SOCIAL JUSTICE EXCLUSIVE TOLERANCE, THE NEW FUNDAMENTALISM

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ANDREW SANDLIN HAS RECENTLY reminded us of the redundancy inherent in the term “social justice.” He cites Thomas Sowell, that “all justice is social…. Justice is necessary when you have a society, not when you have an individual.” To speak of doing justice or seeking justice, by definition, involves a relationship.

Wherever we fall on the ideological spectrum, we may be inclined to wish Sandlin a token thanks for that clarification, and carry on as before. But his point is about more than semantics or technicalities; it exposes the much larger issue of a culture setting itself in opposition to God Himself.

In one sense, it is perfectly reasonable to qualify the application of justice in different spheres—civil, criminal, political etc… This is not insidious, though it is guilty of the redundancy that Sandlin observes; context will ground any discussion of justice within its appropriate arena.

On a deeper level, however, the very existence of the term “social justice” points to an ideologically-motivated phenomenon, requiring an adaptation and repurposing of language. The Hebrew word for “justice” or “righteousness” in Scripture (tzédek) is no scholarly puzzle or disputed term. Its meaning is plain, and the application of this plain meaning is abundant. To do justice—in any area of society—is covered by this word. As Sandlin summarises, “if you treat [people] rightly, you treat them justly.”

The right and just way to treat people, socially and otherwise, has been revealed to us in God’s Word. The use of the term “social justice” implies another standard and agenda for what is just and right. We have been given a perfectly good term to use, and have nevertheless gone about supplanting it with another. The inadequacy is not with our language, but our rebellious hearts.

The social justice agenda described by many, even within the church, is not the same justice that God requires of us in Scripture. Most often it is used to justify taxation of the rich, or other plans for state-sponsored redistribution of wealth; this is overwhelmingly the implication of the term from the time of WWII, and picked up by the Liberation Theology movement in the 1970s. Yet who would ever want to be opposed to justice? Antonio Martino explains of the expression that “its obvious appeal stems from its persuasive strength, from its positive connotations, which allows the user to praise his own ideas and simultaneously express contempt for the ideas of those who don’t agree with him.” Therefore, “Social justice,” is a term designed in opposition to God, expressing contempt for the just and righteous prescriptions found in His Word and exalting instead a man-centered vision of radical equality.

Sandlin is correct that “it’s much better simply to refer to ‘justice.’” However, this point further highlights the distinction between a Christian vision of justice and contemporary social justice doctrine. For the Christian, our doctrine and practice of justice must be grounded firmly and exclusively in God’s revealed Word. This includes the repeated injunction to show no partiality in our pursuit of justice (cf. Deut. 16:19; 2 Chron. 19:7; Col. 3:25).

IN THIS ISSUE

This issue of Jubilee continues the discussion of justice from a variety of perspectives. Joe Boot discusses the trinity as a paradigm for justice, showing how a pagan worldview results in equalitarian visions of justice, whereas Christian justice is grounded in God himself and reflected in his purposes for creation.

Jeffery Ventrella demonstrates that, historically and theologically, there are many good reasons for Christian ministers to speak on political issues from the pulpit. He explains how, rather than common-sense or pious, the prevailing habit of ministers to studiously avoid “political” topics in sermons is in fact a form of retreat that dishonours God and does a disservice to His people.

George Grant makes a compelling case for the primacy of the family in providing welfare charity. He demonstrates that families, enabled and resourced by the church, are by design better equipped to deliver poverty relief and
compassionate care than a state-sponsored welfare agency could ever hope to be.

Scott Masson describes Herbert Marcuse’s idea of Liberating Tolerance as the new fundamentalism in Western society, arguing that a new, anti-Christian tolerance has predominated in the public square, rejecting rival claims to exclusivity – such as that of Jesus’ Lordship.

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2As just one example, compare Genesis 18:19 when the Lord speaks of choosing Abraham to “keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment,” with God’s command in Leviticus 19:15: “in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.” In both passages *tzedek* is the same root word used.
3Sandlin, “‘Social Justice.’”
6Sandlin, “‘Social Justice.’”
THE TRINITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

ROOTS OF JUSTICE: POLITICAL OR THEOLOGICAL?

EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD BE interested in the issue of justice, for without it life can only mean tyranny, slavery and misery. Historically, Christian Europe had a keen sense of justice because at the foundation of its culture was a recognition of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who declared himself to be just, gave his law to Moses and sent his Son into the world as the one into whose hand all judgment had been committed (John 5:22).

In general, justice and law were seen as being involved in each other, and the rule of law governing all men as equal before it counted for something. For our evangelical forebears, the pursuit of justice was seen as a righteous cause, and where a community or nation was united in that cause, a sense of transcendent meaning and unity prevailed.

The insightful British essayist Theodore Dalrymple has pointed out that people in Britain who lived through a great battle for justice against evil in World War II, despite the suffering, shortage and loss, do not remember it with the horror that we might expect, in large part because of the sense of meaning and purpose that they found in the struggle. Winston Churchill had called WWII the battle for the survival of Christian civilisation, and at the time, for most people, that still mattered. Dalrymple asks why that sense of purpose and meaning did not continue in the peace time that followed, and his conclusions are telling. He notes that, for one, the intellectuals of the period held and propagated the view that only the government (the state) could bring about justice in society and that this could be accomplished only through socialism. However, when people don’t feel an immediate and personal responsibility for living justly and believe they can delegate that role to a faceless collective, the seeds of a radical injustice and cultural decline are already sown.

In keeping with the socialist philosophy of common ownership of the means of production, with industry in the hands of the state, and acting as the great employer in the name of the people, George Orwell recommended at the time a mass nationalisation of land, railways, mines, banks and major industries, as well as a state-imposed limitation on incomes and the reform of education along democratic lines – by which he meant the abolition of private education. By the time Orwell wrote this in 1941, political collectivism was intellectual orthodoxy, though his practical recommendations for implementation were nonetheless prophetic. State seizure of property and greatly curtailed freedom would be the plan for justice in the twentieth century: “every economic transaction would become an expression of political power.” Lacking a realistic historical perspective, twentieth-century intellectuals and governments, whether in fascism, communism or the Fabian socialism of Britain, placed their hopes for ‘justice’ in the central planning of the state and power politics. Perhaps, after all, man could enforce his autonomous vision of justice and make that, and not God and his justice, the source of unity, meaning and purpose for society. Justice, they thought, could be grounded politically rather than theologically. As a consequence, social reality and just relations were to be defined by a new elite and the results called ‘social justice.’

THE TRINITARIAN FOUNDATION OF JUSTICE

REV. DR. JOE BOOT

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Because human persons are made in the image of God, it is impossible for us not to think about life and reality in relational and social categories. From the Christian perspective, we are relational beings and we inescapably think of ourselves in terms of relationship to ‘the other’ – both God and man. For biblical faith, the ultimate foundation of all reality and all its categories of thought is the being of God, the ontological Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There is no deeper or more foundational starting point for thought than God’s own being. Jesus Christ reveals in John 17 the all-personal, all-relational character of God by unveiling something of the eternal love relationship that exists between the members of the Godhead – a profound reciprocity of mutual self-giving. Jesus declares in his prayer to the father, “Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed... You loved me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:5, 24). This reveals that God is not love because he created the world, so that a previous potentiality for love could then be actualised by having someone to love (meaning that God is not transcendent or truly distinct, but dependent on creation); rather, God is love within his own being, as the Father loves the Son and the Son the Father, through the Person of the Holy Spirit (1 John 4:8). In other words, as L. T. Jeyachandran has rightly noted, “…in God, qualities of personality can be actualized only if there is an actual, eternal relationship in him prior to, outside of, and without reference to creation. Only in that way would God be a personal being without being dependent on his creation.” The Father is the Father because of the eternal relationship he sustains to the Son, and the Son is the Son because of the eternal relationship he sustains to the Father, through the eternal person of the Holy Spirit in uncreated, equal ultimacy. The person of the Holy Spirit is the bond of love and fellowship who provides the space (distinction) between the Father and Son for there to be a real and eternal plurality within the unity of God’s mysterious perichoresis (a Greek word meaning ‘dancing around’). The concept of perichoresis tries to give shape to the mystery of God’s mutual indwelling that allows for the retention of the unity of God’s essence and personality, whilst distinguishing the persons. This does not imply separation of persons, only real distinction within God’s being. Jesus declared in John 14:7-11:

“If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.’ Philip said to him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me...’

Through Christ, then, we see that there is a mutual indwelling and self-giving within the fellowship of the Trinity, where covenant love is fully realized prior to all creation. In short, God is a relational community whose non-contingent and totally free being not only distinguishes him from all created reality as truly other (so that creation is not emanation from the divine being), but whose eternal fellowship and economy of function provides for a proper understanding of the true nature of love and thus of right human social relationships.

The amazing reality that God is all-personal and all-relational, combined with the marvel that we are made in his image, created for relationship with God and man, means that the term ‘social justice’ is a redundancy. That is to say, all justice is inescapably social. There would be no need for justice in a monistic, solitary existence, if there were no ‘other’ toward whom one must act justly. It is therefore obvious that justice is social! The question is, how is justice to be defined? Does God’s being or do human ideas define justice? Now we must note at this point that the attributes of God are equally ultimate. That is to say, we cannot pit the communicable attributes

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of God off against each other as though one is more basic to God’s nature than the others, nor can we collapse all the divine attributes into one solitary virtue. All the attributes of God are an aspect of his being and express the nature of the relationship that the persons of the Godhead sustain to one another. Justice then is actually another expression of the covenantal love that exists between the persons of the Trinity. We have seen in a previous article that justice in Scripture means giving a person their due in terms of God’s revealed law. God’s law is not arbitrary, but an expression of his self-giving love. Since John tells us that God is love, nothing God does is unloving in the final analysis. Justice cannot then be pitted against love. This is why St Paul is able to say:

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13:8-10).

Thus the Trinity provides the proper foundation for social justice insofar as, within the Godhead, each member gives the other person their due as God. We see the clear expression of this mutuality in the Scriptures, especially in John’s gospel. In John 17:4-5 we read Jesus’ words to his Father, “I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.” Here we see the reciprocal glorification of the persons in the hierarchic economy of the all-personal God. This same theme of self-humbling and mutual glorification is also seen in the great Christian hymn recorded by St Paul in Philippians 2:5-11. Paul concludes:

And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

As the Father glorifies the Son, the Son glorifies the Father, as each gives the other his due as God. Moreover, the Holy Spirit, who likewise mutually indwells the other persons of the Godhead, in giving to the Father and Son their due, is not overlooked. In John 14:16ff and 16:7ff, Jesus assures the disciples that it is to their advantage that he returns to the Father so that they might send another Helper (Grk. parakletos, meaning advocate), one the same as himself, of equal quality (Grk. allos rather than heteros, meaning different quality). That is to say, Jesus designates the Holy Spirit as God, who is, on the one hand, truly other (that is, ‘distinct’ from the Son and not simply another ‘mode’ of God’s self-expression), and yet at the same time of the same kind in the unity of God’s being. His role, because he is God, will be to reveal Christ to the world in the absence of the person of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Thus Jesus declares:

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you (John 16:13-15).

We see here again the reciprocity and equal ultimacy of the divine persons within their hierarchical function. Everything the Father has belongs to Christ and what belongs to Christ is declared by the Spirit. The Spirit glorifies the Son as he reveals God’s righteousness and justice to the world. Jesus says to his Father in John 17:10, “All mine are yours and yours are mine and I am glorified in them.” So, in God’s tri-personal being, each person receives their due, or justice, as an aspect of covenantal love.
Furthermore, with respect to our redemption, in the counsel of God’s sovereign will, an agreement is made that the Son will render to the Father his due by making restitution for the sins of his people. The Son thus gives justice to the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit, affecting our justification by interposing his own blood. We see then, that in both God’s being and saving acts, justice is grounded in his own character and nature. The implication of this is that our social nature and responsibilities are basic to what it means to be made in his image. Therefore, to be truly Christian means to live justly in the societies where God has placed us in his providence. Justice is not arbitrary. Its foundation rests in the being of God himself as an eternal community. Justice then essentially means to render to each person his or her due; if they have not received it, an injustice has occurred. In Romans 13:7, St Paul clearly tells us “render...to all their due.” In Scripture, sometimes what is due is determined by who the person is, i.e. parents; governing authorities; Christian leaders, etc. At other times what is due is established in terms of what a person does. For example, the elders in the church who rule well are to be given double honour (1 Tim. 5:17). Likewise murderers and criminals are to be dealt with in terms of what they do against persons and property (Ex. 21-22). Also, giving to the poor, which in Scripture is a form of giving to God, is not because they belong to an identifiable ‘group’ called ‘the poor’ (i.e. who they are), nor because they have done something to merit it (i.e. what they do), but simply because God’s gracious law requires it. This principle of justice applies to our relationship with God and not only to our relationships with other people. Just as is seen within the Godhead, justice is required first and foremost in terms of what God is. For example, consider tithing to God. The tithe is his due and so to withhold the tithe is actually theft from God – quite literally robbery (Mal. 3:8). Justice is covenantal and God’s covenant law expresses what is basic to his own tri-personal being.

REJECTING THE ROOTS

Arguably, the most important ecumenical creed ever formulated was the Nicene Creed, formulated in part to refute the heretic Arius and the Arians who followed him. Arius denied this relational doctrine of the Trinity, rarely spoke of God as Father, and so quite logically rejected the deity of Christ, arguing instead that the Son of God was a creature – there was a time when he was not. In an important sense, Arius was the father of all liberal theology. Athanasius regarded him as a mythologizer, projecting his image onto God, and insisted instead on the eternal begeting of the Son. What is important to notice about any rejection of the roots of justice in God’s tri-personal being is that the outcome can only be mythologizing and therefore a mythic justice. Once the Trinity is rejected, the working presupposition for thought is that God is unknown – he has not revealed himself in the eternal Son, by the eternal Spirit, as Father. If God is so transcendent that he is unknown then we can only explore the recesses of our inner experience, our spirituality, to find language and images to account for the numinous reality of religious experience – the vague idea of ‘god.’ This was the working assumption of Kant, Schleiermacher, Bultmann and all their liberal offspring. At best, we might know something about God through some of his acts, but as to his being, we know nothing. This view has produced both feminist and queer theology in our time. In the name of their god they demand justice and equality, but their god is mythical, a pale reflection of the inner self, and their worship is a paganism that bows at the altar of an unknown god. They cry ‘liberation’ and demand ‘social justice,’ but the liberation they seek is from the living God, and the justice they pursue demands what is not due to them.

The radical proliferation of anti-trinitarian thought in liberal quarters, and a subtle de-emphasis on the implications of the eternal Sonship and Lordship of Christ within evangelicalism, has led to a preoccupation with the self and its desires among all-too-many concerned for social justice. The emphasis of the faith becomes self-fulfilment, self-esteem, self-realization, human potentiality and so forth. Consequently, Christianity is gradually
“A monistic justice emerges in which all hierarchic relationships (reflecting the triune God) are destroyed and levelled, creational distinctions are denied, and covenantal love is replaced by revolutionary power.”

paganised as merely one means to self-realization and fulfillment. In this neo-gnostic world, the self increasingly becomes identified with God, and self-will with the will of God, and so the feminist starts to pray to ‘our mother who art in heaven’ and the queer theologian blasphemously reads homoeroticism into the New Testament. For such people and for many in our culture today, God is to be discovered in one’s personal spiritual journey where new images of ‘god’ are expressions of a new self-understanding, and particularly of one’s sexuality. Thus, God is remade in man’s fallen image and pressed into the service of sinful sexual desires. These thinkers proceed to have the temerity to call for the enforcement of the new social justice in terms of the idol constructed from their own consciousness. Their religion descends quickly into little more than a fertility cult like those of the Canaanites in the Old Testament, or the Gnosticism encountered by the early church with their female, hermaphrodite and androgynous deities.

If God has not revealed his tri-personal being, the trinitarian community, in the person of Jesus Christ the eternal Son, then justice does not have a relational and covenantal foundation in God. In such a case any god there may be is unknown. The unknown god, being mythic, is merely a foil, a cover for the exercise of man’s naked self-will; which is to say, man is always ready to fill in by identifying the unknown god with himself and his desires – denying the creator-creature distinction and following the tempter’s plan ‘to be as God.’ On this view justice is no longer revelational of God’s being but of man’s self-expression. And sinful man’s self-expression does not embody mutual self-giving and reciprocity but demands total freedom and autonomy – in particular from any restraints placed upon him by the triune God of Scripture. He cries liberation as though he is a victim of circumstance rather than a sinner. Theology is carried on, but in terms of an unknown god, so that various strains of Asian theology; black theology; feminist theology with a feminine Christ; or a queer theology, emerge as expressions of ‘social justice,’ each calling for God to be interpreted in terms of their self-understanding. Religious language about a feeling of absolute dependence on some nameless source of being may be retained, but the holy and just God of the Bible has vanished from view. Theological and Christological statements become merely aspects of anthropology, autobiographical commentary on our self-understanding in relation to the unknown god. The abstract idea of the ‘Christ’ is detached from the revelation of Jesus Christ in Scripture and becomes yet another aspect of one’s self-understanding. In this way God and his justice is re-imagined in non-trinitarian terms and a monistic justice emerges in which all hierarchic relationships (reflecting the triune God) are destroyed and levelled, creational distinctions are denied, and covenantal love is replaced by revolutionary power. This then becomes the basis of political ideology that seeks power to enforce its chosen ends with a totalitarian reach in the name of social justice. Theology is thus replaced by politics and justice is reduced to the will of the people; a will whose freedom is delegated to the power state. As Colin Gunton has rightly noted:

Nice, polite westerners may project a deity who is moderately feminist and in favor of ecological responsibility..., but if the matter is down to the one who projects, there is no end to the demons which can be let loose. Salvation depends on the unflinching affirmation that the God who meets us in the Son and the Spirit is the only God there is.7

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

A denial of the triune God in terms of an unknown god leads then to political theories of social justice rooted in the notion that man needs metaphysical reunification with all being (the unknown god). This is one of the demons let loose by man’s mythologizing of God. If God is not the triune Lord revealed in Jesus Christ, then the doctrine of creation is rendered impossible and man is part of a cosmic chain of being. This is because a monadic conception of
God as some kind of singularity leaves us with the emptiness and void of non-personality as ultimate. If there is no plurality within God’s being then there is no subject-object relation, no particularity, only a blank unity. In such a view of God there can be no foundation for knowledge, love, morality or ethics. Indeed without an absolute personality, there is no diversity or distinction basic to reality at all; ultimate reality is a bare unity about which nothing may be said. This is why the Trinity is so important in tackling the philosophical problem of the one and the many. Moreover, because a denial of the Trinity leads to a denial of an absolute personality, we cannot speak coherently of the will of God. Only persons have a will. But if God has no will, then creation is not the free act of an absolute, personal God. Rather the universe is the *emanation* of divine being and what we call the universe is merely the extension of god, or as some pagans would say, it is the body of god.

Why is this important when speaking of social justice? It is critical because our beliefs about God and our relationship to the divine (to ultimate reality) will shape our understanding of our social world, our relationship to others. If we are all merely aspects of the divine unity then divisions, hierarchies, differences, fundamental distinctions and so forth must be broken down to bring about total unity or oneness. Moreover, there can be no law or justice that transcends human ideas and experience since there is no God distinct from ourselves:

> [The] ancient concept of the kingdom as one body of *continuous being* between God, the king and the state, and his people, is important, for in its modern form it is the doctrine of the corporateness and completeness of humanity. The high point of being in its development is man, and all law is of man and for man, according to this faith. Humanity, therefore, must be one and undivided, and no law can be imposed upon it save its own will, as manifested in an elite or in a consensus. Proponents of the social gospel and of social action by the churches are insistent in reading the Bible in terms of this continuity concept.

For the Christian faith however, because of who God is – an absolute person distinct from his creation – there is only an ethical or covenantal community between man and God (not a metaphysical one as in paganism), and between a man and his neighbor. As reflected in the Godhead, at the human level, real distinctions are maintained and we remain distinct and particular as human beings, even though we are united by virtue of our creation in God’s image as the human family (unity in diversity). In our salvation we become part of the new humanity in Jesus Christ and have communion with Him by grace, not because we are one with Him in substance. As fellow Christians and brothers and sisters in Christ, we do not lose our identity nor our sex; nor do real distinctions in gifting and ability, roles and responsibilities, office and authority disappear – we are covenantally one, not metaphysically so.

This means that in the biblical view, justice is not about equalizing, unifying and levelling all things so that distinctions and hierarchies are destroyed to bring about a social or, for some, metaphysical oneness in which even the fundamental distinctions of sexuality (male and female) are mere illusions or social constructions to be overcome and resolved by an androgynous ideal. Rather, justice is *giving to each their due in accordance with their nature*, a nature which is created and defined by God. This does not undermine the *equal value* of all people made in the image of God. Rather, it emphasizes the need for plurality as the indispensable ground of unity in real diversity. Biblical justice does not aim at the destruction of diversity, but a covenantal or relational unity within real diversity based on the true nature of all things created and defined by the absolute personality of God.

Perhaps the best illustration of how these distinctions and hierarchies can be maintained without posing a threat to the equal ultimacy of human persons is found within the covenant of marriage. Husband and wife are alike made in
The basic social unit in which we first learn to give each their due (justice), the unity of the human family, is established in the marriage relationship and the begetting of children. In this now broadening community there is order, structure, hierarchy and covenant.

Now critically, the equal ultimacy of the persons of the ontological Trinity is not jeopardized by the submission of the Son to the Father and the self-effacing revealing of the Son by the Spirit. The tri-personal mutual glorification binds them in love as each fully manifests God, and as each gives to the other their due as God. So in marriage, the hierarchic economy of mutual submission to God, expressed by the wife in submission to her husband does not jeopardize her identity as free in Christ and equal heir with her husband. Rather it manifests her true freedom and equal ultimacy with her husband in Christ where there is neither male nor female, bond nor free, Jew nor Gentile – we are covenantally (not metaphysically) one in Christ. The ontology of God’s being is then the foundation of the cosmological structure of distinction and relational submission he has built into creation.

The basic social unit in which we first learn to give each their due (justice), the unity of the human family, is established in the marriage relationship and the begetting of children. In this now broadening community there is order, structure, hierarchy and covenant. The son or daughter is not lesser in value or worth than their mother and father because they submit to and obey them in the economy of family. This familial begetting likewise finds its root in God’s own being and covenant with his church, “Yahweh is both Father and Husband to Israel because Yahweh is himself both Father and Son.” In the gospel of Christ is revealed “a Father who so loves his daughter that he sends his Son to give Himself and ultimately, as Jonathan Edwards put it, to introduce her into the family of Triune life as the bride of his Son.” It is because the eternally begotten of the Father submitted to the will of his Father that we today are a people, a bride adorned, with God the Son as the bridegroom, by whose Spirit we are embraced into the covenantal fellowship of his triune life. Social justice, the right ordering of social relationships as each receives their due, is again seen as grounded only in the society of God himself.

SOCIETY AND REALITY

What I have been arguing then is that human society and its view of justice will be a reflection of what a community believes about the nature of God – of ultimate reality. Will it be based on idolatrous mythologizing productive of an unknown god, where in the unity and continuity of all being, man’s idea expresses justice as the unification of society in an egalitarian and equalitarian order? Here, through political coercion, with man as the source of revolutionary social justice, real distinctions must be undermined and the human person reconstructed in the androgynous image of a mythical divinity concept. Or will justice be grounded in the triune God, where ultimate reality is already an eternal and just society? Here, in mutual self-giving each member is rendered their due, providing the foundation for law and justice that is not the product of man’s idea but an expression of the covenant love of God. In this biblical worldview, order, structure, distinctions...
and hierarchy are maintained for the flourishing of all. As Ralph Smith has noted in regard to these contrasting perspectives:

In the Modern West our egalitarian urge leads us to assume that true love erases hierarchy. By contrast, love in the biblical worldview respects hierarchy. Though the three persons of the Trinity are equal in essence and in the possession of all divine attributes, there is order and structure in their relationships. Trinitarian love does not belittle or erase the structure but is expressed precisely in terms of it. This does not mean that there can be no such thing as a relationship among equals. Among men, such relationships express the equality of essence among the three persons of the Godhead.  

The irony of humanistic paganism is that whilst claiming to represent social justice, it is found to be fundamentally anti-social, because it is non-relational. It does not seek communion or community (lit. common fellowship) but bare uniformity, androgyny and monotony. As such, it undermines in humanity other attributes that reflect our maker: freedom and responsibility; real diversity; and love or voluntary self-giving.

Paganism of course is not monolithic and its social vision varies depending on the emphasis placed on human society in history. In Buddhism ultimate reality is non-personal and so social relationships are not the primary concern. This worldview holds out no hope of a kingdom of God, a new society where people live in harmony and peace. Salvation is rather escape from the human condition and from individual personhood altogether. Buddhism is therefore fundamentally anti-social. Hinduism is similar. Acknowledging a pantheon of gods expressing the impersonal one of Brahman, the Hindu is not able to break out of an endless succession of ages and rebirths. It is again a fundamentally anti-social perspective since its inherent caste system designates some people as outcasts because they were born into the wrong family. There is no vision of a new humanity where caste distinctions are overcome. There is no social justice in these mythic concepts because these Eastern religions can give no meaning to the fact that man is a social being, nor can they account for his real personhood. The monadic conception of God within Islam leads to similar problems. God is so transcendent and remote he is likewise an unknown god. As a singularity, this unknown god is an impersonal unity and this leads to a unitary and totalitarian understanding of the state and often a cruel indifference to persons. Life is all too cheap in Islam because an unknowable and impersonal god has not revealed himself as a divine community of love, but rather ‘unveils’ arbitrary will, mediated through a medieval warlord. For such a god, nothing social can reflect his nature or be essential to his being – indeed they are foreign to his being. Why would such a god want any society and what would be the purpose and meaning of it?

Human beings as individuals reflect the unity of who God is. As a family and community we reflect the divine plurality of who he is. Because there is a glorious and perfect harmony in the One and the Many that is the triune God, we can experience socially something of the harmony of the One and the Many when we live in obedience to the revealed will of God. Smith states well the historical direction of the Christian’s social peace and justice: “Though perfect harmony never comes to fruition in this world of sin, it will characterise the social life of the resurrected society of the New Jerusalem. Ethics for man simply means being like God, for He is a God of love.”

Justice is social because God is a society, and he has placed us in family and community to render to all their due in terms of who God has made each one to be. In mutual self-giving, patterned on divine reciprocity, we set forth now, in history, the life of New Jerusalem. Thus we can only approach true justice in our lives and social order when we model ourselves on the divine community and say to the Father with the eternal Son made flesh, “not my will, but yours, be done” (Luke 22:42).

Dalrymple, *Not with a Bang*, 111.

Triune literally means three in one.


For a useful discussion of this see John Frame, *Cornelius Van Til: an Analysis of his Thought* (New Jersey: P&R, 1995), 63-78.


FAMILY: CHARITY Begins at Home


In this world a person can only be complacent if he or she is young enough, has money enough, is well enough, and, at the same time, lacks compassion for those about him. As soon as we face reality, the obscenity of the present situation strikes us in the face.

Francis A. Schaeffer

A recent survey conducted by the National Conference of Mayors indicates that a full 20 percent to 25 percent of the homeless street people in our cities suffer significant psychiatric disorders. Among the estimated half million homeless poor in the United States are thousands of mentally retarded, autistic, and clinically insane persons.

For many years, tax-supported institutionalization kept the psychiatrically impaired out of sight and out of mind. But dire overcrowding, gross mismanagement, misappropriation of funds, and bureaucratic irresponsibility have worked together to dismantle the effectiveness of state programs. As a result, thousands of patients are released into the general population by this social service system gone awry.

So where do these handicapped ex-patients go? Many are reabsorbed into society quite successfully. Others are sheltered by their families. But, unfortunately, the vast majority simply end up in the streets. Some are young, some are old, but almost all are dressed in rags stained dingy yellow by life in the streets. The pockets of their tattered overcoats and their shopping bags bulge with all the little bits of rubbish they collect and live on. They are filthy and suffering – bent and twisted by the downward curve of hunger, desperation, feeblemindedness and want. These are our nation’s untouchables – America’s pariahs: invisible, disposable, and surplus. They are the destitute waste of our failing, flailing welfare society.

What can be done to solve the problem of our handicapped exiles?

Geel, Belgium, is an interesting model of care for the unwanted, discarded mentally handicapped. Its system has been in effect since the middle of the fifteenth century. Over the course of five hundred-plus years, thousands of pilgrims have visited the Shrine of St. Dimpna in Geel. Mentally impaired or handicapped supplicants often travel long distances to the site in hope of a cure. Although records of the church attest to the many miracles performed by the Lord, many of the pilgrims are not cured. In such cases, all too often the natural family, in despair and frustration, returns home, leaving the supplicant behind. Invariably, local families will then open their rooms to those abandoned. Again and again, the same sad scenario is replayed.

As time passed, word spread throughout Europe that the people of Geel had hearts of compassion and mercy, and would open their rooms to the distressed, unwanted, and feebleminded. To this very day, over a thousand families within this town of thirty thousand exercise hospitality and provide medical care for one or more impaired boarders.

There has never been a recruitment program, never a central bureaucracy, and never a central administration. There have only been Christian families, generation after generation, demonstrating Christ’s love, compelled by the Word-and-deed mandate of the Gospel. There are no mentally retarded, no autistic, no handicapped outcasts on the streets of Geel, because there the
people of God take seriously the biblical mandate to care for the helpless and equip the poor.1

In the United States, thousands of psychologically broken victims clutter our alleys and flophouses. The reason? Christian families have failed. We can't blame “deficit-conscious politics.” We can't even blame welfare's war on the poor. The Bible teaches us that the family – provoked and equipped by the church – is the primary agent of charity in a society. It is not the State's job to take care of the poor, the unemployed, the dispossessed, the untouchables, and the aliens. Nor is it the job of the social service agencies. It is Christian families that are to provide environments of stability, healing, nurture, encouragement, and responsibility.

THE PRIMACY OF THE FAMILY

If families fail – because the Church has failed to mobilize, motivate, equip, and enlist them – not only do the hungry and helpless suffer, we all suffer.

Christians in our day had best pay heed to an interesting scenario played out in the life of Samuel. Scripture gives us an intriguing glimpse at his family life and the role it played in the national arena.

It seems that, as judge over Israel, Samuel was a very busy man. Each year, we are told, he made the long and arduous “circuit from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah” (1 Sam. 7:16). His duties left little time for the diligent oversight of his home life in Ramah, and thus, he attempted to rule his family from afar. The result of that course, so sincerely undertaken, was nothing short of disastrous.

The Bible informs us that Samuel's neglect of family affairs was readily apparent in his sons. They failed consistently to walk in a manner befitting righteousness. “They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice” (1 Sam. 8:3). From their judicial seat in Beersheba, they exasperated the people and defiled judgment.

This personal tragedy, as bad as it was, was just the beginning of Samuel's woes. You see, the Israelites, seeing the wickedness of Samuel's family and the senescence of Samuel, began to panic. They began to fear for the future. They began to fret over the stability of their political and cultural order.

In time, the elders came together in Ramah to confront Samuel with their fears and to present him with their demands (1 Sam. 8:4). Samuel's failure in his home had undermined the foundations of national security. Thus, they wanted him to take immediate political action in order to preserve life and liberty in the land. They wanted a king. Like all the other nations around them, they wanted a king (1 Sam. 8:5).

Not surprisingly, Samuel was grieved. His entire life's work had been committed to preserving the standard of Biblical Law and justice in Israel. And now it seemed that his under sighted neglect at home was nullifying his every accomplishment. In desperation, Samuel attempted to warn the people of the inherent dangers of a monarchy (1 Sam. 8:11-18). There would be taxation. There would be conscription. There would be coercion. There would be tyranny. It was inevitable. But still the people could not be moved (1 Sam. 8:19). Even the prospect of tyranny down the road looked better to them than an eroding social order under Samuel's debauched progeny. A king and his tyranny it would be.

The Bible teaches us that the family – guided and shaped by the church – is the primary agent of stability in a society. It is the family that is charged with the responsibility of infusing children with the principles of God's Word (Deut. 6:6-7). It is the family that is charged with the responsibility of upbraiding, restraining, and rebuking behaviour (Prov. 23:13-14). It is the family that is charged with the responsibility of being culture's basic building block (Gen. 9:1-7). It is the family that is charged with the responsibility of balancing liberty with justice, freedom with responsibility, and license with restriction (Deut. 11:18-21). It is the family that is charged with the responsibility of relieving want and destitution within their own ranks...
Charity Begins at Home

15

“The Bible teaches us that the family – guided and shaped by the church – is the primary agent of stability in a society.”

“...and, consequently, tragically subdued. Matters of “great” consequence were subverted by matters of “little” consequence.

Samuel learned too late that families are the primary agents of stability in society. Not judges, not constitutions, not prophets, not bureaucrats, not kings – but families.

Scripture teaches that the family is the moral and institutional foundation upon which all human relations are built. It is central to every social endeavor from education (Prov. 22:6) to governance (Deut. 6:20-25), from economics (Deut. 21:17) to spirituality (Eph. 6:1-4), from the care of the aged (1 Tim. 5:3-13) to the subduing of the earth (Gen. 1:26-28). To all these responsibilities is added another. The family is designated by God as the chief agency of human welfare. It is the divinely appointed institution that is most effective in solving the problems of poverty, sickness, and crisis. It is the only one which fully knows its limitations and strengths.

For centuries, the Christians in Geel have provided, for all the world to see, living proof that no other institution, agency, or program can care for the poor and afflicted as effectually and as securely as the family. They have demonstrated what Christians should have known all along: as society’s safety net, the family cannot be supplemented or supplanted in the work of charity without distorting and ultimately destroying charity. In her best-selling book, The Way Home, Mary Pride relates:

When I was young, even though TV had exploded into every house, parents still told their sons and daughters that charity began at home. Those were the days before the Great Society and the war on poverty, before it was discovered that charity begins in Washington. Americans had not yet learned to be ashamed of taking care of their families first, and then branching out to help other people. We did not yet feel responsible for solving the entire world’s problems before solving our own. But the family is now out of the running when it comes to charity. Private, personal charity has, in our generation, largely been replaced by institutions whose professional job is to do good.²

Yet those institutions, those usurpers of the family, have utterly failed.

The reasons for this are legion.

First, family charity is personal. No matter how benevolent, no matter how philanthropic, and no matter how altruistic a social service agency may be, it can never hope to match the personal intimacy of a family. Except in the rare and extreme cases where strife and bitterness have completely disintegrated familial identity, there is no replacement for the close ties of brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, parents and children, aunts and uncles, kith and kin.

Charity is people helping people by the grace of God. Charity is personal. Charity is the merciful expression of love and hope and life from one person to another. So when, in our attempts to aid the poor, we depersonalize and institutionalize charity, it ceases to be charity. When we begin to delegate away all our familial responsibilities to bureaucracies and professional humanitarians, the war on poverty inevitably turns ugly and becomes the war on the poor.

Second, family charity is flexible. Care can be carefully adapted to fit each unique need. The
federal welfare system can’t afford that luxury. Their procedures must remain nationally uniform. They are bound to an endless array of charts, graphs, budgets, time limits, rules, and regulations. The family, on the other hand, can custom-design charity. It can specify and pinpoint the precise kind of aid for the precise length of time so that the needy are genuinely helped. There is less waste, so the cost is significantly lower. There are fewer delays, so the agony of waiting is eliminated. And the aid can be stopped at any time if it appears that that may be the best course of action.

The federal system is a lumbering, uncoordinated monster, unable to react to new situations, unable to change directions when circumstances so warrant. The family, on the other hand, is agile and flexible. So while the social workers are forced, out of sheer necessity, to treat a street person from downtown Detroit the same way as an unemployed auto worker from Flint, the family is not so encumbered. The family can meet needs and solve problems. The welfare system can only create dependencies – as if poverty weren’t bad enough.

Third, family charity facilitates accountability: because the benefactor knows the beneficiary on a personal, intimate, one-on-one basis, there is far less room for sly manipulation and fraud. Income is harder to conceal. Sloth is next to impossible to hide. Everything is out in the open. Again, this is a luxury the social service system cannot afford. Its nameless, faceless operation is entirely incapable of engendering anything more than a stiff, statistical accounting of its clients. The magnitude of its caseload makes an investigation for graft impractical, and even an enforcement of basic regulations becomes increasingly impossible, and perhaps, illegal, depending on the whims and fancies of tomorrow’s judicial finagling.

Accountability in charity is only possible one-on-one. And one-on-one charity is only possible in the family.

Fourth, family charity reinforces positive values and moral fidelity. As R.J. Rushdoony has pointed out, under the welfare system, “there is a disintegration of the individual and of the family, and extensive demoralization.” Under the family system, however, “untold millions are supported able and well, with the best of social consequences.”

Welfare breeds guilt, bitterness, sloth, envy, and vice. Family charity breeds loyalty, gratefulness, initiative, and productivity.

A recent survey of unemployed workers in Utah showed that those who chose to go on the federal dole were ten times more likely to suffer divorce, three times more likely to turn to crime, and twice as likely to abuse alcohol or drugs than those who did not. But then, we didn’t need a survey to tell us that. One look around a government housing project should be enough to convince anyone that there is something wrong, terribly wrong, with the values that welfare breeds.

Fifth, family charity is effective. “Welfare agencies maintained by state and federal agencies have provided some kind of economic existence for as many as fifteen or more millions at one time,” says Rushdoony. “But, daily, far more than a hundred million are supported by the family system.” Families can do the job, and do it well.

A U.S. Senate subcommittee report estimated that if every Christian family would only take care of its own, the federal dole would decrease a full 30 percent. If every church would then take care of its own, the dole would decrease another 12 percent. And then, if each of those churches would provide a sponsoring family to exercise charity to a single outsider, the federal dole could be eliminated completely. Just like that. Families simply fulfilling their Christian responsibility to their own (1 Tim. 5:8), to their brethren in Christ (Gal. 6:10), and to the stranger and alien (Ex. 23:9) can so effectively do the work of charity that no back-up system, no federal bureaucracy, no matching funds, and no professional humanitarians are necessary. Families can do the job.
When churches mobilize and motivate, equip and enlist families to practice authentic Christianity, they have not only gotten God’s people out where the needs are and seen those needs met in accord with the Great Commission mandate, they have also set in motion the power of body life. They have catalyzed the practice of the priesthood of believers.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS

From the dawning of the church on the day of Pentecost, virtually all Christians have held, at least in theory, to the practice of the priesthood of believers. When the Orthodox churches of the East broke with Rome in the eleventh century, it was primarily over this issue. And later when Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, and other sixteenth-century Protestants challenged the authority of Rome, it was again the priesthood of believers that was at issue. The reformers in both cases asserted that the people of God were not merely recipients or spectators, but also vital participants in the affairs of the church. Thus, the heretofore inactive and immobilized believers were unleashed to do the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:12) and to exercise their gifts (Rom. 12:6).

Wherever the orthodox message reached, the priesthood of believers was emphasized. New Christians were taught early on that they were “being built up into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:5). They learned that they were “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God,” called to “declare the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His wonderful light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

Church history affirms that whenever this truth has been actively taught and practiced, there has been great revival and renewal. However, when the church has narrowed its view of ministry to the point where only certain people at certain times with certain training can perform God’s work, there has been only atrophy and decline. In recent years, despite — or perhaps because of — the effects of the body life movement, the home Bible study movement, the charismatic movement, the parachurch movement, the church growth movement, and the recovery movement the church has drifted away from its reformed and orthodox moorings and its practice of the priesthood of believers. Christianity has become, by and large, a spectator sport. It has become an institution, an organization, a vast complex of properties. Long-time Senate Chaplain Richard Halverson once estimated that even after taking into account Sunday school teachers, choir members, youth sponsors, ushers, and committee members, fewer than one out of every twenty church members ever actually participates in the work of the ministry. All the rest come to church just to watch. Since the church can only “grow and build itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Eph. 4:15-16), this institutional drift has impoverished the work of the Gospel. It has resulted in a church that is, according to pastor and author Frank Tillapaugh, “ministry-helpless.”

A new emphasis on the priesthood of believers in our day would bring about at least three major changes in our churches:

First, Christians would begin to understand and accept their scriptural responsibilities. They would spring into action. Liberated from institutional limits, innovative and powerful ministries would blossom from newly unfettered gifts. They would function as priests, accountable directly and individually to the Lord and Giver of Life. They would move out beyond institutions and traditions and become salt and light, sharing the Gospel, reaching the lost, and mobilizing their families to care for the hungry, the naked, and the infirm.

Second, Christians would begin to think and act in terms of the covenant. Knowing that they were not merely individual priests, but a priesthood, they would begin to work together. They would cooperate. They would coordinate. They would network. As a people bonded together by the covenant of God, they would view all their work, all their ministries, and all...
their responsibilities in terms of the many. As a priesthood – and not just a collection of isolated priests, each going separately to God – they would be a community of priests. They would be priests to each other. Monolithic problems like hunger and homelessness would not be left to a catch-as-you-can haphazardness but would be confronted by the unified resources and the coordinated faithfulness of all the families of the covenant.

Third, Christians would begin to look outward with optimism once again. They would comprehend that priesthood is not just for the internal life of the church; it is for the world. They would view themselves as ambassadors. They would move out to claim this poor fallen world for their Master and King. They would become Kingdom-conscious instead of program-conscious. They would begin to measure success by the standard of Scripture instead of the standard of the world and thus would willingly commit to difficult, multigenerational tasks, like the total reconstruction of social welfare. Knowing that a priesthood has the responsibility of both representing God to men and men to God, they would begin to minimize petty differences and move with confidence towards victory.

THE ONE AND THE MANY

The practice of the priesthood of believers is a practical reflection of the biblical balance between the one and the many. It is the application of both individual responsibility and corporate life. What this means for scriptural compassion should be obvious: families are the primary agents of charity in society, but anarchy need not reign. Families are responsible and accountable to God to live out authentic Christianity, but they need not tackle poverty alone, isolated and uncoordinated. God’s people are called together in the new covenant (Heb. 7:22). They are to act covenantally (2 Cor. 3:6). They are to synchronize their efforts and maximize effect through cooperation (1 Cor. 12:7). The Christian day school and homeschool movements had their genesis when parents began to take seriously their responsibility to educate their children, thus raising them “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). Yet usually those families did not just strike out alone – even when their classrooms were little more than chairs pulled up to the kitchen table. They worked in tandem with other families and with their churches, pooling resources, sharing expenses, and delegating functions.

Very similarly, families can be coordinated by churches to take up their responsibilities in caring for the poor. The churches can maintain the records, initiate the programs, administer the resources, and make the referrals, freeing the families to concentrate on personal ministry, succor, and relief. The churches can provide security, expertise, and supervision, while the families begin the arduous task of restoring the needy to self-reliance and productivity.

The church is charged with the responsibility of equipping the saints (Eph. 4:12) and motivating believers with a sense of mission (Titus 3:8). The individual believers and their families are then to do the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:12) and to bear the burdens of others, “thus fulfilling the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). Any modern model of biblical charity will see this balance between the one and the many deliberately implemented from the start – individual, faithful families and networking, covenantal churches serving in unison to provide hope for the hopeless.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Carl W. Rich was convinced. For some time, he had watched, listened, and learned. Now he was ready to act. “At first, when the elders and deacons began to encourage the families of the church to care for the poor, I was quite skeptical,” he admitted. “But the more I saw and heard, the more convinced I became.” He and his wife, Betsy, began by volunteering two evenings a week handling calls at the church office, posting jobs on the bulletin board, and distributing food to the prescreened applicants.

“Christians would begin to look outward with optimism once again. They would comprehend that priesthood is not just for the internal life of the church; it is for the world.”
“The way the program has been set up by the church, families can begin right away making a difference in the lives of the needy. I, for one, finally feel as if I’m doing some good. Never in all my days have I had so many opportunities to share the Lord and to exercise my gifts. Betsy and I are closer than ever. This whole program is just fantastic. It’s as if I’m really putting it all together: evangelism, discipleship, compassion, spiritual gifts, cooperation, and family togetherness.”

THERE’S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Scripture teaches that the family is the primary agent of stability in society, providing as it does the moral and institutional foundation upon which all human relations are built. Thus, when the family fails, society itself fails. Similarly, when the family is supplanted or suppressed in the work of charity, true charity is distorted and ultimately destroyed.

The family is the best agent for the dissemination of charity because it is personal, flexible, accountable, reinforcing, and effective. As a result, the family can perform the task of charity efficiently and discriminately without welfare bureaucracies, matching federal funds, or professional humanitarians.

But in order for the family to accomplish this feat of daring, it will need some help. In order for the place of the family to be restored to its proper function in society, the church must once again emphasize the orthodox and reformed doctrine of the priesthood of believers. Only when the church enables the family to comprehend its centrality to the work of the ministry will any real progress be made toward solving the great problems of our day. Only then will a balance be forged between individual liberty and corporate responsibility. Only then will deprivation and lack meet their match.

Thus, individual, faithful families and networking, covenantal churches, serving hand in hand, form the infrastructure around which a functioning model of biblical charity is built.

1Editor’s note: This piece was originally published in 1995, however, recent research confirms that the practice not only continues today, but that Geel is being held up as a model for other communities. See Karin Wells, “Psychiatric Community Care: Belgian Town sets Gold Standard,” CBC News, March 9, 2014, http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/psychiatric-community-care-belgian-town-sets-gold-standard-1.2557698.


4Ibid.

ASK ANY PASTOR YOU know and he will tell you that it is forbidden for a pastor to support or oppose political candidates or leaders from the pulpit. This idea seems to be accepted almost as firmly as some Gospel truths. But is it justifiably true legally and theologically? Is it even wise? Should the state via its taxing authority really determine the content of a pastor’s remarks? Should tax exemption pivot on the pastor’s prose? Many, if not most, pastors have not thought through this issue at any level and merely accept this self-censorship as “conventional wisdom.”

There are good reasons, however, why a pastor should fearlessly, freely, and from the pulpit, support or oppose political candidates.

1. SCRIPTURE WARRANTS ADDRESSING POLITICAL LEADERS

The Bible evidences many examples in which spiritual leaders address political leaders both positively and negatively. This occurs negatively when a leader’s efforts conflict with God’s Word or commands. In the same vein leaders are praised when their behavior aligns with God’s Word.

One of the earliest examples occurs when Moses confronted Pharaoh (Ex. 5-12). God specifically tasked Moses to confront Pharaoh because he was enslaving and oppressing the Israelites. Moses didn’t respond by explaining to God that a spiritual leader should not address politics and political leaders. No, Moses obeyed and confronted Pharaoh.

In another example Nathan confronted King David after he committed adultery and murder (2 Sam. 12). Nathan didn’t respond by telling God that politics is off-limits or that political leaders shouldn’t be confronted with God’s truth.

In 1 Kings 17, Elijah confronted King Ahab with God’s judgment of drought because of Ahab’s sinful behavior. In 1 Kings 22, King Ahab summoned Micaiah and ordered him to prophesy victory for Ahab. Micaiah vowed only to speak what the Lord told him and then proceeded to confront Ahab with God’s decree that he shouldn’t go into battle, and if he did he would die. And die he did.

Additionally, the Psalms, which are, among other things, worship songs, frequently address political leaders, including those outside the covenant community of Israel. Psalm 2 calls political leaders to “kiss the Son” and follow His ways. Psalm 58 specifically addresses and confronts “rulers” who “speak unjustly” (Ps. 58:1). Psalm 83 calls out several political leaders of nations who have wronged God’s people, and petitions that God destroy them. Psalm 94 notes wicked leaders who “frame injustice by statute.” It would be odd to sing about these things poetically in worship songs, but have them considered off-limits in the pastor’s prose proclaimed from the pulpit. A pastor can sing it, but not say it? Tax policy should arbitrarily turn on such things?

God spoke through numerous prophets, the spiritual leaders of their day, to political leaders who violated God’s dictates. And lest you think that in the Old Testament the spiritual leaders of the day only confronted the kings of Israel or Judah, remember how Daniel confronted Nebuchadnezzar over his pride and told him that he would be driven away from his kingship like an animal until he acknowledged “that the Most
Politics and the Pulpit

in ways that imply addressing civil magistrates in the context of the corporate religious-congregational gathering. For example, God commands believers to “honor the emperor” (1 Pet. 2:17). How are believers to honor the emperor if we do not know how (or whether) the “emperor” aligns with Scripture? Pastors can help to bridge the gap between when those words were written and today by being willing to speak about what it looks like for today’s Christians to “honor the emperor.”

Scripture also commands that “prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving” be made for “kings and all those in authority, that we may lead peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness” (1 Tim. 2:1-2). If believers can pray for President Clinton’s marriage to be preserved after his adultery was revealed, why can’t pastors address that same issue from the pulpit in order to direct the believers to obey that scriptural command to pray? To maintain fidelity with this command, why can’t pastors express thankfulness that a President’s actions and policies respect life, marriage, or religious freedom? It would be odd to have tax exemption arbitrarily pivot on whether an issue is “prayed for” by the flock or “preached upon” by the shepherd.

The New Testament continues this biblical practice of religious leaders addressing political leaders. John the Baptist was imprisoned and ultimately beheaded because he had confronted Herod on his deviation from God’s design for marriage (Matt. 14:3-4). Jesus called Herod Antipas, another leader, a fox, and refused to leave when Herod wanted to kill him (Luke 13:31-32). And, when on trial, Jesus reminded Pontius Pilate that he would have no authority – that’s legal and political authority – unless it had been granted to him from above (John 19).

There are also scriptural instances in which political leaders are praised or urged by God’s people to do the right thing when facing a moral choice. For example, Nehemiah petitioned Artaxerxes to allow the return of the Jewish exiles to Jerusalem (Neh. 2:1-8). When Artaxerxes does the right thing, he is praised by the religious leaders. Esther intervened with King Xerxes to prevent a planned slaughter of the Jewish people (Esther 5, 7, 8). When President Clinton signed the DOMA and RFRA bills – laws protecting marriage and religious liberty, should not religious leaders be free to commend (or condemn) his action in doing so?

The Bible also instructs the followers of Jesus in high is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes” (Dan. 4:25). And remember how Jonah confronted Nineveh, including its leaders, because of its sin (Jon. 3:1-9).

And we cannot simply discard these Old Testament examples as inapplicable under a misunderstanding that religion and the state were one and the same back then. The fact is that the Old Testament contained a version of the “separation between church and state.” Priests, with a few exceptions, came from the tribe of Levi, and kings came from other tribes, primarily the tribe of Judah. Kings who tried to exercise priestly roles were punished by God (See Saul in 1 Samuel 13 and Uzziah in 2 Chronicles 26). Moses was not Aaron; there was an institutional separation – but not an ethical one – between the priest and polis.

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The Bible also instructs the followers of Jesus in high is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes” (Dan. 4:25). And remember how Jonah confronted Nineveh, including its leaders, because of its sin (Jon. 3:1-9).

And we cannot simply discard these Old Testament examples as inapplicable under a misunderstanding that religion and the state were one and the same back then. The fact is that the Old Testament contained a version of the “separation between church and state.” Priests, with a few exceptions, came from the tribe of Levi, and kings came from other tribes, primarily the tribe of Judah. Kings who tried to exercise priestly roles were punished by God (See Saul in 1 Samuel 13 and Uzziah in 2 Chronicles 26). Moses was not Aaron; there was an institutional separation – but not an ethical one – between the priest and polis.

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The Bible also instructs the followers of Jesus in ways that imply addressing civil magistrates in the context of the corporate religious-congregational gathering. For example, God commands believers to “honor the emperor” (1 Pet. 2:17). How are believers to honor the emperor if we do not know how (or whether) the “emperor” aligns with Scripture? Pastors can help to bridge the gap between when those words were written and today by being willing to speak about what it looks like for today’s Christians to “honor the emperor.”

Scripture also commands that “prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving” be made for “kings and all those in authority, that we may lead peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness” (1 Tim. 2:1-2). If believers can pray for President Clinton’s marriage to be preserved after his adultery was revealed, why can’t pastors address that same issue from the pulpit in order to direct the believers to obey that scriptural command to pray? To maintain fidelity with this command, why can’t pastors express thankfulness that a President’s actions and policies respect life, marriage, or religious freedom? It would be odd to have tax exemption arbitrarily pivot on whether an issue is “prayed for” by the flock or “preached upon” by the shepherd.

2. PASTORAL POLITICAL SILENCE: A RECENT PARTISAN INVENTION

The idea that pastors should remain silent when it comes to supporting or opposing political leaders is something quite new. This is true even if we only consider American history. The first 166 years of America, from the time of the Constitution’s ratification until 1954, pastors could, and indeed did, speak freely from their pulpits both supporting and opposing political candidates for office. Pastors were not timid in doing so.

The pulpits of New England thundered with revolutionary fervor, a fervor grounded in a biblical resistance to tyranny. Jonathan Mayhew, a colonial pastor, was not shy in preaching against tyranny. In the preface to a sermon he preached in 1750, he addressed this very issue:
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Running for reelection to the United States Senate, Johnson found himself opposed by two secular non-profit organizations. One was called Facts Forum and one was called the Committee for Constitutional Government. These two organizations were dedicated to opposing Communism and they believed that Johnson’s stance against Communism was too lenient. The organizations began distributing thousands of pieces of literature opposing Johnson’s reelection bid.

Johnson tried to find ways to silence these organizations. He even inquired of the IRS as to whether the organizations were violating tax law by opposing his candidacy but was told that they were not. With his reelection chances in jeopardy, Johnson came up with a cunning idea to change the law to prohibit non-profits from supporting or opposing candidates for office.

On July 2, 1954, Johnson appeared on the U.S. Senate floor and offered an amendment to a massive bill that modernized and overhauled the tax code. The legislative history shows that no debate occurred on the amendment and it passed with a voice vote. It went on to become part of the bill that President Eisenhower later signed into law on August 16, 1954.

One scholar who studied the history of the Johnson Amendment concluded:

The ban on electioneering is not rooted in constitutional provisions for separation of church and state. It actually goes back to 1954 when Congress was revising the tax code, anti-communism was in full bloom, and elections were taking place in Texas. In this highly-charged political environment, Lyndon Johnson introduced an amendment banning section 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations from participating in any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office. His amendment was directed at anti-communist groups such as Facts Forum and the Committee for Constitutional Government which stood between him and his goals of crippling

Mayhew’s view was not his own but was shared by many other pastors throughout American history. In a sermon in 1800, William Linn opposed Thomas Jefferson’s candidacy for President. Linn said: “I will venture it as my serious opinion, that rather than be instrumental in the election of Mr. Jefferson, it would be more acceptable to God and beneficial to the interests of your country, to throw away your vote…. Let me further repeat, [in this address] the single thing intended, is to show that… he ought not to be honored and entrust with the Presidency of the United States of America.”

In 1864, Pastor William Stearns endorsed Abraham Lincoln for President, saying: “There is a power in this land hardly second to that of an immense army. It is the wisdom and honesty, and the reputation of it inspiring confidence at home and abroad, which belong to the character of Abraham Lincoln.”

Other pastors likewise throughout American history spoke from the pulpit for or against candidates for office. That all changed, though, in 1954 with the passage of the Johnson Amendment. In 1954, Lyndon Johnson was running for reelection to the United States Senate. In the midst of a campaign he was supposed to easily win, he found himself opposed by two secular non-profit organizations. One was called Facts Forum and one was called the Committee for Constitutional Government. These two organizations were dedicated to opposing Communism and they believed that Johnson’s stance against Communism was too lenient. The organizations began distributing thousands of pieces of literature opposing Johnson’s reelection bid.
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McCarthyism, thwarting Allan Shivers’ efforts to control the Democratic Party in Texas, and defeating Dudley Dougherty. Johnson was not trying to address any constitutional issue related to separation of church and state; and he did not offer the amendment because of anything that churches had done. Churches were not banned from endorsing candidates because they are religious organizations; they were banned because they have the same tax-exempt status as Facts Forum and the Committee for Constitutional Government, the right-wing organizations that Johnson was really after… The ban on electioneering has nothing to do with the First Amendment or Jeffersonian principles of separation of church and state.”

This history discloses that a muted pulpit did not arise from any enlightened or noble constitutional principle, but rather became an unintended casualty from a partisan end run that was wholly unconcerned with religious expression – pure politics that was not pure at all. The current ban and self-censorship by pastors supporting or opposing candidates flows from a rank incumbent-protection measure passed by a powerful Senator bent on keeping his seat in the halls of power. Perhaps, as Jesus said of Herod Antipas, Senator Johnson too was a fox.

3. ADDRESSING PUBLIC POLICIES AND PERSONS BENEFITS THE COMMON GOOD

As believers, we are commanded to “do justice” (Micah 6:8). And, God calls His people, especially when living “outside the religious bubble” to “seek the welfare (shalom) of the city” (Jer. 29). The God of Scripture loves justice and hates when injustice pervades a society. (See Is. 61:8; Amos 5:23-24; Prov. 14:34; Prov. 29:2). Confronting evil and exalting righteousness by being salt and light, seeking God’s kingdom and His righteousness (justice), are hallmarks and evidences of fidelity to the Christian faith.

Christians as saved FROM something FOR something (Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:14). How can a shepherd equip the sheep to reflect these ethical mandates without addressing them in his calling as a vocational preacher?

Is a religious perspective irrelevant to the common good? Does religious motivation undermine or motivate the common good? Recall that Christian leaders and their words – many of them uttered from the pulpit – undergirded and sustained the abolition movements in the UK and the US, as well as the subsequent civil rights movement. The IRS would have silenced Wilberforce and the Clapham sect as well as Martin Luther King, Jr. and his allies. Silencing such giants of justice would impoverish the public square and curtail the expansion of public justice.

Finally, note that in the US, it is the people – not the politicians – in whom political power resides. Many of those people practice religion publicly, that is, they try to live according to religious precepts. Far from being irrelevant, those religious precepts enrich the public discourse. proclaiming how religion affects public life is part and parcel of informing a citizen on how to live faithfully – to be IN the world, but not OF it. But to do so, they must learn how their faith applies outside the church doors, including how it applies to matters of culture and, yes, public policy.

And remember that the politicians these citizens elect make and enforce policies and laws that impact people and our society as a whole. For too long, politicians have gotten a free pass from moral and biblical scrutiny by the church and its pastors. Silencing the pulpit from addressing such matters withholds a crucial mechanism for developing and enriching the political checks and balances held by the citizenry which are integral to a well-functioning constitutional republic. As Jefferson wrote, governments are instituted among men to secure – not confer – inalienable rights, rights bestowed by the Creator. The IRS rule treats voters more as subjects than as citizens. Politics in the pulpit is neither profane, nor provocative; rather, it is a prudent practice for promoting public justice.

THE PULPIT: GOD’S OR CAESAR’S?

Yet, objectors and objections remain. Some refreshingly abound with pastoral care and
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Concern—something needed but frequently omitted in many of today’s “cultural discussions.” Yet, many objections never really interact with the central issue actually framed: Is it the State or the Church who decides the content of what is preached from the pulpit? Despite the objectors’ good and well-intended cautions, we see a stream of fallacious and/or incoherent cul-de-sacs that cloud the analytic waters. The commonly occurring objections will be assessed. Their surface plausibility is wholly illusory.

1. “NO CERTAINTY, NO CONFIDENCE?”

Voicing this objection, one man asserts that what’s at stake when preaching is “dividing the church from the world.” He uses this premise to assert that because a pastor could be mistaken or less than certain regarding a political issue or a candidate, a pastor should rarely, if ever, address these areas. Even overlooking this dubious and reductionist description of preaching, this assertion lacks merit.

A.

Every time a preacher says anything, whether “political” or not, he could be mistaken; more problematic: how confident or certain must a pastor be before he passes this “certainty test”? And, how would he (or anyone else) know? If this objection were correct, no prudent pastor would say anything. While wisdom is always “at issue,” it should sound in warning, not as a trump card gagging all political commentary.

B.

The point here is not that every pastor should unwisely spout inane political or partisan slogans, but rather that a pastor possesses the liberty—liberty that should not be constrained by the State—to wisely address these matters and that in wisely addressing such matters, he edifies and equips the sheep and glorifies the Lord.

i. This objection implies that addressing politics and candidates may be (somehow?) deviating from proclaiming the gospel by exceeding the preacher’s authority. But that is not the Apostle Paul’s understanding. In Paul’s calculus, ethics, including ethics in the public square applied to persons (“law”), aligns with the faithful application of the gospel (1 Tim. 1:8-10).

ii. Now, Scripture equips people for “righteousness” and “every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Does the public square need righteousness? Is politics a good work? (Rom. 13). Yes and yes. These matters (good works and righteousness) form the very core of being salt and light and should be the directional beam of our conduct; and that conduct, that is, those good works, are ethical in nature (Matt. 5:13-20; 6:33). This means they also have political implications. Ethics/law written on the heart and then applied to all of life—that is, drawing and applying distinctions between the moral and the immoral—forms the very essence of the New Covenant, effectuated by the means of Christ’s life, death, resurrection, and ascension (Jer. 31:33). Failing to address such matters withholds God’s full Word from the flock.

iii. If a pastor refuses do this from the pulpit, he is not faithfully executing his calling. A moral or ethical matter labeled “political” does not cease being a moral matter that would benefit from the light of God’s Word.

iv. Sometimes the objector asserts this point this way: “Should pastors support or oppose political candidates or leaders from the pulpit?” [emphasis added]. But, this formula prejudices the question. The real issue is whether a pastor’s liberty to address moral matters should be cabined by the State. Moral matters necessarily include both issues and people—issues don’t repent; people by grace do.

2. “ISSUES MAYBE; CANDIDATES NEVER!”

This objection creates a false and frankly palsied dichotomy contending that addressing issues somehow differs from addressing particular candidates, which is deemed particularly problematic and even pernicious. This is erroneous: 
A. HOW do institutions, including political institutions, operate and address matters? They do so via agents who are persons. Issues are effectuated by persons. One cannot coherently divorce the agent from the issue because the agent IS the actor who effectuates the issue.

B. Often linked to this objection is the assertion that when candidates are considered, the issues are complex and this somehow precludes addressing persons. This too is mistaken:

i. In the first place this contention fallaciously assumes a moral equivalency among issues, which is plainly false. A candidate who wishes to close pregnancy resource centers is different from one who wants to raise the tax increment finance ratios. The issues may be complex, but they are not morally equivalent. And some issues, such as those predicated on or derived from the Decalogue, define the “weightier matters of the law.” After all, Jesus tells us that the greatest in the Kingdom follow and teach others to follow God’s law (Matt. 5:19). As the context makes plain, this includes the public application of the commandments, beyond the congregation.

ii. EVERY matter may be complex in some sense; a leader’s very job however is to discern (Heb. 5), not avoid, the complexities occurring in God’s fallen, but redeemed, world... and then, address them using the whole counsel of God. (Acts 20:27)

C. Objectors also claim that while on occasion an issue can be addressed, (somehow?) the pastor ought not to explicitly endorse or oppose a candidate. How does this distinction make a moral difference? The purported justification is that a “direct application” from scriptural principle to the issue provides the decisive standard. This lacks merit.

i. A “direct” application of a scriptural principle may very well directly mean not supporting the person who holds certain unchristian positions. Paul and John do this as indicated below and the underlying principle they use is nowhere limited to dogmatics or heresiarchs.

ii. The sheep draw inferences from sermons – at least that should be the goal; it’s called applying Scripture. To say that preaching Scripture does not apply to persons effectuating issues, but only to the issues themselves, is to truncate Scripture’s witness and intent. The pastor is not somehow “safe” or faithful if he only draws the scriptural line to a key issue but omits “naming names.”

iii. From a less abstract perspective: if a congregant sins in the way he is addressing a public issue, including voting, how can he learn to repent absent spiritual guidance from the pulpit? Is our public and political life to remain unsanctified by Scripture? Is our political life, including voting, a zone of supposed neutrality? What if these matters are addressed in a Sunday school class? Can the pastor “name names” there, but not during his sermon? On what principled basis?

D. And, what if a political candidate or officeholder is a member of the congregation and he sins publicly and gravely? Presumably, the pastor or elders would at some point in the discipline process deem identifying the unrepentant candidate as a proper step of church discipline. But somehow, this application of Scripture to a public person magically becomes improper if the person is not a member of the preacher’s congregation, or if he or she is a member of a different congregation or no congregation at all? This distinction is arbitrary and thus unreliable.

E. Positively put, Scripture often “calls out” actors by name, warning the faithful to avoid them and thus NOT support them: see, e.g., Alexander, Hymenaeus, and Diotrephes (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 4:14; 3 John 9).
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i. “Naming names” enjoys biblical warrant as to individuals. As shown previously, this applies to political actors as well. Many objectors either ignore this scriptural evidence or dismiss it with special pleading.

ii. What about “endorsing” political parties? Well, Jesus “names party names” as well (e.g. Rev. 2 and 3 – Jesus identifies several parties with whom church members are affiliated and then commands them to repent and disassociate). And, of course the Pharisees, the Herodians, the Sadducees, the Sanhedrin, and the Roman officials are all collectively addressed as parties as well.

iii. Deeming candidates “off-limits” also misses an entire biblical category and thereby artificially truncates crucial biblical considerations: Scripture is concerned not only with “issues,” but also with the person, the leader, himself – irrespective of the issues:

(a) What about a candidate’s competence? Is this biblically off-limits? Certainly, if a pastor knows that a gaping deficit exists in a candidate’s competence for the position, he ought to seek the “welfare of the city” (Jer. 29) by alerting the congregation to that deficit. We should not elect deaf and blind folks to serve as health inspectors.

(b) Similarly, this overlooks a candidate’s character. A pastor who remains silent withholds good from the city if he knows that a particular candidate lacks the character to hold a position of responsibility and leadership. See e.g., Deut. 16:19 (bribe-takers); 17:14ff; 2 Chron. 26 (King Uzziah’s pride)

(c) Thus, aside from specific policy matters, a candidate – as a person – may lack the competence or character suitable for holding office or exercising leadership. Limiting preaching to issues and not addressing persons qua persons is necessarily incomplete.

Finally, objectors often contend “division” may result from a pastor “naming names.”

A. This assertion is fallacious as it commits the “false cause” fallacy (post hoc ergo propter hoc) as well as committing the hasty generalization error.

B. Moreover, this point cuts both ways: what about division “caused” by a pastor who refuses to address a prominent cultural issue that impacts the congregation’s ability to discharge its calling? A pastor’s silence can just as easily precipitate division as well as threaten the congregation’s ability to do what it is called to do.

C. And, according to Paul, division is not necessarily bad; division can be the means by which the faithful are made evident (1 Cor. 11:9).

D. Accordingly, invoking the “unity” card – without more – therefore provides no guidance to the question at hand. Why? Because every assertion from the pulpit potentially could precipitate disunity at some level. If three people depart from a 6000-member congregation, is that inappropriate division? What if two depart? One? The entire analytic thread unwinds because it manifestly lacks a sound principled basis. Thus, this point comprises a classic red herring fallacy as well.

Solomon says it well: “Those who forsake the law praise the wicked, but those who keep the law strive against them” (Prov. 28:4). By refusing to “name names” and instead by counseling silence, these objectors are by default (not design) orienting pastors (and their flocks) to ultimately praise the wicked. And, this should not be. Exposing evil, including those who do evil, is part of what Christians are called to do (Eph. 5:11). Query further whether voting for an ungodly candidate constitutes participating in “unfruitful works of darkness,” which Paul forbids.

“3. "BUT IT CAUSES DIVISION!"
While many objectors may be well-intended and are prompted by wise pastoral concern, silencing the pulpit, especially when bowing to Caesar's desires or edicts, fails to comport with robust biblical fidelity.

Jesus is King of Kings and Lords of Lords; that's about as political as one could be. His faithful followers must take every thought captive – including political thoughts – to this King; preaching is not exempt from this command. In fact, preaching should be emblematic of it.

1 Jonathan Mayhew, “A discourse concerning unlimited submission and non-resistance to the higher powers: with some reflections on the resistance made to King Charles I. And on the anniversary of his death: in which the mysterious doctrine of that prince's saintship and martyrdom is unriddled” (Sermon preached at Boston: West (Congregational) Church, 1750), http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1044&context=etas.
‘The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity’ – W.B. Yeats

IN MY LAST ARTICLE, I sought to explain the growing tendency to show brazen contempt for individual conscience in the public square. Even whilst pursuing what they deem social justice, many of those acting in its name are progressively turning Western democracies into libertinic police states. While some might cavil at that charge, we need to remember totalitarian states characteristically enlist the populace itself to intrude upon their fellow citizens’ inner lives to enforce conformity of opinion around the official view. They do so precisely because they wish to deny that man is fundamentally a moral being whose conscience lies beyond their power and control. George Orwell, in his dystopian novel 1984, memorably describes the extent of that tyranny to include prosecuting their opponents on the pretext of ‘thoughtcrime.’ We are regularly seeing evidence of this now in the prosecution of Christians for refraining from doing things against their conscience. As witness, consider any of the recent cases of Christian florists, bakers or photographers who have faced legal penalties for not providing services to same-sex wedding ceremonies.

The stakes could hardly be higher. If the expression of personal conscience in the public square is verboten, it must inevitably result not only in the extinction of the Christian faith, but of every hedge against tyranny in the West. What C.S. Lewis once observed as the ultimate outcome of privatizing the Christian faith seems to be reaching what he foresaw as its inevitable conclusion: “To make Christianity a private affair while banishing all privacy is to relegate it to the rainbow’s end or the Greek Calends.” To be clear: it is not simply Christianity that is being banned, but our private lives, and all sense of personal integrity with it.

Firstly, I noted that a highly illiberal and intolerant brand of liberalism was being adopted by the establishment as a banner of progress in Western political life; secondly, that official policies of inclusion were quite shamelessly restricting the freedom of speech and religion in the public square, even though such freedoms had long been entrenched as fundamental rights in Western law and custom. The alarm that any right-thinking person might feel at these two developments has only been heightened by the virtual absence of public outcry by the guardians of the public good: our politicians; our media; our courts; and above all, our clergy. Yet the sense that we have entered something like a twenty-first century Twilight Zone truly sinks in when we see that private corporations promote this trammeling of private conscience as a corporate policy. The Bank of Montreal, one of Canada’s five major banks, and a coalition of seventy-two of the country’s largest corporations, have announced that they are joining forces to do business only with others who share their exclusive views on “diversity.” As a recent article expresses it, “gay rights have allowed oligarchy to put on a progressive drag.” The reason they have reason to do this is that “these students are far more interested in the refracted rainbow light. The consequence of multicultural propaganda

Mockery aside, these are not trivial developments. They are signs that we now live in the age of a new fundamentalism. It is symptomatic of our plight that it is still largely unrecognized as fundamentalism. That is the proof of its effect. The consequence of multicultural propaganda
which emphasizes our openness and inclusion and defines its diversity to include sexual proclivities and practices that openly reject biblical standards is, unsurprisingly, a people incapable of identifying contradictions to their confirmation bias. Their unwillingness to listen to their critics also shows them to be deaf to their blindness. But the evidence is incontrovertible. We are confronting an entirely different worldview, with an entirely new sense of tolerance, hostile to the one established by John Locke in his Letter Concerning Toleration (1689) around a basic Christian consensus. It is not a matter of society’s willingness to stretch out the tent pegs of hospitality a bit further. That explanation does not account for the sudden displacement of fundamental rights like freedom of conscience and religion in a culture’s law and political practice. Only a new (and contradictory) fundamentalism rooted in a contradictory sense of tolerance can.

I will demonstrate in this article that today’s notion of tolerance was constructed fifty years ago by Herbert Marcuse, a man committed to an ideology implacably hostile to Christianity. He did so explicitly to oppose Locke’s understanding of tolerance and the freedoms which had operated for the previous 300 years in the West. Its consequences need to be understood very clearly. It is not enough to say, as so many conservatives and Christians have, that in our current culture of pluralism the only thing that cannot be tolerated is a claim to exclusivity like that of salvation in Jesus Christ alone. That disguises the true nature of the problem. It is more accurate to observe that in our current culture of pluralism the only thing that cannot be tolerated is a claim to exclusivity like that of salvation in Jesus Christ alone. That disguises the true nature of the problem. It is more accurate to observe that we are increasingly leaving an age tolerant of diversity within Christianity in favour of an exclusive age of tolerance. It is steadily eradicating Christianity in this commitment to exclusive tolerance.

The fact that the exclusive tolerance that marks the new anti-Christian fundamentalism is itself religious in character is betrayed by a third point of scandal and contradiction: that an established Christian rite such as marriage, basic to Western civilization, is being redefined with religious zeal in countries where not only the customs but the majority of their inhabitants would still be identified with Christianity, but by some political charlatans in the name of extending Christianity to include unbiblical practices. And dissenting Christians who reject the spiritual authority of the political and legal establishment to redefine marriage are being targeted – and they almost solely – for conspicuous punishment in the public square as violators of the ever-evolving human rights industry.

It seems to me that the greatest problem in confronting the new anti-Christian fundamentalism is the inability of Christian leaders to identify the nature of the problem. It lies in part because they have too long sought to operate within the Lockean paradigm of tolerance that tacitly assumes Christian commitments but speaks the language of neutrality in public discourse, forgetting that basic Christian commitments have always been the very basis of a civil society of freedoms and rights for all persons. As the poet and critic Samuel Taylor Coleridge once put it:

> Truths of all others the most awful and mysterious, yet being at the same time of universal interest, are often considered as so true, that they lose the life and efficiency of truth, and lie bed-ridden in the dormitory of the soul, side by side with the most despised and exploded errors.

The fundamental freedom of religion is a legacy of Locke. It is not the effect of a commitment to polytheism or moral relativism, let alone a principled freedom from religion. Furthermore, while the illiberalism of our day and attacks on historic freedoms have received a great deal of commentary from conservative pundits and Christians alike, all too rarely have they been traced back to their intellectual source: the project of the Cultural Marxists and their role in redefining tolerance in accordance with an explicitly anti-Christian ethics. This redefinition of tolerance marks the final stage of a process which, as I described in my previous article, sought to further Marx’s utopian political aims of levelling society.
STRUCTURAL OPPRESSION

Most importantly, these Cultural Marxists also began to cater to a different clientele: not simply the meat-and-potatoes worker of old but also a new ‘proletariat’ which included women, racial minorities, and criminals, and it united them all by appealing to a vague sense of common ‘structural oppression.’ The alliance of such wildly divergent groups, and in particular the criminal, is noteworthy precisely because it is in the area of Western law related to ‘women’s health’ where the Cultural Marxists would eventually make their greatest inroads by legalizing the murder of the unborn and encouraging men to reject Christian ethics in their sexual conduct. The measure of their success is how self-evident most people now associate the common cause of these ‘minority’ groups.9

What is that common cause? Whereas Marx had understood class warfare in political and economic terms, his successors realized that their greatest obstacle was what supported the political and economic establishment: the family and the religious presuppositions of their entire culture, with Jesus Christ as its cornerstone (Eph. 2:20). Christ was their stumbling-block. To vilify such basic cultural assumptions as an oppressive force, it was necessary for them to employ their propaganda to misrepresent the foundation upon which they stood and the very culture in which they operated, the series of covenantal relationships to a God in whom “they lived, and moved, and had their being,” (Acts 17: 28) as a coercive force above them. This fraudulent tactic of presenting the very forms of life, their common human nature, as a superstructure of oppression, from which the downtrodden people need ‘liberation’ is to this day the most commonly-used trope and successful tactic of cultural reversal for the Cultural Marxist. Even among Christians, God’s moral law, the law of our servant king, is no longer understood as the very means by which we can operate as a civil society in obedience to him, and as an expression of the love of our neighbour.10 It is framed in Cultural Marxist terms as a Christian cultural ‘imposition,’ and in particular a coercive force of oppression that Christians should act as Christians in rejecting. Hence the absurd dichotomy between law and gospel which besets so many that ascribe to a Two Kingdoms theology. It is the most important beachhead established by the Cultural Marxist, and all its incursions continue to land upon it.11 In this, they are often encouraged by the guardians of orthodoxy with their gospel of personal salvation in Christ the King, a King seemingly without a kingdom in their theology.

The new revolutionary front was thus to be fought not through violence but through a programme of cultural warfare that targeted the family, the law, and the Christian social good (charity), with the aim to uproot Christ and biblical law from culture. And in this sense they were highly astute. The Cultural Marxists recognized that the workers and families of the West were as deeply invested in the biblical assumptions about the nature of the family, the social good, and what constituted justice, as were the factory owners and the political and legal establishment. Many of the Ten Commandments relate to offences against the family. For all their flagrant contradictions, they openly identified themselves as Christians. To overturn what stood above them, they had to uproot the foundation upon which they all stood.

That is because even where there was no established church, as there was, say with the Anglican Church in England, the Christian faith was still undeniably established throughout the Western world. The United States’ separation of church and state was a separation of powers, not core religious and cultural commitments. The shared commitments, whether they are manifest politically in an established church or through a separation of church and state, entail what we call Christendom. On this, there was nothing dividing Catholic and Protestant. Although the Christian faith requires that Christ’s subjects be born again in each generation through a call of individual discipleship – it is rightly said that God only has children, not grandchildren – Christ nonetheless has had a kingdom on earth for two millennia. It was the
earthly inheritance of the incursion of *shalom*, his justice and liberty for all that would one day at Christ’s return be acknowledged by all, without dissent or present contradiction.

In fact, the working class might even be said to have had deeper ties to core social convictions than their leaders, who for at least two centuries had been falling under the deceptive sway of the Enlightenment and the methodological naturalism of the ‘Higher Criticism’ of the Bible. And thus, rather than appeal to the workers, after WWI, the Cultural Marxists insinuated themselves into the midst of the society of the *cultural elite*, a far broader and influential base than the political elite and captains of industry. The common man was too sensible and grounded in the conditions of life to accept the absurd presuppositions of the Marxist about the evil of the family and the Christian faith; but the *bourgeoisie*, Marx’s bugbear, possessed the requisite intellectual pride and the wealth to insulate themselves from life’s conditions to swallow the outrageous lie that *they*, and not Christ, were the architects and prime instruments of social justice. Members of the cultural establishment were connoisseurs whose tastes had already been cultivated to find Christianity distasteful by two centuries of the Enlightenment. They had the sufficient detachment from reality to pride themselves on their ability to direct a *more just society* than had their forebears, led (and tempered) by Christian convictions. They could enact a utopia on earth through an act of creative imagination emancipating themselves from the past. And best of all, the working class had, because of their implicit assent to the Christian faith, accepted a hierarchy in the matters of religion, law, welfare and education, and could be led into error through their acknowledged superiors in these areas. It was a cultural symphony of assent that the Cultural Marxist played with virtuosity.

DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH AMERICA

The sheer scope of the project of Cultural Marxism begun by men such as Antonio Gramsci and Georg Lukacs in subverting Christendom, the foundation of civil society, means that it is complicated to trace. I’ll simplify the path of their followers in the Frankfurt school under five main headings:

1) MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRIES

Under Theodor Adorno’s intellectual leadership the Frankfurt School initially opposed the cultural industry because it regarded culture rather narrowly as the repository of bourgeois values, a capitalist commodity. They were still under the influence of Marxist-Leninist ideas. But eventually, the influence of Walter Benjamin, a close friend of Adorno, and Max Horkheimer, the director of the school, prevailed, and his argument that radio, film and (later on) television could be used to *condition* the public to accept the religious tenets of Cultural Marxism, in particular its views on the family, authority, law, race, etc... Horkheimer and Adorno both spent the Second World War in Hollywood, which to this very day functions as Cultural Marxism’s most powerful weapon. I direct the reader to two studies of popular culture on this front.12

2) STUDIES IN PREJUDICE

The Frankfurt School also sought to stigmatize Christian culture by defining its expressions on sexual morality, on views of the family, and on paternal authority, as nefarious ‘prejudices’ in a wide-ranging series of academic studies under the umbrella ‘Studies in Prejudice.’ The most important contribution to this movement was Adorno’s book *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), which created what he called an “F-scale” that connected traditional Christian views on the family and sexuality to varying degrees of *fascism*.13 To this day, a person under the sway of political correctness will anathematize those who appeal to the normativity of Christian notions of the family or sexual ethics by accusing them of being ‘fascists.’ Most of them will never even have heard of Adorno, but they have adopted his terminology and accepted the slanderous connection of Christianity to fascism.
“These studies tellingly not only oppose the idea of individual responsibility, they don’t even study their subject through the historical and theological lens of the humanities”

3) CRITICAL THEORY

Equally well known to all of us, though not in connection to Cultural Marxism, is what they called critical theory. This tends to be the term designating the work of the Frankfurt School in the field of philosophy. The purpose of critical theory is not the positive task of developing moral and aesthetic discernment in the student’s critical faculties, the traditional path of the logocentric tradition of the West. It is simply to criticize (and thus to denigrate) Western culture. Critical theory is very careful never to define what it proposes; it simply defines what it is against. In that sense, it acts like a parasite of the host it feeds upon.

Critical theory has managed to infiltrate virtually every discipline in universities throughout the Western world, some with greater effectiveness than others. It subjects every legally-recognized entity of the Western tradition of Christendom to unremitting criticism and assault in order to bring them down, beginning with the person, a theological postulate (stemming from the Trinitarian discussions of the Church Fathers), to the family and the church. It disputes every sphere of sovereignty that would limit its own, which is precisely why it is both totalitarian and tyrannical in character.

You will recognize critical theory in terms of the areas of “studies” that it has identifiably spawned: Cultural Studies; Women’s Studies; Aboriginal Studies; African-American Studies; LGBT Studies; Postcolonial Studies; etc... Political correctness is particularly strong in these areas of identity group study. Less acknowledged but much more influential is the development of a school of jurisprudence known as the Critical Legal Studies movement, which has grown from its emergence in the 1970s to become a dominant school of thought. Following scholars like John Rawls, it regards the purpose of the law to be to create ‘fairness’ in accordance with a progressive view of society and political practice.

These studies tellingly not only oppose the idea of individual responsibility, they don’t even study their subject through the historical and theological lens of the humanities (which are predicated on the Christian conviction of a common human nature and world, both of which are foundational to the definition of a university). In fact, they actively seek to deconstruct the idea of a common human identity under God. The products of the students who are indoctrinated in these areas of study are almost invariably marked by implacable anger and hostility towards the common sense of the West in general, and Christendom in particular. Sadly, this includes many of the best-educated Christians, even those whose tradition does not predispose them to hostility towards Christendom like the Anabaptists.

4) DOMINATION

Marx had argued that history is economically-determined. Those who own the means of production have the power, and they determine the course of society. But the Frankfurt School, in accordance with its re-imagining of the proletariat, shifting it from the antagonistic narrative of laborers (proletariat) vs. owners (bourgeoisie), argued that history was in every respect determined by identity group dynamics. Whichever group, whether male or female, black or white, religious or irreligious, gay or straight, etc..., was in a position of social approval had by virtue of that fact ‘dominance’ over other groups. All forms of traditional authority were in their sight thus illegitimate. Their position was wholly rooted in power, at odds with both morality and history. Criminals such as abortionist Henry Morgentaler were by virtue of their condemnation good, indeed to be lauded and honoured; their judges bad; simply by virtue of the position of their identity group in society, and its relation to their inferiors. They were structural oppressors. This is being evidenced in university campuses of our day by the call for students to ‘check their privilege.’ At present it is being applied in racial terms, where it has the broadest range of public sympathy, but it will soon be applied to areas of moral ‘oppression,’ such as in the areas of sexual ethics.

And a complete reversal took place as a corrective to this social injustice in the education system.
Rather than adhere to God’s unchanging character, students who had been ‘socially reconstructed’ were taught to be ‘open-minded’ towards future possibilities. Dewey’s pedagogical goal has been delivered so effectively by the public schools that by the 1980s Allan Bloom lamented that openness was his students’ sole virtue. He ominously noted how much it made them resemble the citizens of the Weimar Republic. The growing influence of progressivist ideology and pedagogy made the public school system absolutely ripe for the Cultural Marxists, who used the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as an offence against ‘openness.’ It remains to be seen whether...

The Frankfurt School was particularly influential in passing this form of teaching on into the public school system because it dovetailed so effectively with the influence of the progressivist educator John Dewey (1859-1952). I have written about Dewey’s influence on public education in an earlier installment of Jubilee. Dewey, the author credited by some to have largely written the Humanist Manifesto I (1933), took little interest in the traditional aim of developing a well-formed conscience in children; to be well-educated for the future, they needed to be ‘well-adjusted’ (his characteristic phrase) and open to a future social consciousness:

…education is a regulation of the process of coming to share in the social consciousness; and that the adjustment of individual activity on the basis of this social consciousness is the only sure method of social reconstruction.
Nietzsche’s ‘transvaluation of all value’ will be used as effectively by the Cultural Marxists as it had been by the National Socialists.

THE 1960S – HERBERT MARCUSE

As I wrote in the last issue of Jubilee, many of the Frankfurt School returned to Frankfurt after the war. But the one member who stayed behind, Herbert Marcuse, arguably became the most important figure in the American New Left. Marcuse’s genius lay in popularizing the more difficult writings of his colleagues in a time of social unrest. So popular was Marcuse among the youth that during the 1968 student uprisings in Paris and Berlin the students marched under the banner “Marx, Mao, and Marcuse,” the same slogan that was plastered in many dormitories.

Marcuse’s chief work was entitled Eros and Civilization (1965), a hybrid of Marxist and Freudian teaching, which reiterated a case made previously by Wilhelm Reich in the Mass Psychology of Fascism (1933) and The Sexual Revolution (1936): that a new paradise where there was only play and no work would be impossible to achieve unless society first “liberated non-procreative Eros” from its moral repression. Only then could it return to what Freud described as the infantile stage of “pure sexuality,” the child’s “polymorphous perversity.” In other words, Marcuse brought the assault on Christendom openly into the realm of the family and sexual ethics. As usual, the antagonistic rhetoric of the sexual revolutionaries was worthy of an Orwellian novel: it was ‘making love, not war.’ Marcuse de-stigmatized every sexual expression except that of heterosexual marital relations, which he stigmatized as a form of “sexual repression.” He also created a whole new class of victim group – the sexual deviant – and allied them to the blacks and the feminists to compose a potent coalition which was identified as the ‘New Left.’ The sexual revolution broke the historic antipathy that the Left – still primarily the working class – had held towards them.24 He also adopted Lukacs’ radical sexual education and cultural terrorism tactics to promote them. It was Marcuse and the Frankfurt School, employing Freudian psychology, which would also pathologize Christian morality, deeming it not only fascist, but the cause of “phobias,” though it may well have been his contemporary George Weinberg who first coined the word “homophobia” in 1967. The common complaint on university campuses today that Christian sexual ethics are ‘heteronormative’ is rooted in a Cultural Marxist animus against the family brought to a particular point by Marcuse.25

5) REPRESSIVE TOLERANCE

The Cultural Marxists’ difficulty in transforming the United States, however, was that most Americans far preferred freedom with personal responsibility and Christian virtue within the context of the family to the tyrannical state of equality that Marxism demanded. Marcuse’s answer to this problem was to launch the most successful venture in critical theory of all, an attack upon the concept of tolerance which had shaped a culture of liberal democracy in the West. Locke’s notion of tolerance had exercised a potent sway in the Anglosphere for almost three centuries, so potent that it now exercised a confirmation bias which allowed for the emergence of its mortal enemy. It was a culture of tolerance that allowed for the freedom of speech and religion, including that of principled dissent within the bounds of a civil society, so long as it lay within the rule of law.

But with a society no longer articulating its Christian commitments in terms of a cultural commitment to biblical law (the heart of the common law tradition),26 Marcuse’s efforts were simply interpreted as principled dissent. What had been forgotten is that dissent could only go so far down. It could not undermine Christian moral assumptions without destroying the very basis of a tolerant society – the love of God, whose nature must be known to lead one to the love of one’s neighbour.27 However scandalous they appeared, the sexual revolution of the 1960s and the cultural unrest surrounding it were naively interpreted as a sign of the strength and health of Western democracy, not an existential
assault on its very foundations. It was left to a few voices, such as Soviet dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn, to observe the peril brought upon the West by what he termed cultural cowardice and the delusion of neutrality in the area of moral conviction.  

But Solzhenitsyn’s prophetic voice was drowned out by the white noise of those who, since the time of David Hume’s fact/value distinction, had steadily been moving to understand tolerance to be an empirical judgment, divorced from Christian convictions. This is not to say that being fair-minded, impartial, or neutral ceased with Marcuse. Those political virtues, the virtues of freedom most prized and most singular in Christendom, allowed the breathing space for the politics of cultural terrorism to incubate. What they did not account for is that Marcuse and the Cultural Marxists’ aim was to subvert Western democracy, not simply to protest against it, let alone to reform it.

This aim is presented most clearly in a little-acknowledged 1965 essay by Marcuse entitled “Repressive Tolerance.” Marcuse’s essay effectively marked the concluding phase of what philosopher Charles Taylor has termed the ‘age of neutrality’ (stemming from the time of Locke), transporting us into the ‘age of contested values’ which we normally associate with the less than helpful term ‘postmodernism.’ Referring to Locke, Marcuse openly attacked the Anglophone world’s notion of ‘tolerance’ by deriding the ‘common sense’ understanding it bequeathed as the ‘repressive tolerance’ of a ‘totalitarian democracy.’ Marcuse represented even the attempt to be fair-minded, impartial or neutral, the virtues of the liberal-minded academic, the impartial judge, and the free press, the acknowledged bases of a civil society, as the very basis for an attack. For in Marcuse’s estimation, “the tolerance expressed in such impartiality serves to minimize or even absolve prevailing intolerance or suppression.”

The liberal society that had arisen from them was based on a subtle form of structural domination, i.e. Christianity, which civil society had come to accept, even if it meant endemic structural injustice. He argued that tolerance could only become good if nondominating (heterodox) ideas were allowed to flourish, and that was only possible if dominating (orthodox) ideas were in future to be suppressed:

The realization of the objective of tolerance would call for intolerance toward prevailing policies, attitudes, opinions, and the extension of tolerance to policies, attitudes, and opinions which are outlawed or suppressed.

Or to put it another way that makes its attack on the Christian categories of common sense clear:

...it is necessary to break the established universe of meaning (and the practice enclosed in this universe) in order to enable man to find out what is true and false...to become truly autonomous, to find by themselves what is true and what is false for man in the existing society, they (will) have to be freed from the prevailing indoctrination (which is no longer recognized as indoctrination).

The political virtue of tolerating those with whom we disagree, the quintessence of liberalism (which is only possible in the context of Christianity and its doctrine of the limited though real authority of the state, the church, and the family), gave way to what Marcuse euphemistically called “liberating tolerance.” It explicitly called for the outlawing and suppression of the morality that had reigned until the 1960s.

“Liberating tolerance” thus entailed a sort of Orwellian doublespeak. It meant agreement with (and tolerance for) all the ideas and movements coming from the Cultural Marxists; but also the disagreement with (and intolerance for) all ideas and movements coming from their ‘regressive’ opponents. As Marcuse clarified in response to charges that he demonized his opponents in the 1968 Postscript to the original essay:

As against the virulent denunciations that such a policy would do away with the sacred liberalistic principle of equality for “the other side,” I maintain that there are issues where either there is no “other side” in any more than a formalistic sense, or where “the other side”
is demonstrably “regressive” and impedes possible improvement of the human condition. To tolerate propaganda for inhumanity vitiates the goals not only of liberalism but of every progressive political philosophy.

The fallacious progressive-regressive dichotomy, which is employed to deny any moral standing to ‘the other side’ before the law (because of the fundamental violation of what would later be called ‘human rights’ in its theology), is an essential pretext to persecuting it in the name of tolerance. Anathematizing their opponents as unreasonable and invidious, akin to the fascists of Nazi Germany, is a dehumanizing form of propaganda that insinuates an alliance between the Christian defense of personal freedom and the Nazis’ project of racial purification.

The illustrations of this Cultural Marxism (social justice) and its ‘liberating tolerance’ in action are now so ubiquitous that describing this “mass movement aimed at stifling the autonomy of natural relationships – friendships, familial love, romantic love, human reverence for the divine – and subverting such relationships to the punitive power of an intrusive state” is almost redundant. I recommend the article on the website of the American Thinker for a catalogue of hundreds of examples. It rightly describes it as ‘homofascism’.

It now seems abundantly clear that Marcuse and his acolytes provided the logic of moral inversion in family law in the West in the 1960s and 1970s. The germination of those tolerant ideas have made even yesterday’s progressives seem awfully regressive. And that posture of contempt is set to continue. No one is exempt from the charge of thoughtcrime. It is now apparently entirely reasonable for a progressive politician to deny freedom of conscience even to those within his own party. After all, the clear religious purpose is to disestablish the Christian foundations of a civil society, including the rights of other individuals, to achieve a ‘humane society.’ This humane social justice is not even for the sake of the poor. For as Marcuse notes:

‘Tolerance is an end in itself. The elimination of violence, and the reduction of suppression to the extent required for protecting man and animals from cruelty and aggression are preconditions for the creation of a humane society.’

No social, familial, political, or other religious fidelity can stand in its way. The absolute loyalty demanded by an all-exclusive tolerance is the true character of the new fundamentalism. Its endgame is the total destruction of man, who bears God’s image.

1 C.S. Lewis, The Weight of Glory.
2 The most flagrant and alarming instance of this in recent history is the decision to reject the application to open a law school at Trinity Western University in BC. See for example Andrea Woo, “B.C. Revokes Consent for Christian Law School,” The Globe & Mail, last modified December 12, 2014, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/bc-revokes-consent-for-law-school-at-trinity-western-university/article22058567/.
9I use scare quotes for minority here because women actually constitute slightly more than half the population.
10Having cited the Ten Commandments related to human relations, Paul summarizes: ‘Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law’ (Rom. 13:10).
11This includes attacks on the unborn, the criticism of which is rebutted as a matter solely of women's rights.
12Jeanine Basinger’s I Do and I Don’t: a History of Marriage in the Movies (Knopf, 2013) describes Hollywood's portrait of marriage in two apparently contradictory yet compatible phases: 1) from 1934 to 1968, it was dominated by what she calls the Production Code, which proclaimed: “The sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld.” Yet the “wiggle room” in this dictum allowed filmmakers “to shape marriage as sad, doomed, and threatened from many directions, but able to be brought back to life at the end to, evidently, respect the ‘sanctity’ of the institution.” As a result, she contends, “the marriage film is...a great example of how audiences liked to be lied to about things they knew from their own lives.”
2) From 1968 onward, the Code was replaced by a rating system, at which point: “Suddenly marriage itself becomes the equivalent to crushing poverty during the Depression or drug addiction in the 1950s. It's hopeless, it's unfair, and it's a situation that can't sustain you, and that you can't sustain.” Basinger’s overarching narrative is that Hollywood never portrayed marriage as a viable institution for human flourishing. At first it portrayed it as a conspicuously unreal albeit pleasant fiction, an escape from a reality the audience could see pressing in at the margins; then, once the social stigma of divorce was removed, it openly undermined marriage as an act of liberation for the audience. Ben Shapiro’s Primetime Propaganda: The True Hollywood Story of How the Left took over your TV (Broadside, 2011) gives a similar account about television. See Sterling Beard, “True Hollywood Story: The Liberal Takeover of your TV,” Daily Signal, last modified June 23, 2011, http://dailysignal.com/2011/06/23/true-hollywood-story-the-liberal-taking-over-your-tv/.
13T.W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson, R. Nevitt Sanford, The Authoritarian Personality (Abridged ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1982) (American Jewish Committee, 1950). “The most crucial result of the present study, as it seems to the authors, is the demonstration of close correspondence in the type of approach and outlook a subject is likely to have in a great variety of areas, ranging from the most intimate family and sex adjustment through relationships to other people in general, to religion and to social and political philosophy. Thus a basically hierarchical, authoritarian, exploitative parent-child relationship is apt to carry over into a power-oriented, exploitatively dependent attitude toward one's sex partner and one's God and may well culminate in a political philosophy and social outlook which has no room for anything but a desperate clinging to what appears to be strong and a disdainful rejection of whatever is relegated to the bottom.” (my italics) (Conclusion, p. 475)
14In the past few issues of Jubilee magazine, I discussed how discussions of sex and gender were not simply matters of preference, but always simultaneously issues of personhood, just as were abortion and euthanasia, because they entailed when a person became a worldly entity entitled to the good stewardship entailed in the dominion mandate.
17See John Rawls, Justice as Fairness: A Restatement, (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2001), http://pages.uoregon.edu/koopman/courses_readings/rawls_JasF.pdf Rawls puts a premium on the principle of equality, justifying the state's incursion into domestic affairs early on to insure what he calls ‘background justice,’ a socio-economic state-defined ‘equality of opportunity.’ It is this move to insure ‘background justice’ that lies behind the growth in early childhood public education. For more, see “Equality of Opportunity:
Heteronormativity is the belief that people fall into distinct and complementary genders (man and woman) with natural roles in life. It asserts that heterosexuality is the only sexual orientation or only norm, and states that sexual and marital relations are most (or only) fitting between people of opposite sexes. Consequently, a “heteronormative” view is one that involves alignment of biological sex, sexuality, gender identity and gender roles. Heteronormativity is often linked to heterosexism and homophobia.


Lord Sacks, former Chief Rabbi in Britain, recently gave a speech at the Vatican’s Humanum Colloquium on Complementarity, observing that Biblical monogamy had been ‘the single most humanizing institution in history’:

“What was new and remarkable in the Hebrew Bible was the idea that love, not just fairness, is the driving principle of the moral life. Three loves. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your might.” “Love your neighbour as yourself.” And, repeated no less than 36 times in the Mosaic books, “Love the stranger because you know what it feels like to be a stranger.” Or to put it another way: just as God created the natural world in love and forgiveness, so we are charged with creating the social world in love and forgiveness. And that love is a flame lit in marriage and the family. Morality is the love between husband and wife, parent and child, extended outward to the world.” Retrieved from Catholic Voices Comment, last modified November 18, 2014, http://cvcomment.org/2014/11/18/the-lord-sacks-speech-that-brought-the-vatican-conference-to-its-feet/.

Allegiance to Marcuse’s ideology may explain Pierre Trudeau’s omnibus bill (C-150) of 1968-69, and its decriminalizing of the apparently unrelated issues of sodomy and abortion in combination with legislation on contraception, regulating lotteries, gun possession, cruelty to animals, etc… Similar legislation decriminalizing sodomy (between men age 21 or older) had been brought forth under the Sexual Offences Act in the U.K. in 1967.

The Wikipedia entry is accurate in reflecting the sense of the term:
Harvard University Press, 2007).

31The essay, one of three, is to be found in a book called A Critique of Pure Tolerance (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), http://www.marcuse.org/herbert/pubs/60spubs/65repressivetolerance.htm.

32Ibid. 98.

33Ibid. 81.


35The fine Christian scholar D.A. Carson has written on this topic repeatedly, most recently in The Intolerance of Tolerance (Eerdmans, 2012). Unfortunately, though many of his observations are correct, he sees the distinction somewhat unhelpfully to lie between a modernist and a postmodernist understanding of tolerance, the latter being little more than irrationalism. He entirely overlooks the Cultural Marxist agenda underlying the new use of the term, and although he rightly notes the unifying animus against Christianity, he fails to recognize that this ‘liberating tolerance’ is directly attributable to Herbert Marcuse and represents the onset of a new kingdom, law and ethics that can only be countered by the renewed application of biblical law and ethics.


37See Robert Oscar Lopez, “300 Articles you have to Read to Understand what is Meant by the term ‘Homofascism,’” English Manif, last modified July 2, 2014, http://englishmanif.blogspot.ca/2014/07/300-articles-you-have-to-read-to.html.

38Ibid., 82.
How Then Shall We Answer - Hardcover

This book represents Joe Boot's summa apologetica. Bold, imaginative and instructive, it is written for a general audience rather than for a specialized one. The prose is remarkable not only for evident wisdom in the field of apologetics but also for the distinctive way the author does it. With various imageries and anecdotes, Joe provides a clear, engaging articulation of a fresh set of perspectives on several topics. Full of biblical and theological insights, and written with an evangelistic heart, this book serves to nourish the faithful, stimulate good arguments for the seeker and build a strong rational basis for the causative relation between faith and reason, the former being the presupposition of the latter. With rigor and relevance, Joe constitutes a seminal apologetic that enables readers to grasp the signs of divine transcendence, and to apprehend, or rather to be apprehended by the beauty of Christ. (Dennis Ngien PhD, from the foreword)

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