
Pro Rege

Volume 41 | Number 4

Article 2

June 2013

Remembrance and Research: Some Reflections on a Pending Centenary

Keith C. Sewell
Dordt College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege



Part of the [European History Commons](#)

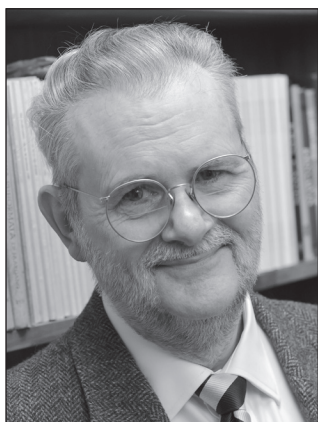
Recommended Citation

Sewell, Keith C. (2013) "Remembrance and Research: Some Reflections on a Pending Centenary," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 41: No. 4, 7 - 15.

Available at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol41/iss4/2

This Feature Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University Publications at Dordt Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pro Rege by an authorized administrator of Dordt Digital Collections. For more information, please contact ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu.

Remembrance and Research: Some Reflections on a Pending Centenary



by Keith C. Sewell

The scene is the Cenotaph, in Whitehall, London, on the eleventh of November. Year after year, from 1919 onwards, the monarch, other members of the British royal family, the holders of high office, and many others remember in solemn ceremony those lost in the great conflicts that started in 1914 and 1939. November 11 is the anniversary of the signing of the armistice in 1918. The second great conflict brought no change to the annual day of remembrance—it was, for many, a dreadful continuation of the first. The sky is often grey and chilly, as if to suggest an approaching bleakness, or

Dr. Keith C. Sewell is emeritus professor of history, of Dordt College, living in Melbourne, Australia.

perhaps even the coldness of the grave.

Over the years the selection of musical compositions played on this occasion has become fixed by tradition. Prior to the National Anthem comes a majestic paraphrase of Psalm 90, “O God our Help in Ages Past,” by Isaac Watts (1674-1748), sung to the tune “St. Anne,” by William Croft (1678-1727). A short while before this, the movement “Nimrod,” by Edward Elgar (1857-1934), from the work generally known as “The Enigma Variations,” is played.¹ In the complete work, the eighth variation is light, pleasant, and happy, remarkably congruent with the (not exactly accurate) popular image of the supposedly halcyon days of the pre-1914 Edwardian era. This variation elides on a single note, held by the first violin, into the ninth, and most famous variation of the entire work: “Nimrod.” From its hushed beginning, this variation develops a theme that is at once dignified, glorious, and majestic yet never without pathos. Depending on place and circumstance, the effect can be powerful—but it does not last. The conclusion is a rapid *diminuendo*, which may be taken, in retrospect, as evocative of the rapid fading of British power in the twentieth century.

All such ceremonies of remembrance mourn those lost by war, but in Great Britain, that mourning tends to merge with an unstated regret for a loss of greatness, habitually perceived, even today, in imperial terms. This discussion will probe the

relationship between British imperialism and the origins of the war of 1914. I will argue that the roots of Great Britain's involvement in this colossal tragedy owed more to the consequences of her imperial ambition than those at countless remembrance ceremonies generally appreciate.

I can remember the Armistice Day ceremony in Whitehall, London, in 1964. That year was particularly poignant, being the fiftieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Great War in 1914—the conflict into which the United States was eventually drawn, in 1917. Next year, the centenary of the outbreak of what came to be called “the Great War” can be expected to be particularly evocative. My grandfather, George H. Sewell (1872-1927), fought against “Fritz” on the western front for four years. If he had been asked why Great Britain and the then British Empire were locked in such a deadly struggle with Germany, he would probably have replied, using an expression of the day, “to save little Belgium.”

This sentiment is understandable, given that the German advance through Belgium, in egregious violation of Belgium's internationally recognized neutrality, gave the British government the grounds needed—not least in the eyes of the British public—to enter the conflict as an ally of France and Russia, on August 4, 1914. Shortly before, the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey (1862-1933),² when addressing the House of Commons, had made Belgium a pivotal point.³ Yet “saving little Belgium” was no ready and simple justification, as Jonathan Helmreich has indicated.⁴ On the brink of war, Grey's policies provoked the resignation of cabinet ministers Viscount John Morley (1838-1923) and John Burns (1858-1943).⁵ Cautionary and prescient editorials in the *Manchester Guardian* called for Great Britain to refrain from participation in the unfolding calamity.⁶

Indeed, the more we explore the origins of this dreadful conflict, the more we find that easy assumptions fade and presumed certainties are compromised. The experience of Sir Edward Goschen (1847-1924), the British Ambassador in Berlin from 1908 to 1914, is a case in point. After his final interview with German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg (1856-1921),⁷ Goschen reported, “I found the Chancellor very agitated. His

Excellency at once began a harangue which lasted for about twenty minutes. He said that the step taken by His Majesty's [British] Government was terrible to a degree, just for a word ‘neutrality,’ a word which in wartime had so often been disregarded—just for a scrap of paper, Great Britain was going to make war on a kindred nation who desired nothing better than to be friends with her.”⁸ The “scrap of paper” remark, which very quickly found its way into the British press, was used to substantiate the view that Germany alone disregarded the rights of neutrals as insignificant and was responsible for the outbreak of war. Of course, and without question, Germany ought not to have violated Belgian neutrality, even though there are indications that France also would have contemplated doing so, under force of circumstances. In the case of “the scrap of paper,” it transpired that many members of the Berlin diplomatic corps had recently seen a play entitled *Les Pattes de Mouche*, in which a small piece of paper is not at all insignificant, but *something upon which everything turns*.⁹

In practice, the truth can be much harder to establish than is generally realized; moreover, attempts to displace entrenched versions of events, especially where immense suffering and loss have been involved, are always liable to encounter resistance. Unsurprisingly, governments tend to be extraordinarily anxious to ensure that *their* version of events is the constantly reiterated *received* version of events. Not only do they have a case to uphold amid the comity of nations, but in the age of democracy, they also have a cause to maintain in the eyes of their own populations, especially when a conflict becomes protracted and costly.

The First World War was no exception. From August 1914 onwards, the combatants published their variously colored selections of documents, each tending toward self-vindication—Great Britain (blue), France (yellow), Belgium (grey), Germany (white), Austria Hungary (red), Serbia (blue), and Russia (orange). All too soon it became clear that the war would not be over by Christmas 1914. As the agonies of loss and rigors of deprivation became protracted, increasingly virulent, state-sponsored propaganda ensured that animosity deepened to hatred. It became imperative to ensure that the “home front” be constantly engaged

and energized. This mood required that all belligerents wage multi-faceted publicity campaigns to fortify and “inform” their populations. These efforts ranged from crude propaganda to careful argument. The British position was presented by James Wycliffe Headlam-Morley (1863-1929), in a work entitled *The History of Twelve Days—July 24th to August 4, 1914*.¹⁰

The roots of Great Britain’s involvement in this colossal tragedy owed more to the consequences of her imperial ambition than those at countless remembrance ceremonies generally appreciate.

Headlam-Morley’s “Preface” framed the perceptions of his readers by focusing on Prussia and the actions of Frederick the Great. Thus contextualized, his discussion proceeded to a step by step account of recent events, based on the various governmental “colored books.” Great Britain appeared as a principal participant in Headlam-Morley’s narrative only at the point at which Germany considered herself forced to take military action in the west in response to the actions of France’s ally (Russia) in the East. The narrative soon pivoted to the German violation of Belgian neutrality as rendering inescapable Great Britain’s entry into the conflict. The “scrap of paper” remark appeared in the culminating passage.¹¹ Headlam-Morley avoided much in his account. At the same time, it is generally consistent with the version later provided by the British Prime Minister in 1914, Herbert Henry Asquith (1852-1928).¹²

Meanwhile, the war proved to be hideously costly in lives and wealth. After she triumphed in the east, Germany collapsed in the west—hence “Armistice Day,” November 11, 1918, as commemorated now for approaching a century. The terms of the ensuing “Treaty of Versailles” (June 28, 1919)

that were imposed on Germany exacted from her an acknowledgement of her presumed war guilt, which in turn constituted the basis on which substantial reparations were levied. It was a punishing peace.¹³ The German delegation to Paris was denied the opportunity to engage in genuine negotiations and obliged to sign the treaty under threat and force of circumstances. In Germany, the treaty was experienced both as a *Diktat* and as grossly unjust. It encumbered the new German republic—known to history as the “Weimar Republic”—with the odium of shame and defeat.

Although beset by many internal tensions, the Weimar Republic resolved to refute the thesis of paramount German war guilt by a massive publication of archival material. The result was *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette, 1871-1914* (40 volumes), which appeared between 1922 and 1927.¹⁴ In 1928 Austrian scholarship produced the *Oesterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik* (8 volumes, dated 1929), covering the years 1908-1914, to parallel the German series. The French government responded with its *Documents Diplomatiques Français, 1871-1914* (Series I, 16 volumes, Series II, 14 volumes, Series III, 11 volumes), from 1929 onwards. These sequences are of undoubted importance for historians. In the post-Tsarist Soviet Union, some material appeared in 106 issues of the *Krasnyi Arhiv* between 1922 and 1941. From 1931 onwards, the more substantive *Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya v Epokhu Imperializma: Dokumenty iz Arkhivov Tsarskogo i Vremennogo Pravitel'stv* started to appear.¹⁵ Eventually published in multiple series, this sequence remains incomplete.¹⁶ Of course, all such publications should be handled critically because they tend to place the publishing state in the best possible light.¹⁷

Great Britain was no exception. Anxious not to have its past policies assessed only as represented by others, the British Government reluctantly embarked upon its own program of publication. In order to impart an appearance of impartiality, the two main editors were the Cambridge historian Harold William Vazeille Temperley (1879-1939)¹⁸ and the independent scholar George Peabody Gooch (1873-1968).¹⁹ These two were primarily responsible for producing the *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914* (13 volumes)

from 1926 to 1938.²⁰ Like its French and German counterparts, this sequence has been subject to scholarly criticism, which notes its serious deficiency in India Office materials. As a result, these volumes under-expose the reader to the issue of Great Britain's vexed relationship with Russia in connection with India, Afghanistan, and Persia.²¹ The two editors often found themselves in tense situations with Foreign Office officials, including Headlam-Morley, who now held the title of "Historical Adviser to the Foreign Office." He was definitely involved in the publication of one of the first volumes to appear, although the last of the sequence in terms of its contents. This was volume XI, on *The Outbreak of War: Foreign Office Documents, June 28th–August 4th, 1914*. This volume, published in 1926, was specifically "Collected and Arranged with Introduction and Notes" by Headlam-Morley, the guardian of the official version of events, as the British Government was anxious to ensure that the prime focus was kept on the German violation of Belgian neutrality.

It was inevitable that historians would seek to probe the origins of the conflict, but in the 1920s they did so in a context rendered toxic by the "war guilt" clauses of the Treaty of Versailles, their use serving as the moral basis for the imposition of immense reparations. In 1923 two learned journals commenced publication, specifically dedicated to the question of the origins of the war. These were *Die Kriegsschuldfrage* (Berlin) and the *Revue d'Histoire de la Guerre Mondiale* (Paris).

However, some of the most influential works of revision, which at least implicitly challenged the assertions of the British and French governments, emanated from the USA. America in 1914 stood at a distance from the European cauldron. Her perceptions of June to August 1914 were not, at that juncture, immediately molded by the conditions that the original participants encountered and endured nor by the propaganda that they issued. Among the most cogent revisionist offerings were those of Sidney Bradshaw Fay (1876-1967).²² Bernadotte Schmitt (1886-1969) also distributed war-guilt more generally.²³ These were linked to classic American critiques of (not least British) imperialism offered by writers such as Parker Thomas Moon (1892-1936).²⁴ The revisionist work of Harry

Elmer Barnes (1889-1968) was subsequently discredited by revelations of the degree to which he became subservient to the official German interpretation and his eventual succumbing to the absurdities of holocaust denial. The truth is that the 1920s revisionist historiography was an important yet only a tenuous development. It was too dependent on officially selected and published documents and carefully crafted memoirs. Fay is the best representative. In short order, the Nazi take-over of the Weimar Republic in 1933/34 seemed to confirm everything that had already been said about German wickedness.

Post-1919 revisionism also had its voices in England. Even before the war, the foreign policy of Grey, British Foreign Secretary from 1905-1916, and his "liberal imperialist" faction within the Liberal Party had attracted criticism for its weakness towards Great Britain's traditional enemy, Russia.²⁵ Almost a decade prior to the conflict, the radical journalist E.D. Morel (1873-1924), thanks to his maritime connections, became aware of unstated changes in British naval policy, committing Great Britain to the defense of France's northern coastline, a policy that he questioned.²⁶ After the war, on February 14, 1929, Grey, now retired, was interviewed by G. P. Gooch, who was working on the *British Documents*. During that interview, Gooch elicited from Grey several important concessions on the deficiencies of British policy in 1914, especially concerning Russia.²⁷ Harold Temperley also had reservations concerning British policy before 1914, but they were not generally known before his death in 1939.²⁸ These concerns did not surface in the literature until during and after the Second World War, which, in the lives of millions, had all too powerfully confirmed all that was said in and after the war of 1914 about Germany's propensity for authoritarian harshness and military aggression.

After the Second World War, the British Government promptly embarked upon the publication of diplomatic documents relating to the period 1919 to 1939.²⁹ In their prefatory remarks, editors E.L. Woodward (1890-1971) and Rohan Butler (1917-1996) informed readers that (unlike the previous sequence) certain kinds of documentation would now be omitted.³⁰ For Cambridge historian Herbert Butterfield (1900-1979), this information

rang alarm bells.³¹ He had been a student of Harold Temperley and greatly admired Gooch. In his widely published 1948/49 lectures on *Christianity and History* he stated,

In the *British Documents on the Origins of the War* the crucial volume for July 1914 [volume XI], contains some interesting scraps of documents ... *belonging to a class of evidence which the editors had some difficulty in getting published* [italics mine, KCS], and which will not be published in the parallel series of documents now appearing for the Second World War. A person who looks hard at those half a dozen lines ... till their implications simply stare him in the face, will find them so important that he must go back to the beginning again—he must re-read hundreds of pages of documents before and after the crucial point, to find what they now mean in the light of those few significant sentences.³²

Butterfield's high estimation of Temperley and Gooch arose not least from their willingness to stand up to the official "guidance" that had been "offered" to them by Headlam-Morley, all of which prompts us to ask what these crucial lines were and what they signified. In fact, in 1950, Temperley's son wrote to Butterfield asking for the references; in reply, Butterfield provided the required information.³³ The references were to pages 81, 82 and 53 of Volume XI of the *British Documents*.

The first of these two references relates to the memoranda attached to the incoming telegram from George W. Buchanan (1854-1924), then British Ambassador in St. Petersburg, to Grey on July 24, 1914, by Eyre Crowe (1864-1925) the Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and Arthur Nicolson (1849-1928), the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. On July 25, Crowe commented: "The moment has passed when it might have been possible to enlist French support in an effort to hold back Russia. It is clear that France and Russia are decided to accept the challenge thrown out to them."³⁴ To this, Nicolson added, "the points raised by Sir Eyre Crowe merit serious consideration, and doubtless the Cabinet will review the situation. Our attitude during the crisis will be regarded by Russia as a test and we must be most careful not to alienate her."³⁵

The second reference is also to internal memoranda, this time attached to a dispatch from the British Attaché in Paris, Granville Leveson-Gower (1872-1939), stating *inter alia* that "The development of Russia today, in all fields of human activity, is only comparable to that of the United States of America some thirty years ago ... [for by] the winter of 1916 ... Russia ... will possess an active army greater in numbers than the joint forces of the Triple Alliance [Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy, and] ... thanks to new strategical railways, [will] be able to mobilise as quickly as the other military Powers. The same effort is to be seen in naval matters, and the Russian navy estimates now exceed the British ones."³⁶ To these prognostications Nicolson added: "Russia is a formidable Power and will become increasingly strong. Let us

For Butterfield, the question was not whether or not Germany could be an aggressor, but of the failure of British policy in the first half of the twentieth century to recognize that Germany and Russia (even as rivals) could function as simultaneous or parallel menaces.

hope that our relations with her will continue to be friendly."³⁷

In his reply to Neville Temperley, Butterfield outlined his perception of the implications as follows:

'Russia is a formidable power and will become increasingly strong. Therefore we must take care to be on her side.' This ... represents a most paradoxical attitude in view of the traditional policy of Great Britain in regard to the growth of continental giants. It is partly explained if, in the light of it, we re-traverse the documents of 1912-14. The truth is that it was Russia that was giving us so much trouble in various parts of the world; and so

long as Russia was an ally we could hope to check her a little, but if she became an enemy we could do nothing with her at all. We felt it absolutely essential not to allow the Russians to feel that we had let them down. [...] All the anomalies of July 1914 seem to be connected with the Russian connection; the subsequent anxieties of the Foreign Office ... have reference to this side of the crisis.

Butterfield carefully calibrated his expressions of opinion on these questions, making his most comprehensive statements to “neutral” audiences in Ireland.³⁸ At this time a cohort of writers, marked by a strong anti-German outlook, dominated the historical profession in England. These included historians as disparate as A.L. Rowse (1903-97),³⁹ A.J.P. Taylor (1906-90),⁴⁰ Louis B. Namier (1888-1960),⁴¹ and, not least, Hugh Trevor-Roper (1914-2003).⁴² In this respect the post-1945 era was not propitious for a sustained reconsideration of the July 1914 crisis and its antecedent influences.

In other respects the post-1945 period was all too propitious. In 1914 the prayers of London and Paris were for vast Russian armies to triumph in the east and soon enter Berlin, Budapest, and Vienna. The answer to their prayers did not come in 1914 and could not be seen in 1919 but was all too apparent in 1945. The result was that the Red Army was most inconveniently positioned in the heart of Europe until 1989. Worse yet, in 1915 under the stress of all-out war, Great Britain had been ready to concede to Russia control of the Bosphorus and therefore a naval presence in the eastern Mediterranean. For Butterfield, the question was not whether or not Germany could be an aggressor, but of the failure of British policy in the first half of the twentieth century to recognize that Germany and Russia (even as rivals) could function as simultaneous or parallel menaces.⁴³ The impediment to this recognition lay in the reasons behind Great Britain’s close association with one of the two opposing alliance systems on the European continent. Butterfield did not discuss the reasons for that prior alignment, a topic to which we will turn shortly.

The almost propagandistic anti-German writing by his fellow-countrymen, of which Butterfield complained, was soon relativized by the prodigious output of two continental European scholars. The first of these was the Italian journalist and

researcher Luigi Albertini (1871-1941). For a short time Albertini supported the fascist movement, seeing it as an effective opponent of the radical left. However, he lost his professional position in 1925, after he broke with fascism, and spent his latter years in self-imposed seclusion, researching the origins of the Great War. His *Le origini della guerra del 1914* appeared in 1942/43 and later in English.⁴⁴ Albertini’s achievement was considerable, although the discussion was at some points uneven as a result of the increasingly difficult circumstances of the 1930s. Most important was his generally strong coverage of the Balkans, which inevitably directed attention towards the east and therefore Russia.

However, the work of Albertini was significantly, if not wholly, overshadowed by the publications of the German historian Fritz Fischer (1908-99), a member of the Nazi Party from 1939 to 1942. Fischer’s counter-revisionist standpoint first came to general attention with his *Griff nach der Weltmacht: die Kriegszielpolitik des Kaiserlichen Deutschland, 1914–18* (1961).⁴⁵ This and subsequent publications put responsibility squarely back on German shoulders.⁴⁶ Within the Federal Republic of Germany, Fischer’s work was highly contentious. He argued for a general continuity of German policy from 1861 to 1941. By contrast, after 1949 many German academics were ready to acknowledge responsibility for 1939, but for them 1914 was another matter. Fischer was criticized for conflating objectives formulated in wartime with diplomatic intentions in peacetime and for giving too much weight to the projects of persons not in authority when it came to the formulation and implementation of policy. It was murmured that he was expiating for his earlier Nazi affiliation.

Where Fischer re-emphasized Germany’s culpability in the violation of Belgian neutrality, he was not saying anything new, but his criticisms of pre-1914 war Germany were one-sided in that they did not address the menacing postures or expansionary intentions of the other continental great powers. He paid very little attention to Russia—at a time when key German archival material was only accessible with the permission of the East German (DDR) government. In England, the work of Fischer was viewed as a vindication by figures such as Trevor-Roper⁴⁷ and taken as read by international relations

specialists, such as F.H. Hinsley (1908-98).⁴⁸

If anything, Fischer's single-message barrage evoked responses that constructively widened the debate. Perhaps unintentionally, he and his "Hamburg School" of followers helped drive the debate wider and deeper. In Australia, John A. Moses fervently supported Fischer.⁴⁹ There, however, L.C.F. Turner, then Professor of History at the Royal Military College of Australia, effectively challenged the Fischer standpoint. Turner emphasized the importance of military decision-making in July 1914, and especially that of Russia.⁵⁰

Along multiple lines of argument, the more astute responses to Fischer all tended to point eastwards, and to Russia. What remains to be explained is why Great Britain should have found herself so bound to France and Russia at the crucial point in 1914. We will address this pivotal question in a future issue.

Endnotes

1. The correct title is *Variations on an Original Theme for Orchestra*, by Edward Elgar, Opus 36. For some of us the best recordings remain those of the Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by John Barbirolli (1899-1970) or the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Adrian Boult (1889-1983).
2. For a long time George Macaulay Trevelyan, *Grey of Fallodon*, (London: Longmans, Green, 1937), was the standard life, now supplemented by Keith Robbins, *Sir Edward Grey: A Biography of Lord Grey of Fallodon* (London: Cassell, 1971).
3. *United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons*, Fifth Series LXV (1914): columns 1809-1834.
4. Jonathan E. Helmreich, *Belgian Concern over Neutrality and British Intentions, 1906-14*, in *Journal of Modern History* 36 (1964), 416-427.
5. See John Morley (First Viscount Morley of Blackburn), *Memorandum on Resignation* (London: Macmillan, 1928), and Keith M. Wilson, "The British Cabinet's Decision for War, 2 August 1914," *British Journal of International Studies* 1 (1975), 148-159.
6. *Manchester Guardian* editorials of August 3 and 4, 1914.
7. The best work in English remains, Conrad Hugo Jarasch, *The Enigmatic Chancellor: Bethmann Hollweg and the Hubris of Imperial Germany* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1973).
8. Christopher H.D. Howard, "The Diary of Edward Goschen, 1900-1914," *Camden Fourth Series* 25 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1980), 51.
9. *Ibid*, 298-302. It turns out that Goschen, as an amateur dramatist, had actually performed the lead role in the play years earlier! See also the discussion provided by Herbert Butterfield, *George III and the Historians* (London: Collins, 1957), 7-8.
10. J.W. Headlam, *The History of Twelve Days: July 24th to August 4th 1914. Being an Account of the Negotiations Preceding the Outbreak of War Based on the Official Publications* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1915). Headlam's surname was hyphenated to Headlam-Morley in 1918.
11. *Ibid*, 289-389, esp. at 388.
12. Herbert Henry Asquith, *The Genesis of the War* (London: Cassell, 1923), 210-11, and *Memories and Reflections, 1852-1927* (London: Cassell, 1928), II, 7-20.
13. Treaty of Versailles, June 28, 1919, Articles 231-248.
14. Edited by Friedrich Thimme (1868-1938), Albrecht Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1874-1936), and Johannes Lepsius (1858-1926). All published by the German Government. The forty volumes were published in fifty-four parts and so appear as fifty-four volumes on the shelf.
15. English translation: "International Relations in the Age of Imperialism: Documents from the Archives of the Tsarist and Provisional Governments."
16. A full discussion is provided by Derek Spring in "The Unfinished Collection: Russian Documents on the Origins of the First World War," in *Forging the Collective Memory: Government and International Historians through Two World Wars*, edited by Keith Wilson (Providence RI and Oxford: Berghahn Books), 1996, 63-86.
17. See Holger H. Herwig, "Clio Deceived: Patriotic Self-Censorship in Germany after the Great War," in *International Security* 12 (1987) 5-44. Of course, this discussion raised the question of "patriotic self-censorship" by *all* governments participating in the conflict.
18. See John D. Fair, *Harold Temperley: A Scholar and Romantic in the Public Realm* (Cranbury NJ: Associated University Presses, 1993), esp. 167-215.
19. See Frank Eyck, *G.P. Gooch: A Study in History and Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1982), esp. 60-90 and 311-405.
20. All published by His Majesty's Stationary Office [HMSO] in London. Volumes IX and X both appeared as two part volumes, so that volumes I to XI appear as 13 volumes on the shelf.

21. See especially the remarks by Keith M. Wilson on "The Imbalance in British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914: Gooch, Temperley and the India Office," in *Forging the Collective Memory: Government and International Historians through Two World Wars*, edited by Keith M. Wilson (Providence RI and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1996, 230-249). Wilson was not the first scholar to criticize the British series. See J.D. Hargreaves, "Some Critical Notes on Gooch and Temperley," *History: New Series* 39 (1954), 68-75.
22. Sidney Bradshaw Fay, *The Origins of the World War, I and II* (New York: Macmillan, 1928, revised edition, 1930).
23. Bernadotte E. Schmitt, *The Coming of the War 1914, I and II* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), and *Triple Alliance and Triple Entente* (New York: Henry Holt, 1934).
24. Parker Thomas Moon, *Imperialism and World Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1926).
25. See, for example, Max Beloff, *Lucien Wolf and the Anglo-Russian Entente, 1907-1914* (London: University College of London / Jewish Historical Society, 1951).
26. F. Seymour Cocks, *E.D. Morel: The Man and His Work* (London: George Allen, 1920), and Catherine Ann Cline, "E.D. Morel and the Crusade Against the Foreign Office," *Journal of Modern History* 39 (1967), 126-137, and *E.D. Morel, 1873-1924: Strategies of Protest* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1981), esp. 69-95.
27. G.P. Gooch, "British Diplomacy before 1914," in *Studies in Diplomacy and Statecraft* (London: Longmans Green, 1942), 106-107.
28. See Harold W.V. Temperley, "British Secret Diplomacy from Canning to Grey," *Cambridge Historical Journal* 6 (1938/1940), 1-32, and especially "Professor Temperley on the Origins of the War of 1914," *Cambridge Historical Journal* 11 (1948), 251-256.
29. The reaction against "appeasement" was fanned by the publication of *Guilty Men* under the pseudonym "Cato" in 1940. The authors were three journalists. For the contribution of a historian see A.L. Rowse, *All Souls and Appeasement* (London: Macmillan, 1961 / *Appeasement: A Study in Political Decline, 1933-1939* (New York: Norton, 1961).
30. Ernest Llewellyn Woodward and Rohan D'Olier Butler, "Preface to the Collection," in *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939*, Second Series, I (London: HMSO, 1946), iii-iv.
31. For Herbert Butterfield, see C. Thomas McIntire, *Herbert Butterfield: Historian as Dissenter* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2004), esp. 356-358, and Michael Bentley, *The Life and Thought of Herbert Butterfield* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 289-290.
32. Herbert Butterfield, *Christianity and History* (London: Bell, 1949), 15.
33. Neville Temperley to Herbert Butterfield, August 10, 1950, Herbert Butterfield to Neville Temperley, September 4, 1950, Butterfield Papers in the University of Cambridge Library, England.
34. *British Documents on the Origins of the War XI: The Outbreak of War: Foreign Office Documents June 28th to August 4th, 1914* (London: HMSO, 1926), [hereafter *BD*], 81.
35. *BD* XI, 82.
36. *BD* XI, 53.
37. *BD* XI, 53.
38. Herbert Butterfield, "Official History: Its Pitfalls and Its Criteria," in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review of Letters, Philosophy and Science* 38 (1949), 129-144, reprinted in *History and Human Relations* (London: Collins, 1952), 182-224, and "Sir Edward Grey in July 1914," in *Historical Studies* 5 (1965), 1-25. Both papers were delivered in Ireland.
39. A.L. Rowse, *The End of an Epoch: Reflections on Contemporary History* (London: Macmillan, 1947), 179-216.
40. A.J.P. Taylor, *The Course of German History* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1945). Cf. Kathleen Burk, *Troublemaker: The Life and History of A.J.P. Taylor* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press), esp. 248-255 and 531-532.
41. See Norman Rose, *Lewis Namier and Zionism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1980), esp. 10-12 and 40-141.
42. H.R. Trevor-Roper, *The Last Days of Hitler* (London: Macmillan, 1947). Cf. Adam Sisman, *Hugh Trevor-Roper: The Biography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2010), 66-70.
43. Butterfield, "Official History: Its Pitfalls and Its Criteria," 140-142.
44. Luigi Albertini, *The Origins of the War of 1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953-57, reprinted 1967).
45. Translated as Fritz Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1967).
46. Fritz Fischer, *War of Illusions: German Policies from 1911 to 1914* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1975), and *World Power or Decline: The Controversy over 'Germany's Aims in the First World War'* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975).
47. Note particularly the tone of Trevor-Roper's "Foreword" to John Röhl, *1914: Delusion or Design? The Testimony of Two German Diplomats* (London:

Elek, 1973), at 9-15.

48. Francis Harry Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace: Theory and Practice in the History of Relations between States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963, esp. 306-7), and *The Causes of the First World War* (Hull, England: University of Hull, 1964).
49. John A. Moses, *The War Aims of Imperial Germany: Professor Fritz Fischer and His Critics* (St. Lucia: Queensland University Press, 1968), "The Crisis in West German Historiography: Origins and Trends," *Historical Studies* 13 (1969), 445-459, and *The Politics of Illusion: The Fischer Controversy in German Historiography* (London: George Prior, 1975).
50. L.C.F. Turner, *The Origins of the First World War* (New York: Norton, 1970), esp. 44-53, and 89-115.

Bob Dylan and Antithetical Engagement with Culture



by Jeff Taylor

On September 11, 2012, Bob Dylan released his thirty-fifth studio album, *Tempest*, in the United States to critical acclaim—fifty years after the release of his first album. The life and writing of Bob Dylan, singer-songwriter and cultural icon, exemplify a type of Christian engagement with popular culture that is mostly antithetical. In the early 1960s, Dylan influenced pop culture and made a name for himself as a talented and perceptive creator of protest songs. As he moved from overt, sociopolitical “finger-pointing” material to introspective, psychedelic “folk-rock” material, he retained his adversarial stance vis-à-vis the domi-

nant trends and institutions of society. His conversion to Christianity in 1978 did not indicate a renunciation of his countercultural stance. Rather, it was a clarifying, broadening, and deepening of his position.

During the past three decades, Dylan has woven his Christian perspective like a thread through his songs (both recorded originals and performed covers). His theology is based on three sources: the ancient Jewish prophetic tradition, the Jesus Movement tradition coming out of the early 1970s, and the Christian tradition in folk-country-and-blues music. Dylan's example reminds us that engagement with popular culture does not necessarily mean endorsement or emulation. It also reminds us that a transformative approach to culture does not necessarily mean involvement in electoral politics or government. Dylan remains apolitical, a stance that is, in itself, both an engagement with and a rejection of our culture. Bob Dylan's emphasis on what Abraham Kuyper called *antithesis* is not the whole story for a Christian world and life view, but it is part of the story.

Bob Dylan's own story began in Minnesota, as Robert Zimmerman, grandchild of Russian Jewish immigrants; from that beginning, Dylan became one of the most influential musical figures of the second half of the century. With artistic genius and personal charisma, Dylan authored classic songs such as “Blowin’ in the Wind,” “The Times They Are A-Changin’,” “Like a Rolling Stone,” “All Along the Watchtower,” “Knockin’ on Heaven’s Door,”

Dr. Jeff Taylor is Associate Professor of Political Science at Dordt College

and “Forever Young.” By the time he was twenty-five, Dylan had reached a cultural level comparable with the Beatles, with songwriting talent rivaling that of John Lennon and Paul McCartney, especially in the realm of lyrics.

During the past three decades, Dylan has woven his Christian perspective like a thread through his songs (both recorded originals and performed covers).

Moving to New York City in 1961 to join the folk music scene, where his talent for singing, songwriting, and performing was soon recognized, he became famous by writing songs about sociopolitical issues (“protest songs”). Folk singers Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger had long been active in left-liberal causes, but they wrote relatively few songs about contemporary issues. Members of the Beat Generation, the Counterculture of the late 1950s, such as Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, expressed themselves by writing prose and poetry, not by writing and singing songs. In other words, Dylan was doing something unique, especially in August 1963, when he sang before 200,000 people at the Washington civil rights march that featured Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech.

In 1965, when Dylan turned from acoustic folk music to electric rock music with songs such as “Subterranean Homesick Blues” and “Mr. Tambourine Man,” harbingers of the late 1960s’ Counterculture, he was accused by folk purists and protest song devotees of being a traitor, of abandoning The Cause in favor of making self-indulgent pop music. He may have betrayed the high-society intelligentsia that hoped to use him as a front man, but he had not betrayed The Cause—racial equality, economic justice, and world peace. Rock music had always been down-to-earth—emanating from black gospel, music of the working class, at least slightly revolutionary. And this was a time for The Cause: By the mid ’60s, many young people had

lost their early ’60s optimism, JFK was dead, the civil rights movement was splintering, the united black-white effort had mostly collapsed, many northern blacks were becoming more militant, and the U.S. military involvement in Vietnam had escalated. At a time when young people were becoming disillusioned with the political and economic Establishment as well as the lifestyle of their own parents, Bob Dylan’s career peaked.

However, in 1966, when Dylan was as well known and influential as the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and Elvis Presley, the incredible intensity of his life halted abruptly when he crashed his motorcycle in a near-fatal accident that produced eighteen months of seclusion as well as the release of his next album. As a result, the American Counterculture, emerging in full force—with their long hair, beads, psychedelic clothes, peace signs, free love, eastern mysticism, communes, grass, and LSD—considered Bob Dylan their uncrowned leader, an uncomfortable role for Dylan, who just wanted to be a singer, husband, and father.¹ Even though Dylan would never regain his former commercial success and social influence, he did turn out a number of hit records in the ’70s and was regularly praised by critics.

What is more significant about Dylan in the ’70s is his conversion to evangelical Christianity, marking a new turning point in his life. While his 1978 conversion confused and angered many fans, his first born-again album, *Slow Train Coming*, went platinum, with the single “Gotta Serve Somebody” nearly topping the charts and winning him a Grammy Award. His superstar status having ended in the mid 1960s and his star status having ended in the late 1970s, Dylan was and is still considered a legend. Seen as perhaps the pre-eminent voice of the generation that came of age in the 1960s even though his voice has been widely scorned as too rough and nasally, he has been deservedly praised as a master of phrasing and emotional impact.²

Dylan and Politics

Dylan’s phrasing and emotional impact were especially useful for what could be called socialistic anarchism. Anarcho-pacifism was the “chief intellectual inspiration” of the New Left, which arose

in the early 1960s, fathered by socialistic anarchists Dwight Macdonald and C. Wright Mills.³ The New Left's leading group was Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), its founding manifesto was SDS' Port Huron Statement, written by Tom Hayden, and its "most resonant troubadour" Bob Dylan, according to Macdonald's biographer: "As medieval Catholicism cannot be understood apart from Aquinas, so allusion to Dylan is obligatory to any study of Sixties radicalism."⁴ Dylan was also the preeminent hero of the less-overtly-political, more-lifestyle-oriented but still anarchistic Counterculture that developed in the late 1960s.⁵

That anarchistic message is clearly evident in Dylan's first all-electric album, *Highway 61 Revisited*, where he writes that to change the world, people must change themselves.⁶ It could be argued that Dylan did more as a rock star than as a folk singer to revolutionize American society, as his songs stimulated self-understanding and change in millions of young people. Twenty years after Dwight Macdonald published his 1946 article "The Root is Man," which called for the creation of small fraternal groups—organized according to the principles of pacifism and noncoercion—that would challenge the government by draft refusal, by evasion, by argument, and by encouraging attitudes of disrespect, skepticism, and ridicule toward the state and all authority,⁷ Dylan put these attitudes on vinyl for purchase at their local record stores.

During the mid to late 1960s, Dylan mostly ignored the government. When he did refer to it, he usually did so in a somewhat disrespectful, skeptical, or ridiculous manner. Dylan represented indifference toward, if not rebellion against, authority, as his songs bear this out. In "The Times They Are A-Changin'" (released in 1964), he warns senators and congressmen that the battle outside would soon shake their windows and rattle their walls. In "With God on Our Side" (1964), he ridicules patriotism which claims that God is on America's side during every war.⁸ In "Subterranean Homesick Blues" (1965), he says, "you don't need a weather man to know which way the wind blows" and "don't follow leaders."⁹ In "Absolutely Sweet Marie" (1966), he notes that "to live outside the law, you must be honest."¹⁰

This apolitical, anarchistic stance did not change when he became a Christian in 1978; instead, it was strengthened and deepened to what could be described as Christian anarchy. Not long after his conversion, Dylan said, "When I walk around some of the towns we go to ... I'm totally convinced people need Jesus. Look at the junkies and the winos and the troubled people. It's all a sickness which can be healed in an instant. The powers that be won't let that happen. The powers that be say it has to be healed politically."¹¹ Five years later, when asked if some of his post-conversion songs were signs that he had moved to the right, Dylan responded, "Well, for me, there is no right and there is no left. There's truth and there's untruth, y'know? There's honesty and there's hypocrisy. Look in the Bible: you don't see nothing about right or left ... I hate to keep beating people over the head with the Bible, but that's the only instrument I know, the only thing that stays true."¹² In a 1984 interview, Dylan said, "I think politics is an instrument of the Devil. Just that clear. I think politics is what kills; it doesn't bring anything alive." When asked, "So you don't care who's president? It doesn't make any difference?" he replied, "I don't think so."¹³

In an interview during the most recent election season (2012), Dylan declined to say whether or not he votes and dismissed a question about whether others should vote with a perfunctory, "Yeah, why not vote?... We live in a democracy. What do you want me to say? Voting is a good thing." When asked if wanted to see President Obama reelected, Dylan replied, "I've lived through a lot of presidents! And you have too! Some are re-elected and some aren't." Despite repeated, tiresome attempts by the pro-Obama interviewer to elicit an endorsement of, or at least sympathy for, Barack Obama out of Bob Dylan, he would have none of it. The interviewer finally gave up and moved on.¹⁴ Dylan's reticence had nothing to do with support for Mitt Romney or the Republican Party and everything to do with his Christian spiritual perspective.

Dylan's anarchism is reflected in many of his post-conversion songs. In "Gonna Change My Way of Thinking" (1979), he says, "there's only one authority, and that's the authority on high."¹⁵ Drawing on his 1960s' reputation, Dylan told a

concert audience, in 1979, “Never told you to vote for nobody; never told you to follow nobody.” Five months later, he told an audience, “They’re running for president now. They’re gonna save the country But you can’t save nothing unless *you’re* saved.” In another city, he said, “Jesus is for everybody. He came to save the world, not to judge the world. Education’s not gonna save you. Law’s not gonna save you. Medicine’s not gonna save you. Don’t wait too long. . . . Salvation begins right now, today.”¹⁶ As an alternative, his unreleased song “City of Gold” (1980) declares, “There is a City of Peace/where all foul forms of destruction cease/where the mighty have fallen and there are no police/There is a City of Peace.”¹⁷ But his completely negative “Political World” (1989) declares, “love don’t have any place,” “wisdom is thrown into jail,” “mercy walks the plank,” “courage is a thing of the past,” “children are unwanted,” and “peace is not welcome at all.”

Dylan then extends the skepticism in “Political World” to the whole fallen world. In “Everything is Broken” (1989), he says, “Broken hands on broken ploughs, broken treaties, broken vows / broken pipes, broken tools, people bending broken rules / Hound dog howling, bullfrog croaking, everything is broken.”¹⁸ In “Unbelievable” (1990), Dylan looks at a fallen world’s definition of the American Dream: “They said it was the land of milk and honey/Now they say it’s the land of money/Who ever thought they could make that stick/It’s unbelievable you can get this rich this quick.”¹⁹ The very title of Dylan’s 1993 album sums up his attitude toward human authority and society: “World Gone Wrong.”²⁰ Then, his Grammy-winning song “Things Have Changed” (2000) declares, “All the truth in the world adds up to one big lie.”²¹

Dylan the Christian: A Passing Phase?

These lyrics invite us to consider the authenticity of Dylan’s Christian conversion and on-going faith in Christ. During the 1980s, two contradictory sets of rumors suggested that Dylan’s “Christian phase” was over. Either he had lost interest in religion and returned to his worldly lifestyle of heavy drinking and carousing, or he had embraced Orthodox Judaism as an alternative to Christianity. While Dylan’s personal life may invite criticism from a Christian moral perspective—as is true for all of

us—it doesn’t prove or disprove his faith commitment or his status in relation to the grace of God. As for a return to his Jewish roots, this perception was sparked by events such as attending the bar mitzvah of one of his sons in Israel and studying with some rabbis in Brooklyn. These actions don’t prove or disprove his Christian faith. Dylan did not reject his Jewishness when he knelt before Yeshua, the Jewish Messiah. His gospel album *Saved* featured Jeremiah 31:31 on the inner sleeve: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.”

A year after the Orthodox Judaism rumors began, Dylan continued to sing his Christian songs in concert. When a *Rolling Stone* interviewer asked him, in 1984, “Are the Old and New Testaments equally valid?” he answered, “To me.” Dylan also said, “I believe in the Book of Revelation,” and referred to the coming Antichrist. Twenty-eight years later, he repeated the line about Revelation word for word to a different interviewer for the same magazine.²² During his 1986 world tour, Dylan introduced the song “In the Garden,” from the album *Saved*, by saying, “I want to sing you a song about my hero.” That was not the act of an Orthodox

“Jesus is for everybody. He came to save the world, not to judge the world. Education’s not gonna save you. Law’s not gonna save you. Medicine’s not gonna save you. Don’t wait too long. . . . Salvation begins right now, today.”

Jew. He sang both the black spiritual “Go Down, Moses” and his own “In the Garden,” about Jesus Christ, when he performed in Tel Aviv, Israel, in 1987.²³ Dylan’s concert set-lists, including his choice of cover songs; his cagey-yet-illuminating interview remarks; and his biblical language, includ-

ing New Testament words, in his songs all attest to his continued Christianity.²⁴ In 2012, he told *Rolling Stone*, “No kind of life is fulfilling if your soul hasn’t been redeemed.”²⁵

Church Out of World, Christ Against Culture

If Bob Dylan were an isolated example of an artistic, intelligent Christian dabbling in theology, his perspective would hold limited value for the wider Christian community. But we can place Dylan in the wider context of a distinct, important tendency within Christianity. In Richard Niebuhr’s five types of Christian response to culture, Dylan is clearly in the “Christ Against Culture” camp.²⁶ He “uncompromisingly affirms the sole authority of Christ over the Christian and resolutely rejects culture’s claims to loyalty.”²⁷

This is not to say that Dylan’s stance in relation to culture and non-Christians is one of utter negativity or complete rejection. Being in opposition to the world as an organized system does not mean opposition to every aspect of life in the world; it means rejection of the world’s dominant spirit and direction—specifically, rejection of the “arrangement’ under which Satan has organized the world of unbelieving mankind upon his cosmic principles of force, greed, selfishness, ambition, and pleasure.”²⁸ Yet God is not absent, even in such a spiritually benighted milieu. In a recent interview, Dylan remarked, “I see God’s hand in everything. Every person, place and thing, every situation.” After acknowledging his use of biblical imagery and reiterating his belief in the Book of Revelation, Dylan went on to say, “There’s truth in all books. In some kind of way. Confucius, Sun Tzu, Marcus Aurelius, the Koran, the Torah, the New Testament, the Buddhist sutras, the Bhagavad-Gita, the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, and many thousands more. You can’t go through life without reading some kind of book.”²⁹ Even though this statement could be one of Dylan’s characteristic interview dodges, his underlying point remains: Dylan sees God’s hand in everything—or at least the potential in everything—as well as the existence of sin, falsehood, and evil.

In other words, Dylan believes in what Kuyper called common grace. Kuyper asked, “Does Christ have significance only for the *spiritual* realm or also

for the *natural and visible* domain? Does the fact that he has overcome the world mean that he will one day toss the world back into nothingness in order to keep alive only the souls of the elect, or does it mean that the world too will be his conquest, the trophy of his glory?”³⁰ Kuyper argued for the second answer to each question. However, he did not sugar-coat reality or lapse into syncretistic humanism. His conception of common grace included acknowledgment of sin, the Fall, Babylon, and Antichrist.³¹ Kuyper also distinguished between interior and exterior manifestations of common grace: “The former is operative wherever civic virtue, a sense of domesticity, natural love, the practice of human virtue, the improvement of the public conscience, integrity, mutual loyalty among people, and a feeling for piety leaven life. The latter is in evidence when human power over nature increases, when invention upon invention enriches life, when international communication is improved, the arts flourish, the sciences increase our understanding.”³²

Kuyper’s view of common grace, echoed in Dylan’s words, is summarized by Richard Mouw’s statement “God mysteriously works in positive ways in sinful humankind. This is how we are to understand the works of beauty that might be produced by a promiscuous, blaspheming artist, or the acts of justice committed by a person who speaks disdainfully about religious allegiances.”³³ The same might be said for truth-telling by someone ignorant of, or hostile toward, God. A song on Dylan’s new CD—“Roll on John”—is an example of Dylan’s appreciation for art, justice, and truth flowing through humanity, regardless of individual spiritual allegiance. Bob Dylan is a Christian; John Lennon was not. Yet Dylan can pay tribute to Lennon because he appreciates Lennon’s positive contribution of shining a light in a dark world.³⁴ With his keen sense of justice and great artistic ability, Dylan himself was a conduit of common grace in his pre-Christian years of the 1960s and 1970s.

With his conversion to Christianity in 1978, in the context of the southern California-based Jesus People Movement of the late ‘60s and early ‘70s, Dylan turned to the biblical book of Revelation, which is “radical in its rejection of ‘the world.’”³⁵ As the so-called Jesus Freaks and their allies sought a restoration of the purity and simplicity of the

first-century Church, they emphasized contemporary social ethics as well as eschatological yearning for the Second Coming. The converted Dylan went through intense Scripture study under the teaching of ministers connected with Vineyard Christian Fellowship, a loose-knit denomination that began as a Bible study in the Hollywood living room of Larry Norman. Dylan's study emphasized Revelation, the Olivet Discourse of Christ (Matthew 24-25), and the Old Testament prophetic books, as understood by dispensational premillennial theology—the kind of Bible prophecy popularized by Hal Lindsey in the 1970s.

While Niebuhr attempted to mitigate the enduring anti-culture motif of Revelation because it was written in the context of Roman persecution, Dylan and the Jesus People did not see the book as dated or fulfilled.³⁶ Dylan went so far as to spend considerable time between songs, during his con-

Dylan recognizes the biblical and oppositional distinction between the Church and the World, a distinction foundational to the “Christ Against Culture” position and well-represented in the New Testament.

cert tour of 1979-1980, giving Bible-based insights and advice to his audiences. These insights, coupled with Dylan's refusal to sing any of his pre-Christian songs, confused and angered fans, many of whom heckled or walked out, spreading the word of the new religious Dylan to the media and hurting ticket sales.

Many of Dylan's mini-sermons focused on the End Times. In San Francisco, he said, “There's gonna be a war called the Battle of Armageddon which is like something you never even dreamed about. And Christ will set up His kingdom and He'll rule it from Jerusalem. I know, far out as that may seem this is what the Bible says.” In Albuquerque, he said, “I told you ‘The Times They Are A-Changing’

and they did. I said the answer was ‘Blowin in the Wind’ and it was. I'm telling you now that Jesus is coming back, and He is!... Jesus is coming back to set up his Kingdom in Jerusalem for a thousand years.”³⁷ Dylan's belief in a future, literal, earthly reign of Jesus Christ followed the tradition of Tertullian (160-225 A.D.), father of Latin theology and fellow proponent of “Christ Against Culture.”³⁸ Dylan songs with eschatological and apocalyptic themes include “Slow Train,” “Gonna Change My Way of Thinking,” “When He Returns,” “Ye Shall Be Changed,” “Are You Ready,” “The Groom's Still Waiting at the Altar,” “Caribbean Wind,” “Angelina,” “Jokerman,” “Man of Peace,” “Dark Eyes,” “Death is Not the End,” “Ring Them Bells,” “Man in the Long Black Coat,” and “Cat's in the Well.”³⁹

Other major themes of the “Christ Against Culture” type also appear in Dylan's work. For example, Dylan recognizes the biblical and oppositional distinction between the Church and the World, a distinction foundational to the “Christ Against Culture” position and well-represented in the New Testament. The word *Church* comes from *ekklesia*, or *ecclesia*, in the Greek, meaning assembly of the called-out ones.⁴⁰ The Church is called out of the World, as Christ himself declared.⁴¹ (Of course, this is a spiritual separation, not a physical separation.) Even earlier in God's covenant relations with humankind, we see the same principle at work with ancient Israel, for whom the word *holy* means “set apart.” The same root gives us the words *sanctify* and *saint*. Jesus prayed, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,” and told Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world.”⁴²

Niebuhr was correct in pointing out the prominence of the anti-*kosmos* imperative in the writings of John—namely Revelation and the epistles. I John is particularly emphatic, declaring, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” But this is not only a Johannine topic; other apostolic writings also emphasize a spiritual divide. Paul writes, “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind”; and “From now on, let those ... who deal with the world [live] as though they had no dealings with it. For the form of this world is passing

away.” Succinctly enunciating a full gospel of both social justice and personal holiness—a combination not too common for Christians of our time and place—James writes, “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.” He also writes, “Unfaithful creatures! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”⁴³

Clearly, the Church opposes the World (as an organized system dominated by fallen, ungodly values), partly because Satan is described as the prince of this world during the present age.⁴⁴ Because of these contrasting loyalties, Christ set forth alternate ethics for an alternate society—not for some perfected future but for the fallen present, a present that makes the commands so difficult yet so important.⁴⁵

In addition to references in his songs, including dozens of cover performances of “This World Can’t Stand Long” in concert, Bob Dylan made clear reference to these “Christ Against Culture” verities when he preached on stage in 1979-80. He told one audience, “The Bible says, ‘Friendship with the world is the enemy of God.’ In other words, a friend of the world is the enemy of God. I know that sounds really strange, but sometimes the truth is hard to take. But the truth will set you free.” He told another audience, “You know Satan’s called the god of this world, that’s true, and it’s such a wonderful feeling when you get delivered from that.” He added that Satan “has been defeated at the cross.”⁴⁶

Spiritual Maturity and Artistic Nuance

In these attempts to engage culture as a new Christian, Dylan sometimes sounded superficial and seemed ham-fisted, often criticized for sounding like a second-rate Moral Majority scold during his *Slow Train Coming* period. Even sympathetic fans cringed at some of his lines.⁴⁷ “All that foreign oil controlling American soil/Look around you, it’s just bound to make you embarrassed/Sheiks walkin’ around like kings/wearing fancy jewels and nose rings/deciding America’s future from Amsterdam and to Paris” sounded jingoistic and

bigoted. “Adulterers in churches and pornography in the schools” seemed to be a silly sounding of false alarms, although the next line was better: “You got gangsters in power and lawbreakers making rules.”⁴⁸ One critic attributed such clunker lines to “sloppy writing” and Dylan’s desire to “make a conscious connection for the public between the early ‘protest-singer’ Dylan (still his best-known image) and the present-day, born-again Dylan.”⁴⁹ While some of this criticism is probably accurate, spiritual immaturity was also a factor.

In 1979, Dylan even linked his gospel rap to the Iranian hostage crisis, referring to the Shah of Iran as having “plundered the country, murdered a lot of people, escaped.” He went on: “Now here’s what Jesus would have done. Jesus would have gone back. See, that’s what Jesus did.”⁵⁰ He made a point, but such a simplistic approach whereby every current event is merely grist for the evangelistic mill is not the best example of Christian engagement with culture.

Six years later, Dylan exhibited considerably more spiritual depth when he discussed American culture and the ways of the world. He told an interviewer, “I’ve never been able to understand . . . the seriousness of pride. People talk, act, live as if they’re never going to die. And what do they leave behind? . . . Nothing but a mask.” He condemned the commercialization of the world in a way that went beyond Accept-Jesus-as-your-Savior-or-you’ll-be-in-big-trouble: “Everything’s a business. Love, truth, beauty. Conversation is a business. Spirituality is not a business, so it’s going to go against the grain of people who are trying to exploit other people People who believe in the coming of the Messiah live their lives right now as if he was here.”⁵¹

Dylan’s maturity, lacking in the 1979-80 period, is especially evident in his comments about songs on his *Biograph* box-set compilation. Commenting on “Every Grain of Sand”—one of his most beautiful, hymn-like post-conversion songs—Dylan provides nuggets of wisdom: “The old trades are still the most useful, can get you out of a jam. Everything is crooked now and the signs all point you the wrong way—it’s like we’re living at the time of the Tower of Babel, all our tongues are confused. We’re building a tower to Venus. Where the hell is that? What are we going to find there? God?” And:

“Make something religious and people don’t have to deal with it, they can say it’s irrelevant. ‘Repent, the Kingdom of God is at hand.’ That scares...people. They’d like to avoid that. Tell that to someone and you become their enemy. There does come a time, though, when you have to face facts and the truth is true whether you wanna believe it or not, it doesn’t need you to make it true.” Dylan had not changed his commitment to revealed truth or his allegiance to Christ as king, but he had developed a richer vocabulary and could engage a wider area of culture than in earlier years.

Antithesis in the Reformed Tradition

Can we, as Reformed Christians, learn from Bob Dylan and others who emphasize Christ Against Culture? Yes, but we might first have to get past a conceptual constraint. In the Reformed tradition, especially among neo-Calvinists, the “Christ Against Culture” type is often caricatured and condemned because it is pitted against the preferred “Christ the Transformer of Culture” type.⁵² Antagonism between the two types is more perception than reality—there are some legitimate differences in emphasis, but both are parts of genuine Christianity.

Recognition of age-old conflict between the Church and the World is not the property of a narrow, offbeat portion of the Christian tradition. An obvious example during the late ancient period is Augustine’s *City of God*. One analyst comments, “The public practices of the empire are not merely political or merely temporal; they are loaded, formative practices that are aimed at a *telos* that is antithetical to the city of God,” even if Augustine’s critique of the City of Man “does not entail a simplistic, wholesale rejection of Rome or other political configurations of the earthly city.”⁵³ During the past century, Dietrich Bonhoeffer referred to “The Great Divide,” noting that “the followers of Christ” are “separated from the rest of the world” in an ongoing process, in which we guard against false prophets, whose ambitions are “set on the world, not on Jesus Christ,” as they hope for “power and influence, money and fame.”⁵⁴ C.S. Lewis also recognized the power that God allows Satan to exercise in the world during this age: “Enemy-occupied territory—that is what this world is. Christianity is

the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage.”⁵⁵

The Church-World divide and the power of Satan are also recognized in the Reformed tradition. After all, it was Calvin—following Luther, following Augustine, following Scripture—who emphasized the depth of sin and the extent of the Fall. Obviously, total depravity carries cultural implications. In a certain light, the “Christ Against Culture” position and “Christ the Transformer of Culture” position appear as opposites, but they need not be viewed as such. Properly understood, they complement one another. Culture would not be in need of transformation if it were not seriously flawed.

Abraham Kuyper recognized this divide, calling it *antithesis*, which means contrast or opposition—in other words, *against*. According to Kuyper, the Bible is plain about the role of Satan: “There is a thinking mind, a personal being, whose unity of plan and conception is manifest in that life of sin and whose mighty but disastrous endeavor is served by all humanity in its pursuit of sin.” In

In a certain light, the “Christ Against Culture” position and “Christ the Transformer of Culture” position appear as opposites, but they need not be viewed as such. Properly understood, they complement one another. Culture would not be in need of transformation if it were not seriously flawed.

regard to world unity, Kuyper observes, “The similarity between God’s plan and that of the world is therefore undeniable.... But as with counterfeit currency, the similarity is only in name.” He, therefore, warns of danger when “the church of Christ or

the Gospel does not act as a yeast in the life of the world but, contrariwise, the principle of the world ...ferment[s] in Christ's church."⁵⁶

Asking if the world will get gradually better and more Christian, if Christ will find a Christianized world when he returns, Kuyper's answer is No: "We are told that a great apostasy awaits us. ...That in the end this opposition will culminate in the advent of an appalling *anti-Christian* world-power which, if Christ did not break it, would rip this whole world forever out of the hands of its God and away from its own destiny." Taking an apocalyptic approach, Kuyper notes, "Someday there will be coercion, when Christ descends in majesty from the heavens, breaks the anti-Christian powers with a rod of iron, and, in the words of Psalm 2, dashes them in pieces like a potter's vessel." This Kuyper statement reminds us of the opening lines of Dylan's song "When He Returns": "The iron hand it ain't no match for the iron rod/The strongest wall will crumble and fall to a mighty God."⁵⁷ More recently, Herman Dooyeweerd, referring to "the monster-marriage of Christianity with the movements of the age, which arise from the spirit of this world," reminds us, "History remains the battle-field between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness."⁵⁸

The Kuyperian emphasis on antithesis is exactly right. It keeps us from being naive, overly-optimistic, quasi-humanistic Panglossians when we toil in the vineyard of the world. Yes, the kingdom has come, but not fully. It is not "God's world" in the sense that this is as good as it gets. And while we are called to advance kingdom values in the present age—rather than just marking time for individual blessedness in heaven or merely seeing our time on earth as an opportunity to convince others to repeat the sinner's prayer—it will take the personal return of Christ himself to fully overthrow the kingdom of Satan.

There is a refreshing realism in Kuyper and Dylan. Both can simultaneously embrace the Christ-as-sovereign-of-creation concept of Colossians *and* the Love-not-the-world concept of I John. Without antithesis, we fall into the current of a fallen-world stream flowing in the wrong direction. Without common grace/cultural mandate, we fall into an unhealthy withdrawal from

the rest of creation and a narrow understanding of Christian life that does not reflect the fullness of the New Testament. It might be assumed that analyzing Christian engagement with culture/world is a dull subject, of importance to only a specialized class of theologians. But, in fact, that analysis is constantly being done by all Christians and is important for all Christians. Bob Dylan expresses his worldview of sin-but-redemption and antithesis-but-transformation primarily through lyrical music, but all Christians can manifest a biblical perspective in a variety of ways.

Despite his fame as a singer, songwriter, folk popularizer, and rock star, Bob Dylan's most important legacy may be his attempt, however imperfect, to embrace, practice, and share the full gospel of the Kingdom of God. It is a high calling. It is a high calling given to each of us.

Endnotes

1. Bob Dylan, *Chronicles: Volume One* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 114-24.
2. Jann S. Wenner, "Bob Dylan and Our Times: The Slow Train is Coming," *Rolling Stone*, September 20, 1979, 95.
3. Stephen J. Whitfield, *A Critical American: The Politics of Dwight Macdonald* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1984), 101.
4. *Ibid.*, 105.
5. David E. Apter and James Joll, eds., *Anarchism Today* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1972), 41-69; Dionne, E.J. Dionne Jr., *Why Americans Hate Politics* (New York: Touchstone, c1991, 1992), 40-41.
6. Gross, *Bob Dylan*, 82; Bob Dylan, *Highway 61 Revisited* [sound recording] (New York: Columbia Records, 1965).
7. Whitfield, *Critical American*, 70.
8. Bob Dylan, *The Times They Are A-Changin'* [sound recording] (New York: Columbia Records, 1964).
9. Bob Dylan, *Bringing It All Back Home* [sound recording] (New York: Columbia Records, 1965).
10. Bob Dylan, *Blonde on Blonde* [sound recording] (New York: Columbia Records, 1966).
11. "Dylan Tells Story of Christian Conversion," *Contemporary Christian Music*, February 1981, 22.
12. Mikal Gilmore, "Positively Dylan," *Rolling Stone*, July 17/31, 1986, 135. A few years after Dylan's interview, Christian theologians Stanley Hauerwas and William

Willimon offered a similar perspective in their book *Resident Aliens*: “The times are too challenging to be wasting time pressing one another into boxes called liberal or conservative. The choice is between truth and lies.” – Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 156, 160.

13. Kurt Loder, “Bob Dylan: The Rolling Stone Interview,” *Rolling Stone*, June 21, 1984, 17.
14. Mikal Gilmore, “Bob Dylan: The Rolling Stone Interview,” *Rolling Stone*, September 27, 2012, 49, 48-50.
15. Bob Dylan, *Slow Train Coming* [sound recording] (New York: Columbia Records, 1979).
16. Bob Dylan, *Saved!: The Gospel Speeches of Bob Dylan* (Madras, India: Hanuman Books, 1990), 43, 81, 109, 110.
17. Bob Dylan, *Lyrics, 1962-2001* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 434.
18. Bob Dylan, *Oh Mercy* [sound recording] (New York: Columbia Records, 1989).
19. Bob Dylan, *Under the Red Sky* [sound recording] (New York: Columbia Records, 1990).
20. Bob Dylan, *World Gone Wrong* [sound recording] (New York: Sony Music Entertainment, 1993).
21. *Wonder Boys: Music from the Motion Picture* [sound recording] (New York: Sony Music Entertainment, 2000).
22. Loder, “Bob Dylan,” 17; Gilmore, “Bob Dylan,” 51.
23. Scott M. Marshall with Marcia Ford, *Restless Pilgrim: The Spiritual Journey of Bob Dylan* (Lake Mary, Fla.: Relevant Books, 2002), 89-90.
24. In the late 1990s, Dylan was performing Christian songs like “Hallelujah, I’m Ready to Go,” “Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior,” “Somebody Touched Me,” “I Am the Man, Thomas,” and “Rock of Ages” in concert. See Marshall, *Restless Pilgrim*, for other specific examples.
25. Gilmore, “Bob Dylan,” 48.
26. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1951, 1975), 45-82.
27. *Ibid.*, 45.
28. C.I. Scofield, ed., *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1917), 1342. Scofield was an influential Bible commentator and conference speaker within the dispensational school of theology. He identifies these principles in his annotation on *kosmos*, in connection with Revelation 13. Scofield goes on to note, “This world-system is imposing and powerful with armies and fleets; is often outwardly religious, scientific, cultured, and elegant; but, seething with national and commercial rivalries and ambitions, is upheld in any real crisis only by armed force, and is dominated by Satanic principles.” The heirs of the Jesus Movement who taught Dylan-the-new-Christian were imbued with a popularized type of dispensationalism, including an emphasis on opposition between a fallen world and a righteous God. Scofield’s description of the world-system sums up Dylan’s own perspective and such thought is present in numerous Dylan songs from 1979 to 2012. Dispensationalism was essentially half of the American fundamentalist movement that arose in the early twentieth century, with orthodox Presbyterianism associated with Princeton Theological Seminary being the other half. Although dispensationalists were more skeptical of culture than the men associated with Princeton theology, and although the latter rejected the premillennial eschatology of the former, both groups were Calvinist in their basic doctrines. See: George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).
29. Gilmore, “Bob Dylan,” 51.
30. Abraham Kuyper, *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 171.
31. *Ibid.*, 179-82.
32. *Ibid.*, 181.
33. Richard J. Mouw, *Abraham Kuyper: A Short and Personal Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 68.
34. Bob Dylan, *Tempest* [sound recording] (New York: Sony Music Entertainment, 2012).
35. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 45.
36. *Ibid.*, 45-46.
37. *Ibid.*, 47, 12-13.
38. Tertullian, *Apologetic and Practical Treatises*, trans. C. Dodgson (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1842) (Nabu Public Domain Reprint), 120-30; Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 49, 51-55. Niebuhr also places Leo Tolstoy in this tradition – *Ibid.*, 56-64. This is an accurate assessment although Tolstoy did not have the premillennial, apocalyptic vision of Tertullian and Dylan.
39. Dylan, *Slow Train Coming*; Dylan, *Lyrics*, 420-21, 453-54, 456-57; Dylan, *Saved*; Dylan, *Shot of Love*; Dylan, *Infidels*; Bob Dylan, *Empire Burlesque* [sound recording] (New York: Columbia Records, 1985); Bob Dylan, *Down in the Groove* [sound recording] (New

- York: Columbia Records, 1988).
40. The word *ek* means “out of.” The word *kaleo* means “to call.”
 41. Jn. 17:6, 9, 14, 16.
 42. Mt. 6:10; Jn. 18:36.
 43. I Jn. 2:15; Rom. 12:2; I Cor. 7:31; Js. 1:27, 4:4.
 44. Lk. 4:5-8; Jn. 12:31, 14:30, 16:11, 17:15; II Cor. 4:3-4; Eph. 2:1-2; II Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:2, 7.
 45. Mt. 5-7; Lk. 6. For insightful commentary, see: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, rev. ed. (New York: Collier, 1963), 117-220.
 46. Dylan, *Saved!*, 70, 23-24.
 47. Paul Williams, *Dylan—What Happened?* (Glen Ellen, Calif.: Entwistle Books, 1980), 86-89.
 48. “Slow Train” and “When You Gonna Wake Up?” on Dylan, *Slow Train Coming*.
 49. Williams, *Dylan*, 89, 90.
 50. Dylan, *Saved!*, 35.
 51. Scott Cohen, “Don’t Ask Me Nothin’ About Nothin’ I Might Just Tell You the Truth: Bob Dylan Revisited,” *Spin*, December 1985, 80, 81.
 52. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 190-229. Unfortunately, Niebuhr does not do justice to this type in his book. Rather than focusing on John Calvin and his theological heirs, he chooses a relatively minor historical figure (F.D. Maurice) as the type’s primary exemplar. This short-changing of the type might seem odd since it appears to be Niebuhr’s own favorite, but his bias in favor of the (false) doctrine of universalism appears to have led him to the minor at the expense of the major. John Wesley, who also receives a brief nod in the chapter, would also have been a better choice than Maurice. For a sample of the culturally-transformative power of the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement tradition, see: Donald W. Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).
 53. James K.A. Smith, “Reforming Public Theology: Two Kingdoms, or Two Cities?” *Calvin Theological Journal* 47 (2012), 131. Augustine’s story of his conversion in his *Confessions* provides an interesting parallel to Dylan’s life. Referring to his search for truth and happiness, before becoming a Christian, Augustine writes, “In all the bitter disappointments which, by your mercy, thwarted our undertakings in this world, we tried to see the reason for our sufferings. But darkness overshadowed us and we turned away asking, ‘How long is this to be?’ Again and again we asked ourselves this question, but we did not relinquish our worldly aims, because we could not see the light of any truth that we might grasp in place of them.” On the verge of his own Christian conversion, Dylan’s song “New Pony” contains the refrain “How much, how much, how much longer?” It is sung by the female backup singers who act as a kind of Greek chorus, commenting on Dylan’s description of his decadent lifestyle. The parallel goes further with Augustine referring to his sexual lust and the role of Satan in his lost state, while the object of Dylan’s sexual lust is named Lucifer. – Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin, 1961), 126 (book VI, chapter 10), 129 (book VI, chapter 12); Bob Dylan, *Street Legal* [sound recording] (New York: Columbia Records, 1978).
 54. Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 210-13.
 55. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 51.
 56. Kuyper, *Abraham Kuyper*, 22, 23, 67, 193.
 57. *Ibid.*, 211, 220; Dylan, *Slow Train Coming*.
 58. Herman Dooyeweerd, *The Christian Idea of the State*, trans. John Kraay (Nutley, N.J.: Craig Press, 1968), 4, 9; Herman Dooyeweerd, *The Crisis in Humanist Political Theory: As Seen from a Calvinist Cosmology and Epistemology*, ed. D.F.M. Strauss and Harry Van Dyke (Grand Rapids: Paideia Press, 2010), 115.

Editor's note: This article is a revised version of a paper presented by Kevin Timmer at the Christian Engineering Education Conference held at Baylor University, Waco, Texas, in June 2009.

Putting the “And” Back Into Genesis 2:15



by Kevin J. Timmer

Abstract

As our consumeristic society bumps up against creational limits, technological and economic progress is often pitted against environmental stewardship. Those opposed to governmental regulation of pollution and resource use claim that these restrictions hinder the growth of the economy, while those in favor of additional control acknowledge that we will likely have to make sacrifices as a result. The adversarial relationship between humankind and the rest of the creation has a long history with many ramifications. This paper begins to explore how this twisted relationship has distorted the engineering design process by narrowing the definition of the

engineer's stewardship task. By revisiting the garden and our original mandate, we will broaden our understanding of our stewardship task, from one of “doing less harm”¹ to one of enabling creation to flourish. A richer understanding of our proper relationship to the rest of creation has the potential to spur creative solutions to meet the needs of our world while pointing to Christ's kingdom of shalom.

Introduction

In the last few decades, societies have become increasingly aware of the planetary limits of our cultural activities. These limits threaten the consumeristic lifestyle that many in the West have adopted and others in the world are striving to achieve. Concern for the environment is often seen as a threat to economic growth and therefore to progress. Automobile manufacturers bemoan CAFÉ (Corporate Average Fuel Economy) standards, which they predict will threaten their economic competitiveness. As the U.S. drags its feet on committing itself to climate change reform for fear it will hurt the economy, environmental groups fight to keep the thirsty petroleum industry out of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and the livelihood of people, like loggers, is pitted against the lives of other creatures, like the spotted owl. Through these examples and countless others, we see technological and economic growth seemingly at odds with environmental stewardship. Meanwhile, many have recognized our path as unsustainable and warn of future catastrophe. Lester Brown, president of

Dr. Kevin Timmer is a professor of engineering at Dordt College with particular interests in energy systems and the environment.

the Earth Policy Institute, writes “We are crossing natural thresholds that we cannot see and violating deadlines that we do not recognize. Nature is the time keeper, but we cannot see the clock.”² Richard Wright of Gordon College introduces his environmental science text with this warning: “However, if we fail to achieve sustainability by our deliberate actions, the natural world will impose it on us in highly undesirable ways”³ Still, others continue to proclaim salvation through increased technology, as demonstrated in this statement from Freeman Dyson: “Three huge revolutionary forces are being harnessed just in time for the new century: the sun, the genome, and the Internet. These three forces are strong enough to reverse some of the worst evils of our time. . . . [like] poverty. . . .”⁴ The realities of the tension between creation development and creation care suggest that we are living as if Genesis 2:15 read “. . . to till it or keep it” rather than by the original mandate, “. . . to till it and keep it” (RSV). This paper is an initial attempt at understanding the implications of the tension between technology and the environment for engineering and how embracing the comprehensive scope of our stewardship task might free us to design in ways that allow all of God’s creation to flourish. A brief background to the issue is followed by an exploration of the biblical foundation for a holistic call to stewardship. The paper concludes with three examples meant to illustrate comprehensive stewardship at work and gives a few ideas for how engineering faculty can respond to the call to be stewards.

Background

The tension between humans and the rest of creation, including the environment, is, of course, as old as the “thistle curse” of Genesis 3:18. The original harmonious relationship between humanity and the rest of creation became a struggle after Adam and Eve’s fall into sin and an all-out assault after the Renaissance and Enlightenment (see Chapters 5-9 of *Earthkeeping in the Nineties*⁵ for a brief history of this progression). Intoxicated with the prospect of controlling its own destiny through the power of human reason, western culture has largely abandoned God and his call to serve and has instead sought autonomy through technological power and economic accumulation. In this con-

text, progress has come to be defined as that which expands technology and grows the economy, with the result that the rest of creation becomes raw material for this end.

As faith in technology and the economy has grown, it has given rise to consumerism. Alan Durning argues in his book *How Much is Enough*⁶ that western societies have moved beyond materialism to consumerism. In contrast to materialism, which places its faith in the accumulation of wealth, consumerism is anchored in the act of selling, buying, and throwing. Consumption itself becomes the sought-after source of happiness. Quality takes a back seat to price, as people welcome planned obsolescence, which frees them to upgrade without guilt. Consumer-based economics, at its extreme, seeks to maximize profit at nearly any cost. Loss of ecosystems and the extinction of species are only concerns if there is an immediate impact on human wellbeing in terms of higher prices or the loss of a potentially useful genetic resource. This anthropocentric attitude has triggered a counter-progress, preservationist movement that puts the needs of the rest of the creation ahead of the needs of humans and, at its extreme, as expressed by some in the Deep Ecology movement for example, celebrates the death of humans as a measure of liberation for the rest of nature. These two ideologies serve as poles for the tension between technological development and environmental preservation.

In the last few years, many Christians, concerned about large scale destruction of the environment, have authored books⁷ drawing attention to God’s expressed love for the creation and his call to man to preserve and take care of it. However, some of these writings tend to apply the cultural mandate of Genesis 2:15 as two separate mandates—to develop and to preserve—that must somehow be balanced, rather than a single rich call to stewardship in all that we do. These books emphasize the importance of creation preservation with little or no mention of our call to unfold and develop the creation. For example, Scott Hoezee writes about the creation, “As image bearers, it is our holy vocation to notice it, love it, and preserve it.”⁸ Given the wide-scale destruction of species and ecosystems and the general ambivalence of the church toward creation care, a one-sided presentation may

be warranted. However, a one-sided presentation, while effectively calling attention to our God-given responsibility to care for the environment, also tends to propagate a distorted view of our stewardship task. This distorted view results in our attempt to balance human needs and development against

Intoxicated with the prospect of controlling its own destiny through the power of human reason, western culture has largely abandoned God and his call to serve and has instead sought autonomy through technological power and economic accumulation.

the needs of the rest of the creation. And even though the authors of *Earthkeeping in the Nineties* and *Responsible Technology*⁹ do give a more holistic description of our stewardship task, they tend to emphasize either the preservation of creation or the unfolding of creation to meet human needs, respectively, in their application proposals.

While framing the discussion of our stewardship task as either primarily a process of unfolding creation or primarily a task of preserving creation may serve a valuable role in particular contexts, such a frame can also limit our understanding of the richness of the cultural mandate and the potential design alternatives that may flow from it. When the cultural mandate is incorrectly understood as “development or preservation,” the responsible designer is asked to choose sides and is often frustrated by this dichotomy. Technological development is seen as being at odds with creation preservation. So, for example, the civil engineer would feel compelled to choose either to practice the profession of highway building or to preserve habitats important to the health of a particular ecosystem. In this context, exercising stewardship during engineering design is often practiced as a process of minimizing damage. While minimizing creational damage

by reduction of harmful emissions, fossil-fuel use, construction-site soil erosion, or the rate of species extinction is often the best that we can do in a sin-twisted world, these efforts fall short of our singular task—enabling the whole of creation to flourish to God’s glory and toward the restoration of shalom. A designer that appreciates the full scope of God’s call to stewardship may be able to see alternative solutions to problems that simultaneously serve mankind and the rest of the creation.

Identifying creationally sound alternative designs is only part of the challenge. The engineering design process is often driven by a consumeristic worldview. When alternative designs compete based on profit margins, the result is often “an attractive product that is affordable, meets regulations, performs well enough, and lasts long enough to meet market expectations.”¹⁰ In this setting, creation care becomes an unaffordable luxury but for a splash of “green paint,” as apportioned by a market analysis. The wholesale exploitation of the material world to feed the economy is assumed, and even as Christian engineers we are often content to embrace “do-less-harm”¹¹ as the full expression of our stewardship calling. We have allowed our stewardship task to be reshaped into the space provided for it by the consumeristic mission. In a world in which economies are bumping up against creational limits, consumerism eagerly accepts a “do-less-harm”¹² stewardship ethic, particularly when human well-being is a concern or when green technology positively impacts the bottom line.

The straight-jacketing of the design process by consumerism has troubled me for a long time, particularly in environmental concerns. My formal introduction to environmental conservation and ecology in high school resonated with an adolescence spent outdoors on the family acreage. For a variety of reasons, I chose to pursue a technical degree (engineering actually chose me, but that is another story) in college in lieu of ecology. However, as I earned an engineering degree, I also developed my outdoor interests and began to study native prairies as a hobby. For many years as I taught and practiced engineering, I saw firsthand the rift between environmental stewardship and technological development, knowing in my heart that such a rift was not what God had intended. During my

early years of teaching I felt that the engineering curriculum adequately addressed energy and materials stewardship but that there was little room or place to discuss ecology and the stewardship of the whole of creation. And as a Heating, Ventilating, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) engineer, I often consulted building owners and architects unwilling to consider energy conservation measures unless simple payback periods were less than two years, despite their hope that the building would last much longer than that. The day-to-day world of technique seemed far removed from the biblical call to creation care. During those years I felt paralyzed by the enormity of the problem and was compelled instead to live with the dualism by doing engineering during the week and exploring prairies on the weekends. However, my recent doctoral studies in using biomass as a renewable source of energy and materials allowed me to combine my interest in prairies and energy conservation and gave me renewed vigor to explore the biblical relationship between technological development and the environment.

Biblical Foundation

In the New Testament, Christ teaches that through him the law is fulfilled and that God's kingdom has come, although it is not yet fully revealed. He then calls each of us to be his disciples by seeking first his kingdom, a kingdom of shalom. Shalom is an Old Testament word that refers to the restfulness, contentment, and harmony of a life lived in perfect obedience to God's will. Shalom is a condition in which everyone and everything is in right relationship all the time.¹³ Both human and non-human creation is enabled to flourish by becoming everything God created it to be. This flourishing condition existed before Adam and Eve's fall into sin; its complete restoration through Christ was envisioned by Isaiah (Isaiah 11) and John (Revelation 21).

While we, as whole beings, seek God's kingdom, it can be helpful for us to think of our sanctification as a process of restoring shalom in our relationship with God, with others, and with the rest of creation. The need to seek a restored relationship with God and with others is often clear to Christians, whose brokenness in personal relation-

ships awakens our sense of failure to live obediently before God and of our need for forgiveness and restoration through Christ. God's call to us to seek a restored relationship with the rest of creation has not always been as obvious to many Christians but it is no less real.

God's love for His creation is proclaimed throughout scripture, as Cal DeWitt¹⁴ and others¹⁵ have made clear. The apostle Paul proclaims Christ's mission to "reconcile to himself all things" (Colossians 1:20). Ezekiel gives us a wonderful vision of a restored relationship between humanity and the rest of creation (Ezekiel 36:6-12), and we read in Romans 8:18-22 that the creation groans as in child-birth for this restoration. Indeed, even our response to Christ's call to love our neighbor, current and future, is woefully inadequate if we are polluting our neighbor's drinking water or destroying the earth's fruitfulness.

Creation knew this perfect relationship before the fall. In Genesis 1:28, we read that mankind was not given the earth but was given dominion or authority over the rest of creation. Our relationship to the rest of creation in light of this authority is further clarified in Genesis 2:15, where we read, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it" (RSV). Cal DeWitt has explored the details of this mandate; the following discussion is based on his efforts. The Hebrew word for "till" is *'abad*, which can also be translated as "to work," "to dress," or "to serve." "Keep" is the Hebrew word *shamar*, which is also used in the Aaronic blessing, "The Lord bless you and *keep* you" (Numbers 6:24, RSV). That is, "the Lord bless you and sustain you, prosper you, or cause you to flourish." In this context DeWitt understands our creational-keeping task as a dynamic, human-involved prospering rather than a preserving or set-aside type of keeping.¹⁶ Therefore, our mandate "to till and to keep" is best understood as two different ways of stating the same thing, "to serve and to prosper the garden," rather than two separate tasks. In the initial chapters of Genesis, God not only is calling us to be stewards or managers of his creation but also is asking us to bear his image by ruling it as loving servants. God expects us to serve creation by enabling it to flourish in every conceivable way. Flourishing here certainly means allowing natural

creation to thrive in all its diversity, but it also includes responsible unfolding or development of the creation through all our cultural activities, including technology. Through obedient development we make it possible for creation to bring praise to God in ways it couldn't without human involvement. In keeping with God's plan of shalom, obedient design unfolds creation so that the whole of creation, including humanity, flourishes. In other words, we must enable all of creation to flourish through time as a growing chorus of praise with ever increasing diversity. When we steward or serve creation in this way, we cultivate shalom.

The authors of *Responsible Technology* describe our technological task "as a form of service to our fellow human beings and to the natural creation. This means that we are to develop technology in such a way that the blessings, riches, and potentials God has put in creation are allowed to flower. We are called to do technology in such a way that the creativity and joy for which God created men and women can exist in abundance, the riches of the physical world can be uncovered and utilized, and the plant and animal worlds can be perceived and used for what they are and for what God intends them to be."¹⁷ I would modify this statement slightly to include the physical world as part of what we are called to help flourish and not just see it as something to be uncovered and utilized. Consider the following as an example of the comprehensive way in which we can serve the rest of the creation.

As members of particular ecosystems, we might say that oak trees biologically flourish and have flourished for a long time. They grow, reproduce, collect solar energy, and, by providing food and shelter for a host of plants and animals, give back to their ecosystems. But oaks are also enabled to flourish in ways they could not on their own when humans selectively harvest some oaks and skillfully manufacture them into beautifully grained tables and desks. Through this unfolding, the oak's voice in the chorus of praise has been enhanced. Mankind serves oak trees in this way. We enable them to become what God had intended. When we do this well, I believe we can go beyond Cal DeWitt's stewardship goal of "enjoying creation's fruit without destroying its fruitfulness"¹⁸ to actually increase creation's fruitfulness. God intends

mankind to unfold and develop creation, to get their hands dirty, to add voices to the choir, but not at the expense of other voices. Oaks must also be allowed to continue to flourish in their natural calling as integral members of ecosystems by reproducing and by producing food and shelter for other creatures. Obedient stewardship not only enables the entirety of creation to flower in every conceivable way but also builds just, harmonious, and delightful relationships among God, mankind, and the rest of creation.

Obedient stewardship not only enables the entirety of creation to flower in every conceivable way but also builds just, harmonious, and delightful relationships among God, mankind, and the rest of creation.

Of course, this comprehensive potential has been seriously crippled by Satan's work and sin's distortion since Adam and Eve's fall. In the absence of God's grace, mankind's misdirected heart flees from obedient, loving, selfless service and instead embraces self-centered autonomy from God at the expense of everything else. However, Christ's victory over Satan frees us to serve as God intended. Christ's work restores the possibility of a right relationship with God and with each other and the rest of the creation. By the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, we are prodded and enabled to seek Christ's kingdom first and to find it. His kingdom is a kingdom of right relationships, a kingdom of shalom.

Although the victory is won, believers are called to wage war against the powers of evil by proclaiming the good news until Christ returns. Engineers witness not only by verbally proclaiming the gospel when appropriate but also by revealing the way things are supposed to be in all areas of life, including technological development. We are called to

bring healing in and through our lives, including our design work, “erecting signposts of the kingdom,” as Goudzwaard says.¹⁹

Designers, tasked with the original mandate to enable creation to flourish and now the additional mission of bringing healing to a broken world, need to be properly equipped. To be an effective manager and agent of reconciliation, an engineer requires knowledge of, or at least sensitivity to, all of the diverse aspects of the creation. The engineering student’s ability to serve effectively is enhanced by exposure to ecology, sociology, and environmental studies, etc. Engineers must know enough to recognize brokenness and be able to prescribe healing. The engineer must consider the whole in order to chart a path toward true progress, universal flourishing, and shalom. As this type of holistic design generally requires breadth of expertise, it is facilitated by the involvement of a community of diverse individuals, all contributing insight from their unique disciplines or perspectives.

Examples

While we often see tension between concern for the environment and technological development, we can also point to examples of tilling and keeping that could potentially bring some measure of shalom and flourishing. The first example comes from my own experience and served as the impetus for writing this paper. While working on my doctorate degree in biorenewable resources, I was introduced to the idea of growing large stands of switchgrass as a source of renewable energy and chemicals. This idea piqued my interest, but rather than envisioning just a monoculture of switchgrass, I envisioned the reestablishment of whole prairie ecosystems. A diverse prairie ecosystem of grasses and forbs carries the potential to provide a sustainable source of cellulose with limited need for fertilizer, build the soil, and provide habitat for numerous animals, insects, and microbes, simultaneously. In this way, mankind and the rest of creation can flourish in harmony. A number of other intriguing ideas are proposed by William McDonough and Michael Braungart, in their book *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*.²⁰ Many of their suggestions comport well with the stewardship ideal laid out in this paper. They argue for redirecting our

technological goals away from economic efficiency and toward human and ecological health. Their catch-phrase, “waste equals food,” captures their concept of complete cycling of both manmade and naturally occurring materials. They maintain that materials and products should be designed to become biological food or technological “food” easily, after their useful life. They describe the retooling of an upholstery manufacturer in which all the toxic dyes and chemicals were removed from the product and process. The result was furniture fabrics that no longer off-gassed toxins and fabric trimmings that were no longer considered hazardous waste but rather food for compost. Redesigning holistically resulted in a safe and competitively priced product for the user, a safe process for the workers, and a net benefit for the environment.

This last example illustrates how seeking flourishing and shalom may bring to light non-technical solutions to problems. Many North Americans take pride in keeping a well-manicured lawn around their home. While restricting the height of urban grass may help control rodents and wild fires, current practice can tread heavily on creation. Traditionally an assortment of herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers, and water are generously applied to a cool season grass in order to encourage its growth, and a gasoline powered mower is used to whack it off when it does. Gasoline lawn mowers have some of the highest pollution rates of all internal combustion engines. The herbicides eliminate plant diversity; the pesticides reduce insect and worm numbers even if they are beneficial; watering consumes a valuable resource; and we are told that when it rains, a portion of the applied chemicals make their way into the local river, disrupting that ecosystem and those downstream. This situation cries out for a steward. However, when stewardship is explored within the confines of economic efficiency and a technological mindset, the potential for full flourishing is restricted. The least radical solution to the identified problem might be to improve the fuel efficiency and emissions controls of the gasoline mower. Alternatively, an engineer could really go “green” and design a battery powered mower, packaged with a photovoltaic (solar), recharging system. While each of these designs represents improvements over the status quo, they

are both “do-less-harm”²¹ options, with limited potential to increase flourishing. They each reduce the amount of damage done but fail to consider the problem at its root. If instead we approach the problem holistically, seeking to serve the entire creation, we may arrive at a radically different solution: plant buffalo grass.

Buffalo grass is a perennial, warm season, native prairie plant that grows slowly to a maximum height of four to six inches. It is drought resistant; forms a dense sod, which controls weeds and builds the soil; and does not require fertilizer or pesticides. Mowing could be completely avoided or reduced to a monthly trimming with a manual unit if one desired it. Elimination of the chemicals decreases the cost to care for the lawn but is also healthier for the neighborhood. The number and diversity of insects would likely increase, attracting birds and other wildlife to the property. In this case a non-technological solution has allowed us to move beyond just doing less harm toward managing for shalom.

... when stewardship is explored within the confines of economic efficiency and a technological mindset, the potential for full flourishing is restricted.

These examples illustrate the point that efforts to redirect technology toward flourishing and shalom are most fruitful when they begin at the root. Unfortunately, by the time a project reaches the designer’s desk, the scope of the problem and also what constitutes a solution have often already been determined. So while the engineer may set her sights on the fullness of kingdom design, the narrow drive toward minimizing first costs often sets the technological path and denies holistic thinking the freedom to bear much fruit. Even as engineers move into management positions, they are often constrained by the mission of the corporation. Indeed, it would be difficult for a company that produces and sells lawn mowers to accept buffalo

grass as a feasible solution. Clearly, given humanity’s finite and fallen nature, it is unrealistic for us to expect to witness complete shalom before Christ’s return. But this should not keep us from striving to bring the kingdom to light in all that we do.

The call to serve the creation is given to everyone, not just engineers. It is part of our larger call to bear witness to Christ’s kingdom of shalom in all that we do and requires us to respond individually and collectively within each of our spheres of influence. As engineering faculty, we should nurture a longing in our students for shalom and biblical stewardship, but we should also temper that idealism with the realities of practicing engineering in a broken world. We should design curriculum with sufficient breadth to equip our students to recognize all forms of flourishing. As faculty, we might also consider teaching an energy stewardship course to the broader student body. Perhaps as church members, we might find opportunities to educate fellow Christians about the idolatry of consumerism and its threat to shalom.

As members of residential communities, we can persuade local governments to encourage stewardly behavior through codes and ordinances. For example, I live in a small but growing community concerned about energy conservation. This community could benefit from instruction about energy savings through housing developments designed with southern exposures. These types of homes are passively heated by the sun in the winter and kept cool in the summer, a process that potentially reduces energy use by half, compared to an identical home facing west. At home, too, we should seek whole-creation stewardship and be open to alternatives that may not necessarily be the most cost effective. I believe through these and countless other ways, we can shine light on a path of obedience, by God’s grace.

Conclusion

In our broken world, technological development is often pitted against creation care, but antagonism between these ends is not the way God intended life to be. God created mankind to reflect him through their loving service to each other and the rest of the creation. This stewardship requires engineers to till and keep creation in such a way that all things can

flourish in accordance with God's will and to his glory. This is a difficult goal to achieve, but if we become content with "do-less-harm"²² stewardship, we may miss opportunities to be salt and light.

Author's Note: While buffalo grass asks very little of its community, it does have one significant demand: sunshine and lots of it. To do well, buffalo grass requires a minimum of six to eight hours of full sun per day, limiting its use to relatively open areas. As an alternative to buffalo grass, I am currently experimenting with a lawn mix called No Mow grass. No Mow grass boasts many of the same benefits of buffalo grass but is also shade tolerant. Because of its slow-growing nature, buffalo grass, or No Mow grass, requires patience of the would-be cultivator. Full establishment of either variety may require up to two or three growing seasons.

Endnotes

1. Michael Braungart and William McDonough, *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things* (New York: North Point Press, 2002), Ch. 2.
2. Lester R. Brown, *Plan B 3.0: Mobilizing to Save Civilization* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 4.
3. Richard T. Wright, *Environmental Science*, 10th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 10.
4. Morton Winston and Ralph Edelbach, *Society, Ethics, and Technology*, 3rd ed. (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2006), 136.
5. Loren Wilkinson, ed., *Earthkeeping in the Nineties: Stewardship of Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991).
6. Alan Durning, *How Much is Enough? The Consumer Society and the Future of the Earth* (New York: Worldwatch Institute and W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1992), Ch. 7.
7. See for example: Calvin B. DeWitt, *Earth-Wise: A Biblical Response to Environmental Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: CRC Publications, 1994); Loren Wilkinson, ed., *Earthkeeping in the Nineties: Stewardship of Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991); Calvin B. DeWitt, ed., *The Environment & the Christian: What Can We Learn from the New Testament?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991); Scott Hoezee, *Remember Creation: God's World of Wonder and Delight* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); David S. Koetje, ed., *Living the Good Life on God's Good Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2006); and Stephen V. Monsma, ed., *Responsible Technology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986).
8. Scott Hoezee, *Remember Creation: God's World of Wonder and Delight* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 27.
9. See Loren Wilkinson, ed., *Earthkeeping in the Nineties: Stewardship of Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), and Stephen V. Monsma, ed., *Responsible Technology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986).
10. Braungart and McDonough, 37.
11. *Ibid.*, Ch. 2.
12. *Ibid.*
13. See Sydney Hielema, *Deepening the Colors* (Sioux Center, IA: Dordt College Press, 2006), Ch. 1.
14. See Calvin B. De Witt, *Earth-Wise: A Biblical Response to Environmental Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: CRC Publications, 1994) and *The Environment and the Christian: What Can We Learn from the New Testament?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991).
15. See for example: Scott Hoezee, *Remember Creation: God's World of Wonder and Delight* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1998) and David Koetje, ed., *Living the Good Life on God's Good Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Faith Alive Resources, 2006).
16. De Witt, *Earth-Wise*, Ch. 3.
17. Monsma, ed., *Responsible Technology*, 68.
18. DeWitt, *Earth-Wise*, Ch. 3.
19. Bob Goudzwaard, *Aid for the Overdeveloped West* (Toronto: Wedge, 1975).
20. Michael Braungart and William McDonough, *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things* (New York: North Point Press, 2002).
21. *Ibid.*, Ch. 2
22. *Ibid.*

Book Reviews

Hall, Mark David. *Roger Sherman and the Creation of the American Republic*. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2013. 224 pages. ISBN 978-0199929849. Reviewed by Scott Culpepper, Associate Professor of History, Dordt College.

In the last forty years, the quest to define the faith of the American founding fathers has unleashed a veritable cottage industry within the worlds of both academic and popular publishing. Scholars from every end of the philosophical and ideological spectrum have tried to navigate the complex and often contradictory evidence with nuanced academic studies. Popular political polemicists, both Christian and secular, have provided some light, but more often they have muddied the waters with wildly partisan interpretations that skew the evidence to suit their political or social agendas. As Mark David Hall correctly observes at the beginning of *Roger Sherman and the Creation of the American Republic*, “Such concerns might be only of academic interest except that the views of the American founders carry significant weight in contemporary political and legal discourse” (6). Appealing to the founders to provide guidance in contemporary matters or even guidance in interpreting the Constitution is complicated by the reality that the founders did not speak with one voice. They were cosmopolitan men who were shaped by diverse influences and held to a number of contrasting views.

Mark David Hall, Herbert Hoover Distinguished Professor of Politics at George Fox University, has written *Roger Sherman and the Creation of the American Republic* with two primary goals in mind. First, Hall wishes to educate Americans about the life and contributions of a founding father whose importance has been overlooked. Sherman (1721-1793), who served in a number of judicial and legislative offices at the state and local levels, was elected a member of the First Continental Congress in 1774, served on the committee that drafted the Declaration of Independence in 1776, and was also a member of the committees that drafted the Articles of Confederation (1777) as well as the United States Constitution (1787). Hall informs the reader, “Roger Sherman was the only founder to help draft and sign the Declaration and Resolves (1774), the Articles of Association (1774), the Declaration of Independence (1776), the Articles of Confederation (1777, 1778), and the Constitution (1787)” (1). In addition, Sherman served as both a representative and senator in the fledgling United States Congress. His importance to the American founding is easily demonstrated, and the need for a comprehensive study of his contributions is easily justified.

In addition to informing his readers about the service of a forgotten founder, Hall seeks to reveal the influence, on many American founders, of an overlooked theological tradition. Students of the founding era have often pointed to the influence of enlightenment political theories, classical republicanism, natural law theory, and Scottish Common Sense philosophy on the founders and the formative institutions they produced. Mark David Hall joins many of his predecessors in arguing for a strong Christian influence in the American founding as well. However, he goes beyond them in arguing for the specific importance of one Christian theological tradition: the Reformed tradition. Founders like Roger Sherman, a dedicated Congregationalist, were heavily influenced by the tradition of resistance to arbitrary governmental authority that was nurtured in Europe during the late sixteenth century by Reformed theologians like Theodore Beza (1519-1605) and Philippe du Plessis Mornay (1549-1623). Hall argues that this Reformed theological influence on Roger Sherman, mediated through New England Puritanism and Congregationalism, was also present in the lives of many other founders. Roger Sherman’s biography and contributions are utilized by Hall as a single case study representing what he argues is a pervasive influence of Reformed theology on the political views of a significant body of founders.

Hall accomplishes these two goals very well. He begins his book with chapters introducing his thesis and describing the legacy of Reformed political theory before Sherman’s day. The chapters that follow discuss Sherman’s early political career in Connecticut, his contributions to the early documents declaring American separation from Great Britain, his participation in the Constitutional Convention, and his service to the early republic. Hall provides a concluding chapter entitled “Philosophy May Mislead You. Ask Experience,” in which he reiterates his central themes and supporting evidence.

Roger Sherman and the Creation of the American Republic is an excellent read that is worth the time invested. Hall is a gifted writer and careful researcher who frames his evidence well. His insistence that scholars should take the Reformed tradition seriously in their analysis of influences on the founders is supported by ample evidence of the existence of Reformed theology as a driving motivator for Sherman. His description of Roger Sherman’s political

activities is fascinating for anyone who is interested in political history. The reader is often impressed with the awareness that our government was born in the midst of conflict and compromise. Hall provides a glimpse of the moments when the cement of the American experiment was still wet and the impressions with which we are so familiar were far from set in stone. His detailed and honest presentation of Sherman's role in making those impressions gives the reader a strong sense of being present at the creation.

Hall's presentation of Roger Sherman's views on church and state is a good example of his willingness to give an honest appraisal of Sherman even when Sherman is not on the winning side of a debate. In fact, Hall works meticulously to demonstrate that there were important perspectives that mattered even if they did not ultimately triumph. In several ways, Sherman, like Samuel Adams and Patrick Henry, was more comfortable with religious influence in governmental matters than were other founders. Sherman was somewhat uncomfortable with the idea of not having a religious test for federal office. In addressing the issue of why the Constitution bears so little direct theological language, Hall asserts, "It is true that the Constitution says little about religion and morality, but this is because most founders believed that *to the extent to which* [emphasis Hall's] governments should promote these perceived goods, that it should be done at the state and local level" (111). Hall's recounting of the creative synergy of debate between Sherman and James Madison demonstrates that even when Sherman did not win, his opposition often helped sharpen and refine Madison's position.

One of the strengths of Hall's work is also a weakness for his overarching argument regarding the prevalent influence of Reformed theology among the founders. Hall's study is especially helpful because it is a detailed study of the life of a particular founder rather than a series of short vignettes. There have been a number of these works, such as David L. Holmes' *Faiths of the Founding Fathers* (Oxford 2006) and Stephen Waldman's *Founding Faith* (Random House 2011), that attempt to treat the religious views of the founders by offering a number of short sketches. These works provide a more comprehensive overview, but they also sometimes lack detailed nuance and can still be narrowly selective in the founders they choose to cover. Individual studies like Hall's study of Roger Sherman enable readers to appreciate the formative influences on one founding figure with the appropriate sense of nuance and contradiction that often attends issues of intellectual indebtedness. Unfortunately, what Hall achieves in terms of individual debt detracts from his goal of demonstrating the prevalence of Reformed theology. Since he focuses on one case study, Hall merely names other founders who shared Sherman's Reformed perspective, without being able to defend his categorization of them as strongly Reformed in any detail. The reader is simply left to trust that Hall is correct in his assessment. Such trust is difficult in a field

littered with contrasting interpretations of even the most transparent founding figures.

Another interpretive issue that surfaces is Hall's sometimes dismissive assessment of John Locke's influence and Hall's argument for the use of vague language to identify the deity by even traditional and orthodox Christians in the eighteenth century. In a subsection of chapter two titled "What about John Locke?" Hall provides a necessary corrective of the assumption that the entirety of eighteenth-century thought about political dissent and contractual government begins with Locke. His argument that political resistance theory has an older and more religious vintage than Locke's writing has great evidential support. He goes on to argue that even if one did posit a pervasive Lockean influence, that influence can only be separated from the Reformed tradition of political resistance in what he calls "secular" readings of Locke (21-22). Such an assertion fails to take into account the degree to which Locke's political thought was grounded on a view of human nature that was diametrically opposed to the Reformed theology of original sin with which he was raised. Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) delineated a conviction that human beings are essentially born as a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate on which anything can be written. Whereas Reformed thinkers argued for the importance of controls on government because human sinfulness must be restrained and righteousness promoted, Locke viewed the role of government as providing protection and opportunity for persons who could become good and responsible citizens through experience and education. Even with works such as Locke's *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695), it is clear that a reading of Locke that considers religious views must acknowledge that his political views were grounded in a more Arminian and rationalistic outlook than in a surviving echo of Reformed resistance theory.

While Hall provides good examples of cases in which many religious founders used vague language to describe God (58), the reader is still left with the essential question of why the name of Jesus Christ is not mentioned in the founding documents. A number of good reasons can be and have been given for this dynamic, including the wish to maintain a broad consensus between religious and enlightenment thinkers. Hall's point is that men like Sherman would have seen the "Creator" referenced in the Declaration of Independence as synonymous with the Christian God and therefore have seen no ambiguity in the Declaration's religious content. While Hall is probably correct in his assessment of Sherman's acceptance of the religious nature of the Declaration, the lack of more explicit references to Christ or a specifically Christian creator is a helpful reminder that our quest to recover neglected influences on the American founding should not result in the diminishing of those other intellectual and spiritual traditions that were present.

Mark David Hall provides an excellent biography of an important founding father in *Roger Sherman and the*

Creation of the American Republic. He also constructs an interesting and convincing defense of the important influence of the Reformed theological tradition in the

American founding. In these pluralistic times, Hall's work is a compelling reminder that our faith can still have a significant transformative influence in the public square.

Richard J. Mouw, *The Challenges of Cultural Discipleship: Essays in the Line of Abraham Kuyper*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012. ISBN 9780802866981. Reviewed by Neal DeRoo, Professor of Philosophy, Dordt College.

As a long-time advocate of Kuyperian thought and Reformed principles, Richard Mouw needs no introduction to the readers of *Pro Rege*. *The Challenges of Cultural Discipleship*, a collection of essays that have previously appeared in various journals and edited collections between 1989 and 2010, deals with a variety of topics ranging from the finer points of the doctrines of regeneration and covenant (as applied to the question of infant baptism) to the nature of the church, the school, government, and other elements of civil society. Using explications of the thought of historical Reformed figures (including Dooyeweerd, Schilder and Kuyper) to engage with contemporary social, theological, and political issues, Mouw tries to articulate both the spirit of what it is to be Reformed and how that spirit might be able to interact with the spirits of our age. Those wanting to understand better what it means to be neo-Calvinist in today's social and cultural context should look no further.

This is a book on "public theology," not a book on engaging Christianly with popular culture. That is, the book's approach to the topic of cultural discipleship is philosophical and theological, and its interests are more socio-political than economic or entertainment-related: it deals with the theological and/or philosophical background of institutional relationships. Issues discussed are theoretical (sphere sovereignty, modal diversity, natural law, and creational ordinances) and most often suggest how the church ought to relate to something, be it its own people (for example, in the chapter on infant baptism or the one on "True Christians and the True Church") or other social institutions (e.g., day-schools, seminaries, "theological" schools, the academy). What makes this an issue of cultural discipleship is the book's dogged determination to clarify what Reformed theological and philosophical principles mean for public engagement. Because our cultural life is "animated by a spirit" (223) that is unflinchingly religious, we must use all the resources at our disposal to analyze the spirit that drives our lives—not just individually but also communally, culturally. If we do not do this, Mouw warns, we may "simply [find our] place in the larger cultural milieu—or ... [our] many places, if you wish" with no clear understanding of whether or how our place reflects God's will (231). Without trying to understand the spirit that lies at the root of our community, we risk becoming a community that is driven by a spirit that is not the one we explicitly acknowledge and may, in fact, be fundamentally at odds with that spirit. Against this outcome, Mouw tries

to clarify a distinctly Reformed approach to the topics at hand and so maintain a Reformed Christian spirit as an operative force in our cultural world.

Indeed, it is Mouw's ability to think "in the line of" Kuyper's thought—without remaining dogmatically tied to it—that is the most important element of this book. It clearly shows that Kuyperian thought is a living, rich tradition that has much to offer our contemporary world by giving us tools with which to make sense of our ever-changing world. One of the biggest merits of the book is Mouw's ability to explain how the theological and philosophical ideas of the neo-Calvinist movement pertain to particular historical and cultural settings. This explanation moves in both directions, as he examines not only how certain philosophical themes (e.g., sphere sovereignty) can help us navigate contemporary issues (say, the question of an educational voucher system), but also how certain doctrines and tenets emerge as a response to particular problems in a particular historical community and may, therefore, not apply equally well to us today (say, the notion of cultural "pillarization" in the sixth chapter). Indeed, Mouw's extensive knowledge of the history not just of Reformed thought but of Reformed communities is helpful in reminding us of the complex interweaving of theological disputes, strong personalities, and immigrant concerns that led to the vast array of different Reformed communities that exist today. (After getting married, I was somewhat surprised that my wife, who is not of Dutch or Reformed background, would keep getting these different communities confused. Was the difference between the Dutch Reformed, the Netherlands Reformed, the Free Reformed, the Christian Reformed, the Reformed, and the Canadian Reformed not obvious?).

One small addition to the book that proves to be very beneficial in this regard is the Appendix, which provides a quick reference point for the different Dutch and Dutch American church groups. I found myself quickly consulting that Appendix several times while reading the book—and I grew up in a Reformed Dutch immigrant community! I can only imagine how welcome it would be for those not raised from birth in the web of these disputes and divisions.

By showing the "clear pattern of interaction between philosophical ideas and cultural context" (230) at the heart of the intra-Reformed disputes, Mouw helps us better understand each other in the Reformed tradition (the chapters on Schilder, on the "Dutch Calvinist 'splits'" and on "Dutch Calvinist philosophical influences in North

America” were especially helpful for me in this regard). In recovering the meaning of the basics of being Reformed, he is then able to trace out, from that basis, a Reformed approach to cultural issues. This sometimes leads to surprising conclusions, such as the distinctly Reformed *rapprochement* with Anabaptist thought that he offers, in critique of many in the Reformed tradition (including his earlier self; see 111).

The book is not perfect. Organizationally, the connection between the essays is not always clear, and the overall collection is not neatly organized or thematically unified (beyond the general relation to “public theology” broadly defined). The lack of a meaningful introduction to the volume (the one that exists is a little over two pages in length, and is more of a forward or preface than a real introduction) is emblematic of this difficulty. Further,

several important passages from Kuyper, Schilder, and others are directly quoted in different chapters and, hence, get repeated multiple times over the course of the book. While not in itself problematic, this repetition does contribute to the feeling that the book is a collection of disparately published papers (which it is), rather than one coherent volume on its own.

Still, it is a testament to Richard Mouw that such a collection of essays can so poignantly drive home the importance of thinking “in the line of” Kuyper for us today. All those who fancy themselves as thinking, working, and living in that same “line” will find out more about themselves and their community by attending to the articles contained in this book. Hopefully, this will help us stay true to the Spirit we love while we engage meaningfully with our culture.

Bratt, James D., and Ronald A. Wells. *The Best of “The Reformed Journal.”* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012. 321 pages. ISBN: 978-0-8028-6702-5. Reviewed by David Schelhaas, emeritus professor of English, Dordt College.

What surprises the reader who picks up this collection is the sheer brilliance of the writing. Good writing, first of all, requires good thinking, and most of the essays in this volume are models of clear thought presented in elegant prose—prose that is not stylistically flashy or gaudy with metaphor and imagery but measured and balanced. Spanning forty years, from 1951 to 1990, and covering most of the social and theological concerns of Christian Reformed people living in that time period, the essays in this collection remind us that during this time, Calvin College had a cluster of brilliant scholar-writers who were eager to give to Christian Reformed laity a Christian perspective on the important issues of the day. The list of contributors reads like a Who’s Who of CRC intellectuals: Boer, Daane, Smedes, Stob, Zylstra, Wolterstorff, DeKoster, Mouw, Timmerman, Plantinga, and many more. Not many women wrote in the *Journal*, especially in the fifties and sixties—theology and philosophy departments, and college faculties in general, being largely male conclaves.

What might surprise the younger reader of this review is that *The Reformed Journal* was read by the laity of the church. My parents and uncles and aunts—none of them college educated—had copies of *The Banner*, *Torch and Trumpet*, and *The Reformed Journal* lying on their coffee tables, and they read them, for they took seriously the concept of a “world and life view.” I don’t think this was especially unusual in the rural homes of CRC-dom in the fifties and sixties.

The pledge that the *Journal* editors made in the first issue states that “as servants of Christ and of his church, we shall endeavor in all our writing to serve the church and her communion.” You will not find many footnotes in the articles of the *Journal*, probably because of this pledge to serve the church community. The articles are

never long, and the writers use a scholarly prose intended for non-scholars—prose that is neither condescending nor pretentious yet accessible to the reader of good will. None of the essays are over four pages long—though some have been abridged to attain this brevity.

The ninety articles of this collection are organized into three chronological sections: 1951-1962, 1963-1977, 1978-1990. Within each of these “time capsules,” the essays are arranged in thematic units that are similar though not identical as we move from one time period to the next, units such as “Education,” “Religion and Society,” “On Evangelicalism,” “Politics,” “Education and the Arts,” “Church and Theology,” and “On Gender.” The essays cover many subjects, and, not surprisingly, some of the same subjects come up in every time period—“the arts,” for example, and “politics” and “education.” Some are more decade-specific: race in the sixties and gender in the eighties. Interestingly, since the *Journal* stopped publication in 1990, there is not an article—at least in this collection—about homosexuality.

Perhaps the most striking thing to me about the early articles is how relevant they are to issues of our time. Here’s Harry Boer in his essay “The Cathedral,” which uses the cathedral as both a literal manifestation and a metaphor for human appreciation for history:

It [the cathedral] says that God is the Lord of History. Therefore it cuts the never-aging rock out of the eternal hills and fashions it into an enduring structure. [. . .] In such a cathedral one never stands alone. One stands in the consciousness of communion with and indebtedness to the past, and of a stewardship to discharge in the present and transmit to the future. It is this sense of his-

tory, the sense that builds cathedrals of stone or stately mansions of the soul, that we have lost in the Christian Reformed Communion.

Here's Henry Stob in "Fundamentalism and Political Rightism," skewering free-will Arminian theology:

It means that there are in the world a multitude of personal centers into which God cannot enter until man "sovereignly" opens the door to Him. God can knock at the door, but it will be opened to him only when the individual autonomously decides it shall be opened. Man is "free." The human soul is "inviolable." No one may enter it—not even God—except by permission. The human soul is basically impervious to grace; it is "independent" of God. It is impregnable in its unqualified liberty and individuality. Man in this view, just as in modernity and Communism, is basically autonomous.

Or observe how Lester DeKoster demonstrates how John Calvin's policies in Geneva as well as his writings "have stood, in the large, for the positive intervention of the state in the social and economic life of the people for the general welfare" and that this (at least up until 1958) "has been both the intent and result of much legislation devised, sponsored and in large measure enacted by the Democrats" (of the United States Congress).

Reading these essays is not simply a journey down nostalgia lane but an opportunity to re-engage key issues by encountering solid, biblically based wisdom from thirty, forty, and fifty years ago. Is your Christian college struggling with issues of academic freedom? Henry Stob's

essay on the subject might enlarge your understanding. Does evangelicalism still drive you crazy from time to time? Read Smedes and Wells and Henry. Do you have questions about our nation's continuing obsession with waging wars? Read Mouw and Smedes and Juhnke and read Van Der Weele's poignant "Twenty Years after the Bomb." Is the Palestinian Question still a question? Read DeVries and Wolterstorff. Do you wonder what the Dekker "Love of God" issue was all about during the early sixties? Read Harold Dekker himself and Peter De Jong in rebuttal.

There are lovely essays on baseball and golf, portraits of Buechner and Solzhenitsyn and Schaeffer, analyses of classic films, and advice on looking at art. You will encounter thoughtful reflections on grand-sounding topics of the kind we seldom see attempted today: John Timmerman on "The American Way of Life" and Roderick Jellema on "Who Is Twentieth-Century Man?"

The brevity of the essays makes the book an ideal airplane companion. For anyone who was Christian Reformed during the early decades covered in this collection, it would be a fetching gift. Taken all together, these essays are a moveable feast, the most enjoyable collection of non-fiction I have read in a long, long time.

Yet I also feel sort of melancholy as I finish the collection. These essays were written by writers and for readers who cared deeply about how the Reformed faith worked itself out in daily life. I sense that those days have passed. Many CRC folk today have completely bought into the agenda of Evangelicalism and the Religious Right, an agenda which is sometimes in direct conflict with a Reformed perspective and sometimes simply neglectful of significant issues that involve living faithfully before the face of our God.

Submissions

We invite letters to the editor and articles, of between 2,500 and 8,000 words, double-spaced, using MLA or *Chicago Style Manual* documentation. Subjects should be approached from a Reformed Christian perspective and should treat issues, related to education, in the areas of theology, history, literature, the arts, the sciences, the social sciences, technology, and media. Please include a cover letter with your e-mail address and a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Send your submission to the following:

Pro Rege

c/o Dr. Mary Dengler, Editor
Dordt College
498 4th Ave. NE
Sioux Center, Iowa 51250

Dordt College is a Christian liberal arts college in Sioux Center, Iowa, which believes that the Bible is the infallible and inspired Word of God and which bases the education it provides upon the Bible as it is explained in the Reformed creeds. Hence, the college confesses that our world from creation to consummation belongs to God, that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation, and that true comfort and reliable strength can be had only from his Holy Spirit.

Dordt College was established in 1955 and owes its continuing existence to a community of believers that is committed to supporting Christian schools from kindergarten through college. Believing in the *Creator* demands obedience to his principles in all of life: certainly in education but also in everything from art to zoology.

The Dordt College community believes in the *Word* of God. God's revelation in word and deed finds its root in Jesus Christ, who is both Savior from our sin and Lord over the heavens and the earth. The Bible reveals the way of salvation in Christ Jesus and requires faithful thanksgiving to him as the Lord of life, especially when exploring, coming to understand, and unfolding the diversity of creation.

Dordt College, in its many departments and programs, celebrates that diversity and challenges students not merely to confess Christ with their mouth but to serve him with their lives. Empowered by the strength of his *Spirit*, Dordt College stands ready to meet the challenge of providing and developing serviceable insight for the people of God.

Pro Rege



A quarterly faculty publication of
Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa