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Foreword

This article represents research done by Dr. William C. Robinson under an assignment of the Permanent Theological Committee of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.

In mimeographed form, the substance of the article was one of several papers presented to the members of the Permanent Theological Committee. In its present revised form, it is here offered for the first time. The resolutions at the end were one of four contrasting papers prepared at the request of Dr. Dean M. Kelley of the National Council of Churches for consideration at the National Study on Church and State in Columbus, Ohio, February 4, 1964.

God and the State: A Plea for Prayer in the Schools

The 1963 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States expressed concern lest factors in our contemporary life be encouraging the development of the concept of a total disconnection between the American State and the God of Biblical revelation. Among these factors are recent decisions of the Supreme Court declaring state laws requiring Bible reading and prayer in the schools to be unconstitutional and the actions of certain ecclesiastical bodies which support or even exceed the decisions of the civil court. Our Assembly asked for a comprehensive study of the relationship between the State and our Nation's religious heritage of faith in God.

The tragic events of November the twenty-second have lent poignancy to this concern of our General Assembly. In those earth shaking hours the hearts of the American people turned to God as a very present help in trouble. This common response was evidenced in spontaneous gatherings for prayer and was amply expressed by our representative spokesmen. Thus both these acts of worship and the words of our leaders

which follow attested the reality of our Nation's heritage of faith in God. President Kennedy expected to close his address in Dallas on that day with a citation of Psalm 127:1,

Except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.

His Thanksgiving Proclamation asked us to express our gratitude for the glorious gifts of God and humbly to pray that He continue to guide and sustain us. When informed of the shooting, General Eisenhower reported, "Each of us in his own way said a prayer for the President." Premier Pearson of Canada prayed, "May God comfort those close to him in this hour of sorrow and desolation." The new President, Mr. Lyndon B. Johnson, pledged, "I will do my best: that is all I can do. I ask for your help; and for God's." As the Congressmen of both parties left the new leader that night each man said to Mr. Johnson, "God bless you." Mr. Adlai Stevenson concluded, "At such a moment we can only turn to prayer. May God help us." According to Senator Goldwater, sorrowing America will rise "from prayerful knees." Governor Nelson Rockefeller concurred thus, "May God Almighty grant strength to Lyndon Johnson for the task that is his." To which sentiments Governor Carl Sanders adds, "It is time that we turn to God, for comfort, for strength, for guidance."

From these current affirmations we move to

I. A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE RELIGIOUS HERITAGE OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN STATE.

"The Western World as we know it, the civilization of Europe and America, has been created by Christianity".* The worship of the living God brought order, civilization, education, and unity to old England through such men as Augustine of Canterbury, Aidan of Lindisfarne, Theodore of Tarsus, Venerable Bede and Alfred the Great. The last named began his laws with the Ten Commandments and was constantly inspired by the name of God to wage his heroic battle that the light of learning, law and order which springs from Christianity might not be engulfed in the darkness of pagan

*G. Elson Ruff, *The Dilemma of Church and State*. 1954, p. 14.

ignorance and chaos. And nothing would do more to stem the wave of immorality and crime which is sweeping our current American civilization than the regular recitation of God's Ten Words in the Church, the home and the school. When this was an essential part of the Huguenot worship, these people became known for their honesty, their industry and their integrity. Zeal for God as well as for the human rights He has granted inspired Stephen Langton and the barons at Runnymede. It was the Bible recovered and rendered into English which united Scotland and England to make Great Britain.

God's providential dealings with sundry of the groups which came to America seeking liberty had prepared them to support the cause of American independence. With his deep realization of the seriousness of sin, Calvin had advocated lower magistrates as a check upon the chief magistrates. (Institutes, IV, xx, 31, 8.) John Knox and Christopher Goodman, *How Superior Powers Ought to be Obeyed*, went beyond Calvin in advocating the right of the people through their religious and civil leaders to limit the powers of the sovereign. This line of thought was developed among the Presbyterians of Scotland by George Buchanan, *De jure regni apud Scotus*, 1578, Andrew and James Melville, Alexander Henderson, Samuel Rutherford, *Lex Rex*, Stewart of Goodtrees, *Jus Populi*, James Renwick, *The Informatory Vindication*, Alexander Shields, *A Hind Let Loose*. It was for the right to worship God solely according to His Word that the Presbyterians of Scotland and the Puritans of England rose against the absolutism of Charles the First and restored the rights of free men.

Following the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day, there was a steady stream of Huguenot political thought demanding the limitation of a king when he becomes a tyrant.¹ According to Theodore Beza, Francis Hotman and Philip Mornay, God makes a pact, covenant or contract between king and people. There are two ideas here, namely, that all authority comes from God and that regimes are founded on the consent of the people. Likewise the German Palatines fled from the absolutism of Louis XIV of France who was devastating their land and persecuting their religion.

¹P. Fuhrmann, *Philip Mornay and Huguenot Challenge to Absolutism*, 1964.

The right to worship God according to His Word as one's conscience directed inspired the founding of the majority of the American colonies. The preaching of Jonathan Edwards, the Tennants, George Whitfield, and their associates in the Great Awakening gave the first sense of American unity to these colonies. William Tennant, Pastor of the Circular Church in Charleston, was both a hot gospeller and a fiery patriot. During the Revolution, he traveled all over South Carolina preaching the revival and advocating the cause of the Continental Congress.

In 1775 the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians in Abingdon, Virginia, in Baltimore, Maryland, in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in Mecklenburg, North Carolina, as well as the Puritans in St. John's Parish, Georgia, made deliverances looking toward independence. Moreover, Continental Congress was being opened with the reading of a Psalm and the offering of prayer to God by Pastor Duche, the Episcopal Rector.*

From such backgrounds, and in this context, the one divine in the Continental Congress, Dr. John Witherspoon of Princeton, advocated both the resolution and the Declaration of Independence. With moving eloquence, Witherspoon pledged his own reputation, property and life to the sacred cause of his country and so prevailed upon the members of the Continental Congress to commit themselves by signing the Declaration of Independence. The appeal in this document to the Creator Who gives rights to men and lays upon them the duty of maintaining the same and to Providence to vindicate their commitment to this end expressed the faith that God stands sovereign over all the rulers of men and demands justice and liberty for all.

The United States of America became a nation under the blessing of the God of Biblical revelation. As according to Blackstone, the standard expounder of English law, "Christianity is part of the Common Law of England," so this sentiment has been recognized by the highest courts of several of our American States.² Indeed, even Mr. Justice Clark in the recent *Abington School v. Shemp* admits that from the May-

*George Bancroft, *History of the United States*, VII, pp.194-6; 206-7; 370-3; 131-2.

²Cf. for citations, Schaff, P., *A History of the Christian Church*, IV, 393.

flower Compact to the Constitution "religion has been closely identified with our history and government." The Constitution of the United States is dated in the year of our Lord, 1787, while some forty-nine of the Constitutions of our fifty States acknowledge our indebtedness to God, e.g., "We, the people of the State of Maryland, grateful to Almighty God for our civil and religious liberty"

For the great body of American patriots, represented by John Witherspoon, "Government is derived from the consent of the governed in only a secondary sense. Its sanction is ultimately of God to Whom it is responsible."³ From earliest days we have enjoyed the blessing of which the psalmist sings, "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord." (Psa. 144:15.)

II. THE WALL OF SEPARATION.

This organic development of law, order, culture and nation has been jeopardized by the building of a wall of separation between nature and grace and consequently between the State as allegedly built on natural law and the God of grace. Thus men assumed that the State arose without and exists apart from the God of Biblical revelation.

THOMISM

Thomas Aquinas developed the concept of Nature in distinction from the Supernatural. For Thomism, man by his fall has lost the *similitudo* but not the *imago dei*. This means that his unaided reason is still able to discern first principles, practice cardinal virtues, build a natural theology, discover natural law, and establish a just state. He needs the supernatural gifts only to complete what nature has already begun, that is, to exercise the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. Accordingly, natural law is the basis of the State and supernatural grace that of the Church.

From Greek philosophy and Roman law,⁴ scholastic reason deduced the assumption that natural law derives ultimately from God. Accordingly, the body politic is to be organized for the fulfillment of the ends proper to man's distinctive human

³John R. Richardson, *Romans*. Baker, 1963, p. 131.

⁴Cicero, *De Leg.* I., 6, 8.

nature. The State exists that men may live according to the principles which God has naturally ordained for the ordering of human society. This means that the State as such has no connection with the God of Biblical revelation.

Where the Church also exists, however, Thomas regarded this natural order as subordinate to the supernatural grace embodied in the Church. Moreover, since the ends of the State are temporal, they must be subject to the eternal ends of the Church, namely, the final felicity of souls in the Kingdom of God.⁵ In similar vein Hildebrand compared the figure of the Church to the sun and the State to the moon, which only shines in the light reflected from the sun. With such analogies, Pope Innocent III largely dominated the civil authorities, but with Boniface VIII the papal hegemony began to crumble as the States asserted their God-given responsibilities.

DEISM

The main premise of the deists was the conception of God handed down by scholasticism.⁶ Making themselves heirs of the separation between natural law and supernatural revelation, the French and English Deists assumed that only the *lumen naturale* mattered. For Matthew Tindal and his followers, Christianity was as old as the Creation, so that whatever in it is new is not true and whatever is true is not new. The relevant elements are a republication of the laws of nature which are open to all men either by their innate ideas which could not be affected by original sin, or by the principles of their sufficient human reason. The result is what Tom Paine calls the age of reason or the age of human absolutism.

According to this thinking, the State is derived from the rights of men more than from the grace of God. For Rousseau, the education of children is according to nature. These positions appear in the French Declaration of Human Rights, 1789, and to a lesser degree in the American Declaration of Independence, 1776. According to Barth, both understand the state from the point of view of man or the sum total of men

⁵E. H. Stokes, *A Conception of a Kingdom of Ends in Augustine, Aquinas, and Leibnitz*, Chicago, 1912.

⁶John Orr, *English Deism*, 1934, p. 51.

making up the nation, but the Calvinism gone secular in the American document is preferable to the Catholicism gone secular in the French one.⁷ In the French statement sovereignty lies completely in the people; in the American the rights are given by the Creator and His Providence is trusted to sustain the duty He has given men to maintain their rights. Now while Witherspoon, who supported the document, opposed deism, Thomas Jefferson, the author of our Declaration, drew on deistic writers and represented such influential deists as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine, and Ethan Allen. Ambiguously, "two-thirds of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were Anglican laymen, essentially deist in their outlook."⁸

Later in the Alien and Sedition Controversy, Jefferson took the Unitarian minister, Dr. Joseph Priestley, and the materialistic philosopher, Dr. Thomas Cooper, as his proteges. He tried to make the latter president of the University of Virginia, but being blocked in that attempt by the Presbyterians, he got Cooper in as president of the College of South Carolina. There he became the High Priest of Nullification and the First Prophet of Secession. Eventually, Presbyterian influence forced him out of the presidency of the Columbia (South Carolina) institution. Jefferson's own views are indicated in his arrangement of the Greek, Latin, French and English renderings of the Gospels, commonly known as Jefferson's Bible but formally entitled *The Morals of Jesus*.⁹ Every miracle is excised from the accounts and the volume closes,

"There laid they Jesus and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre and departed."

In a personal opinion Jefferson went beyond the Declaration of Independence when he spoke of the First Amendment to the Constitution as "building a wall of separation between church and state." His figure of speech has become a rule of law for our modern jurists, "the great American principle of eternal separation," or the complete separation between State and religion. By using the Thomist separation between nature

⁷K. Barth, *Die Protestantische Theologie im 19 Jahrh.*, 1947, pp. 31-33.

⁸Dillenberger and Welch, *Protestant Christianity*, 1954, p. 143.

⁹As well as in his anti-clericalism. Cf. F. C. Leubke in *Church History*, September, 1963.

and grace, and removing God's gracious intervention for our salvation, deism has built its wall of separation not only between Church and State, but also between the God of Biblical revelation and the State. It now condemns statutes passed by the several States for the recognition of the living God in brief and simple acts of Biblical worship at the opening of each school day. At the same time, in the interest of academic freedom, teachers are permitted to inculcate scientific and economic theories which give God no place in the origin or history of man and which deny the possibility of His direct act in the raising of Jesus our Lord from the dead. Thus positivism and secularism are on the verge of making the public schools to be non-God or irreligious. The wall of separation is issuing in a secular State and a pagan public school.

Is freedom of religion to become synonymous with freedom from religion, or with established non-religion? Is freedom's holy light that shone from our fathers' God, the Author of Liberty, to be exchanged for the slavery which issues from anti-God communism? How can we rear men to be citizens with a sense of responsibility, without presenting the God to whom they are responsible, or soldiers with a will to stand for the God of our fathers when they have not been educated in His Presence? Schools without a word from and a prayer to the living God will not build in their pupils the stamina to stand against atheistic communism when the going is hard.

We ought to be exalting in our schools, as well as in our churches and homes, the Ten Commandments, God's banner against the floodtide of disorder, violence, crime and immorality which is sweeping our civilization. Instead we are decreeing that the schools no longer teach the oncoming generation even to acknowledge the Lord as the Good Shepherd of the Psalms, the Heavenly Father of the Gospels. Such folly invites increasing Godlessness and the judgment of the Almighty Whose warning is

"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all
the nations that forget God." (Psalm 9:17.)*

*Cf. G. E. Ruff, *op. cit.* p. 103, "The Way of the No-God leads to a totalitarian doom. The way of the true God leads to freedom and life."

and Whose final answer to those who take counsel against Him is

“... the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings.” (Rev. 17:14).

The human absolutism of the eighteenth century has, moreover, spilled over into and modified the testimony of our Churches. The Preface to the Westminster Form of Presbyterian Government is a glorious affirmation of Christ as the Head and King of the Church. Where this Headship and Kingship of Christ is the cornerstone of Presbyterianism, there issues a confession of faith that it belongs to Christ’s majesty to rule and teach the Church through His Spirit and Word by the ministry of man.¹⁰ And “the mission of the whole Church is to establish in the whole earth the reign of Jesus Christ.”¹¹

When, however, American Presbyterianism was reorganized in 1787-89, the Christological hub was replaced by Preliminary Principles designed to secure “the approbation of an impartial public” for the right to be a Presbyterian Church. The foundation having been laid in general principles, a church constitution was built with its radical principle “that the majority shall govern.” When one’s Preliminary Principles derive, even in part, from eighteenth century reason, the end becomes a capitulation to secularism in order to please twentieth century pluralism. Accordingly, the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., in pamphlets issued by the Assemblies of 1962 and 1963, prepared for the current surrender of our public schools to secularism by appeals to the pluralism of modern society. The 1963 Assembly recommends that religious observances never be held in a public school and that devotional Bible reading and public prayers be omitted.

Writing in *The Presbyterian Outlook* for December 23, 1963 Elder Gerald Monsman Esq. of our Franklin Street Church in Baltimore has pointed out the following flaw in this UPUSA paper:

¹⁰*Book of Church Order*, Presbyterian Church, U.S., I, carried over from *Preface to the Westminster Form of Presbyterian Government* and from the *Second Book of Discipline of the Kirk of Scotland*, I. 13.

¹¹D. G. Miller, *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, p. 72.

“Citizenship and church-membership are two separate phases of our lives. They should both be Christian, but not be confused. Failure to recognize these two separate aspects of a Christian’s life is, to my mind, the basic error of the report and leads to its dangerous conclusions.

“Christians *as citizens* can and should work for the recognition of Christ as sovereign over the state, without denying to non-Christians full freedom of convictions, and while keeping their churches, as churches, organically separate from the state.”

A pronouncement of the General Board of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. declares

“Neither true religion nor good education is dependent upon the devotional use of the Bible in the public school program.”

At the same time it leaves to the judgment of the local school board the question of offering prayers on special occasions¹² and it affirmed earlier that

“. . . the nation subsists under the governance of God and that it is not morally autonomous.”¹³

If the thinking set forth in the Preparatory Paper for the 1964 National Study Conference on Church and State of the National Council of Churches is accepted, the result is even more secularist. In direct opposition to our Biblical Confessional doctrine that God has ordained the civil magistrate, Dr. J. M. Swomley puts too much weight on Brunner’s position that in view of its compulsive character “the State is not an expression of the will of the Creator.”¹⁴ Then he bases the public schools on autonomous human reason and specifically excludes from them any revealed set of truths, principles, religious instruction, or faith, pp. 84-86, 98, 95. On the other hand, *The Witness of the Reformed Churches*^{14A} stresses “the importance of learning how to think about political, social and economic issues in the light of one’s faith.” On his premises, Swomley objects to

¹²Pronouncement of NCC adopted by General Board June 7, 1963.

¹³Pronouncement of NCC adopted by General Board May 20, 1953.

¹⁴John M. Swomley, Jr., *Church-State Relations in Education Today*, ed. Dean M. Kelley, N. Y., 1964, p. 82, citing E. Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, p. 445.

^{14A}A statement of the Joint Committee of the Reformed Church in America and the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

“under God” in the salute to the flag, p. 98, antagonizes indoctrination in nationalism or in a particular economic or political system, p. 85, and opposes Bible reading and prayer in the schools as associated with the coercive function of government, p. 96. On the contrary, when it suits Swomley’s purpose, he gives an entirely different account of the school as the place where the pupil enjoys the experience of being loved and accepted in an order and dependableness that is not imposed as a harsh discipline, p. 100. He advocates excusing Jehovah’s Witnesses from saluting the flag, p. 98, and conscientious objectors from military drill, p. 99, but inconsistently holds that excusing unbelievers from attendance on worship is treating them as second-class citizens, p. 96.

In our opinion, these positions are too close to the utilitarian view that man’s attitude toward the cosmos in which he lives is all-determining, not his attitude toward God. Moreover, we constantly need the reminder of Barth’s weighty warning

“The Church is no longer the Church where it does not know a higher authority than its own, or an obedience other than that of self-government.”¹⁵

The genius of Calvinism is a striving to see everything not from man’s point of view but from the viewpoint of God, in every area to think God’s thoughts after Him. Calvin “would never have countenanced the secularization of the state; the exclusion of religion from education would have seemed to him madness.”¹⁶

Accordingly, we dissent from the thinking of these great ecclesiastical bodies and ask a re-study of our Calvinistic and Reformed heritage. We want to see this matter not through the scholastic eyes of Thomas Aquinas nor through the deistic logic of Thomas Jefferson, but from the Word of God with the help of the giants of the Reformed Faith and our own Confession of Faith with the preamble adopted by the Westminster divines. This means not a total disconnection between the State and the God of Biblical revelation. Rather, the Presbyterian Confession teaches that the living God has ordained the State

¹⁵K. Barth, *K. D. I.* 2:573-658.

¹⁶J. T. McNeill, *Calvinism*, 1954, p. 234.

for His own glory and the good of the present and the oncoming generations.

The second chapter of Jeremiah presents a very similar challenge in ancient Israel. There the prophet reminds Jerusalem of her first love when she went after the Lord in the wilderness, and solemnly warns them that since they have now gone from Him the Lord has a contention with them, and with their children's children. Then follow these weighty words:

Hath a nation changed its Gods, which are no Gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

III. THE STATE ACCORDING TO CALVIN AND THE REFORMED FAITH.

The Reformation operated with a deeper sense of the gravity of the Fall and a greater need for grace and light from God for sin-darkened man than that professed by Scholasticism. Consequently, it did not assume that man could begin with a natural knowledge of God, morality, and the State. For the Reformers, the beginning of all true knowledge of God is Jesus Christ clothed with His Gospel. They began with Christ and read the Bible in the light of His atoning Cross and glorious Resurrection, then they read nature in the light of the Bible. Accordingly there are not two areas, the State governed by natural reason and the Church by supernatural grace. Every area of life is to be brought into subjection to the God Who confronts us in His revelation.¹⁷

¹⁷While Calvin found some seeds of political order and a native love of truth implanted in every man, *Inst.* II. ii. 12-13, nevertheless this internal law engraved on the heart needs to be clarified by the giving of the written law to men who are blinded by the sins of arrogance, ambition and self-love, *Inst.* II. viii. 1, Library of Christian Classics, XXI, 367-8, with footnotes. Nor can the human mind attain any true knowledge of God without His Word, *ibid* I. vi. 2. Accordingly Calvin begins not with "some blind light of nature," Letter of Francis I I, 2, but as a disciple of Scripture with the doctrine of heaven, *Inst.* I. vi. 4, and in Scripture the believer starts "with the Gospel which sets Christ alone before us with His Cross," *Argument to Commentary on Genesis*.

Rejecting the Thomist doctrine of a difference between the image and the likeness of God, the Reformers held that by the Fall the image of God was destroyed, effaced, or so deeply corrupted that all that remains of it is a horrible deformity (*Institutes* I, xv, 3-4). The New England Primer begins "In Adam's Fall we sinned all." His realization of the gravity of original sin led Calvin to favor lesser magistrates as a check upon the chief magistrate and James Madison, who had studied under John Witherspoon, developed the checks and balances in our American system of government. Civil government is to restrain evil men and keep the public peace that society may not disintegrate and that opportunity may be given the Church to proclaim redemption. Church and State owe one another mutual aid and collaboration.

For Calvin, God has established two governments, both for His own glory and our good. Even the State has not come about by human perversity but by Divine Providence and holy ordinance so that the magistrates should be faithful as God's deputies for those doing good unto praise; for those doing evil, avengers of wrath, Rom. 13. "For this consideration makes a good king: that he recognize himself as a minister of God in the government of his kingdom."¹⁸ Yet Christ's spiritual kingdom and the civil jurisdiction are things completely distinct; the former occupied chiefly with the soul, with internals and eternal, the latter chiefly with the body, with externals and temporals. Under God, each is autonomous in its own sphere. That is, neither is to rule over the other, but God is over each and He has subjected us to both.

In Geneva "there was no question of a theocratic regime in which the temporal power would be subject to the spiritual power."¹⁹ Rather, the problem there was how to prevent the city-state from completely dominating the Church. Calvin was exiled in 1536 and threatened with exile later because he would not permit the City Council to dictate the worship and discipline of the Church. He was never an official of the State and during most of his ministry there not even a citizen. His struggle

¹⁸Calvin, *Letter to Francis I*, cf. *Institutes*, IV, xx.

¹⁹F. Wendel, *Calvin*, 1963, Harper & Row, pp. 79, 309. Cf. E. A. Smith, *Church and State in Your Community*, Westminster Press, 1963, "In Calvin's view no King was a church agent for ruling the people; he was God's own agent for civil affairs," pp. 32, 54, 75.

was not to set up the rule of the clergy, but the reign of the living God who confronts us in His revelation.

The Christian *as a citizen* seeks this sovereignty of God in the State, while the same believer *as a churchman* promotes the lordship of Christ the head over His body, the Church.

In Scotland it required definite testimony to keep the State from invading the offices of the Church, as the witness of Knox, the Melvilles, Henderson, the Erskines, Thomas Gillespie and Thomas Chalmers attest. The issue of this Scottish story is that

these two institutions, the Church and the State, equally of Divine appointment, have a separate existence, a distinct character, and an independent authority; and that it is impossible to identify them, or to make the one dependent upon the other.

Further, as ordained by God both the State and the Church are to be accounted moral parties responsible to God, and in consequence of this moral responsibility to God, bound to recognize His revealed Word.²⁰

In his Stone Lectures at Princeton, Abraham Kuyper insisted on a free Church in a free State, and showed that Calvinism emancipates the State from the dominion of the Church BUT NOT FROM GOD. Indeed, man's duty is to serve God in the world, to praise Him in the Church, to thank Him in the family, and to recognize Him in the school. Treating of *Calvinism and Politics*, Kuyper finds that there are three concepts of sovereignty in the State. For the Calvinist, "All authority of governments on earth originates from the Sovereignty of God alone," or as the Scripture puts it, "By Me kings reign," and "the powers that be are ordained of God." It is a gracious gift of Almighty God when we the people are given the liberty of choosing our magistrates. That this power comes from God is recognized in varying degrees in the Declaration of Independence, in the Articles of Confederation, and in the Constitutions of most of our States. In the words of the dissenting opinion of Justice Potter Stewart in *Engel v.*

²⁰Bannerman, James, *The Church of Christ*, I. pp. 102 ff.

Vitale, "We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a supreme being."

Over against this recognition of Divine Sovereignty there are the two contrasting views of popular sovereignty and of State sovereignty. According to the one, man is the ultimate as well as the proximate cause of civil power. Each time the government meets it must inquire, first, is this the kind of government the people now want, and secondly, are we those whom the sovereign people wish to govern them. This popular sovereignty is the basis of the French Revolution and the Communist Revolution, both of which are anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-religious.

The other alternative is that the State is in itself absolute. Then the law is right—no matter how wrong may be its murderous liquidations—merely because it is the law of the State. This was the philosophy of Hitler and the Nazis as also the militarists of the Japanese Empire. Against this position General Douglas MacArthur declared that it was one's theology which mattered most in the affairs of nations. Today the United States of America stands as the strongest human bastion against the theories of ultimate popular sovereignty and ultimate State sovereignty. But we can hold these lines not by the weak deistic view that God has never intervened in the affairs of men, and that the stone rolled over His tomb is the end of Jesus, but only in the Biblical faith that Divine Sovereignty is the source of civil authority and that His Father has exalted the risen Christ to be Prince over the kings of the earth. (Rev. 1:5).

There is a forgotten chapter in our communion's history which needs restudying. Dr. James H. Thornwell introduced into our first General Assembly a paper on the relation of the State to Christ in which he warned against the danger of permitting the distinction between Church and State to issue in a separation of the State from the Christian revelation.

As a moral person the State should recognize the Christian revelation to the extent of not making laws contrary to the Bible on which our chosen magistrates take their oaths of office. The State condemns many things which many of its subjects approve, and enjoins what many condemn. Thus communists among us reject the right of private property, gangsters

disregard the sanctity of human life, and early Mormons practiced plural marriages. Yet the public conscience protects the rights of human life, private property and monogamous marriage, for the public conscience is a reflection of the law of God, which law is enunciated with authoritative clearness in the Scriptures.

Thornwell proposed that there be added, as an amendment to the section in the Constitution providing for liberty of conscience, a distinct recognition of our responsibility to God and the supremacy of His Son Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, and a provision that no law be passed by Congress inconsistent with the will of God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. We must regard it as a wise Providence that caused Thornwell to withdraw this paper due to a lack of time for its adequate discussion. The Confederacy was to fall on the field of battle. The Most High so overruled that this recognition of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ did not go down with the collapse of the Constitution of the Confederate States of America.

Our Reformed Presbyterian brethren of Pittsburgh have long advocated an amendment to the Constitution of the United States which explicitly recognizes our dependence upon God. The Rev. Dr. J. Calvin Rose of Miami has received favorable acclaim for his advocacy of a proper amendment which will permit the reading of the Bible and the offering of prayers in the public schools. Unless some amendment is adopted, or unless the Supreme Court of its own accord permits the local parents and taxpayers to exercise voluntary or elective worship in the schools, we are likely to see the distinction between Church and State turned into a stone wall separating the covenant children of our homes in their major educational experience from the Word of the living God Who has named them as His own in holy baptism.

In Nazi Germany, the *Deutsche Christen* bowed to the national movement of race, blood and soil, but the Confessing Church refused to be determined by this secularization of the dominant movement. They heard the word of Romans 12.2. "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould," Phillips tr. Instead the Barmen Declaration proclaims

that there is one word we have to heed in life and in death: Jesus Christ as he is testified to in the Holy Scriptures, and who is God's mighty claim on our whole life with no areas thereof in which we do not belong to him. And if we may permit the one who is credited with writing the Barmen Declaration to make its meaning concrete, Professor Karl Barth writes,

The state as such, belongs originally and ultimately to Jesus Christ . . . in its comparatively independent substance, in its dignity, its function, and its purpose it should serve the Person and Work of Jesus Christ and therefore the justification of the sinner . . .

In the decisions of the State, the Church will always support the side which clarifies rather than obscures the Lordship of Jesus Christ over the whole which includes the political sphere outside the Church. The Church desires that the shape and reality of the State in this fleeting world should point toward the kingdom of God not away from it.*

Now prayer and the devotional reading of the Bible in the public schools point toward the Kingdom of God.

*The Witness of the Reformed Churches*²¹ is first, the reaffirmation of the sovereignty of God and His purposes in history. "This sovereign purpose is embodied in the revelation of Jesus Christ as Lord." Secondly, this unique revelation is recorded in the Bible, the written Word of God; its content is Jesus Christ; its authentication is the witness of Holy Spirit in our hearts. Thirdly, as everything in life is related to God, so the Christian thinks about every issue in the light of his faith, and responds by the deeds of the law because he is grateful for the transforming experience of grace.

*K. Barth, *Community, State and Church*, 1960, N.S.C.F., pp. 118, 170. Cf. S. C. Guthrie, Jr. in *Bulletin, Columbia Theol. Sem.*, June 1963, p. 28, "The first and last primary thing we have to say about the world into which we are sent is that *it already belongs to Jesus Christ!* . . . There is no part of the world, however hostile or merely indifferent, over which He is not already Lord."

²¹*The Witness of the Reformed Churches*, A Theological Statement of the Joint Committee of the Reformed Church in America and the Presbyterian Church in the U.S., July, 1963.

From such passages as Rom. 13 and I Pet. 2:13-17, cf. Psa. 86:9-10; 22:27; 144:15; Isa. 66:23; Rev. 15:3-4; 17:14, Presbyterians teach that "God, the Supreme Lord and King . . . hath ordained civil magistrates to be under him over the people, for his own glory and the public good . . ." (*Westminster Confession XXV (XXIII)*). From Mat. 28:18, Eph. 1:20-23, cf. Phil. 2:9-10; Coloss. 1:12-20; Hebr. 1:2-3; Acts 2:25-35; 10:36; Rev. 1:5; Isa. 9:6-7, our Presbyterian Church, U.S., confesses that "All power in heaven and on earth is given to Jesus Christ by the Father who raised him from the dead, and set him on his own right hand, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come" (Preface to *Book of Church Order*).

The Reformed conception of the living God in His relation to the State may be summarized thus: the living God is the Lord Who confronts us in His Biblical revelation; He is the Holy One of Israel before Whom the world is so sinful, lost and hopeless that only God can help; in Jesus Christ God is the Saviour of the world, Whose arms are ever stretched out to fallen man in the words of promise, ". . . him who comes to me I will not cast out" (John 6:37); this God has established the State as truly as the Church, the school as definitely as the home, and His sovereignty over each ought to be recognized in worship. For His might which made us, for His majesty which governs us, for His mercy which saves us, we worship God.

"Every day will I bless thee;
And I will praise thy name for ever and ever."
(Psa. 145:2.)

"For the Lord is good;
His mercy is everlasting;
and His truth (faithfulness) endures
to all generations." (Psa. 100:5.)

IV. THE RECOGNITION OF GOD IN THE SCHOOLS.

Calvin sets forth the obligation of the ministers to contribute to the moral education of the citizens, and recognizes teachers as an office ordained by God in His Word for the order

of the schools. With great sacrifice and labor he established an Academy in Geneva where the children of the city were educated in the knowledge of God and His works. The concerns of the parents for their children, of the State for responsible citizens, and of the Church for a believing succession were all honored by the worship of God and the teaching of His Word in this school system initiated by Calvin, headed by Beza. The first plan for public education in Scotland was projected by the Reformer, John Knox. Wherever the Reformed faith had free course in Britain and on the Continent, schools were supported in which God was worshipped and His Word taught.

In the American colonies, the first movements toward popular education came from those who honored the God of Biblical revelation. Mr. Justice Brennan, in his concurring opinion in the recent Supreme Court decision, *Abington School v. Schempt*, admits that “the use of prayers and Bible readings at the opening of the school day long antedates the founding of the Republic.” In substantiation thereof, he cites the Rules of the New Haven Grammar School in 1684 and the contract with a Dutch schoolmaster at Flatbush, New York, in 1682. He adds,

“After the Revolution the new States uniformly continued these long established practices in the private and in the few public grammar schools
...”

and that this

“... exemplified the universal practice well into the nineteenth century.”

This means well after the adoption of the First Amendment to the Constitution, and also means that the Constitutional statements in the First Amendment, as adopted, did not refer to State actions. Indeed, the Tenth Amendment reserved these powers to the States.

Early in 1964, the Supreme Court of Florida unanimously reaffirmed its earlier decision that the Florida law providing for prayer and Bible reading in that State is constitutional.

Mr. Justice Stewart in his recent dissenting opinion shows that after the passing of the First Amendment “each State was

left free to go its own way and pursue its own policy with respect to religion," so that Massachusetts had an established Church until well into the nineteenth century. He concludes,

"So matters stood until the adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment, or more accurately, until this Court's decision in *Cantwell v. Connecticut* in 1940."

While the language of the First Amendment explicitly limits only Congress, now the Supreme Court supports those exercises of religion authorized by Congress, e.g. chaplains, while it strikes down Biblical worship prescribed for public schools by State law. Yet the States, rather than the Federal Government, have been the chief agents in initiating and supporting the public schools. Federal aid in support of the schools is of recent origin, as is Federal ruling on prayers in these schools.

The First Amendment prohibits *Congress* from establishing religion. The Fourteenth forbids the *States* from depriving any citizen of his rights without due process of law. There is no amendment which gives the Federal Government power to forbid the local community from having voluntary worship in its public schools. Consequently, it seems that the First and the Tenth Amendments reserve to *the people* this free exercise of religion in their several communities.

Further, the fact that a school is public does not mean the government of State or nation has the sole interest therein. God established the home long before He ordained either of these governments, and to the family He gives the children. When parents claim the covenant promises of God for their children in the Sacrament of Baptism, they also covenant on their part to rear their children as God's children. These parents and their neighbors are the taxpayers whose money supports the schools.* In this matter the government is largely the

*Cf. Address by R. L. Hunt, Dept. Church & Public School Re. N.C.C. at Purdue, Oct. 8, 1963, "The classic doctrine in the United States was that the teacher stood in the classroom of the American public school as the representative of the parents. . . . The public school was really a school belonging to the parents, and the teacher was there to help realize the purposes of the parent. . . . The parents of the community used the machinery of the state to collect taxes and to organize and operate a school, but the school belonged to the parents." Hunt also cites the National Defense Education Act of 1958, Sec. 101, par. 3, thus, "Congress reaffirms the principle and declares that the States and local communities have and must retain control over and primary responsibility for education."

tax collector and dispenser. "When the state finances schools, it ought not to purchase control of the curriculum".* Are we Christian parents to be taxed by a government which professes to believe in God and have our school tax money used to give our children a pagan education in schools which do not permit even a brief recognition of God?

May God so bless America that we never see even a shadow of that situation which the Turks meted out to the conquered Christians in the Near East. By their Mohammedan masters the Christian enclaves were forced to pay staggering taxes and then to surrender the strongest of their sons to be reared as fanatical Muslims for the Janizaries, the troops which kept the Turk in power. During Hitler's regime the Confessing Church properly refused to permit *der Fuehrer* to dictate their preaching, even though the Nazi State was paying the salaries of their pastors.

We hold that God has given to the parents, to the taxpayers, to the people in the local communities, and to the several States rights and powers in the conduct of the local schools, and consequently that it is our duty respectfully to assert and petition for the maintenance of these rights lest they be curtailed in the interest of increased Federal domination. To the same end, we advocate an amendment to the Constitution clarifying and preserving these rights.

In answer to the claim that the churches and the homes are the places to teach religion, Dr. Vernon S. Broyles, Jr., replies:

"This is true, and the more effectively they do the job the more positively people resist efforts to remove God from our public institutions. God is Lord of all life . . . and to acknowledge Him in all our ways becomes a necessity for our well-being."

While we favor the teaching of the Bible as literature and as history, such objective courses on religion and ethics are not adequate substitutes for the recognition of God in worship. We do not properly place ourselves above God as the scientist

*E. A. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 74, cf. p. 77.

does the elements he manipulates in his test tubes. The I AM WHO I AM (Exod. 3:14) may not be treated as a mere object or thing in the I-it relationship. As the infinite Person, the eternal *Ego Eimi* called first Old then New Israel into the personal I-Thou relation to Himself. Here the believer stands far beneath the MOST HIGH in reverent worship, in humble faith.

“All nations whom thou hast made
Shall come and worship before thee, O Lord;
And they shall glorify thy name.
For thou art great and doest wondrous things:
Thou art God alone.” (Psa. 86:9-10.)
“Jesus Christ, He is Lord of all.” (Acts 10:36.)

PROPOSAL FOR GENERAL FINDINGS

Presented by

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Before the
National Study Conference on Church and State
National Council of Churches

Trinity Episcopal Church, Columbus, Ohio
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“THE GOD OF BIBLICAL REVELATION AND THE SCHOOLS OF AMERICA”

“All nations whom thou hast made shall come
and worship before thee, O Lord.” Psalm 86:9.
“All the nations shall come and worship before
thee, for thy judgments are made manifest.”
Rev. 15:3-4.

First, in these and sundry other passages the God of Biblical Revelation proclaims Himself the King of kings and the Lord of nations so that we confess:

God, the Supreme Lord and King, . . . hath ordained civil magistrates to be under him over the people, for his own glory and the public good. (*Westminster Confession of Faith.*)

and likewise we acknowledge that,

it belongs to Christ's Majesty from His throne of Glory to rule and teach the Church through His Spirit and Word by the ministry of men.

God has established two governments, State and Church. Under God, each is autonomous in its own sphere, neither is over the other. Christians are subject to both. But in view of the separation of Church and State the believer has distinct relations to each. *As a citizen* he is to seek the sovereignty of God in civil or state matters, without denying to non-Christians full freedom of convictions; while *as a churchman* he is to promote the Headship of Christ in His body, the Church. "Citizenship and church-membership are two separate phases of our lives. Both should be Christian, but not be confused."* In keeping their churches, as churches, organically separate from the State, American Christians should oppose State aid to Church schools.

Secondly, in view of the current situation in which the worship of God in the public schools is becoming more difficult, the Christian *as a churchman*, and as a parent, ought to give additional concern and enlarged support to education under distinctly Christian auspices. Accordingly, we recommend:

- A. That our homes return to family worship and catechizing;
- B. That our congregations be urged to strengthen their teaching ministry in Communicant classes, in Church and mission Sunday Schools, in an added week-day period for Bible teaching and worship, and in kindergartens for pre-school age children, in each of which the revelation of God in Christ Jesus be given the primary and the pre-eminent place;

*Gerald Monsman, Esq., *The Presbyterian Outlook*, Dec. 23, 1963, p. 9.

- C. That parents acquaint themselves with the Christian Schools now flourishing in Michigan. These are not parochial but parental institutions, supported by Reformed parents as a means of keeping their covenant baptismal vows to rear their children as God's children;
- D. That we cherish the Church and Church-related grade schools and support additional educational endeavors of this kind.

Thirdly, that America may escape the doom which awaits all the nations that forget God, Psalm 9:17, and continue to enjoy the blessings of that nation whose God is the LORD, Psalm 33:12; 144:15, the Christian acting *as a citizen* should use every proper method to continue the recognition of God in the public schools.

The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, 1791, forbids Congress from making a law establishing a religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. The Fourteenth Amendment, 1868, forbids a state from abridging the rights of a citizen by law or without due process of law. In *Cantwell v. Connecticut*, 1940, the Supreme Court interpreted the Fourteenth Amendment as applying the prohibitions of the First Amendment to the state legislatures as well as to the Congress. In the last two years state laws providing for worship in the schools have been declared unconstitutional. In thus seeking to prevent "an establishment of religion" by the States in violation of the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, there may unwittingly be established a religion of secularism. And, "the way of No-God leads to totalitarian doom," G. E. Ruff. The free exercise of religion clause in the First Amendment and the reservation to the states and to the people of all rights not delegated to the Federal Government in the Tenth Amendment seem to sanction freedom to participate in acts of worship according to conviction of conscience as well as not to participate.

Only recently has the Federal Government begun to give support to and direction concerning the public schools. Through the years the states, the communities, the local taxpayers, and the parents have nourished this great institution.

Historically, biblical worship at the opening of school is as truly a part of the American heritage as is the invocation of God in our judicial and legislative halls and our President's proclamation of a day of thanksgiving.

Therefore, we advocate,

- A. That such worship as the law permits be carried out, including exercises before or after the official school day, and voluntary or elective activities during the school day where there are also desirable alternatives for dissenters. Conscientious objectors could be excused from worship as easily as they are from military drill and from the salute to the flag. In one class the pupils take turns, one each day, reading a passage of his own selection from his own Bible, and leading in prayer.
- B. That the Constitutional law be clarified by an amendment to the effect that neither Federal nor State Government shall deny to any citizen the right to participate in* appropriate religious worship according to the dictates of his own conscience during a reasonable portion of the official day in a public school.

Finally, that while we thus stand for the separation of Church and State, we do not favor the divorce of the State from God. While we advocate a free Church in a free State, we recognize the living God who confronts us in His revelation as the Creator of the universe, as the King over the nations, and as the Lord of the human world which He has reconciled unto Himself in Christ. As the Lord of all, He is properly the Lord of the school, as He is Lord of the home, the Church and the State, each of which has a tremendous stake in the school. The daily recognition of God in the school fortifies our soldiers for their fight against communistic atheism. As without God life is void and meaningless, so without Him education is a menace to the morals of the home, to the faith that has made America great, to responsible citizenship, and to liberty under law. That we may learn to love God with all, we ought to worship Him in the school. This Republic was founded on

* (or to refrain from participation in).

freedom of worship, not on the elimination of worship. As in Jesus Christ, God is for us, so “is He also God’s mighty claim on our whole life,” with no areas of our life in which we do not belong to Him. (*Barmen Declaration*, 2.)