

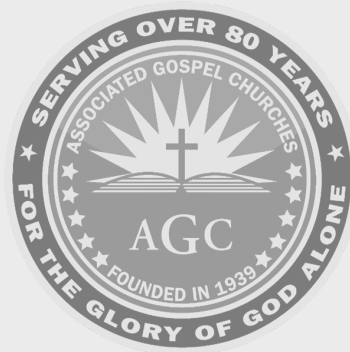
— The AGC —

JOURNAL

Published Semi-Annually

VOLUME 3 – NUMBER 2

Fall 2023



Rooted in the Great Commandment (*Matthew 22:36-40*) and the Great Commission (*Matthew 28:18-20*), and recognized by the federal government as an official ecclesiastical endorsing agency, the Associated Gospel Churches (AGC) exists to represent Biblically Christ-centered churches, for the purpose of recruiting, endorsing, educating and supporting ordained men to serve as chaplains—pastors in uniform—in publicly-restricted access institutions.

ASSOCIATED GOSPEL CHURCHES
215 Pine Knoll Road • Greenville, SC 29609
www.agcchaplaincy.com

THE AGC JOURNAL

Published by

The Associated Gospel Churches

Steve Brown, President

Bob Freiberg, Editor

AGC BOARD MEMBERS

Steve Brown • *President*

Ron Benzing • *Vice President*

Scott Nupson • *Secretary*

Ken Lawson • *C&E Committee*

Don Mikitta • *C&E Committee*

Brian Bee • *Treasurer*

Art Schulcz • *AGC Attorney*

Joseph Mayer

James Galyon

Matt Wilson

Travis Jones

Wade Matuska

Billy White

Joe Wilburn

AGC ADVISORY BOARD

The AGC would like to thank the following individuals who have volunteered to act as advisors in their specific fields to make this Journal possible:

Dr. Kevin Bauder • Civil Air Patrol Chaplain

Research Professor of Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Mpls. MN

Dr. Tim Demy • CDR, CHC, USN-ret

Professor of Ethics and Leadership, US Naval War College, Newport, RI

Jennifer Ewing • MLIS, MACM

Head Library Services, Southern California Seminary, El Cajon, CA

Dr. Mike Grisanti

Professor of Old Testament, The Master's Seminary, Los Angeles, CA

Dr. Kurt A. Johnson • CAPT, JAG, USN-ret

Institutional Chaplain Consultant

Dr. Jeremiah Mutie

Professor Church History, Southern California Seminary, El Cajon, CA

Dr. Richard Mayhue, Th.D.

Research Professor of Theology Emeritus, The Master's Seminary, Los Angeles, CA

The views represented in this Journal are not necessarily endorsed by the AGC administration or Chaplains but exists to provide information about the Christian history of our great nation. The main purpose of this Journal is to glorify Christ and honor God as much as is possible. This is done by bringing informative articles of God's grace and mercy to those who are interested in the Gospel ministry of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Whether civilian or serving as a full-time chaplain or pastor, this journal is for you to read, be edified and enjoy.

Copyright is waived if articles are used in the classroom or congregation. Use is free, but we ask that when and if you distribute any of our articles you give credit to the name, source and the information presented. If you need to distribute this to over 100 persons, please seek advance permission by emailing journal@agcchaplains.com.

FOR CHRIST AND COUNTRY

*υποφέρουν από δυσκολίες μαζί μου, ως καλός
στρατιώτης του Ιησού Χριστού*

– II Tim 2:3

THE AGC JOURNAL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Editor5
Bob Freiberg, editor

The First Commandment and the First Amendment8
Stephen Kim

The Origin of Christian America Part Two: The Great Awakening and the Forming of America17
Kurt Johnson & Bob Freiberg

Making God into Our Image The Problem of Evil and Theistic Personalism37
Brian Huffling

Hints of Pastoral Theology from the Book of Zechariah49
Stephen Huebscher

Training & Teaching Zambian Chaplains.....59
Jay Hartranft

Christianity and Critical Race Theory: A Faithful and Constructive Conversation.....61
Review by Andrew Lawson

Tech-Life Balance: 101 Ways to Thrive in a Digital World66
Review by Jason (Jay) Skeens

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the Fall 2023 edition of the AGC Journal. For those who haven't read about us or are unfamiliar with what we do, we are an ecclesiastical endorsing agency for those seeking to serve as chaplains for all US military services, as well as other institutions which need spiritual guidance and ministry. We are also made up of individuals serving God in various church pastorates, as well as other Christian ministries. We support the faith once delivered to the saints and believe in the function of the local church. We believe in the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures and our chaplains serve all over the world. We are recognized by the United States military and have over 160 chaplains in full and part-time ministry. We have dedicated ourselves to the preaching and teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world.

Our Journal is written by AGC chaplains for AGC chaplains and others who need an extra toolbox for such things as sermon helps, brushing up on theology, encouragement from others, as well as reporting on some individuals serving the Lord in some capacity. We even have book reports on some current topics affecting our people. Whether it is Christian history or giving some insight into an aspect of a doctrine, enjoy this as an oasis of refreshment from the fountain of the Lord in the midst of a dry and thirsty land. It is an instrument used by and for military chaplains of like faith and practice. In this issue, all the articles have been written by AGC Chaplains or former chaplains. Hopefully, you will find each article informative and helpful for your own use as you see fit for your professional or spiritual needs. Here is a short synopsis of what is in store for you:

PROFESSIONAL CHAPLAIN ITEMS OF INTEREST

Doctrinal Clarity: “The First Commandment and the First Amendment”

Dr. Stephen Kim offers some insight into how we have developed a false sense of parity with non-traditional faiths who now enjoy the same freedom of religion and expression as Christian faiths do in America. He builds a case of how they can have a seat at the table, but we as Christians do not need to disregard our own faith and heritage at the throne of diversity.

Observations of American History: “The Origins of Christian America-Part Two”

This article was co-authored by a retired Navy Captain JAG (Dr. Kurt Johnson) and me (Dr. Bob Freiberg). It is the second in a series of the Origins of Christian America where our heritage is re-discovered and discusses the theological, historical and legal reasons for civil disobedience against the religious and financial oppression of England. Center to most of this article is the work of the evangelists of the Great Awakening who influenced two generations of Americans to fight for religious freedom. The third and final article will be found in the 2024 spring edition of the AGC Journal.

Theodicy (the study of evil): “Making God into Our Image”

One of the most striking fallouts of our current generation is the inability to not comprehend good and evil, mainly because these concepts are infrequently discussed or taught. This has led to much confusion with our young Sailors, Soldiers and Marines. It is only with a correct view of theodicy that we can start on our path to Biblical counseling to help our “flock.” This study by Chaplain/Professor Brian Huffling, offers sound Scriptural theological insight for the young chaplain offering to help our young men and women serving in our military.

Pastoral Theology from the Old Testament: “Zechariah”

By using the book of Zechariah, Dr. Stephen Huebscher gives us some thoughts on not only being a chaplain but serving in the capacity as a pastor in charge of a flock. This is a good reminder for our calling and function as chaplains as we put on all sorts of “hats” to minister to our people. This is an encouraging piece and a good reminder of what we can take away from the Scriptures as we think of ways to serve our troops.

Report on a new AGC Ministry: “Training and Teaching Zambian Chaplains”

Last year a general call went out to all AGC active and retired chaplains to fill a need in the country of Zambia to train their active-duty chaplains in Scripture and the practical parts of chaplain ministry. This is Jay Hartranft’s story and testimony. Jay is a retired chaplain AGC Army chaplain who heeded God’s call and went. Warning! Be ready to read it and be blessed!

BOOK REVIEWS

In our attempt to help you find Biblical resources for certain current issues, here are some books which cover some of today’s most relevant topics:

“Christianity and Critical Race Theory: A Faithful and Constructive Conversation”

Andrew Lawson reviews and gives good insight into the world of CRT (Critical Race Theory). For those of you unfamiliar with this philosophical and current ideology, this review should serve you well.

“Tech-Life Balance: 101 Ways to Thrive in a Digital World”

Chaplain Jason Skeens reviews this secular book which gives some practical advice on using tech devices wisely. There are a few nuggets here which are worth your while. At the very least, it will help the novice know some of the problems facing our young military personnel out there

May the Lord bless you as you serve Him and this great nation of ours!

For God’s Glory,

Bob Freiberg, editor

CDR, CHC, USN-ret, M.Div, Th.M, D.D., D. Min.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT AND THE FIRST AMENDMENT

Islam as the Linchpin for Religious Liberty

Stephen Kim

Stephen Kim, Chaplain USA, Captain is an active-duty chaplain serving at Joint Base Fort Lewis/McChord in Washington State. He is attached to 555 BDE. Chaplain Kim has a Ph.D. and a D.Min. and has addressed the 2020 Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) with the same topic and paper.

By intention or by sleight of hand, Islam is rapidly being purported to be the linchpin for religious liberty in America. The argument is that the First Amendment of the United States Constitution mandates the government to grant equivalent privileges and benefits to both Islam and Christianity. The argument further asserts that any difference in privilege detracts from the authenticity of religious liberty and might even serve to destroy religious liberty in the future. This paper contends that an originalist understanding of the First Amendment will reveal that no equivalency of privilege was ever intended by the founders of the Constitution. Furthermore, because no such equivalency was ever intended, this paper will also contend that the withholding of certain privileges from Islam will not threaten religious liberty for society at large.

CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

On February 7, 2019, Dominique Ray was pronounced dead of a lethal injection at the state prison in Atmore, Alabama. Ray was an inmate who was

sentenced to death for the 1995 rape and murder of a 15-year-old girl. On July 15, 1995, Tiffany Harville disappeared from her Selma home and her decomposing body was found one month later in a cotton field. The execution of the 42-year-old Ray was Alabama's first execution of that calendar year.

What made Ray's execution unique was his request prior to his execution. Dominique Ray was a Muslim and he requested to have an imam stand in the execution chamber instead of the prison's Christian chaplain. His request was denied because the Alabama prison deemed it to be a security risk to let someone into the room who was not an employee of the state's corrections department. Ray's attorneys sought a stay on the execution and argued that Alabama's execution procedure illegally favored Christian inmates:

The 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on Wednesday had stayed the execution over the religious arguments, but the U.S. Supreme Court allowed it to proceed in a 5-4 decision Thursday evening. Justices cited the fact that Ray did not raise the challenge until Jan. 28 as a reason for the decision. Justice Elena Kagan wrote in a dissent that she considered the decision to let the execution go forward "profoundly wrong."¹

During the execution, the inmate's imam, Yusef Maisonet, was allowed to watch from the next room as he stood behind a glass window.

Less than three months later, a second Muslim death-row prisoner filed a federal civil rights lawsuit challenging Alabama's policy of allowing only a Protestant chaplain into the execution chamber:

Charles Burton, Jr. converted to Islam 47 years ago. In a complaint filed in the United States District Court for the Middle District of Alabama, Burton, who was sentenced to death in 1992, argues that Alabama's policy violates the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses of the First Amendment and the religious freedom amendment of the Alabama state constitution by denying non-Christian prisoners access to religious advisors during executions in circumstances in which spiritual assistance is made available to Protestant Christian prisoners.²

¹ Kim Chandler, "Alabama Executes Muslim Inmate Who Wanted Imam Present," *Associated Press* (Feb. 8, 2019). <https://apnews.com/50ced4152dc74df1975a925e4fa29038>.

² "Second Alabama Prisoner Files Suit to Allow Muslim Chaplain in Execution Chamber" (April 18, 2019). <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/news/second-alabama-prisoner-files-suit-to-allowmuslim-chaplain-in-execution-chamber>.

The attorneys for Burton argued that Alabama's actions "violate two of the most elementary principles of our constitutional democracy, principles that the law requires to be honored even in prison: to be able to practice one's religion free from substantial and unjustified governmental burdens and to be free from governmental discrimination based on one's religion." As a result of the complaints, the prison is now considering completely removing all chaplains from the execution chamber.³

Defense attorneys are no longer the only ones claiming that providing for a Muslim's religious request is something that is mandated underneath the Constitution's First Amendment. Many media outlets, senators, theologians, and pastors are now insisting that religious liberty is at risk if Muslims are not supported by the government in a manner that is at least equivalent to the treatment given to Christians. In May of 2016, two arms of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) reached out to a New Jersey Muslim congregation and publicly supported their purported right to build a mosque. Both the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) and the International Mission Board (IMB) were 2 of 18 various religious groups that filed an amicus brief protesting the Township of Bernards's zoning board decision that prevented the mosque from being built due to parking spot shortages. The amicus brief argued that "such unequal treatment of the mosque in this case represents a potential threat to the free exercise rights of each of the amici represented here and is an affront to our nation's commitment to religious liberty for all." The president of the ERLC, Russell Moore, went even further and said, "Sometimes we have really hard decisions to make. This isn't one of those things. What it means to be a Baptist is to support soul freedom for everybody."⁴

Moore's equivocation is often missed by evangelicals: to be a Baptist does not necessitate one to support the building of a mosque. Furthermore, belief in religious liberty does not require one to demonstrate active support for Islam. While Moore was resolute that government ought to fully support the

³ In a similar incident, the Supreme Court ruled that Texas could not execute inmate Patrick Murphy if they did not permit his chaplain of choice into the execution chamber. As a result, the state of Texas decided to ban all chaplains from entering the execution chamber. See Morgan Lee, "When the Government Bans Chaplains from Execution Chambers," *Christianity Today* (April 10, 2019). <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2019/april-web-only/chaplainsbanned-execution-chambers-death-row.html>.

⁴ Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra, "Southern Baptists Back Away from Backing Mosques," *Christianity Today* (Feb. 8, 2017).

building of the mosque in New Jersey, not everyone even within his own denomination agreed:

Less than a month later, IMB trustee and Tennessee megachurch pastor Dean Haun resigned with a year left on his term. “I love our IMB leadership and our missionaries and their work across the globe. I am not a rabble rouser, and my heart is not to take down the IMB,” Haun told the Baptist and Reflector, the newspaper of the Tennessee Baptist Convention and one of the SBC’s oldest state papers. “[But] if we defend the rights of people to construct places of false worship, are we not helping them speed down the highway to hell?” he said. “I want no part in supporting a false religion, even if it is in the name of religious freedom.”⁵

Due to such complaints from fellow Southern Baptists, the IMB walked back its support of the mosque, but not before it published an official statement stating that the “IMB’s call on the government of these other countries to support the religious freedom of their citizens will ring hollow if, in the USA, we only support freedom of religion for Christians.”⁶

FALSE DICHOTOMY

In Exodus 20:1-3, God prohibits his people from having or serving any other gods. Active support of Islam’s flourishing and assisting in the building of mosques are violations of the First Commandment. The Constitution does state that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Yet, the use of Islam as a linchpin for authentic religious liberty is misinformed. If we take the originalist approach to the First Amendment, then we will discover that one could abide by the First Commandment and still uphold the First Amendment.

Colonial Context

An originalist reading of the Constitution is critical to any sincere attempt at upholding it. As per James 1:27, by the term *religion*, the majority of the founders meant *Christianity*. Research demonstrates that most of the founders of the Constitution also served in their respective state governments.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

At the time state delegates met in Philadelphia to draft a new constitution, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Vermont, and even Rhode Island explicitly mandated civic officials to be Protestants.

The states of Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania required that their leaders must be Christians while only Virginia and New York did not have such religious mandates.⁷ The First Amendment must be understood within this colonial societal context.

Without this colonial context, scholars and legislative experts have erringly come to believe that the First Amendment calls for government to give benefits to all religions equally. For example, in speaking of tax benefits for religious organizations, Wayne Grudem wrote:

Baptist churches receive these benefits, but so do Buddhist temples, Jewish synagogues, Roman Catholic churches, and Muslim mosques. The reason for this preferential tax treatment for churches and other charities is that society has decided that, in general, charitable organizations such as churches do much good for society as a whole. In the classic wording of the preface to the US Constitution, they “promote the general welfare.” Therefore, it is entirely reasonable for a society to decide to give churches some tax benefits that are open to all religions equally. This is not compelling support of any one religion; it is not giving any government funds directly to any religious group; and it is certainly not contrary to the original meaning and intention of the First Amendment.⁸

Grudem rightly wishes to consider the “original meaning and intention of the First Amendment,” but with his position, Grudem concedes far more to Islam than he has to, and he certainly concedes more than what the founders intended with the First Amendment. An originalist approach enables modern-day evangelicals to hold to the First Amendment while simultaneously honoring the First Commandment. The originalist’s

⁷John K. Wilson, “Religion Under the State Constitutions, 1776-1800,” *The Journal of Church and State* 32 (Autumn 1990): 764; Derek Davis, *Religion and the Continental Congress, 1774-1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 34; Daniel L. Dreisbach and Mark David Hall, eds., *The Sacred Rights of Conscience: Selected Readings on Religious Liberty and Church-State Relations in the American Founding* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund Press, 2009), 242-64; and Gerard V. Bradley, “The No Religious Test Clause and the Constitution of Religious Liberty: A Machine That Has Gone of Itself,” *Case Western Law Review* 37 (1987): 681-87.

⁸Wayne A. Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 29.

perspective would look at the First Amendment through the lens of men like Roger Sherman. Sherman was a Connecticut statesman who played a major role in drafting the Bill of Rights. He also helped pass a religious liberty bill in colonial Connecticut in January of 1784. Sherman's religious liberty bill began with the following excerpt from its preamble:

As the happiness of a people, and the good order of civil society, essentially depend upon piety, religion, and morality, it is the duty of the civil authority to provide for the support and encouragement thereof; so as that Christians of every denomination, demeaning themselves peaceably, and as good subjects of the State, may equally under the protection of the laws: and as the people of this State have in general, been of one profession in matters of faith, religious worship, and the mode of settling and supporting the ministers of the Gospel, they have by law been formed into Ecclesiastical Societies, for the more convenient support of their worship and ministry: and to the end that other denominations of Christians who differ from the worship and ministry so established and supported, may enjoy free liberty of conscience in the matters aforesaid.⁹

Such statutes, dating as far back as 1784, demonstrate that Connecticut's civic leaders both promoted Christianity and believed that state support for Christianity was fully compatible with the "free liberty of conscience" for "Christians of every denomination." In their minds, this was not a violation of the establishment clause as many would probably charge if the same state support were shown in the modern era. When some modern-day evangelicals accuse others of abandoning the First Amendment for not supporting Islam, they fail to read the First Amendment from an originalist perspective. The overwhelming majority of colonists were Protestants. In the case of Connecticut, 99.99 percent of the state's citizens identified themselves as Protestants in 1784.¹⁰ For them, the word *religion* meant the *Christian* religion; and *religious liberty* meant, as Sherman wrote, that the various "Christians of every denomination" were to be given both protections and benefits so that the free worship of the triune God could take place. The First Amendment was never intended for the mandated active support of religions like Islam in the name of religious liberty.

⁹ *The First Laws of the State of Connecticut*, ed. John D. Cushing (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1982), 21-22.

¹⁰ At the time, there "were only a handful of Catholics in late eighteenth-century Connecticut and half-dozen Jews." Christopher Collier, "Common Law and Individual Rights in Connecticut Before the Federal Bill of Rights," *Connecticut Bar Journal* 76 (2002): 4.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper is not arguing for the establishment of a Christian theocracy. Too many have died by the hands of professing Christians who have attempted to establish a theocracy in Europe. In fact, one could argue that the United States of America was founded in order to avoid such bloodshed. A theocracy is impossible and dangerous in a fallen world. Rather, a godly voter in the New Testament era lives under the Lord's command found in Matthew 13:30: "Let both grow together until the harvest." God will take care of the heretic. The Christian's duty is to attempt to live at peace with "all men" (Rom 12:18).

This paper is, however, arguing that American Christians can simultaneously uphold the First Commandment and the First Amendment. The First Amendment does not mandate an American Christian to "speak up" and support the building of a mosque in his community to be faithful to religious liberty. An originalist reading of the First Amendment will reveal that the concessions demanded for Islam were never part of the vision of America's founders. As the Supreme Court ruled in *Employment Division v. Smith*, a landmark religious liberty decision in 1990, the First Amendment does not mandate government to protect all religious practices equally.¹¹ Consider how, for now, prostitution is illegal in American states. Hence, the authentically religious practice of temple prostitution by believers in ancient Greek mythology

should not be protected by the First Amendment.¹² The First Amendment allowed for the flourishing of Christian churches because the founders believed that Christian churches promoted "the general welfare" of a society. As a false religion, Islam does not promote "the general welfare" of any society.

¹¹ Stephen Losey, "Meet this Norse Heathen airman approved to grow a beard in the Air Force," Air Force Times (July 17, 2019). Ridiculously, last year, the United States Air Force Approved Staff Sergeant Garrett Sopchak to wear a beard because he now considers himself a "Norse Heathen." According to the Air Force Times, "For a long time, the old Norse mythology of Odin, Thor and Ragnarok was just that for Staff Sg. Garrett Sopchak – mythology, a collection of interesting stories but little more. But little more than two years ago, ... Sopchak became a Norse Heathen."

¹² In *Employment Division v. Smith*, the Supreme Court ruled that members of the Native American Church in Oregon were not protected by the First Amendment to use peyote—a cactus with hallucinogenic properties—in their worship ceremonies. In his majority opinion, Justice Antonin Scalia ruled that the government does not have to show a compelling state interest for denying religious exemptions—as long as the law in question applies generally to everyone.

Importantly, this paper argues that American Christians are not jeopardizing the ideal of religious liberty by not supporting the building of a mosque in their city. Analogously, Christians are not jeopardizing the institution of marriage by not supporting the granting of equivalent marriage benefits to gay couples. In fact, the opposite is true. By withholding support, the Christian is strengthening the institution of marriage.

Most of the original signers of the Constitution were devout Christians who were exclusively committed to the triune God. Under an originalist reading, the First Amendment was written with the underlying assumption that many Americans would actively work to evangelize people of other religions. For example, Roger Sherman (mentioned earlier as a statesman from Connecticut who helped write the First Amendment) helped write a 1784 statute for his home state that required families who adopted “an Indian Child” to instruct him in “the principles of the Christian Religion.”¹³ Such was the mentality of that day! Many, if not all, of the founders would be shocked to see modern church scholars using the First Amendment as a rallying call for Christians to actively support the flourishing of Islam. In our present age, religious plurality is seeking to eviscerate all exclusivists. General Washington would be shocked that we now live in an America in which Christian military chaplains are written-up by their supervisors for preaching the exclusivity of Jesus Christ during a *Christian* base chapel worship service!¹⁴

Contemporary Christians should not feel guilty for *not* supporting the construction of a mosque in their township (Deut 12:3). Not doing so will not jeopardize religious liberty in the future. There is no contradiction between the First Commandment and the First Amendment. Christians should be free to live peacefully without being forced to vocally support the practices of another religion. Antonin Scalia ruled that the government does not have to show a compelling state interest for denying religious exemptions—as long as the law in question applies generally to everyone. It’s not just with Islam. Christians should not be compelled to call for the legalization of

¹³ *The First Laws of the State of Connecticut*, ed. John D. Cushing (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1982).

¹⁴ Sonny Hernandez, “Military Chaplain Scolded for ‘biased’ Sermon,” *WND* (June 17, 2019). <https://www.wnd.com/2019/06/military-chaplain-scolded-for-biased-sermon/>.

marijuana for practicing Rastafarians.¹⁵ Nor should they be fighting to gain the legalization of polygamy for Mormons. Russell Moore may feel as if to be “Baptist is to support soul freedom for everybody,” but we must remember that true soul freedom is found exclusively in Jesus Christ. Love for our neighbor demands us to consistently remind ourselves of this fact.

¹⁵ “The Rastafarian faith regards cannabis – the ‘wisdom weed’ – as a sacrament. Smoking it is a religious rite, harkening back to the notion that cannabis was alleged to have grown on the grave of King Solomon.” Madison Margolin, “Now Decriminalized, Could Jamaica Become Destination for Legal Weed?” *Rolling Stone* (August 20, 2018).

The AGC
JOURNAL

Vol. 3 / No. 2 / Fall 2023

THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTIAN AMERICA

Part Two: The Great Awakening and the Forming of America

Kurt Johnson & Bob Freiberg

Dr. Kurt Johnson serves on the advisory board as our legal consultant. He served in the Navy as a JAG (CAPT, USN-ret) and has a Masters and Doctorate degrees in Theology and Ministry. He currently serves as a Chaplain for Samaritan's Purse and is actively serving God's people in his local church. Chaplain Freiberg (CDR, CHC, USN-ret, M.Div, Th.M., D. Min., D. D.) has extensive operational experience with the Naval Sea Services in times of peace and war. His tours include Command positions in the Blue Water Navy, Marines, SEALs, and the Coast Guard. His academic experience is as an adjunct professor of Church history and theology, and he also served as an administrative dean of a seminary. He currently is a staff professor of Chaplain ministry at Central Seminary in Minneapolis, MN.

Gordon Wood in his prize-winning book “The Creation of the American Republic,” stated in his preface: “for better or for worse, in the 1970s and 1980s our three works were picked up and cited by the increasing number of scholars who had all sorts of interpretive needs and political agendas to promote.”¹ So much for objectivity and neutrality while doing historical work on the origin of America! Unfortunately, historians frequently promote a particular agenda or viewpoint when recounting the American story. For example, works by Gregg Frazier put forth a belief that the American revolution was an illegal war and it had nothing to do with the Christian beliefs of its Founding Fathers because most of the Founding

¹ Wood, Gordon. The Creation of the American Republic: 1776-1787, University of North Carolina Press, chapel Hill, NC, vi.

Fathers were not true Christians.² Likewise, Nikole Hannah-Jones asserts in her controversial “1690 Project,” that American history revolves around the first slaves brought to America in 1690. So, what is the right story?

The author recalls discussing this topic in his church history class with Dr. John Woodbridge at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS) during his Th.M. program. Dr. Woodbridge cautioned his students about “reception history” where a person only focuses on one part of the historical whole at the exclusion of the other causes or reasons. He encouraged his students to go to the primary sources first and then look at what respected scholars have researched to give a whole and balanced answer to historical questions. It is with this in mind, that this second of three articles seeks to tell a story which is fair and balanced about the origins of America. It emphasizes a part of the American story which is rarely discussed or noticed: the role of Christianity and its legal ramifications in the lives of those who lived through those times.

Some have said that the United States is not a Christian nation founded on the principles of the Word of God. As recounted in the first part of this three-part series, current teaching in America history has imposed a modern artificial social mores “grid” for those people who fought and died at the beginning of our nation. Nothing could be further from the truth in their lifetime! While there were many varied reasons for the American Revolution, this article incorporates the idea that Christianity did indeed influence the desire for freedom in the early American colonist from England. It was not the only thought, but one that definitely had a part of the total picture.

Review of Part One: Religious and Legal Disobedience to King and the Established Church

The Protestant Reformation started out as a protest the errors of the Catholic Church and its refusal to embrace the main doctrine of Justification by Faith. This is the idea that an individual can be right with God by faith through the sacrifice and atonement of Jesus Christ and Christ alone. There is no need to go through the “wickets” of works in accordance with established

² Frazier, Gregg, *The Religious Beliefs of America's Founders: Reason, Revelation, and Revolution* (Univ. Press of Kansas, 2012). My comment about his personal beliefs about American Christian origins came from a personal experience of sitting in Professor Frazier's American History class in 2003 while visiting my son as a student at The Master's University (then College). What was very interesting was his personal comments about the unorthodox beliefs of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson in their personal correspondence a few years before their deaths. While it was true neither one believed in the Trinitarian God of the Bible right before they died, Adams as a young man did, but eventually rejected his father's strong Calvinistic beliefs and lost his orthodox faith the older he got. Unfortunately, Dr. Frazier failed to mention to a group of impressionable Christian college sophomores that the writings of old John Adams was different than the writings of a young John Adams.

Catholic dogma of times past which affected late medieval Europe. Rather, an individual may enjoy a personal relationship with God through Christ. This is based on Scripture alone and not on the religious practices and traditions of fallen humanity or an ecclesiastical fiat.

Theologians and lawyers used this truth in demonstrating that the English king and Catholic clergy had no special powers over individual spiritual truth. While each had their function before God, a man's spiritual freedom was inviolate and irrevocable and could not be nullified by any human decree. This relationship was special and only existed between man and God. As a result, the King (State) and Church had no power or jurisdiction over the faith which God had given to the individual believer. Divine Right Monarchy and the religious tyranny of the State and the synergistic relationship between Church and State during medieval times were misguided and not founded on truth.

For instance, when Martin Luther preached "The just shall live by faith," it freed sinful men from the horrors of an angry and vengeful God by the love of God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Once men embraced the truth of saving grace through faith in Jesus Christ, they rebelled against the tyranny and injustice of human bondage through the oppression of the State. Understanding their newfound spiritual freedom in Christ, they angrily focused on the inequality and oppression from the Catholic Church and its relationship with the nobles and cruel landlords of their time. The Peasant Revolt was a direct result of Luther's salvation preaching as stated in their "Twelve Articles."³ The war between the Peasants and the Aristocrats in Germany (1524-25) was fueled by peasant grievances against their political and spiritual oppressors based on the Word of God.

Luther himself addressed many of the peasants' main points and even addressed their desire to do such things as chose their own pastors and worship God apart from the oppression of the established Church. Luther at first was sympathetic and even encouraged them in their struggle. However, as history has shown, the Peasant Revolt did not end well, with even Luther turning against those whom he had at first helped.

Part One of this series explored the link between salvation as defined by Scripture, and human freedom as it played out on the stage of Church and State in Western civilization through the Reformation and culminating in the English Civil War.

³ Cory Higdon, Martin Luther, Political theology, and the Contest Between Persecution and Toleration, *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society*, Vol 65., no. 3, 426-427.

This part (Part Two) discusses how the Gospel of Christ and the corresponding thirst for human freedom drove the creation of a government which values individual freedom over power of the state – a government “of the people, by the people, for the people.” Our Founding Fathers formed this government as a Constitutional Republic rather than a democracy, in large part to avoid concentrating too much power in the hands of a few. To understand our government and our nation, we must go back to our history. America’s struggle for political and religious freedom did not just happen. For many (not all), it all started with widespread individual faith in God. God’s Word underpinned new ideas and laws which uplifted the status of free men who worship a wonderful and loving God. To understand our origins, one must go back to our notion of law, both secular and sacred. The underpinning of English law based on past Christian principles gave our forefathers both biblical and legal bases to rebel against Church and civil tyranny.

“Compenetration” is a philosophical theological word which describes two things that are separate, yet work together at the same time. An example is found in Isaiah 7:14 where the prophecy of the virgin birth of Messiah (as interpreted in Matthew 1:23) talks of the future, but it also rebukes Isaiah’s contemporary Israelite King Ahaz. In that passage, the word “Almah” can also be translated as “young woman” which fulfilled the prophecy in Isaiah’s time for a son to be born from his wife, yet further Scripture in Matt 1:23 clarifies it further to mean Jesus.

This is exactly what happened with the events of early 18th century England and Colonial America. Most American history is written from the colonies’ perspective alone, but there were things going on in England both in the government (State-legal) and Anglican church (spiritual) which greatly affected how England later strangled the spiritual and financial necks of the American colonies. Policies coming out of Parliament and the Crown were heavily influenced by advice coming from Lambeth Palace (where the Archbishop of Canterbury lived) and his minions. As these policies came out, the common place for the people to hear and discuss them was not only in the taverns and public houses, but even more so in the pulpits in churches on both sides of the Atlantic.

PART TWO: RELIGION AND POLITICS IN THE EARLY TO MIDDLE 18TH CENTURY.

Most American history only glances at what was happening in colonial America. It studies the Pilgrims and Puritans and then generally skips over to the causes of the American Revolution. Most older Americans believe that America was only formed as a nation because of England's unfair economic oppression over the colonies. Even less Americans believe that America was formed primarily to promote slavery. However, there is a wealth of events which affected our true history, based primarily in the legal and religious life of the English people.

The Importance of Magna Carta

Even a casual glance at the imposing thirteen-ton bronze doors of the U.S. Supreme Court Building would powerfully affirm that United States law and the American ideal are deeply rooted in more than eight centuries of English law and history. Each of the two doors contains four bas-reliefs illustrating significant turning points in the development of law undergirding the U.S. Constitution. As Harry Dickinson highlights, three of the panels depict “an image of King John agreeing to Magna Carta at Runnymede in 1215, another of King Edward I confirming Magna Carta in 1297, and a third showing Sir Edward Coke disputing with King James I.”⁴ As events unfolded in the late eighteenth century, English colonists insisted that they were to be afforded the same rights and privileges as those enjoyed by their fellow citizens in England, including those anchored in Magna Carta. David Carpenter points out that even in 1215, the ideas contained in Magna Carta “were already centuries old and part of general European heritage ... It was in England, however, that they led to the most radical and detailed restrictions on the ruler.”⁵ Those and more restrictions on the government, and the corresponding individual liberties they preserved, were woven into the very fabric of the American revolutionary ideal.

Those “already centuries old” ideas were articulated and highlighted in the 1215 edition of Magna Carta. Significantly, the very first substantive clause of Magna Carta declares, “FIRST, THAT WE HAVE GRANTED TO GOD, and by this present charter have confirmed for us and our heirs in perpetuity, that *the English Church shall be free, and shall have its rights undiminished, and its liberties unimpaired* (emphasis added).” It is beyond

⁴ Dickinson, “Magna Carta in the American Revolution,” in *Magna Carta: History, Context and Influence*, ed. Lawrence Goldman, 79–100 (London: University of London, 2018), 99–100.

⁵ Carpenter, “Magna Carta 1215: Its Social and Political Context,” in *Magna Carta: History, Context and Influence*, ed. Lawrence Goldman, 1724 (London: University of London, 2018), 19.

serious debate that Magna Carta was, in Peter Linebaugh's words, "a document of Christian Europe," concerning itself chiefly with "the freedom of the Christian Church from the secular authority of king."⁶ More than five centuries later, the demand for freedom of the Christian Church undergirded American resistance to control of the English crown, fueled the American Revolution, and enshrined itself in the noble words of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

Ralph Turner observes that "Christian teaching, always a major source for American political thought, mingled with natural law doctrines"⁷ is enshrined in Magna Carta. By way of example, Turner cites four Presbyterian pastors who wrote in 1775 that "to take any man's money, without his consent, is unjust and contrary to reason and the law of God, and the Gospel of Christ, as well as contrary to Magna Carta and the English constitution."⁸ The enduring allure of eight-hundred-year-old Magna Carta in American jurisprudence is without equal. It has been cited in dozens if not hundreds of state and federal court decisions and continues to be cited to this day. Most recently, Magna Carta was cited in the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, overturning the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision.

The Importance of the English Civil War and the Glorious Revolution

Part One of this series underscored that American dissenters rejected the theological concept of "Divine Right Monarchy." The degree to which one must follow government, based in Romans 13:1-7, was brought into question when Martin Luther read his Bible and realized "the just shall live by faith" (Rom 1:16-17). Having realized the biblical doctrine of justification by faith and understanding the true meaning of the priesthood of the believer, Bible believers were motivated to please God. Taking the Bible at its face value and understanding the scriptural mandate that kings were also held accountable not only to God, but to the common people, created a sense of spiritual and political power. As a result, Bible Christians felt empowered to seek more freedom in both their choice of worship and political governance. This fundamental understanding that the "just shall live by faith," changed the

⁶ Linebaugh, Peter. *The Magna Carta Manifesto : Liberties and Commons for All*, 27–28.

⁷ Turner, Ralph. Magna Carta, 214–215.

⁸ Turner, Ralph. Magna Carta, 214–215.

course of European history and in many ways charted the American Revolution.

A quick overview of 17th century English history clarifies how the struggle between the power of the monarchy and the church, and individual citizens, ultimately significantly influenced the United States Bill of Rights (1789-1791). The Parliament of England issued the Petition of Right in 1628 to resolve ongoing disputes with King Charles I over a host of issues including taxation, finances, and religious issues. The Petition of Right was intended to both better articulate and limit the monarch's powers. As Mark Cartwright notes, Charles I "saw himself very much as a monarch with a divine right to rule, that is he believed he was appointed by God and no mortal was above him or should question his reign. This view went against the growing tradition in England that Parliament should have a significant share in government, especially regarding finances."⁹ Unfortunately, Charles, who initially had agreed to the Petition of Right, subsequently ignored it, and did not call any parliaments between 1629 and 1640. According to Cartwright, this was a contributing factor to the English Civil Wars (1642-1651).¹⁰ As with the leadup to the Petition of Right, these wars centered on religious disagreements and discontent with the monarch's unbridled use of power.

The so-called "Glorious" Revolution of 1688 was a bloodless transfer of the British monarchy from the unpopular three-year rule of James II, a Catholic, to his son-in-law, William of Orange, and Mary, both Protestants. The event precipitated Great Britain's final rejection of absolute sovereignty in its monarchy to a constitutional monarchy in which power is shared between the monarch and a parliament elected by the people. It also triggered the overthrow of the Dominion of New England on the other side of the Atlantic. The Dominion, created by James II, merged the colonies of modern-day New England, and eventually also included New York and New Jersey. It was an attempt by James II to tighten control over the colonies. In the wake of the Glorious Revolution, the Parliament of England issued the Bill of Rights in 1689. The Bill "firmly established the principles of frequent parliaments, free elections and freedom of speech within Parliament."¹¹ It further enshrined the principles of "no right of taxation without Parliament's agreement, freedom from government interference, the right of petition and

⁹ Cartwright

¹⁰ Cartwright

¹¹ UK Parliament

just treatment of people by courts.”¹² If those principles sound very familiar to American ears, it is because the English Bill of Rights 1689 served as a model for the United States Bill of Rights (1789–1791).

In England in particular, the Puritans were a religious/political party which strove to limit the power of the king over the religious and political life of the people of his realm. King Charles I was beheaded by the Puritans in the English Civil War, but they lost power once Oliver Cromwell died. Charles’ son, Charles II was called back from exile and asked to set up the Monarchy once again. Once in power, he punished the Puritans to the fullest extent he could. This gave rise to the two different parties known as the Whigs (those who wanted a limited power to the king) and the Tories (those who believed the king should be the spiritual head and political leader of the nation).

As the kings (Charles II and James II) were pro-Catholic, the protestant clergy of the Church of England and Parliament finally got rid of the almost absolute power of the kings and after the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688, England became a “Constitutional Monarchy.” This means that the power of the crown would be limited and delineated in a formal constitution. Some of the high churchmen in the Anglican church refused to take the oath to the new King and Queen, William of Orange, and Mary. They became known as “non-jurors” and believed in the divine right monarchy of the Stuarts. However, even though the new constitution limited the power of the king, it still maintained that the head of the church would remain the king or queen.

Despite all that the new Constitution gave the English people, it now made second class citizens of those who refused to be a part of the Anglican Church. This included two factions, the “Non-Jurors” and “Dissenters.” While the Non-Jurors were out of favor, they still yielded tremendous power and were able to make legislative headway in the political sphere because they remained part of the Church of England. They represented the “old way” of king and country. They could hold office and hold public jobs. They effectively brought political balance through debates and even though there were “flash points” of disagreement like the Bangorian Controversy, both sides still belonged to the established church and were treated like full Englishmen. It was a far different story for the Dissenters.

No matter how bitter the animosity was between these two factions, both sides harbored contempt for the Dissenters. Dissenters were those who refused to be a part of the corrupt Anglican Church. They included the

¹² UK Parliament

Quakers, Baptists, and other non-conformists who had biblical and traditional arguments against the similarities between the Anglican and Catholic Churches. Dissenters against the Church of England could not run for public office, which severely limited their public and political standing in British society. For instance, the “Test Act” was passed in 1673 which mandated a religious test of office consisting of each elected member taking public communion and attending worship services at an approved Anglican church. Dissenters of course were not members of the Anglican Church and hence, were not eligible to partake of public communion at those churches. If they did not, they could not partake of anything that had to do with public service. This situation fueled the potential for civil unrest in early 18th century England.

The English Constitution nevertheless allowed non-conformists to worship unhindered. No longer would they be thrown into prison and have their lands and fortunes confiscated by the State. While King William III was alive, he allowed them to live in relative peace. Under his authority, he allowed dissenters to run for and hold public office if they wanted to be “Occasional Conformers.” These were people who would have the appearance of being approved by the Church of England and conforming to the Test Act by coming to a service and partaking of communion once per year. The hypocrisy was obvious to all, but William III allowed it in his capacity of Head of the Church.

In the wake of William’s death, however, Queen Mary was not so tolerant. In the same year William died, the House of Commons passed a law against occasional conformity. Around the same time, a high Anglican churchman, Henry Sacheverell, preached a fiery sermon warning against letting dissenters assume positions of government. This touched off a firestorm which started a huge public divide. Sacheverell was revered by huge crowds for challenging the dreaded Calvinistic Baptists, non-conformists and evil Quakers. Such was the attitude of the people against the dissenters and the non-conformists in English society and religious life from 1700-1719. Enter the Great Revival in England and America.

BACKSLIDDEN ENGLAND AND COLONIAL AMERICA

From the early part of the 18th century in England as well as in America, spiritual deadness reigned supreme. People were more concerned about politics and the things of this world and, like the days of ancient Israel in the times of Elijah, true worship almost died out. When there is a lack of

conviction of sin, sin runs rampant in a society. This is an axiomatic truth which transcends times and cultures and still remains true to this day.

Unfortunately, the fervent piety of the Reformers and Puritans in the English Civil War was lost in a few generations. This is not new, for the same thing happened to ancient Israel in Amos 2:4. In the passage, God tells Judah judgement will come (perfect tense) because over time Israel was guilty of three things (the syntax shows a progression of time). The three things were: 1) they rejected the Law of God, 2) They did not keep his statutes (a simple qal indicative) and because of their lies, they were 3) being led astray (Hiph-meaning they are being led astray was intense).

In other words, because they forsook God, they would never embrace the truth that would enable them to solve problems. The natural outcome of this path was predictable.

Crime in England was at an all-time high, public drunkenness was commonplace, and morality based on biblical principles was almost non-existent. The same happened in America. Once biblically minded churches and even Harvard college became part of the problem by compromising with unbelievers via the “Half-Way Covenant.” This was an attempt at getting unconverted people to church by allowing them to take communion and was expressly forbidden in both the Old and New Testaments (I Cor 5:10-12, 10:1-12, II Cor 6:14). Preaching biblical doctrines of sin and redemption through Christ gave way to a focus on the schemes of cultural relevance and the morality of man by political fiat.

A culture devoid of human responsibility before a Holy God and lacking a sense of theodicy (the question of evil) will invariably lead to civil unrest and anarchy (an all too familiar situation in modern culture). People lost confidence in government and religious institutions due to their numerous hypocrisies. Public anarchy reigned on both sides of the Atlantic. When it finally got to be a problem in America, a leading clergy tried do something about it:

In 1725, Cotton Mather of Boston presented a petition to the Legislature in the name of the Assembled General Convention of Ministers. In this petition, the clergy desired that a synod might be called for the remedy of the existing unhappy condition of the churches, in view of the great and visible decline of piety in the country. During the extended proceedings on the matter, Anglican clergymen in Boston attempted to hinder the work of the synod. They reported the affair to London, with the response that the calling

of synods pertains to the King alone and the affair must end. The matter was therefore terminated.¹³

The corruption of the Anglican Church was on full display, referring this matter to the king because George I was not a moral man and cared little for anything having to do with England or the Church. George I had numerous mistresses and hated his son. He never wanted to be king, so he left much of running the government to the first Prime Minister of England, Robert Walpole, a noted religious skeptic. For those clergy who took the Bible and sin seriously, the answer to cultural decay was not to be found in the machinations of government, but in God Himself. England was in far worse moral condition than the colonies. “Disastrous social, economic, and health conditions ravaged the poor. Offensive theater gatherings encouraged immorality. National gin addiction and gambling tore at the fabric of family life. Riots were a common occurrence, while the upper classes and clerics embraced all sorts of heterodoxy or deist teaching. Blasphemy against anything holy was commonplace.”¹⁴

It is against this backdrop of moral and social decay that a Scottish preacher, John Erskine, wrote a plea for everyone to come together in prayer and ask God’s divine intervention to change the hearts of men and women. It was Erskine who led the first Scottish revival in the late 1730’s. Erskine also had a regular correspondence with a man in the colonies named Jonathan Edwards and Erskine sent Edwards a copy of his prayer. Edwards was so moved by the prayer that he wrote a book and had it published. It was then read by many at that time, and it became one of the pillars of the great revival which became known in history as “The Great Awakening.”

Enter George Whitefield

On October 21, 1765, John Wesley, a contemporary of George Whitefield, wrote the following in his journal:

I breakfasted with Mr. Whitefield, who seemed to me to be an old, old man, being fairly worn out in his Master’s service, though he has hardly seen fifty years, and yet it pleases God that I, who am now in my sixty-third year,

¹³ E. Oberholzer, *Delinquent Saints Discipling Actions of the Early Congregational Churches of Massachusetts*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1966), p. 250.

¹⁴ John Woodbridge and Frank James III, *Church History: From Pre-Reformation to the Present Day*, The Rise and Growth of the Church in Its Cultural, Intellectual and Political Context, (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI., 2013). P. 403.

find no disorder, no weaknesses, no decay, no difference from what I was at five and twenty; only that I have a fewer teeth, and more gray hairs.¹⁵

Whitefield would die five years later September 30, 1770, in Newburyport, Massachusetts and be buried in the crypt of the First Presbyterian “old South” Church. Once word got out about his death, huge crowds gathered in churches and city commons to hear funeral sermons in England, Colonial America and Scotland eulogizing the man who God used to change the course of history. Whitefield himself had asked John Wesley to preach his funeral sermon in England and on November 10, 1770, Wesley obliged.¹⁶

He later wrote in his journal about many funeral sermons he preached not only in London, but all over the English countryside:

Sat. Nov. 10- ...on Sunday following, went to the chapel in Tottenham Ct Road. An immense multitude was gathered together from all corners of the town. I was at first afraid that a great part of the congregation would not be able to hear... It was an awful season: all were still as night; most appeared to be deeply affected, and an impression was made on many... The time appointed for my beginning at the Tabernacle was five thirty, but it was quite filled by three, so I started at four.¹⁷

Later in the narrative, Wesley records how every place he went was packed and, in some cases, funeral sermons were held outside because the houses of worship could not hold the crowds. Others held funeral sermons in England, Scotland and Colonial America and it was the same throughout. There was something special about this man and his death was keenly felt by the on both sides of the Atlantic. For thirty years, George Whitefield had been the most famous and well-known man in the English-speaking world.

What was it about George Whitefield that an entire nation would stop everything to mourn his loss? What had happened that would move a whole civilization from the depths of depravity towards embracing the things of God?

George Whitefield: The Man

¹⁵ John Wesley, *The Heart of John Wesley's Journal*, (New York: Eaton and Mains, Condensed version with commentary of Augustine Birrell, a biographer of Wesley, 1850-1933). 320.

¹⁶ John Giles, D.D., *Memoirs of the Life of George Whitefield, M.A. Late Chaplain of the Right Honorable the Countess of Huntington, in which every circumstance worthy of notice, both in his private and public character, is recorded. Faithfully, selected from his Original Papers, Journals and Letters*, Printed by Charles and Edward Dilly, London. 1772. 276.

¹⁷ Wesley. *Journal*, 362-3.

Born in 1712 in the city of Gloucester, England, George Whitefield was the son of a hotel/tavern keeper. His father died when he was two, and he was a product of an educational ministry of St. Mary's de Crypt church two blocks away from where he lived. It was there where he learned the traditional courses of math, science, and English grammar, as well as Latin classics, and his love of the oratory of the theater from a Biblical perspective. From ages twelve to fifteen, he frequented played and incorporated the eloquent manners of the actors into his rendition of Latin stories for anyone who would listen. However, there was something else welling up within him, and that was his love of God. He was called into the ministry as a young man serving as a host in his mother's hotel in Gloucester.

He entered Pembroke College at Oxford to learn how to serve God. It was here that his "mind over body" episodes were first recorded. He became friends with Charles and John Wesley there and was part of the famous "Holy Club" which was a group of seminary students dedicated to the deeper things of God. It was in this time that John Wesley records his "strangely warm" episode and was born again (John 3:7). Likewise, the Spirit of God laid ahold of George and changed the direction of his life.

From this time, it seems that George was fully dedicated. When no one had seen or heard of George for days, they looked for him and tried to discover his whereabouts. Finally, after much effort, Charles Wesley found George in his room, and it was apparent he had not eaten or slept for days. Afterwards, he was under the care of a physician because he carried his dedication to God to an extreme and was in constant danger of self-harm from neglecting the physical needs of his body. He had deserted his physical body because God was calling him for something special and he had neither the time nor the desire to eat or sleep.¹⁸ Much like Christ during the temptation in the wilderness where He didn't eat or drink for forty days (Matt 4, Luke 4), he was at a place where God wanted to use him. It took him a long time to get his strength back, and when he did, he never looked back. Unfortunately, this pattern was to afflict him for the rest of his life and contributed to his early death at age fifty-seven.

When it came to preaching, George Whitefield was a dynamo in an age of horse and buggy without any electric public address systems. Benjamin Franklin wrote that when Whitefield preached, he could be heard up to three

¹⁸ Giles, 7-8

quarters of a mile away while preaching to a crowd of 30,000 people.¹⁹ People came from miles around just to witness his rhetorical ability, as well as the message he proclaimed. It was a stark contrast from the staid and sterile delivery which was common in that era. Critics accused him of grandstanding and admiring preachers mimicked his style. It affected American religious and political life so much that even Patrick Henry's and others' political oratory can be traced back to the evangelical preaching style of George Whitefield.

Eventually, this high-energy, candid, and demonstrative preaching took its toll on Whitefield's health. In addition to the account of John Wesley when he saw Whitefield in 1765, there are accounts where, even in his thirties, he had to be helped up onto the elevated platform before he preached. Some wrote how he would wheeze and gasp for air before he preached, as if to catch his breath, no doubt suffering from asthma. His health issues were exacerbated by his exhaustive preaching schedule -- usually twice a day at different locations to thousands and sometimes tens of thousands and once he was done, he would go back to his lodging and see those who needed personal spiritual counseling. He saw everyone who wanted to see him, and he conversed with each person individually without sleep or food. People would line up blocks outside of his dwelling after a sermon and wait to see him, often until the early hours of the night, even though he had to get up early the next day for his next preaching event. He never refused to see anyone because it is what he believed Jesus would have done.²⁰ Such was the type of man who carried God's message to the masses.

George Whitefield: The Message

Many often ask the question, "What is the purpose of mankind?" and find no satisfactory answer. George Whitefield never had a problem with that esoteric question. His life was one of single-mindedness and focus on preaching and teaching God's Word. In his thirty-five years of ministry, he traveled to Scotland, England, Ireland, Holland, Bermuda, and Colonial America. He made seven trips to America and in that time preached over 18,000 sermons to many crowds, some in excess of 30,000 worshippers. It is

¹⁹ Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, 2nd ed., edited by Leonard W. Labaree, (Yale University Press, New Haven, CT. 1964), 175-176.

²⁰ Ken Lawson, D. Min, Ph.D., Personal conversation with one of the foremost historical Whitefield experts of our time, AGC Annual Military Chaplain Training, Colonial Baptist Church, Virginia Beach, VA. Feb 22, 2023.

estimated that over ten million souls heard his sermons firsthand. That does not count all the letters, newspaper articles and published sermons which were copied and preached in every corner of the English-speaking world by others who followed his Gospel preaching. The Evangelical Library in London contains an archival collection of his handwritten sermons and papers filling six volumes, each with over 450 pages. There are many more libraries and collections of Whitefield's works and writings which are too numerous to mention here.

He was not only prolific, but he was also dynamic. He was a friend of Benjamin Franklin for over thirty years, and Franklin wrote in his autobiography about the quality, conviction, and forcefulness of Whitefield's preaching. Whitefield's vocal sermon projection was legendary. Franklin himself recounts that he heard many of Whitefield's sermons and while many were new, the ones he repeated "were improved by frequent repetitions, that every accent, every emphasis, every modulation of voice, was so perfectly tuned and well placed, that without any interest in the Scripture, that one could not help but be pleased with the discourse."²¹ This was written by a man who in his early years was a self-proclaimed deist.

Whitefield wrote that during his very first public sermon given at the church he grew up attending, fifteen people complained to the bishop that they were "driven mad."²² Many who experienced his preaching commented on the precision of his delivery and oratorical ability and how his presentation moved many.²³ This incredible man could project an hour-long message up to three-quarters of a mile away, without any modern loud speaking equipment, and hold massive crowds of people spellbound... And yet he had a pastor's heart with compassion for each individual sheep who heard his voice. His unprecedented effectiveness in preaching the gospel was mightily powered by the authority and supremacy of the Holy Spirit!

Whitefield's theology can be described as Calvinistic, but he was a soul-winner through and through. His message was simple: we are sinners, and we need the payment of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ to pay for the penalty of sin and be reconciled to God through the atonement of His Son. In an age where personal and corporate sin ran rampant, this was a message sent by God through this man to change all of society on both

²¹ Franklin. 180.

²² Thomas Giles. 10.

²³ Wikisummaries, *Ben-Franklin-on-Rev-George-Whitefield*, <https://wikisummaries.org>, accessed March 6, 2023 on the internet.

continents. Whitefield used both Old and New Testament passages to tell of the righteousness and judgement of God against sinful humanity. His sermons were generally topical and filled with various biblical passages which backed up his main point. They were thoroughly Scriptural with some practical applications, ending with the need to repent and accept the Gospel of Christ to save one's soul. Additionally, his sermons were both biblical and practical. They demonstrated a need for the hearer to repent and come back to the loving arms of an Almighty God who provided the means of reconciliation through the acceptance of His Son's sacrifice.²⁴²⁵ However, they also provided practical scriptural guidance on topics such as finances, government and politics.

George Whitefield: The Miracle of the Great Awakening

In the first part of this article, sources showed an accurate portrayal of the corruptness and spiritual deadness of the age before the revival preaching of John and Charles Wesley, Erskine, Edwards, and Whitefield. When these men preached, they used the Word of God and when that happens, hearts and minds of many and even societies are changed for the better. Their combined efforts changed people and to do that, there was a true miracle that had to happen. That was for people who heard this message to repent and be saved by the grace of God. The miracle was in the giving or outpouring of God's Spirit which caused a change in the lives of those that heard Whitefield's preaching. It was true revival given by God to wake up those who were slumbering spiritually. Others had a part, but Whitefield outshined them all.

So, what is a "spiritual revival," one may ask? Revival is demonstrated in the Bible when in times of great apostasy, those who are professing believers in God repent of their sins and come back to a proper relationship with the Lord. A good example is found in the Old Testament when Nehemiah comes

²⁴ George Whitefield, *Whitefield's Sermon Outlines: A Choice Collection of Thirty-Five Model Sermons*, The World's Great Sermons in Outline, selected and edited by Sheldon B. Quincer, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI., 1956).

²⁵ George Whitefield, *Saul's Conversation*, based on Acts 9:22, *Classic Sermons on the Apostle Paul*, ed. by Warren Wiersbe, (Kregel publications, Grand Rapids, Mi., 1991), 19-37. This is an actual and full account of just one his sermons and is listed here merely as an example of the type of sermon Whitefield preached. Remember, he is on record as preaching over 18,000 sermons. The Evangelical Library, located in London has probably the largest handwritten sermon collection of Whitefield's, but there are other places where one can still look to read and see what he preached.

back and reestablishes tithes, Sabbaths, and makes the priests divorce their pagan wives as directed in the Torah. He also reminds the people of Judah of the reason they have been oppressed: they have forgotten God's warning (Neh 13:17-18). Revival is not to be confused with "Evangelism," which is when those who never had a relationship with God\ repent and come to Him for salvation.

Evangelism is best demonstrated in Acts 2, where Peter preaches about the outpouring of God's spirit as prophesied by the prophet Joel (2:28-32). Evangelism is when God pours out His Spirit and when His Word of repentance and salvation through Christ is preached. People realize their sin before a Holy God, and they desire a right relationship with Him. Peter preached this message and as God poured out His Spirit upon the people, three thousand souls were counted as new converts (Acts 2:41-42). This of course was possible by faith in the finished work of redemption through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It was through the preaching of men like Whitefield during this time that people who were "backslidden" believers were renewed and rededicated themselves in their devotion to God, much like those in ancient Israel. *This was true revival.* As history and the Scriptures have shown, when the outpouring of God's Spirit happens, those who were backslidden are revived and those who never knew the Lord come to personal salvation through Christ. It is a spiritual renewal and an awareness of the presence and person of the most Holy God. Hence, this time in American History became known as "The Great Awakening."

For this message to have any meaning, the Holy Spirit must work in the hearts of individuals to call them to repentance. God used the message of George Whitefield and others during this time to cause men and women to weep over their sin before God. The stark realization that one is forever spiritually lost without hope is a sobering and frightful terror. It is such moments that God, in His mercy and grace, sends out the Holy Spirit to bring lost souls to Himself. The moment that a person encounters the Divine offer through the Spirit of God, and by faith trusts and embraces this eternal reality, is a life changing event.

The Great Awakening's impact on Colonial America was wide and inescapable. It went from city to country, black to white, male to female, and north to south. Even though not everyone was revived or converted, it still permeated all of society. However, while the Gospel went out through Whitefield's teaching and preaching of God's Word, there were those who greatly opposed him. For the first part of his ministry (generally from about

1740-1750), he made many enemies who were either jealous of his success or were personally convicted by his sermons because of their spiritual deadness or corruption. They pursued their displeasure at him with vengeance.

Those whom Whitefield named or called out responded with retribution. In those days, a person was never neutral on the subject of George Whitefield--one was either for him or against him. There was no middle ground. The subject and details of his detractors will be discussed in a later article, but for now it is enough to know that his bitterest enemies were other proclaiming Christians in the Church of England and their hierarchy, as well as those who ran the religious seminaries of America.

HOW SOCIETY IN AMERICA CHANGED

The spiritual malaise and social moral corruption brought on by the dead, destructive theology of deism of the early 18th century in England and Colonial America soon changed and gave way to a renewed interest in all things Scriptural and Christian, in particular, due to the preaching and teaching of men like Whitefield. Churches, seminaries, and religious and missionary societies sprang up. One result of all this was all Protestant sects at this time began to focus on the common enemies preventing the preaching of God's Word and man's ability to know God personally: France and the Roman Church and the seat of Divine Right Monarchy, the old enemy of human freedom.

To a revived, born-again Calvinistic Protestant, the enemy of God was France because of what it had done to the Huguenots, especially during the "St. Bartholomew's' Day Massacre." France had Catholic missionaries in America at the same time as Great Britain and used the Mississippi river valley from Minnesota to New Orleans as a means of converting the native Americans. New Orleans and Quebec had been settled by the French and they brought their religion with them. This put France and America on a crash course if America were to expand westward. Men saved during this time also started comparing their earthly life through the lens of Scripture, especially looking at things that God hated, and things God loved.

From the time after the Great Awakening in both America and England, there was a renewed interest in biblical living and the biggest threat to those who were saved during the revival was the influence of France and their support of the Catholic Church. This conflict grew until France and England went to war on both continents. The French and Indian wars were fought in

America from 1753 to 1763, while the Seven Years War ravished the European continent from 1757 to 1763.

CONCLUSION

Part One of this series explored the idea brought forth from the Reformation to the English Civil War that a man could be right with God by faith and have no need of a priest (Rom 1:16-18). This of course did not sit well with either the Catholic Church or the civil government as represented by the king, who in turn supported the state religion of Catholicism. This was especially so because the king derived his authority from a symbiotic relationship with the Catholic Church of Rome. Those that were converted to Protestantism during this time took to heart the truth that God is the ultimate authority and that the king was a servant of the people and could do things only with the permission of those he/she ruled.

Of course, this spiritual biblical truth then gave rise to questions about relations between those who govern and those who are governed – between legal, political, and religious institutions and individual freedom of worship. English law during the Reformation as well as the English Civil War was used to show how the Bible gave individual religious freedom over the State, starting with the Magna Carta and ended with the English Bill of Rights. However, it nevertheless took the Great Awakening to give full rights to the Dissenters.

Part Two of this series underscored that the preaching and teaching of the Gospel changed a dissolute and chaotic society into one which had a meaning and purpose based on the standards found in the Word of God. The revival and evangelistic events in Colonial America, England, and Scotland from 1735 to 1750 reoriented these societies away from neo-paganism back to Christianity. However, this newfound spiritual freedom based on the Gospel of Christ was challenged by the established Church of England and the influence of French Catholicism in America. The fear that Catholic France would win and take away religious freedom from Protestant Englishman and Americans was a critical factor in the Seven Years War in Europe and the French and Indian Wars in America. Those who had been changed and spiritually awakened by the revival were fearful of losing their freedom to worship according to the dictates of their consciences. Letters, sermons and newspapers testify to this truth in England and America during this time. This war would eventually be won by the English, with the American

colonists playing a part in it, but it would set in motion a series of events, both religious and political which would dramatically change the world.

Part Three of this series will discuss how God used Whitefield's preaching and life ministry to influence contemporary and subsequent generations of Americans to fight against England. It was to be a complex war with many causes, but at its root lay religious truth lived out in the lives of believers in the great God of the Bible. The religious reasons for the American Revolution did not affect everyone, but it was certainly one of the many causes why America went against England. However, it is so important in the lives of many who fought that it should be mentioned. It is through the work of men like George Whitefield that this will be further explored in the next AGC Journal.

MAKING GOD INTO OUR IMAGE

The Problem of Evil and Theistic Personalism

Brian Huffling

Dr. Brian Huffling teaches at Southern Evangelical Seminary in North Carolina, and is a U.S. Air Force Reserve chaplain.

Gordon Chaplains have the potential to minister to people experiencing great trauma and uncertainty. Questions often arise as to the source of evil and catastrophe around us. It matters not whether the chaplain is military or civilian, a prison chaplain, a hospital chaplain, or a law enforcement chaplain. Questions are asked as to why God allows evil to go apparently unchecked in this fallen world. Skeptics mock chaplains and others who try to explain the goodness of God in disaster situations. How can we comfort the grieving and point them to a God who allows such suffering in this world? How can we respond to those questioning God’s existence via the issue of evil? Hopefully this article will be of help to those ministering in such situations.

INTRODUCTION

“What do you think is the most important issue in Christian apologetics today?” this author was once asked. Without too much thought, “The problem of evil” was given as the answer. The problem of evil has plagued humankind since the earliest of times. It is clearly seen in the Book of Job. Simply put, the problem goes something like this: if God is all-good, all-powerful, and all-knowing, why is there evil? This is likely one of the questions that chaplains and ministers get asked more than any other. However, the daily administrative tasks, and even biblical ministry, keep many from the important task of theology and a sound view of God.

While the problem of evil has been the atheist's main weapon against theism in general and Christianity in particular, another problem has crept into Christian circles in the past few decades. This problem is what Brian Davies calls "theistic personalism."¹ Theistic personalism is the idea that God is very much like human persons. It is a blurring of the lines between Creator and creature. One example of this was when this author participated on a panel discussing divine simplicity and one of the other panelists noted that regarding knowledge and power, the definition of such is not different, God just has an infinite amount of both. In other words, regarding these attributes, the difference between God and man is quantitative, not qualitative. Such blurring of the Creator/creature distinction is theologically dangerous.² One area where this has practical consequences is the problem of evil.

This essay will hopefully serve as a motivation for those chaplains and others in ministry to (1) recognize the distinction between theistic personalism and what is generally considered classical theism; (2) reflect on the distinction between God and his creatures; and hopefully (3) offer another tactic at approaching the alleged problem of evil and suffering. The emotional problem of evil is not the primary concern; however, it is related. The goal of this article is to prepare chaplains to deal with those asking hard questions about God's existence as it relates to evil.

THE GENERAL PROBLEM OF EVIL

As previously mentioned, the problem of evil or suffering concerns why God, if he is an omni-God, allows so much suffering. Atheists use this as an argument to question theism while theists fall in the trap of questioning various attributes of God. There are two general forms of the problem of evil: the logical (also called deductive) form, and the evidential (also called inductive) form.

The logical form attempts to demonstrate there is no logical possibility that God exists with evil. A well-known attempt at this form was made by J. L. Mackie. His argument is:

¹ Brian Davies, *An Introduction to Philosophy of Religion*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 11-17.

² Psalm 50:16, 21, "But to the wicked God says... You thought that I was altogether like you, but I will rebuke you, and set them in order before your eyes."

In its simplest form the problem is this: God is omnipotent; God is wholly good; and yet evil exists. There seems to be some contradiction between these three propositions, so that if any two of them were true the third would be false. But at the same time all three are essential parts of most theological positions: the theologian, it seems, at once *must* adhere and *cannot consistently* adhere to all three.³

Mackie admits that “the contradiction does not arise immediately”; rather to show such a contradiction, according to him, one needs “some additional premises, or perhaps some quasi-logical rules connecting the terms ‘good’, ‘evil’, and ‘omnipotent’.” What Mackie is claiming is that the above attributes of God must be understood in such a way as to mean that a theistic God would want to eliminate all evil since he is good and that he could do such a thing if he all all-powerful. If these two notions are agreed upon, then it would seem that there is a logical contradiction with such a being and the existence of evil.⁴

Mackie further notes that “once the problem is fully stated it is clear that it can be solved, in the sense that the problem will not arise if one gives up at least one of the propositions that constitute it.”⁵ For example, if God is not completely good or not really omnipotent, or some such other reason, “then the problem of evil will not arise.”⁶

Put into a syllogism, the logical argument can be stated like this:

1. **God is all-powerful** (or omnipotent).
2. **God is all-good** (or omnibenevolent).
3. **Evil exists.**
4. **Therefore, God does not exist.**

So, according to Mackie, if God really is all-good and all-powerful, then evil should not exist; but since it does, then no such God exists. However, if one gives up the traditional notions of the terms in question, then the problem vanishes. Is it possible to say that God is either not all-powerful or

³ J. L. Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence,” *Mind*, Vol. 64 no. 254 (April 1955): 200; emphasis in original.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 200-201.

⁵ Mackie, 201.

⁶ *Ibid.*

not all-good? Some have said that God is in fact not omnipotent. One such example is Harold Kushner. He argues that God simply is not omnipotent in the traditional way.⁷ Such is a denial of the classical and arguably biblical view of God and thus is not acceptable to those who want to maintain the traditional view that God can do anything that is not logically impossible.⁸ In this view, God can do anything that can be done, but some things just cannot be done, such as making a square circle. Alvin Plantinga famously debated Mackie on this point by arguing that even an omnipotent God cannot logically guarantee that evil would not exist if his creatures had libertarian free will.⁹ Thus, some argue that God, for one reason or another, is not omnipotent in the way that Mackie claims causes the problem. That is one way out, and many philosophers have accepted that Plantinga has deflated Mackie's logical problem.

One such philosopher is William L. Rowe who admits that “no one [he thinks] has established such an extravagant claim” as Mackie made regarding evil being logically inconsistent with God.¹⁰ Rather than maintaining the alleged contradictory nature of evil and God, Rowe argues for an evidential argument which may, according to him, “provide *rational support* for atheism.”¹¹ His overall argument is that there is more evil than one would expect if such an omni-God in fact exists. In other words, if an omnipotent and omnibenevolent being exists, one should not expect to see so much evil in the world. Since such evil does exist, it is not likely that such a God exists.

RESPONSE: GOD AS A NECESSARY BEING

There is a myriad of problems made by those who argue in the vein of both Mackie and Rowe. One is that such arguments ignore theistic proofs that attempt to demonstrate God's existence. If the traditional arguments (or even one) are sound, then a necessary being exists. Three well-known

⁷ Cf. his *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (New York: Anchor Books, 2004).

⁸ Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *On the Power of God*, questions 1 and 2.

⁹ Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), chapter 4.

¹⁰ William L. Rowe, “The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism,” in *The Problem of Evil*, eds. Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams (1990; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 126n.1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*; emphasis in original.

examples are from the famous five ways of Thomas Aquinas in part one, question two, article three of the *Summa Theologiae*. The first argument attempts to prove that God is a being of pure act, or pure existence. The second tries to demonstrate that God is the efficient cause of all other things that exist. The third sets out to show that God is a necessary being (all three would show this, but the third argument argues for the necessity of a being since an infinite regression of contingent beings is not possible). If it is the case that these, or any other theistic proofs are sound, then God exists. While not all proofs demonstrate that God is a necessary being, such as the design arguments and arguably the kalam cosmological argument, those of the Thomistic sort (and even the ontological argument of Anselm) if sound, show that God not only exists, but exists necessarily as a being of pure, unlimited existence. Such is especially clear from the first way.

The first way argues that things in the universe are in a state of change. Aquinas' understanding of change is that an existing thing is composed of actuality and potentiality. A thing's actuality, or act, is its existence (or act of being), and its potentiality is what it has the potential, or power (*potentia*) to become. A thing cannot be in act and potency at the same time in the same way. For example, a person cannot be actually walking and potentially walking. At one moment he can be potentially walking but once he starts, he is actually walking. This applies to everything in nature. Thus, change happens when an actually existing thing undergoes a process of becoming; that is, it goes from being potentially x to actually x. Further, such a change must be brought about by a being that is already in act. However, there cannot be an infinite regress of one being bringing about change in another being (or there would be no actual beginning or ultimate cause). Thus, there is one ultimate being of pure actuality that is not composed of potency. Such is God.

If sound, this argument not only demonstrates God's existence, but it also demonstrates many aspects of God's nature. For example, if God is a being of pure act, then he is not composed of potency, or anything else. He is therefore said to be simple. The doctrine of simplicity, once a foundational doctrine but mostly ignored or rejected by many today, states that God does not have any composition or parts in any way.¹² He is a complete unity of infinite being. Further, if potency is a necessary condition for change, and God does not possess any potential, then he cannot change. (He does purportedly have what is referred to as active potency, which is the kind of

¹² Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia., q. 3.

potential needed to bring about change in other beings, or bring about other beings. The kind of potency denied is a passive potency which would cause a change in God). If he cannot change, then he is immutable. Since God does not change, then he has no before and after, thus God would not be measured in time and is atemporal or eternal. Aquinas follows Boethius here in the traditional understanding of ‘eternity’.¹³ Another attribute that follows from this is that God is impassible, meaning that he is not affected passively by his creation.¹⁴

All this is to say that the atheist often treats evil as if there are no sound arguments for God’s existence. Evil, it is maintained, is a sufficient condition for the non-existence of God. However, if God is a necessary being, then evil could not be a counterargument to his existence, even in principle. Thus, the debate needs to be made at the level of theistic proofs, not the existence of evil. And then the chaplain or others must try to simply explain these complex ideas to the grieving and heartbroken when asked.

CLASSICAL THEISM AND THEISTIC PERSONALISM

Perhaps the most egregious problem made by atheists is the blurring of the Creator/creature distinction. This is seen by the fact that by ‘good’ atheists mean that God is morally good. However, atheists are not the only ones that take this view—many theists do as well. One such theist is Richard Swinburne. He exhorts:

I suggest that the theist’s claim that God is by nature morally perfectly good should be understood as the claim that God is so constituted that he always does what is . . . probably the morally best action or best kind of action (when there is one), does an equal morally best or best kind of action where there is one, and does not do any action that is probably a morally bad action. If God did not always do what on his evidence is probably the best where there was a best, or ever did a bad action, he would be less than perfect.¹⁵

¹³ Boethius, *On the Consolation of Philosophy*, Book v.

¹⁴ For God’s immutability and eternity following from simplicity, see *Summa Theologiae* Ia. questions 9 and 10 respectively.

¹⁵ Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 202.

What Swinburne is saying is that God is a moral being just like his creatures and that if he does not perform actions that are the morally best kind of action, then his perfection is jeopardized.

The problem with taking God to be a morally good being is just that: it requires God to be a moral being. What would it mean for God to be a moral being? What does it mean for any being to be moral? To be morally good means that a being is measuring up to a certain standard. For example, for a human to be morally good is to say that the individual person is behaving in a way a human *should* behave. According to natural law theory (which is consistent with Romans 2), there is an objective human nature that all humans have in common. Some actions promote the good of a human and some actions cause harm and prohibit the good. But the good is not a random, subjective aspect of the person. It is inextricably bound up with the kind of the thing that it is. However, regarding morality, the person is good if he does what he is supposed to do and avoids what he is supposed to avoid. In other words, he is good if he follows the standard of goodness that is in accordance with his nature. Such a standard, and human nature, has a cause, viz., being created in the image of God.

The problem arises when one tries to use the term 'good' in a univocal way between humans and God. A given term can be used in one of three ways between creatures and God (or any two referents): univocally, equivocally, and analogously. To say a term is used univocally between God and man is to say that the meaning of the term is the same. For example, to say that Bank of America and Wells Fargo are both banks is to use the term 'bank' univocally. However, to say that one is going to go fishing on the bank of the river is to use the term 'bank' equivocally, that is, in a way different from the previous use. An analogous use of a given term means that it is somewhat alike but somewhat different in its meaning between two referents. For example, to say that a computer is good and to say shoes are good is to use the term 'good' in an analogous way.

The problem with taking terms in an equivocal way between creatures and God is that they would quite literally be meaningless. However, it is also problematic to say that words have the exact same meaning between creatures and God. But this is precisely what many Christians maintain.¹⁶ One distinction made is between the definition of a term and the way it is predicated between two referents. In the case of man and God the term is

¹⁶ Cf. Battista Mondin, *The Principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology* (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963), and Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, *Introduction and Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2002), chapter 9.

often said to have a univocal meaning and an analogical predication. What this means is that the term ‘good’, for example, has the same meaning when it refers to both God and man; however, it is predicated finitely to man and infinitely to God. This has the unfortunate conclusion that God is different by degree, not by kind. It seems to make God more like a creature. This is of course, not the desire that Christians want to maintain and those who hold to this position would certainly take exception to this analysis.

If God does exist as a necessary, simple, immutable, infinite, eternal being, then he is nothing like his creatures.¹⁷ To apply the same meaning of a term between him and his creatures is to blur the Creator/creature distinction, if not to implicitly reject it.

Predicating the term ‘good’ to various finite, temporal, contingent, material things demonstrates that it is analogous even among them. For example, a computer can be good, as can shoes, a steak, a golf shot, and a person. A good computer is one that works properly and does what it is meant to. A good pair of shoes are comfortable, stylish, and protective. A good steak is nutritious and tasty. A golf shot is good if it is the way the golfer intended it to be. A person is good if he is what he is supposed to be. But a computer’s goodness is not like the shoes’ goodness. The steak’s goodness is not like that of the golf shot. The man’s goodness is not like any of the others’ goodness. None of these things have a goodness that is like the others. Rather, a thing’s goodness is tied to its nature. In other words, a thing’s goodness is tied to what the thing is. There is no univocal goodness that all these things share. Goodness, then, is analogous even to these finite objects. How much more is goodness going to be analogous to an angel that is not material, spatial, temporal, etc.? But the angel is still a finite, contingent creature. How much more, then, is goodness going to be analogous to the unlimited, necessary, immaterial, infinite Creator?¹⁸

Another aspect of the things above regarding their goodness is that their natures are relatively well-known. People know what computers, steaks, and shoes are. People also know what *they are supposed to be*. A major difference between finite things and God is that his nature is not known as the things in one’s physical experience. While one can make positive attributions about him, such as he exists, most of the metaphysical and literal attributes known about God are negative in nature. To say God is simple is to say he is *not*

¹⁷ Jeremiah 10:6, “Inasmuch as there is none like You, O LORD, You are great, and Your name is great in might.” See also Exodus 8:10; I Samuel 2:2; I Kings 8:23; Isaiah 46:9.

¹⁸ “The Lord is good, A stronghold in the day of trouble; And He knows those who trust in Him,” Nahum 1:7.

made up of parts. To say that he is immutable is to say that he does *not* change. To say he is eternal is to say he is *not* temporal. The same negations apply when saying God is immaterial, infinite, impassible, etc. In a real sense, a finite creature cannot know the infinite nature of the divine being. One simply does not know what God is or what he is *supposed to be like or do*. This has serious implications for the problem of evil, since the problem invariably maintains that if God does exist, then either he *would* or *should* keep evil at bay. However, the only way such a statement can be made is if one can say he knows what God is like or should be like.

All this is not to say that God is not good; actually, he is pure and infinite goodness. But it is wrong to say that his goodness is a moral goodness. This is at least for a couple of reasons. First, to say that something is moral is to say that it has some sort of standard that it needs to be measured against. Second, to say something is moral is to say that one knows enough about its nature to say such a thing. Neither is the case for God. There simply is no standard by which to measure him. He is not a human being with human morality or obligations. For example, he cannot murder. Since all life belongs to him, he cannot take it improperly. If he wants to take someone's life, it is ultimately God's anyway. God cannot steal. Everything already belongs to him. Further, he has no obligations as he is not subordinate to anything.

God's goodness refers to his perfect existence. He lacks nothing and is purely actual. Further, he does not *have* goodness as humans do; he simply *is* goodness. He is the Creator of all finite things, and as such is worthy of worship. The kind of goodness referred to here is a metaphysical goodness. It is not a moral one. Finite beings also have metaphysical goodness. Following Augustine, evil is not a positive nature or thing in itself; rather, it is a corruption or privation of being.¹⁹ For example, if a human is missing a part of his body, then his being has been corrupted. He suffers a privation of being. This is not a moral evil, but a natural one. The same can be said of his moral character, as it too can be corrupted and not *be* what it is supposed to *be*. God, by contrast, has no corruption or privation, and is thus completely and perfectly good.²⁰ Thus, to say God is 'good' is ambiguous in the context of the problem of evil unless one specifies what he means.

While atheists argue that God is a moral being but is not acting moral if he exists, theists generally also maintain that God is a moral being and must

¹⁹ Cf. Augustine, *Against the Epistle of the Manichæus Called Fundamental*, chapter 35.

²⁰ Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia. questions 4-6 regarding God's perfection, goodness in general, and God's goodness respectively.

have morally justifiable reasons for allowing evil. If he did not, the reasoning goes, then God would not be justified in allowing evil and would not be perfectly good (as the above citation of Swinburne demonstrates). Both groups generally take God to be a moral being with obligations. However, this makes God subject to a moral standard. One must ask from where such a standard comes; although generally the Christian will say that God is his own standard. While this usually means he is morally obligated to act a certain way, Davies believes that God being his own standard can be understood in a different way. He states, “The notion of God as subject to duties or obligations (and as acting in accordance with them) would, I think, have been thought of by [Aquinas] as an unfortunate lapse into anthropomorphism, as reducing God to the level of a human creature.”²¹ Regarding this, Aquinas writes:

Since good as perceived by intellect is the object of the will, it is impossible for God to will anything but what His wisdom approves. This is, as it were, His law of justice, in accordance with which His will is right and just. Hence, what He does according to His will He does justly: as we do justly what we do according to law. But whereas law comes to us from some higher power God is a law unto Himself. (*ST Ia. q. 21.*)

What Davies and Aquinas are saying, is that God is not subject to any other standard besides himself. This is not to say he acts in a moral sense; rather, it is to say God is not beholden to any moral standards and he thus transcends morality like he transcends space and time.²² A good illustration of this is the Book of Job.

THE EXAMPLE OF JOB

The Book of Job provides a biblical example of what has been presented from a theological or philosophical perspective. Job chapters 1 and 2 narrate the sequence of events regarding Job’s suffering. Simply put, Job is seen as a righteous man with ten children, many servants, and a great deal of cattle. All this is taken away when God dares Satan to test Job by giving Satan all that

²¹ Brian Davies, *Thomas Aquinas on God and Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), chapter 6, “God’s Moral Goodness,” Kindle.

²² For more on this cf. Brian Davies, *The Reality of God and the Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) and Herbert McCabe, *God and Evil in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies (London: Bloomsbury, n.d.).

Job has, with the proviso that Satan does not attack Job directly (at first). Satan attacks and Job loses his children, servants, and cattle. Job remains steadfast and God claims that Satan incited God against Job “without reason” (2:3).²³ Until chapter 38, Job and his friends argue about what Job did to bring about this sin. Job maintains his innocence while his friends maintain that God does not allow such suffering for righteous people. However, according to the book, God does. Further, there was no reason for Job’s suffering according to God.

If one were to take the typical Christian approach to make sense of Job’s suffering, such as Swinburne, then one would likely tell Job that God has morally justifiable reasons or try to offer some sort of theodicy or defense to “get God off the hook.” But this is not at all what God does. Rather, God excoriates Job for speaking about things of which he has no knowledge. God does not offer morally justifiable reasons or attempt to help Job understand why such suffering happened. God simply reminds Job that he is not God and that he (Job) has no idea what he is talking about.

This has tremendous import for the problem of evil and how Christians should go about “solving” it. This where the chaplain and others must become theologians, counselors, and Biblicists. First, it should be maintained that God is not a being like other beings. He is not under obligations like humans are. Humans do not judge God or provide morally justifiable reasons for his actions. Such is exactly what Job’s friends were trying to do. Job also wanted to judge God, but there is no standard by which to judge him.

CONCLUSION

The problem of evil has been used by atheists to deny God’s existence and it is an example of how many theists view God as a moral being which blurs the line between Creator and creature. As Mackie noted, if one denies a premise of his argument, “then the problem of evil will not arise.” While it would be wrong to suggest that God is not good, it is arguably correct to say that while God is perfectly good, he is not good *as humans are*, viz., in the moral sense. Such not only maintains the Creator/creature distinction, it also deflates the alleged problem of evil by denying a premise used by Mackie

²³ *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001).

since the term ‘good’ would not be used in the (moral) sense that he intends.²⁴

Hopefully this article will serve chaplains who support and minister to those suffering from evil and who need theological and biblical guidance. Emotional suffering is not completely quelled by intellectual answers. This article does not primarily seek to deal with the emotional sting of evil; however, it is intended to help frame the alleged problem in a more accurate way to be able to deal with the intellectual issue of evil as it relates to God’s existence.

²⁴ For those interested in general works on God and evil, see Norman L. Geisler, *The Roots of Evil* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1978), and Michael L. Peterson, ed., *The Problem of Evil* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017).

HINTS OF PASTORAL THEOLOGY FROM THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

Stephen Huebscher

Stephen Huebscher is a reserve chaplain serving with the United States Navy.

This essay presents a brief argument for including the OT to develop a biblical theology of pastoring.¹ The essay then looks at several passages in Zechariah which deal with issues of pastoral theology (Zech 1:1-6a; 10:1-3; 11:4-17; 13:2-6, 7-9). Three themes are addressed in these passages: (1) repentance and judgement as God's two methods for restoring people, with repentance (and thus penitential preaching) as God's preferred method for restoring people, (2) problems of ministry, including leaders, people, and work, and (3) a "good shepherd" model of ministry in which pastors follow God's example of caring for those in need and having high ethical standards for behavior. This paper concludes that these themes are crucial for chaplains as pastors.

THEOLOGY OF PASTORING IN THE OT?

At first it may seem like an oxymoron to look in the OT for biblical theology of pastoring. After all, there are no churches in the OT, so by definition there can be no Christian pastors. However, there are at least three good reasons to expand our understanding of biblical pastoral theology to include the OT.

¹ I want to thank Tim Little for reading this essay and suggesting changes, which have improved it.

(1) The OT itself remains authoritative for NT doctrine and teaching (2 Tim 3:16-17).

God calls people to hear his Word and respond in faithful obedience and trust. Human leaders are a part of accomplishing this in every era, including the time before Christ. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 3:16-17, that “all Scripture is...profitable for doctrine/teaching.” Though all parts of Scripture do not teach all parts of doctrine equally, Paul affirms that the OT remains both relevant and authoritative for Christian teaching. If OT believers needed spiritual leaders to help them in following the Lord, it makes sense to search out what Scripture says on the topic.

(2) The OT shepherd model of spiritual leadership remains key.

Both the OT and NT talk about spiritual leaders who are supposed to proclaim God’s Word, pray for God’s people, and care for and guide those people spiritually.² The English word pastor is actually the Latin word for shepherd. This makes the Latin word pastor, the Greek word ποιμην, and the Hebrew word רֹעֵה all synonyms for shepherd. In English, however, we do not use the word pastor to refer to someone who tends sheep. Rather, we reserve the term for vocational Christian church leaders (also called clergy), who are usually paid religious professionals. Thus, although the OT lacks the English word pastor, this should not be construed as evidence that the OT does not contain relevant doctrine about spiritual leaders. By that line of thinking, we would have to remove the English word pastor from the NT and substitute shepherd in order to be consistent.

(3) Proclamation of God’s Word remains a central duty.

OT Israel had at least four categories of spiritual leaders who were charged with proclaiming or at least teaching God’s word to the people, including

² Although this is a key meaning, there are other nuances to these words. For example, the OT concept of shepherd shares the Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) royal concept of the king as a shepherd, while ancient Greece applied the concept to philosophers. See G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 17 vol. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974–2021), 13.547–53; Willem A. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1997), 3.1141–42; Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, eds., *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 3.1246–48.

priests, Levites, prophets, and wise men. None of these categories was exactly the same as NT pastors of churches, but there is significant, if partial, overlap in their duties. The prophets preached the OT Scriptures and called people to obey God faithfully. Priests and Levites were to teach the Israelites God's Instruction (Torah), in addition to their duties offering sacrifices and assisting with the work of the Tabernacle and Temple. The wise men were to help apply God's Word to life so people could reflect the wisdom of God in their daily lives. Because of this overlap, I believe it is appropriate to include such spiritual leaders in relation to NT pastors. Biblical teaching about pastoring is not necessarily dependent on direct references to shepherds. Rather, themes, imagery, and topics of spiritual leadership are the key.

Having laid out a basic justification for considering OT biblical teaching about spiritual leadership to apply to NT pastors, we now turn to a prophet who lived more than 500 years before Christ's birth, the prophet Zechariah.

GOD'S CALL, HUMAN RESPONSE, AND GOD'S FURTHER RESPONSE

Pastoral ministry for Zechariah was rooted in the call of God for his people to turn/return (שוב) to him. The situation was one of complacent disobedience in a time when life was difficult for many people. The Jews who had returned to Judah struggled economically, politically, and spiritually. There was a tendency to mistreat people, including other Jews, for economic gain (Zech 7-8). In this setting, God took the initiative to act, out of his compassion and covenant relationship with his people, just as the shepherd in Jesus' parable would leave his 99 sheep to go seek for the one that was lost. In following the example of God in caring for his people, clergy should—in the best sense—prayerfully initiate contact with people in an effort to reach them with the message/call of God.

The key word is “turn, return” (Hebrew שׁוּב, see Zech 1:2-6). It is used in the OT in both theological and ordinary senses. Theologically, one changes direction. Instead of going away from God, one turns towards God and returns to him in covenantal obedience. This is understood as involving the heart-will-emotions and changing one's actions to willingly obey God's commands. The NT uses the Greek word *μετανοία* (a change of mind/heart), with the implication that a mind/heart change leads to a change of action. Repentance instead of judgment is God's preferred remedy for sin, and thus

his preferred method for restoring his people. This theme is made clear at the beginning of the book of Zechariah.

The conceptual background of OT repentance, however, is found in the Pentateuch, which is the root of God's covenant and written proclamation. Deuteronomy 4 gives the general command to seek God with all one's affections. This is developed in Deut. 30, which teaches that the first step of repentance is reflection. In this case people are directed to reflect on the blessings and curses of both following and disobeying God's covenant.³ Skipping chronologically ahead to the twelve Minor Prophets, the second step is for believers to reflect or meditate on the character of God— "gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in covenant faithfulness" (mentioned in Joel 1-2 and Jonah 3)—which goes back to Exod 34:6-7. Joel and Jonah both provide examples of people repenting with the hope of avoiding Yahweh's judgment. Such repentance is one of affection, word, and deed, and this is what Zechariah urged people to do.⁴

But if the call to Zechariah was rooted in the call of God, it was enacted in the response of Zechariah. The prophet faithfully proclaimed the divine message, unlike Moses who avoided it (Exod 4:1-14), Jonah who ran from it (Jon 1), or Elijah who despaired of it (1 Kgs 19:1-14). Careful study of Zechariah's messages shows that he coordinated his preaching with that of his predecessors, the pre-exilic Former Prophets. This was especially true of Jeremiah. The significance of this is that Zechariah did not fulfill God's call simply by waiting for God to give him fresh revelation to present to the people. He did do that, but he also studied the books of Scripture that others had written and applied it to his (new) situation.

While many specific historical elements separate us from the ministry of Zechariah, we share a common source of God's message and a common means of proclaiming this message for people not to repeat the mistakes of the past, but to humble themselves and to hear and heed God's call to repentance.

There are two important points that followed from Zechariah's obedient response. First, the people responded by repenting of their sin and returning to God, at least on a basic level (Zech 1:6b). Whether this involved the fully-developed kind of repentance mentioned above remains to be seen. Second,

³ Boda, *A Severe Mercy: Sin and Its Remedy in the Old Testament*, 106.

⁴ Boda, *A Severe Mercy: Sin and Its Remedy in the Old Testament*, 349. The theme of repentance is also an overarching theme of the twelve Minor Prophets. Boda, *A Severe Mercy: Sin and Its Remedy in the Old Testament*, 347.

however, God responded to this step of obedience with further revelation (Zech 1:7—6:15, esp. 1:7-8a). At this point in the book of Zechariah, the prophet introduces another revelatory experience—a set of visions which he most likely saw the previous night.⁵ These visions contain messages that collectively urge Zechariah’s audience to fully obey God. Given that this additional revelation immediately follows the initial obedience of the people, the sequence “revelation—obedience—more revelation” suggests an implied relationship, in which God rewards the people’s initial but incomplete obedience by giving them additional encouragement to continue on and to fully obey him *so that he can fully bless them*. This is substantiated by God’s announcement that he will return to Jerusalem to dwell there if the people will complete what they have begun.⁶

Why is this important for our understanding of the pastor’s role? The act of following the call of God in Christ upon our lives is often more of a process or at least a series of actions rather than merely a one-time event. This is why the act of following Jesus as Lord can be described in terms of a journey. Both Deuteronomy and Proverbs lay out two kinds of lifestyles in terms of ways of living, and they call on the readers to “choose life.” Jesus’ parable of the house of the sand (Matt 7) can be understood similarly. Having looked at the interplay of divine and human actions, we now move on to see how this worked out for Zechariah.

PROBLEMS OF MINISTRY

Zechariah was confronted by problems with other leaders, people, and work. Beginning with other leaders, Zechariah faced competition for people’s attention from false spiritual leaders. These leaders had a self-serving outlook and viewed ministry as a means to personal gain (“Blessed be Yahweh! I have become rich!” Zech 11:5). This self-centeredness was also demonstrated in their lack of ethical behavior, including sexual misconduct (Zech 13:6). Later on in the NT, Peter and Jude also commented on the correlation of sexual

⁵ The statement “I saw in the night” (Hebrew ראייתי הלילה) is better translated as “Last night, I saw...” Mark J. Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2016), 115. The significance of the time of writing so close to the time of the vision is significant for the historical reliability of Scripture. See Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, “Through a Glass Darkly: Zechariah’s Unprocessed Visionary Experience,” *Vetus Testamentum* 58 (2008): 573–94.

⁶ Boda, *Zechariah*, 113 This should not be understood to mean that God will give new authoritative revelation today on par with Scripture.

misconduct by false teachers (2 Peter 2; Jude 4). As has been observed, those who cannot color inside the lines in one area of their lives tend to have trouble staying inside the lines in other areas too.

A second problem Zechariah faced was the confusion caused by deceptive, false messages claiming to be given by God: “For the household gods utter nonsense, and the diviners see lies; they tell false dreams and give empty consolation” (Zech 10:2a). In his day, Zechariah carefully distinguished his own message from that of the false prophets, emphasizing its source as the actual word of God. He did this primarily using three kinds of phrases: (1) the Word of Yahweh (the LORD) came to me, (2) declaration of Yahweh, and (3) thus says the Yahweh (used with slight variation). In addition, there are two instances where the Hebrew term oracle or divine message (אִשְׁרָא) is used (Zech 9:1; 12:1). While these have significance for the twelve Minor Prophets beyond the book of Zechariah (together with a third occurrence in Malachi), they demonstrate Zechariah’s efforts to clarify that his message, no matter how unappealing it might have appeared, was not based in his own lack of creativity or situational awareness, but in the direct revelation of God Almighty.

Although people did initially respond Zechariah’s preaching favorably, there are signs that the people stopped short of fully obeying God. Specifically, Zechariah called on them to obey God in their daily financial and business dealings with each other (Zech 7-8). Sadly, there is no record of the community embracing this call to personal holiness.⁷ Instead, as the book of Zechariah proceeds, it deals with further judgment and an eventual return of Yahweh to personally intervene and restore true righteousness and holiness throughout the land (Zech 14).

God’s judgment extends not only to the people, but also to the false spiritual leaders: “My anger is hot against the shepherds, and I will punish the leaders [lit. male goats]” (Zech 10:3a). As good shepherds, we must attend to our flock with patience and prayer, encouraging their progress in the faith, and gently warning them of the danger of God’s judgment, which is God’s alternative, non-preferred method of inducing repentance.

Unfortunately, the lack of having divine direction in life resulted in a lack of directed living in peoples’ lives. “Therefore, the people wander like sheep; they are afflicted for lack of a shepherd” (Zech 10:2b). A message was proclaimed, but the message was not from Yahweh. These harmful leaders led

⁷ Boda, *Zechariah*, 421.

the community into idolatry.⁸ This provides a negative example for us. All sources of hope are not equal; truth matters. Our ministries must be deeply based in Scripture.

Lastly, even for those believers who were trying to be faithful, Zechariah faced the difficulty of changing circumstances that affected how to properly honor, obey, and worship God. Jews in Zechariah's day struggled with knowing how to correctly apply God's Word in the face of new circumstances (the question of continuing to fast in Zech 7-8). Zechariah responded with a series of probing questions about motivation and obedience, and eventually answered their question. Good pastors grapple with the difficult question of applying God's eternal Word to new situations, in order to help people faithfully live out God's call.

Unlike the false spiritual leaders who lead people away from truth into destruction, Zechariah also presents examples of good pastoral leadership, and it is to these that we now turn.

A "GOOD SHEPHERD" MODEL OF MINISTRY

Zechariah contains elements of what might be called a Good Shepherd model of ministry. Good pastors, like God himself, care about people and have compassion on those whose lives are being destroyed or are self-destructing. "The LORD of hosts cares for his flock" (Zech 10:3b). God will "assume personal responsibility" for his people, and good pastors do too, though obviously not to the same extent.⁹ It bothers us, makes us angry, makes us cry, when we see the corrupting power of sin in peoples' lives. It disturbs us when we see a person entering into an abusive relationship and there is nothing we can do about it. God is grieved about such things, and to the extent that we are called to imitate the Father and the Good Shepherd, such things grieve us too.

Moving on, Zech 11:16-17a is a negative pronouncement by Yahweh on his expectation for shepherds: "For behold, I am about to raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for those being destroyed, will not seek the young, will not heal the broken, and will not support those who are standing, but will eat the flesh of the fat ones and tear off their hooves. Woe to the

⁸ Mark J. Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2004), 436.

⁹ Ibid.

worthless shepherd who leaves the flock.”¹⁰ There are five priorities identified: (1) care for those on the verge of death, (2) seek the wandering, (3) heal the broken, (4) nourish the assistant leaders, and (5) refrain from preying on the healthy.¹¹

Good shepherds extend help and care to those whose lives are being destroyed. In reality, we often are limited in our ability to stop people from engaging in practices that are counter-productive to human flourishing, but the intent of God’s message to Zechariah was that good pastors should try as they are able. In a related vein, good pastors watch out for those who are in danger of wandering off from the main group and becoming scattered. Good shepherds are also called to have restorative, healing ministry, even as the God the Good Shepherd does. Sin is destructive, and we must walk with hurting people and help them pick up the pieces of their lives. (Paul’s command to “bear one another’s burdens” in Galatians 5 comes to mind here). God is able to bring renewal to those who seek him, and good shepherds promote this.

Unlike the foolish shepherd in Zech 11, good pastors also watch over their staff and assistants. The wicked shepherd is so self-centered that he “does not even care for his attendants, who are key to the proper care of the flock.”¹² While God calls and invests authority in pastors, pastoring is not a

¹⁰ The dream sequence of Zech 11:4-17 has two shepherds in Zech 11:4-17, one good (11:4-14) and one foolish (11:15-16). Both are appointed by God, the one to help the flock, and the other to hurt, which was part of God’s judgment. They also bear certain similarities to Ezekiel’s shepherds in Ezek 34, and also to Ezek 37:15-28, making the differences all the more important. Boda, *Zechariah*, 650; Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 273–309, 393–424. “While Ezekiel contrasted his dark portrait of the shepherds with that of God’s compassionate care for his flock in Ezekiel 34, Zech. 11:15-16 traces the rise of harmful shepherds to Yahweh’s judgment of the community.” Boda, *Zechariah*, 677.

This passage is notoriously difficult to interpret. There are questions of genre (vision or historical narrative), lexical meaning (כֹּהֵן, קֵר), history (was there a historical ruler that this sign pictured?), and theology (the meaning of the broken covenants). Boda, *Zechariah*, 648–80. I take the passage to be a sign-act that was never acted, but may have originally addressed the demise of Davidic leadership. Boda, *Zechariah*, 648–49, 652–54. If so, the original meaning would have dealt with royal leadership of the Jewish covenant community that had returned to the land. The passage makes clear, however, that there was a spiritual dimension to this leadership of God’s people, and it is this aspect that is our focus.

¹¹ Boda, *Zechariah*, 675–77.

¹² *Ibid.*, 676.

one-man job, at least not ideally. Moses relates to this when he says, “I wish that all Yahweh’s people were prophets” (Num 11:29). In the NT, the apostle Paul makes the point that Christ gave pastors as a gift to the church to strengthen and mature believers (Eph 4). He also encouraged believers to follow his example (2 Tim 1:13; also Heb 13:7). In this sense, Paul was continuing the pastoral leadership tradition of God’s people that we see here in Zechariah. Having living examples present with us makes a huge difference in every generation. Lastly, good shepherds do not hurt healthy people for their own satisfaction or benefit. This general characterization has broad application, which includes at a minimum professional, financial, and sexual ethics that reflect the highest standards. Although the book of Zechariah does not mention them directly, a ministry of presence and a studious attention to those whom we minister to are necessary in order to fulfill the stated requirements.

The book of Zechariah concludes not on a low note about the failures of good shepherds nor the evils of foolish shepherds, but on a high note: God’s people will finally become holy! This will be achieved by God’s direct involvement (Zech 14:20-21). God will be present with his people and richly bless them.

CONCLUSIONS FOR CHAPLAIN MINISTRY

For those who work in the specialized pastoral ministry of chaplaincy, the book of Zechariah offers both positive and negative examples of pastoral: those who love and care for their flock and faithfully proclaim God’s Word to them, versus those who view ministry as a means of personal gain and therefore live unethically. God still calls people to repentance today, and it is up to preachers to proclaim that message of repentance, even if our ministries are sometimes tilted more towards individuals than to congregations. Zechariah faced competition from other religious professionals claiming to have a divine message. Zechariah emphasized the source of his message as being rooted in actual revelation from the true God, but the fact remained that many people listened to the false prophets and suffered the harmful consequences.

Today, a common temptation of gospel pastors is to avoid, water down, or substitute alternative messages of hope and good news for people other than that of repentance from sin and faithful trust in our Lord Jesus Christ. These alternatives can be as innocuous as suicide prevention or grief support, both which indeed can be valuable helps to hurting people. Nevertheless,

they make poor substitutes for the Good News. How to walk this delicate balance is not always clear, but we must look for opportunities to proclaim Christ while not confusing people that we are mere purveyors of (secular) cheer and comfort.

One of the keys handling such situations is to be good students of those we serve. The book of Zechariah does not deal explicitly with this aspect of ministry, but it seems to me that Christian pastors need to study people and be attentive to what God's Spirit is already doing in their lives. This in no way substitutes for the study of God's Word as the source for our ministry, nor does it support the ill-advised quote "always preach the gospel—use words if necessary," but done in conjunction with a ministry of presence, it provides guidance on how to minister to people appropriately. This attentiveness also helps us to avoid casting the valuable pearls of our message before those who would be unreceptive, something which is portrayed as preachy or judgmental.

Nevertheless, this attentiveness to our audience carries its own set of risks, one of which is the hidden danger that we might allow ourselves to become driven solely by what people want. In reality, there are times when God's call on our lives mandates that we speak his message to people who may not be receptive to it, and may at times, even actively reject it. (Although not covered in this essay, the ministry of Jeremiah would be a prime example of this: he probably had only one convert [Baruch]).

Properly understood, attentiveness can be understood as part of a Good Shepherd model of ministry. God expects us to seek after people who are hurting. Instead of viewing their weakness or wealth as an opportunity for personal gain, we should nurture, care for, and protect such people. This divine expectation mandates that we must be ethical pastors and deny the opportunities to take advantage of vulnerable people. Sadly, there are still wicked people who prey on the most gullible and vulnerable people among us for their own benefit.

Our ministries are fraught with challenges, and there are no easy ways ahead. But like the message of Zechariah, the future remains as bright as it is sure, backed by the promise of God to receive those who repent. This reality of Christian ministry is as true now in our day as it was in Zechariah's some 2,500 years ago.

Ministry Update:

**TRAINING & TEACHING ZAMBIAN
CHAPLAINS**

Jay Hartranft

Jay Hartranft, D. Min, Chaplain (LTC), USA Retired.

On 02 May 23, I received an email from Bob Freiberg (CDR, CHC, USN-ret) calling for an “All Hands-on Deck,” opportunity to train chaplains in Zambia. The email was accompanied by a letter from AGC’s Chief Under Shepherd, President and Endorser, Steve Brown to “prayerfully consider serving God in another Ministry venue... in a new and unique Mission... to partner with them (Central African Baptist, University, and [CABU for short]) in the training of African military, hospital, and prison chaplains for the Gospel work of Chaplaincy Ministry...” My first thoughts were, “How exciting for someone a bit younger than me. At 72, I just didn’t think I could do it.” And in that moment, God brought to my mind Zechariah 4:6, “So he answered and said to me: “This *is* the word of the LORD..., ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts.” I informed Gail, my wife of 50+ years, that I was going to Zambia.

Heeding God’s call and after the appropriate briefings and preparation, I traveled early one morning (left Thursday, arrived Friday), so I would have a couple of days to recover from the thirty-four-hour trip from Orlando, Florida to Ndola, Zambia. I arrived, not feeling well because my digestive tract was in an uproar. However, Pastor Edward Mwanisa who runs the Chaplain program at CABU, invited me to preach at his church, Faith

Baptist church Kakolo, Zambia. Though the church was only 17 miles away, due to numerous potholes, it took an hour to get there. I preached, Pastor Edward translated, and one young man, about 25 years old, responded to the Gospel and received Christ. That moment was worth the entire trip!

By the end of the service my digestive illness had progressed severely so on Monday morning, the college secretary arranged transportation to the local clinic where Dr. Anderson took my lab work and diagnosed that I had salmonella typhi. I was treated and given 5 days of antibiotics, while thinking I would not be able to teach and accomplish all that the LORD had put on my heart in my ministry in Zambia... but again, the LORD enabled me by His grace. God empowered me to stand and teach the eight-hour sessions each day. However, at the end of the day, I was so exhausted with the illness, that I was not able to attend all the after-hour dinners and gatherings that CABU planned for the visiting professors and the missions team from Wisconsin. I simply went back to my room and missed all of the evening social programs.

The fifty students represented chaplains from several governmental and religious organizations. We began each class with worship. Some chaplain, sometimes a man, other times a woman, would begin a song, and then all would join in. I can honestly say that I haven't been in such a joyous experience of praise and worship in a very long time. Rachel, the college secretary, had printed a daily schedule, so we knew when every break was and the time to resume class. Tardiness was often a problem, but I anticipated that because time had a different meaning to the Zambian mind. Each student chaplain brought their Bible and seemed eager to be in the class and learn the subject which was: Old Testament and New Testament Introduction/Survey. Adding to the syllabus from my personal experiences in the Marines and Army was a value added affect to Bible application.

I want to express my eagerness to go again next summer. My hope and prayer is that you who read this will also receive the call from God to join this most exciting work of the LORD in Zambia. What a joy it was to be about the Father's business!

Book Review:

**CHRISTIANITY AND CRITICAL RACE
THEORY: A FAITHFUL AND
CONSTRUCTIVE CONVERSATION**

by Robert Romero and Jeff Liou

Review by Andrew Lawson

Andrew Lawson is a friend of AGC and a Ph.D. candidate at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

On July 23, 2021, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General Mark Milley gave explosive testimony before Congress defending his policy of teaching about critical race theory (CRT) in the military.¹ Conservative members of Congress pressed Milley on whether the Armed Forces were putting undue emphasis on a divisive ideology rather than promoting meritocracy regardless of race. In the years before and since this confrontation CRT has been a political hot potato, a partisan issue that increasingly divides the country and has even become central in contemporary presidential campaigns.

¹ Danielle Kurtzleben, “Top General Defends Studying Critical Race Theory in the Military,” *National Public Radio*, June 23, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/06/23/1009592838/top-general-defends-studying-critical-race-theory-in-the-military>. General Milley did not characterize the teaching of CRT as an endorsement of the ideology. “I’ve read Mao Zedong. I’ve read Karl Marx. I’ve read Lenin. That doesn’t make me a communist. So what is wrong with understanding – having some situational understanding about the country for which we are here to defend?”

Ten or even five years ago CRT was largely unfamiliar to the American political scene, confined mostly to the discussions of activists and academics. With the theory holding more and more influence on the behavior of the federal government and the leaders of the armed forces, how should military chaplains with evangelical convictions interact with this trend, especially as commanders they serve under apply its ideas to their unit? What exactly is CRT? Is it completely incompatible with biblical Christianity, or are there aspects of it that can prove helpful to a chaplain? If so, how does CRT fall short of the biblical gospel in offering ultimate hope?

Robert Romero and Jeff Chao wrote *Christianity and Critical Theory: A Faithful and Constructive Conversation* to pierce through the hyper-partisan noise and offer a sympathetic critique of CRT from the perspective of two American pastors who are racial minorities, committed to evangelical Christianity, and longtime academics addressing issues of race in modern America. Romero and Chao believe there is more overlap between the principles of CRT and the biblical worldview than might be expected, yet they are unsparing in their critique of CRT's failure to provide genuine solutions to the real problems it diagnoses in American society. Their book, *Christianity and Critical Theory*, will provide the military chaplain unsure how to interact with the rapid advance of CRT with a tool to better understand what presuppositions undergird the theory, where its ideas lend support to the Christian worldview, and how specifically the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a better treatment for racial injury and hurt than any secular program can hope to provide.

CHRISTIANITY & CRT: CORRELATION AND CONTRAST

Romero and Liou identify three ways CRT is congruent with the biblical worldview – the ordinariness of racism, the beauty of the nations, and the desire for the beloved community. CRT teaches that racism is not the exception in human society but rather the rule, and that its prevalence in both personal and systematic forms should not be surprising. The authors equate this idea with the Christian teaching on the prevalence of sin in both individual hearts and world systems.² A believer who holds to the total depravity and corruption of man should not be shocked to encounter racism, whether in individual micro-aggressions and stereotypes or in equal

² Robert Chao Romero and Jeff M. Liou, *Christianity and Critical Race Theory: A Faithful and Constructive Conversation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2023), 63-98.

opportunity access to education, healthcare, or housing.³ The argument presented here is compelling, and gives the military chaplain a biblical category for discussing the influence of racism in society.

Another principle the authors discuss is CRT's rejection of the colorblind meritocratic ideal in favor of embracing racial and cultural diversity. Romero and Liou argue that the celebration of the nations before the throne of Christ in Revelation ought to make Christians understanding of CRT's objection to the "colorblindness" portrayed by many Americans as a positive good.⁴ The church of Christ contains people from many nations, and the cultural perspective and insights of each ought to be welcomed, not ignored. For example, different sets of values can reveal cultural blind spots. Romero uses his own family as a microcosm – he values the example of industry, frugality, and personal discipline he saw in his in-laws, Midwesterners descended from German immigrants, while his own Latino cultural background emphasized compassion for others, hospitality, and the good of the community above the individual.⁵ Military chaplains often participate in events that celebrate the diversity of American soldiers, and at their best these principles can be used to promote learning and camaraderie among servicemen, not racial division.⁶ Unfortunately, due to the influence of books such as *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo (which the authors reject as "not a work of CRT"),⁷ it is possible for such events to transform from a celebration of both diversity and patriotic unity into promoting racial grievance and collective guilt. Evangelical chaplains should resist this trend, as it is both not congruent with the unity and peace brought by the gospel message and harmful to the morale and teamwork required to fulfill the mission of the military.

³ One of the most notorious instances of systematic racism in American history was the denial of GI Bill benefits to African-American veterans of WWII. The inability of black veterans to easily pay for college or a mortgage through government benefits in the 1940s/50s made the accumulation of generational wealth much more difficult during the post-war economic boom. Though the reasons for high rates of poverty among black Americans are many and complicated, the impacts of past discrimination have certainly played a role.

⁴ Romero and Liou, *Christianity and Critical Race Theory*, 35-42.

⁵ Ibid 47.

⁶ I have clear memories of my father, Chaplain Kenneth Lawson, taking us to many such events on military installations celebrating Black History Month, Latino History Month, AAPI History Month, ect. These events celebrated the contributions of these societies to the United States, and were marked by delicious ethnic food, music, cultural practices, and patriotism!

⁷ Ibid 66.

The final area Christianity and CRT are compared is in how hope for the future is portrayed. Here Romero and Liou are the hardest on the insufficiency of CRT. More optimistic practitioners of CRT envision a version of the “beloved community” that was central to the theology and social work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.⁸ However, the authors identify a key weakness in CRT – without the basis in redemptive hope provided by Christianity, the beloved community becomes a mirage. “Works that treat the beloved community as little more than an inclusive or diverse community miss its theological and missional significance.”⁹ Secular practitioners of CRT who honestly recognize the ordinary perniciousness of racism have little hope of change for the better and can at best advocate a kind of stoic dignity absent final victory.¹⁰ In contrast, the hope for the beloved community held by black Christian theologians in the civil rights era was intimately connected with the ministry of the church, the redeeming power of the gospel, and Christ’s final victory over sin and death. The military chaplain who holds to the truth of the Gospel can provide more genuine hope and relief for the oppressed through sharing the person and work of Jesus Christ than CRT ever could.

CONCLUSIONS

Critical Race Theory has become an emotionally charged and divisive issue within both the broader culture and conservative evangelicalism in recent years. Lawsuits and boycotts have gone back and forth, and the unity of faithful churches destroyed. Any pastor or chaplain ministering in this environment ought to have a clear understanding of CRT and its relationship to the Christian faith. In *Christianity and Critical Theory*, Robert Romero and Jeff Liou have written a largely sympathetic overview of the ideology and pointed out how several elements do correspond with Christian doctrine on the nature of sin and God’s delight in his diverse creation. Their critique of CRT focuses on the incompleteness of the ideology – divorced from the final redemption offered through Christ, modern CRT activists can offer no genuine hope to the oppressed.

⁸ Ibid 138-143.

⁹ Ibid 138.

¹⁰ The authors quote Derek Bell, one of the founding fathers of CRT: “It is time we concede that a commitment to racial equality merely perpetuates our disappointment. Rather, we need a mechanism to make life bearable in a society where blacks are a permanent, subordinate class,” 149.

The Christian tradition has long affirmed that all truth is God's truth and common grace is given to all men. Where CRT offers true insight that affirms what the Bible teaches about sin, diversity, and community, the chaplain should not be afraid constructively engage, particularly with the hope of offering a better final solution than CRT ever could. The influence of CRT is not going to disappear soon regardless of which government controls the Pentagon, so a military chaplain familiar with Romero and Liou's book (regardless of whether they agree with their sympathetic attitude toward CRT)¹¹ will be better equipped to navigate these important issues.

¹¹ While the authors never dwell long on partisan politics, there are a few brief (and unnecessary) discursions that were not relevant to their thesis. For example, Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio are characterized in one sentence without further explanation as "politicians who have chosen the path of assimilation to receive white acceptance by supporting policies that harm the vast majority of Latinos/as in the United States," 118. This remark should either have been elaborated on or removed.

Book Review:

**TECH-LIFE BALANCE: 101 WAYS TO
THRIVE IN A DIGITAL WORLD**

by Taino Benz

Review by Jason (Jay) Skeens

Jay is currently an active-duty Army chaplain serving with the 3-73rd Cavalry Squadron (Devil Recon), 1BCT, 82nd Airborne Division (Fort Liberty, NC). Before this, he was an NCO with other Fort Liberty units. He has also served on the pastoral staff of several churches and with the Navigators. He holds an M. DIV. from Shepherds Theological Seminary in Cary, NC.

It seems few can go minutes without checking their cell phone for an update or to scroll through the latest and greatest post on social media. Some would even argue that smart devices have become a necessary part of our lives. These devices have also led many to have an unhealthy association with technology. *Tech-Life Balance: 101 Ways to Thrive in a Digital World* by Taino Bendz addresses these issues with 101 ways to take control of one's tech use in an easy-to-read manner. It is not a Christian approach to this topic, but a practical one for all. Bendz opens with discussing attention grabbing technology (AGT), habit formation, and how to navigate the book. This is not a typical resource. While one can certainly read from front to back, it is also acceptable to skip to a specific section that appeals most to you and start there.

Chapter one addresses tech life balance for focus and productivity. This includes helpful tips to adjust settings on your phone to optimize focus. It

also covers plenty of interesting ideas to improve one's concentration. Although one may jump to any section, chapter one lays a solid foundation for the other chapters.

Chapter two discusses tech-life balance for mental health. This eye-opening chapter explains how digital technology high jacks one's brain. It expounds on how failure to manage one's tech use can lead to anxiety, depression, and digital addiction. It contains plenty of tips to make one's phone instantly less interesting and carve out boundaries to protect oneself from the lure of digital stimulation.

Chapter three discusses the physical cost of tech life imbalance. These imbalances include issues with posture, heart health, obesity, and even damage to one's hands. As I type this review, I think of how many people I see crouched over their phones daily, scrolling incessantly with their thumbs for lengthy periods of time. This chapter is a commonsense reminder to set the phone down and take care of your body.

Chapter four discusses the cost of tech-life imbalance on the planet. Topics reviewed involve high Co2 emissions, material consumption, and waste from trashing devices. If nothing else, this chapter reminds one to reduce their use of technology and to recycle their device instead of throwing it out when it becomes obsolete.

Chapter five discusses tech life balance for families. This chapter provides common sense guidance to reign in tech use within the household. Cyber bullying, internet safety, and overuse of technology are having a detrimental impact on households. This incredibly important chapter gives plenty of practical tips on how to reign in the tech use at home without completely cutting off the use of devices.

Finally, chapter six discusses tech-life balance for social life and relationships. By focusing on media use with developing real life healthy connections balance can be found. The author doesn't take an all-or-nothing approach. Rather than completely stopping social media, he suggests being more intentionally to connect with others instead of relying on it for real-life relationships. For self-directed individuals struggling to use their devices healthily, *Tech Life Balance* is a unique book that will be of interest. One can take as much or as little as they want from the chapters. Each chapter contains layers of difficulty (from 1 to 3). The easiest steps (level 1) help provide quick entry level changes that help one take charge of the use of their device. If one is up for a challenge, they may try level 3 steps. I found this approach intriguing. It reminds me of a book filled with physical exercise to choose from and drafting one's own training program. For those that like the

freedom to structure their efforts how they please, then this format will be a winner for them. For those that need more guidance, they may find it frustrating.

Overall, this resource is one-of-a-kind and beneficial for those who want to escape the clutches of attention-grabbing technology. It's also useful for counselors who want to expand their practical tools. For chaplains, I suggest having a handful of copies ready to distribute. However, be prepared to provide programming guidance for your counselees because the book lacks these tools.

— *The AGC* —

JOURNAL

Vol. 3 / No. 2 / Fall 2023



ASSOCIATED GOSPEL CHURCHES
215 Pine Knoll Road • Greenville, SC 29609
www.agcchaplaincy.com