation

Unless I am mistaken, three strategic leaders of contemporary (reformed) Evangelicalism (Don Carson, John Piper and Tim Keller) are theistic evolutionists. I stand to be corrected! But isn't that the point? They are so ambivalent about this crucial aspect of their worldview. They will not come clean! Instead, they hide behind a pseudo-intellectual smokescreen, offering religious platitudes about 'God being our Creator'. But what they typically mean is, God used 'something like evolution to bring about His creation over billions of years'. They will not engage with the Science – except to 'humbly' recuse themselves of specialist knowledge supposing that the mountain of scientific evidence for what the prevailing naturalistic orthodoxy preached is substantial and incontrovertible. But it isn't! Authentic Christianity takes seriously the history that confronts us in Scripture. Luke's Gospel (3:23-38) identifies about 76 generations between Adam and Jesus. Moreover, Jesus identified Adam and Eve with the beginning of Creation (Matt 19:4). Ex 20:11 tells us that God took six 24-hour days to make the heavens and the earth, hallowing the weekly Sabbath as an institution we are obligated by covenant to respectfully remember every week – lest we forget the crucial reality of our creatureliness.

Of crucial importance is the historic reality of (i) the Fall & (ii) the Noahic world-wide Flood! That year long catastrophe readily accounts for the essential morphology of the globe with extensive sedimentary layers of rocks laid down by watery tsunamis advancing and receding over the WHOLE world burying all living things from which have formed the fossil-rich hydrocarbons (coal, oil & gas). Various excellent websites (*Genesisapologetics.com*; *Answersingenesis.org* & *Creation.com*) collectively provide compelling scientific articles debunking the myths of Darwinian pseudo-science. Alas, the great majority of Church leaders are bewitched by the establishment narrative and, for the sake of personal pride and their desperate desire for public acceptance, have capitulated to 'theistic evolution' – something taught nowhere at all in Holy Scripture!

Naturalistic cosmic evolution is the greatest hoax of all time. It alleges that

- the entire universe was contained in a volume smaller than a full-stop!
- gravity & thermodynamics ALONE can account for galaxy & star formation from hydrogen gas!
- life arose spontaneously from non-living chemicals!
- chance and time can overcome mathematically impossible odds!
- death and suffering are both part of the natural created order!

And we, humble skeptics, are scorned and ridiculed for not believing the lie! Psalm 2 reminds us that 'the kings of the earth conspire together against God and His Anointed.' Nowhere is that conspiracy more up-front than in cultural Darwinism.

2. Comprehensive Covenant Theology

The reduction of the Biblical message to a lifestyle challenge to 'Trust in Christ' was perhaps well intentioned. It has been helpfully critiqued by Nancy Pearceyⁱⁱⁱ. Alas, it has had devastating consequences on the true gospel of Christ. Where to begin? The Bible teaches that the whole of life is religious. There is no activity, no issue, no aspect of human life and civilisation that God has left for us to address independently of His sovereign jurisdiction (Matt 4:4). In short, Jesus is Lord of all! (Col 1:18)

The original cultural mandate given to Adam & Eve was to leave the garden & build, world-wide, civilisation to the glory of God. The conquest of Canaan was a significant advancement of this objective in fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham several centuries earlier. That territory (Canaan) was to serve as a shining example of God's rich blessing upon His covenant keeping community! Surrounding nations were to come and see what real blessedness looks like. Hence, Moses writes,

"See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the Lord our God whenever we call on Him? Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?" [Deut 4:6-8]

The covenantal failure of God's OT people was, of course, anticipated (Jer 31:31-34) and thus prepared the way for the NT Church (a mix of both Jews and Gentiles) to supplant Israel's spiritual prerogative. Christ gave His NT bride the Great Commission, subsuming His more ancient commission to Israel:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
[Matt 28:19-20]

The Lord's Prayer represents the simplest & clearest expression of God's present purposes – to bring all of creation from its bondage to sin & satanic tyranny into the glorious liberty of full redemption. Thus, we pray,

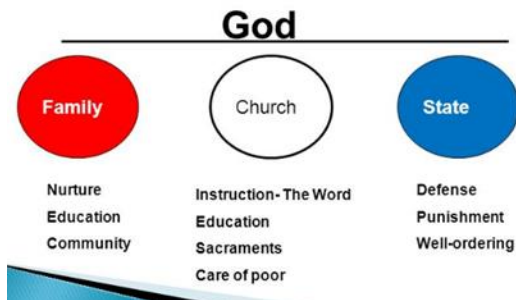


'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.' [Matt 6:10-13]

God's ordained instrument for accomplishing recovery of all that was lost by Adam & Even in the garden is 'Covenant'. Therefore, a full and proper understanding of what Scripture teaches about God's covenant is crucial. Theonomy wholeheartedly endorses the traditional reformed concepts of (i) the *Covenant of Works* which Adam broke and (ii) the subsequent *Covenant of Grace* as expounded by WCF and both shorter and larger catechisms. Accordingly, each successive expression of God's covenant dealings with His OT saints (Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, etc) contain both moral and ceremonial aspects elucidating previous statements. Briefly, those elements which are plainly ethical (e.g. Decalogue) are of perpetual standing for they reflect the very character of God. By contrast, those elements that are ceremonial (e.g. circumcision, animal sacrifice, priesthood, etc) find fulfilment in Christ's death, resurrection and ascension, etc. Augustine's dictum summarises this: *'The New is in the Old concealed; the Old is in the New revealed'*.



Ray Sutton's extensive treatise - 'That You May Prosper'^{iv}, though only recently expounded, is helpful too. Let's briefly consider his discovery (see below). But first, we must apprehend that God has ordained three interconnecting social spheres – *Church, Family and Civil State* – to establish Christ's rule & reign upon the earth. His reign must be worked out in its proper respects in each of these spheres whilst being careful not to neglect any one of them. Within each,



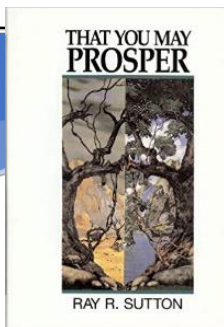
- (i) God is the sovereign Lord, being its Creator and providential Sustainer. We may thus identify His **TRANSCENDENCE** (T) over them all.
- (ii) God has ordained a sort of blue-print by which they are to be ordered. There is therefore an internal **HIERARCHY** (H) of function among the participants when they are working as they should. [E.g. Man, as husband and father, is to exercise leadership in his family; the wife is to be a helper; children are to learn obedience and respect, from both Mother and Father, etc.]
- (iii) For each divinely appointed sphere (Family, Church & State) God has supplied a code of **ETHICS** (E). His are good, honourable laws and commandments being derived from the perfections, holiness and justice of His character (Ps 119; Rom 7:12,14). The decalogue (Ex 20; Deut 5) represents a simple summary of God's law; so too does Matthew 22:37-40. The various laws & commandments of Deuteronomy & Leviticus prescribe the details as they applied historically to the body-politic of OT Israel. Being overtaken in AD 70 (Fall of Jerusalem) they became obsolete in their literal practicality; however, what was in principle 'ethical' then, now finds legitimate (necessary!) expression and application throughout all properly constituted human law and legislation. Every nation and king (civil authority) is accountable to God, via that law code set forth in Scripture, for the way it governs its people.

[NB. On a private level, the alignment of an individual's heart and mind with God's Law represents personal 'repentance'. In the OT, the Israelites frequently rehearsed, 'All that the Lord says, that we will do!' (e.g. Josh 1:16, Ex 19:8)]

- (iv) God invites the solemnizing of hearty promises and pledges via formal **OATHS** (O). The rehearsal of wedding vows and the exchanging of rings represent just such a solemn ritual. As a public spectacle the ritual rehearses (and celebrates!) the newly united couple's covenantal responsibilities - binding for life! Likewise, throughout biblical history, individual believers (i.e. saints – an OT word!) entered sacred covenant with God by faith in His Christ. In the OT, this was sealed with animal blood; in the NT Jesus' own blood was the requisite expiation. Circumcision (OT) and baptism (NT) similarly represent formal acknowledgements of God's covenant promise to bless a man's family. The patriarch/father immediately recognised his solemn obligation to raise children in covenant obedience to Christ. Once all of this is clear,

it is logical enough to recognise for a sovereign nation state to express formally & publicly its allegiance to God. There is no place whatsoever for multi-culturalism and cultural relativism in a Christian State. On the contrary, the exclusive reign and rule of Christ throughout the civil realm ought to be (ideally) secured and safeguarded on penalty of death! Oaths and their counterpart – sanctions – are thus a crucial element of covenantal theology.

- (v) God has promised to bless (& trouble!) succeeding generations of His people. For example, He says, “For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.” (Ex 20:5-6). Prophecy and its fulfilment in Scripture is commonly allied with specific promises of God to bless (or judge!) a certain nation, tribe or family. **SUCCESSION** (S) then is a further crucial element present in God’s covenantal dealings with His creatures.



T – TRANSCENDENCE

H – HIERARCHY

E – ETHICS

O – OATHS

S – SUCCESSION

3. Postmillennial Eschatology

Let us now turn briefly to the question of history and whether it is unfolding at all according to God's eternal decree. Theonomy teaches that it is and, moreover, that it will conclude gloriously with Christ exalted throughout the nations of the earth. Christian reconstruction is thus unashamedly and enthusiastically postmillennial! That is, we expect to see here on planet earth – the actual theatre of God's redemptive program – Christianity subjugating all competing ideologies, with the final phase of earth history being a prolonged period of unspecified duration during which the laws of every civilisation are heartily subject to Christ. The seed (first-fruits) of this 'golden era' was established by Christ's resurrection long ago (1Cor 15:20-28). As time marches on, more and more individuals, nations and institutions are to acknowledge that 'Jesus is Lord'. The final goal is the unification of heaven and earth! Paul says,

'that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him'
(Eph 1:10)

Alas, contemporary evangelicals have lost faith with this biblical vision and have settled instead for a spiritualised understanding of Christ's victory in which the human heart of the believer becomes the unseen throne of Christ's kingdom. Instead of Christ's lordship extending everywhere throughout all human life and civilisation, the cry, 'Jesus is Lord of all!' is comprehended by evangelicals as "He's lord of ALL of my heart." But this is a travesty of what Scripture teaches!



In summary,

- (i) Earth is the theatre of God's redemptive plan (Ps 24:1).
- (ii) Adam was commissioned to exercise dominion over all creation (Gen 1:28). What he forfeited in terms of power through the entrance of sin, Jesus will recover. The Great commission represents a reaffirmation of the cultural mandate to build civilisation to the glory of God (Gen 1:28 and Gen 9:1-2).
- (iii) The establishment of God's kingdom upon the earth was to occur gradually over multiple generations (Dan 2). God promised to bless 'all the families of earth' through Abraham (Gen 12:3). It is by faith that we are to look forwards to the future blessedness of the earth

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Heb 11:1)

- (iv) Abraham's offspring (Israel) were to establish a stronghold in mount Zion to which all the nations of earth were to look.
- (v) The establishment of Christ's government and peace throughout the earth would occur gradually down through history:

*For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. (Is 9:6,7)
...I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. (Matt 16:18)*

- (vi) The conquest of Canaan was both historical and typological signifying the struggle by which the NT Christian church is to vanquish its enemies in order to secure the promised heavenly 'Rest' (on earth!).

For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. (Heb 4:8)

- (vii) NT Christians are specifically called to wield the sword of the spirit (the Word of God) in this plundering of all Christ's enemies,

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2Cor 10:3-5)

- (viii) Today, Christ is shaking the nations. He is slowly but surely stirring up political parties crushing some and exalting others, raising up a Cyrus here, a Nebuchadnezzar there, with the final end-game goal of establishing His reign and rule throughout the earth.

For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from

heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. (Heb 12:25-27)

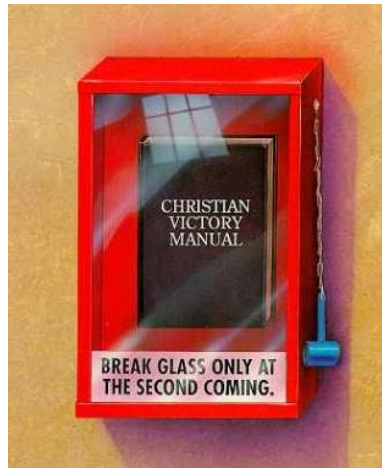
- (ix) The Book of Revelation presents us with the glorious climax of the ages. There we read,

"The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (Rev 11:15)

- (x) Several of Jesus' parables plainly indicate the gradual nature of Christ's conquest:

*"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches. Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."
(Matt 13:31-33)*

It is worth pointing out that all of this represents historic orthodoxy. There is nothing novel or quirky about Postmillennialism. Dr Francis Nigel Lee has proven all of this at length^v in various writings and sermons. The 18th century scholar and theologian of revival Jonathan Edwards has likewise bequeathed to us a compelling treatise – History of Redemption^{vi} – affirming the same. Iain Murray identifies Postmillennialism as the 'Puritan Hope'^{vii} – the dominant eschatology of Bible-believing scholars throughout Europe in 16th – 18th centuries. Alas, contemporary evangelicals have abandoned and betrayed it in a vain effort to console themselves that they are not to blame for the Church's very evident decline throughout the 20th century. In its place they have embraced either pessimistic amillennialism or, worse still, a version of 'reformed dispensationalism' - a pseudo-gnostic version of spirituality which defers Christ's 'spiritual' victory (only!) to an unseen realm beyond the grave! Gary North explains somewhat pithily, "according to standard amillennial social theory, things are gonna get an awful lot worse before they get worse!" Contemporary evangelicals have abandoned the Great Commission, believing instead in an imminent Return of Christ to overthrow His enemies in an instant. Wherefore, they preach, 'Don't polish brass on a sinking ship'. 'Culture,' they say, 'is not part of Christ's kingdom; it is not to be redeemed.'



4. Theonomic Ethics

Dr Greg Bahnsen (1948-1995) was the chief exponent in the 20th century of Theonomic ethics. In his book *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*^{viii} he sets forth the biblical basis for how, in general, we make moral judgements. It is frankly staggering that this should be so controversial but, alas, it is! Paul tells us that,

'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work'. (2Tim 3:16)

Christians ought therefore to run straight to Scripture to discern right from wrong. Van Til and Rushdoony spell out for us the crucial significance of Eve's deliberation in Eden when confronted with Satan's temptation to determine for herself the distinction between what is right and what is wrong. The psalmist urges us to be fruitful, godly branches in the Lord. How?

'By making the law of the Lord his delight and in His law meditating day and night.'
(Ps 1:1)

The Decalogue, uniquely in holy Scripture, was inscribed by the finger of God in tablets of stone – signifying its permanence and authority. The standing laws and case laws scattered throughout the Pentateuch represent exemplary applications of those laws in both the civil and personal realm. The Lex Talionis (e.g. eye for eye; tooth for tooth, etc) stipulates God's requirement for equity in the criminal law court after due process. Samuel Rutherford's great treatise *Lex Rex* has been helpfully

summarised by Joe Morecraft in these words: ‘that is a crime which God says is a crime; that is the due penalty for a crime that God says is the due penalty.’ We are not at liberty to stipulate amongst ourselves criminal jurisprudence. Where the civil magistrate prosecutes a crime without due regard for God’s law, he effectively promotes injustice and comes under God’s judgement. The duly elected civil magistrate in all nations/states is

‘God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.’ (Rom 13:4)

Antinomians are critically short-sighted at this point. Fearful of men (not God!) they anticipate the following objections

- (i) ***What if the civil magistrate is pagan? We can’t expect pagans (who don’t respect God) to honour Him by promulgating God’s law can we?***

To this we simply ask in return, Did Jonah preach God’s law or local Ninevian law when he called for the entire city to repent? Similarly, did God indict the inhabitants of Sodom & Gomorrah for infractions of their own common local customs? What was Nebuchadnezzar’s conclusion to his enquiry regarding ultimate authority in the light of his own humiliation? Let’s see:

‘At the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honoured Him who lives forever: for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, “What have You done?”’ (Dan 4:34-35)

Immediately afterwards, Nebuchadnezzar declares,

‘I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice.’ (Dan 4:37)

- (ii) ***What are we to do when the civil magistrate does not recognise or respect God’s law?***

Answer: we are to invoke the ‘Doctrine of the Lesser Magistrate’ which teaches that when the superior or higher-ranking civil authority makes unjust laws, a lesser ranking civil authority has both a right and duty to refuse obedience to that superior authority. If necessary, the lesser authorities may even actively resist the higher authority. All authority is derived from God. It is not arbitrary or unconditional. Rather it is God-given, and thus, all civil magistrates have a duty to govern in accordance with God’s law. When someone in authority makes laws or decrees contrary to God’s law, they are rebel against God’s rule. Matt Trewhella^{ix} has shown how this doctrine was alive and well throughout the Reformation period and indeed, down through history. Alas, it has been conveniently set aside, buried and effectively denied by contemporary evangelical Christians!

We need to recall the simple creed proclaimed by the early Church – Jesus is Lord, not Caesar nor any other earthly authority! Scripture declares plainly,

Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth
(Revelation 1:5 NKJV)

And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. (Rev 19:16)

Finally, we must deal with the 19th chapter of WCF which states, concerning the OT commonwealth of Israel, that

“To them also, as a body politic, He gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the state of that people, not obliging any other now, further than the general equity thereof may require.” (19:4)

“What is meant by ‘general equity’ and what is its contemporary scope?” The answer is straightforward enough once we see that the moral laws of God enshrined in Scripture reflect the character of God. Stealing is wrong because God is not a thief; lying is forbidden because God is the source of all truth; fidelity is a virtue since God is faithful, etc. For this reason, Jesus asserts,

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.’ (Matt 5:17-19)

Theonomy affirms Jesus' teaching, reckoning His sacrificial cross-work and resurrection etc, the fulfilment of OT shadows and types of ceremonial law while the moral aspect, concerning the measurement of right and wrong, is (like God's own character) unchangeable. Thus, the equity of God's law speaks of that moral principle underpinning every OT determination of right and wrong. For this reason, St Paul (1Cor 9:9,14) exhorts the Corinthian Church to remunerate its ecclesiastical ministers citing Deut 25:4

"You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,"

This text is obviously not directly concerned with the payment of human labourers, but Paul exacts from it the principle of equity and applies it to that subject. Likewise, the establishment of cities of refuge, as equity, represents an instruction to differentiate between murder and manslaughter by the civil legislature. Again, the requirement to build a parapet on the roof of a house dwelling suggests for example that we, as ordinary citizens, put railings around a swimming pool to prevent unsuspecting toddlers from falling in!

Finally, Jesus fully endorsed even the most difficult OT laws – e.g. the putting to death of rebellious sons/daughters. When castigating the Pharisees for their toleration of corban tax He said,

'God commanded, saying, 'Honour your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God"— then he need not honour his father or mother.' Thus, you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.' (Matt 15:4-6)

This should come as no surprise, for the writer of Hebrews exonerates all OT civil law and legislation,

'For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation...?' (Heb 2:2)

So then, we discover that Theonomy represents a faithful exegesis of the Biblical texts in contrast with the spurious attempts of soft-bellied 'evangelically-fish' (as an 'axis of treacle') who have no stomach to stand up for God's Law in the face of extreme pressure from the politically correct establishment who mis-govern our civil realm. The generality of theologians and scholars called upon by the English parliament to craft WCF in 1647 were made of much sterner stuff^x. Their own writings and sermons bear eloquent testimony to the fact that they, along with Calvin & the Reformers, by and large, held to a Theonomic understanding of God's Law.

5. Presuppositional Apologetics

Finally, we come to what is perhaps the least intuitive component of a Theonomic worldview. Yet truly, Presuppositional Apologetics (PA) fits harmoniously within the Theonomic paradigm. This is perhaps because Theonomy seeks to be rigorously logical and consistent in its exposition of Scripture. PA was first worked out in detail by Cornelius Van Til in the 20th century and then even more rigorously developed and practically applied by Van Til's most illustrious student – Dr Greg Bahnsen^{xi}. Van Til simply dared to approach apologetics based on the underlying principles of Reformed Theology. The key features are therefore,

- a. Recognition of Scripture as our ultimate authority (Is 8:20). Therefore, a biblical approach to apologetics and evangelism! (2Tim 3:16)
- b. The metaphysical distinction between Creator and creature – creatureliness is the actual common ground of believers and unbelievers which guarantees the amenability of the unbeliever to the gospel (Rom 1:20).
- c. The fact that faith in God represents the precondition for the intelligibility of all human experience (Heb 11:3,6).
- d. Personalism - God is a person. Humanity, being created in the 'image of God', is hard-wired with 'personalism' which is incomprehensible apart from the Trinity of God (Gen 1:26).
- e. Personalism exclusively accounts for memory, identity, abstract thought, logic, reflection, recognition, substantiation, meaning, etc. These 'transcendental' features of personal experience, which have no material substance nor geometric extent, represent a sort of ocean through which we necessarily swim (Col 1:16,17).
- f. Transcendental reality recognises both 'universals' (i.e. laws/ideals – e.g. duckness) and 'particulars' (a ball falling; a certain duck). Apart from God, the unbeliever cannot account for (i) laws of logic, (ii) laws of science & (iii) laws of morality.
- g. The Trinity of God alone accounts for our ability as persons to bring together into a harmonious unity universals and particulars – the one and the many.
- h. All of this implies that unbelievers are irrepressibly 'believers', as Scripture actually teaches! (Rom 1: 21)
- i. Various foundational (transcendental) truths are communicated to us 'immediately' by God. Such revelation to both believers and unbelievers constitutes our innate 'Sensus Divinitatus' – sense of the Divine (Rom 1:19).
- j. The unbeliever therefore suppresses the Truth in unrighteousness; he is wilfully ignorant of God's truth, exhibiting a proud spirit of independence and autonomy from His Maker. Psychologically, he is morally schizophrenic, living a life of self-deception (Rom 1:18).
- k. God has made His own Self-disclosure plain; His attributes are clearly perceived through what has been made (Rom 1:20).

- l. By way of illustration: *All human communication involves the use of words; words presuppose objective meaning; meaning presupposes categories of 'true' and 'false'; Truth presupposes logic; logic is unaccountable apart from God.*
- m. There is no escaping this bind; the unbeliever who seeks to deny the logical implication of his conscious existence is delusional. He is like a child slapping his father's face while being dandled on his father's knees (1Cor 1:20-21; 25).
- n. PA represents a push for epistemological self-consciousness, pressing the unbeliever to be logical and consistent – i.e. pushing the antithesis. 'Reasoning by implication' is central to PA (Is 1:18; Acts 17:2; 18:4).
- o. Proponents of PA seek mastery of critical thinking since fallacious reasoning abounds among infidels. PA draws attention to arbitrariness & inconsistency in all unbelieving worldviews. They are legion! (2Cor 1:18)
- p. PA seeks to draw attention to the 'impossibility' (i.e. inconsistency) of ANY competing worldview other than the Christian one. Evangelism/apologetics constitutes a clash of worldviews. (Act 17; Rom 3:3)
- q. The operating worldview of an individual comprises three component pillars: (i) epistemology - how we know; (ii) metaphysics - the nature of reality & (iii) ethics – how we determine right and wrong. It is by close analysis of these component activities (their comportment with one another) that the integrity of a man's thinking is properly appraised.
- r. It turns out there are only TWO alternative attitudes/postures: (i) covenant keeping & (ii) covenant breaking.
- s. Covenant keepers seek to make all their thinking subject to Scripture (Ps 36:9; Is 8:20; 2Cor 10:4-6). Such thinking is aptly described as 'analogical'. Being creaturely knowledge/understanding it is inevitably different from God's. But it is similar – like concentric circles or congruent triangles.
- t. Covenant breakers embrace (in futility!) autonomous/univocal reasoning. Such reasoning asserts that facts are brute – i.e. that their attendant meaning/significance is determined apart from God. This leads to 'evidentialism' – the notion that the intellectual arena is a sort of level playing field which needn't take account of worldview considerations.
- u. PA supplies therefore, with certainty – not mere probability - an indirect proof for the existence of God (2Tim 1:12).
- v. It follows that Hell is warranted for all who will not repent when the nearness, redemptive kindness and providential superintendence of God over His universe is pointed out (2Thess 1:8,9).
- w. It follows that the unbeliever is a fool (Ps 14;1 Ps 53:1)
- x. The two-fold strategy of the apologist is summed up in Proverbs 26:

*Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him (v3).
Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes (v4).*

This entails, in no priority order, (i) standing in the unbeliever's shoes, adopting his worldview and urging him to see the inevitable internal tension of his thinking; (ii) affirming the Biblical worldview and demonstrating its capability of ACCOUNTING for human life/experience.

None of this is widely accepted, even within the Christian community. You may wonder why. It is because (i) we are unaccustomed to think in such clear, Biblical terms and (ii) the arguments can sound somewhat philosophical to the superficial enquirer, etc. But everywhere, throughout Scripture, this paradigm is taken for granted. We read, concerning man's daily existence that, 'in Him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28); we find that, 'in Him all things hold together' (Col 1:17). Moreover, men by nature, walk, 'in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.' (Eph 4:17-19).



**A MAN CONVINCED
AGAINST HIS WILL,
WILL KEEP THE
SAME OPINION STILL**

Conclusions

Contemporary Christianity is in crisis. It has reduced the content of its message to a bare minimum. It says, in effect, 'Christianity is a lifestyle choice in the context of alternatives. The Bible's message however, whilst finding application at the individual level, calls for the transformation of the whole world and renewal by the Holy Spirit. The kingdom of God is to be found wherever the authority of God and His word (the Bible) are acknowledged and embraced. Our obligation to submit to God's rule of law applies as much to academia, arts, science, politics, the family, commerce, civil authorities and international law agencies etc, as it does to the individual. The fruit of sin is to be seen everywhere. God's purpose in redemption is to destroy sin's power and dominion in every realm (1Jn 3:8).

Right now, God is working out His purposes to reverse Eden's curse, to redeem humanity and to restore fully 'the crown rights of Jesus Christ' over creation. Psalm 110 is the most oft-quoted psalm in the NT. In it we read,

The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies! Your people shall be volunteers in the day of Your power; in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, You have the dew of Your youth."

I believe we are living in, or very close to, 'The Day of Christ's power'. May it please Him to raise up a new generation of faithful Christian soldiers who dare to abandon the Pietism (personal salvation only) and Marcionism (Theology limited to NT only) of popular evangelicalism and replace it with a more principled, full-orbed gospel.

Steve Layfield – April 2019

Appendix 1 Marriage

I must be brief! Countless evangelical leaders^{xii} complain against recent cultural trends to promote 'gay marriage' and 'transgenderism' within the civil sphere.

Q1. *Is marriage a civil ordinance or is it an ecclesiastical ordinance?* The answer historically is clear enough – it is a civil ordinance. For this reason, only a duly qualified civil registrar is authorised to sign the marriage certificate at a wedding. The church minister may obtain supplementary authorisation from the state to do the same, but most church leaders generally don't.

Q2. *As a civil ordinance, is marriage subject to the Law of God?* Most Christians are hesitant at this point. Their baptistic paradigm sees the culture in which they operate as inherently 'worldly' ruled by Satan himself. Instinctively they lament the redefinition of marriage by the state but accept it as inevitable given the general drift of culture (i.e. politics, academia and the media, etc) into secularism. John F MacArthur stipulates that 'marriage is Christian; the state should have nothing to do with it!'

A more principled answer to the question is, 'Marriage is a divine institution which the state, SUBJECT ITSELF TO GOD'S LAW, is under obligation to administer according to Scripture.' But did you notice, the civil state is not religiously neutral? Why not? Because no activity, no institution, no government, no king, etc, is religiously neutral! When this truth is properly comprehended the lights go on; the penny finally drops. Has it dropped for you?

Q3. *Should the state be Christian?* Yes, indeed! Injustice in the civil realm is chargeable by God. God expects the state legislature to prosecute its business in accordance with God's own holy law. God indicts the civil magistrate for sanctioning 'gay marriage', transgenderism, abortion, pornography, prostitution, Sunday shopping, euthanasia, etc. It is the responsibility of the Christian Church to draw the attention of the civil bureaucracy to this fact. But the Christian Church has abandoned this prophetic calling. Why? Essentially because it lacks backbone. It is embarrassed and ashamed to stand four-square upon the principles of divine law. It prefers to heal slightly the hurt of God's people saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace. God is profoundly displeased with the contemporary evangelical Church for shirking its responsibility to stand firm upon the Scriptures and hold to account the civil state. Dozens of Scriptures could be cited to prove all of this!

[NB. A significant underlying problem persists within evangelicalism; that is its tenacious adherence to baptistic theology. This establishes a theological paradigm which is essentially 'individualistic'. Christianity, for Baptists, is all about saving souls and getting new folks to join the local church.]

Appendix 2: Matt Trehella – A Brief History on Pietism and Statist Rulers

Pietism was a movement which originated in the late 17th century. Pietists believe Christianity or God's Law has no place for the governance of society. They view involvement in public policy matters as "unspiritual." They believe Christianity should be only a private and personal matter. Pietism was developed amongst the Lutherans, impacted the Calvinists, and became prevalent amongst Baptists. Pietism went on to infect every area of Christianity. Present day Christianity is (substantially) Pietistic.

How did Pietism gain such a place of prominence throughout America and all of Western Civilization?

Phillip Spener and August Francke of Germany were the founders of the Pietist Movement. Their teachings emphasized Christians being separate from the world, focused Christians on the inward and personal, and exhorted for the lessening of pastoral involvement in the debates over public policy. Their followers took things way beyond what they originally taught. This new form of Christian religion quickly caught the eye of kings and rulers. Various kings and rulers immediately put Pietists in positions of influence, particularly in teaching positions in universities. They also financed and promoted this new religion throughout their empires. Frederick, King of Prussia, for example, installed Pietist teachers and financed its propagation. Unfortunately, Pietism even influenced the Prussian form of education he developed which went on to impact all of Western Civilization.

Why would the kings and rulers have an interest in a form of Christianity which promoted the idea that one's Christian faith should be a purely private and personal matter?

Because a private Christianity is a more controllable Christianity. Reduce people's Christianity to the realm of the personal, and they will not stick their noses into public matters. Hence, the kings and rulers were politically motivated to push this form of Christianity. Through it, they could further remove the influence of Christianity from the public square. Sadly, most all of Christianity and Christians, both then and now, have embraced Pietistic thinking. So thoroughly have the Statists routed Christian thought, that most Christians now view the idea that Christ and His kingdom should impact the nations of the earth as a completely foreign idea, or worse, heretical. The truth is however, the Scriptures make clear His Word and kingdom are to impact the nations of the earth. The early Church Fathers taught it as so. The Apologists addressed their writings to the magistrates of their days. And the early missionaries who went out to spread the Gospel, often went to the leaders of an area or nation first. Why? Because of what the Scriptures teach. His Law, Word and Gospel were intended to impact all the nations of the earth. This is why Jesus

said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations." (Mk. 11:17) His final command was "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." (Mt.28:19) And Paul said his ministry was "for obedience to the faith among all nations." (Rom.1:5) This is why Christ is declared by John to be "the ruler over the kings of the earth." (Rev.1:5) Contextually, this was declared to be so then when John wrote it, not to be applied off in the sweet bye and bye. Paul says Christ is "the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords." (I Tim.6:15) Paul uses the present tense, as there won't be any kings or lords in heaven. In Psalm 2, a Messianic Psalm foretelling of Christ, the Father says to His Son in verse 8, "Ask of Me, and I will give you the nations for Your inheritance."

Christian men down through church history understood that the rule of Christ extended to all the nations of the earth because of what the Scriptures declare. To think that the Law and Word of God would not impact nations was an absurdity to them. That is, until about 300 years ago, when Pietism came upon the stage of human history. The kings and rulers of the earth liked this form of Christianity because they could throw off the rule of Christ in their nations, and keep Christians marginalized in their "spiritual" ghettos. Though most Christians today have embraced Pietistic thinking, true Christianity understands that Christ and His rule impact both the personal and the public. It is not an either/or. Though many are content with a Pietistic form of Christianity, there are many of us who recognize it for what it is - biblical imbalance. God's Law, Word and Gospel radically impact and transform the individual lives of men, and this translates into His rule and kingdom impacting nations. Matthew Henry wrote regarding Matthew 28:18-20,

*"The principal intention of this commission is to disciple all nations.
Do your utmost to make the nations Christian nations."*

Appendix 3: Comprehensive Christian Education

Rushdoony, North and Bahnsen et al dedicated much of their lives promoting Christian (worldview!) education. Two pages only to what such a Christian Educational Curriculum looks like in outline; fasten your seat belt, here goes!

Subject	Key Features
Religion	Fear of God = beginning of knowledge, wisdom & understanding; exclusive character of Scripture; perspicuity of Scripture; hermeneutics, systematic theology; false religious worldviews (i) pseudo-Christian cults & (ii) immanent moralism (iii) monism
English	The Trivium: grammar, logic or dialectic, and rhetoric; transcendental nature of word meanings; instantiation; refutation of deconstructionism & postmodernism
Maths	Metaphysical nature of maths; history of mathematical procedure; mathematical procedures (algebra, geometry, trigonometry, calculus, etc)
Science	Priority of Scripture (Ps 36:9); no brute facts;

ⁱ Theonomy and the Westminster Confession – Marpet Press 1997

ⁱⁱ See Appendix 2

ⁱⁱⁱ Total Truth – Crossway Books 2008

^{iv} Available as a free download from Gary North/free books.com

^v see his on-line lectures

^{vi} Works of Jonathan Edwards – Banner of Truth

^{vii} Banner of Truth 1971

^{viii} Theonomy in Christian Ethics – Covenant Media Press 2002

^{ix} See Matt Trewhella's web-site: www.lessermagistrate.com

^x Theonomy and the Westminster Confession – Marpet Press 1997

^{xi} See Van Til Apologetic – Presbyterian and Reformed 2012

^{xii} E.g. John F MacArthur – Grace Community Church - YouTube message.