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IT IS IMPORTANT in beginning our study of the early church to realise why men like John Calvin saw everything that the New Testament and the Early Church stood for summed up in the counsel of Chalcedon. What did it mean?

The great problem in the world of antiquity was the divinization of man. The essence of the face of pagan antiquity was to point to man becoming god. The Roman Senate had the power to divinize emperors and heroes. Instead of an unbridgeable gap between God and man, they held to a growth on the part of man into deity.

As against this, the early church said, there is one unique, unrepeatable, incarnation. And in this incarnation the two natures are without confusion. What was the meaning of this? Why was it that the early church fought so strongly to defend this? Finally, in 451 — as against all the creeping paganism around them seeking to infiltrate the church — defined Christ in terms of the formula of Chalcedon: two natures, in perfect union, without confusion. This barred the divinization of man and of the state from ever being regarded as Christian.

It meant also an important fact which is obscured now because we are neither familiar with patristic literature nor are we theologically minded in our time. Namely, that when the Scripture speaks of the body of Christ being the church, it refers to His perfect humanity. So that the church as the body of Christ is not God walking on earth, as some would imply in their thinking. It is Christ's new humanity. Christ as the last Adam creates a new human race to replace that of the first Adam.

The New Society

IT IS A SERIOUS MISTAKE to view the early church as an institution similar to what goes by the name of "church" today. The early church, first of all, did

The Early Church

by R.J. Rushdoony

not see itself as another institution within society. Rather it was the new society — the new society that was to supercede all others. It took very seriously the Biblical declaration of 1 Corinthians 15:45-47 that Jesus Christ is the second and last Adam, the head of a new humanity, regenerated by His power.

We find in the liturgy of the early church reference to the race of Christians, a new human race with a new King. A new empire, created by God the Son, not to be another institution in society, but to supercede all those institutions created by the sons of Adam. Christians

"The early church... did not see itself as another institution within society. Rather it was the new society...."

thus saw themselves as neither Greeks, Jews, nor barbarians, but as members of Christ's new humanity. A new human race. They were thus not interested in finding a place in society but in remaking men and nations in terms of Jesus Christ and His Law-Word. The Great Commission is explicit. Teach all nations.

Taking Possession

Second, because of this fact, the Roman empire viewed Christianity as an enemy. The church refused to accept the status of a licensed, registered, and tax-paying religion. It regarded itself as a kingdom. The Kingdom of God whose King Jesus is declared to be the Blessed and Only Potentate, the King of Kings

and Lord of Lords. The early church saw its future set forth in Revelation 11:15: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever." Notice that this statement in Scripture in Revelation says

that the kingdoms of this *world* are become, have now become, the kingdoms of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the task of the church is to take possession.

St Paul saw himself as an ambassador for Christ, an accredited representative of the supreme sovereign of the universe, who was reclaiming His creation and all men and nations. Rome recognised the threat. The church was an empire within the empire. Not only ruling in every sphere, but also claiming all spheres for Christ. The church acted as the power in all these spheres: health, education, charity, and much more, all seen as areas for God's government through Christ.

Rome, on the other hand, recognised no independent sphere, no power having any right apart from Rome and its concessions. It certainly did not recognise an empire within the empire. Clearly the battle between Christ and the Caesars was a war unto death. No two rival governments with radically different laws could long coexist in the same jurisdiction. This is why we have a war on our hands today with the various civil orders. Having departed from Christ they know better — more often than the church — that Christ's people constitute an empire within the empire. An *imperium*, a technical, legal term, is the sole and absolute power in a particular jurisdiction with total powers therein. That's a legal definition. For Christians to challenge Rome as an *imperium* in the name of Christ the King meant that another ruler and another law must govern over Rome.

The church today is simply another institution within the state, and its place is one of peripheral importance at best. The modern state will in time destroy it

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because the modern state wants to survive.

The early church had serious faults and problems, but its belief that in Christ they were a new human race, made compromise and surrender untenable. There were churches and churchmen who compromised with Rome. But the bitter Donatist battle was over the issue of their forgiveness: Should compromisers ever be forgiven and restored to the church?

Two Humanities

Then third, the fact of two humanities. On the one hand, the fallen humanity of Adam, and on the other, the new humanity of Jesus Christ, meant for the early church that there was a great difference between the two humanities, and the Christian race could not enter the arena on the world's terms. As Dr. Ethelbert Stauffer wrote, "Early Christianity scorned all political means to power and all political means of fighting. It avoided all political provocation and even renounced any form of political protest. God loves the confessors, said the martyr bishop Cyprian, and not demonstrators. The Christians could be attacked, persecuted, tortured to death, without uttering a word that could be political polemics.

The hearts of these men were free of all thoughts of hostility to the state." They were the new conquerors. The old order was going to die. Of that, they had no doubt. For them, a non-Christian state could not do Christ's work. It was a part of the fallen world. St Augustine's *City of God* is a classic statement of this as is

also Salvian the Presbyter's *The Governance of God*. Our present day Operation Rescue protestors in the States, demonstrators against abortion, would have been incomprehensible to the early church. Confessors, as Cyprian said, not demonstrators. Cyprian cited Matthew 10:32. "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven." Those who refuse to confess Christ will be denied by Him. The Greek word translated as confess means to be in communion with, in covenant and agreement and in the Greek it implies "agreement with joy."

In 1 John 5:4 we are told for whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. "And this is the victory that overcometh the world. Even our faith." This is why the martyrs died joyfully. They were part of a great victory. Confessing Christ is thus the awareness that as members of His new humanity, we are the people of victory whose calling is to serve Him who makes all things new.

It was thus a battle of the church against the world. It was fought by bringing all things into captivity to Christ as King.

Aliens

Fourth, the Christian in the early church was told to see himself as an alien to the world around him, and as a citizen of the new realm. In Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature or creation, all things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new."

I recall as a child hearing an elderly missionary recount his first encounter with a totally pagan people untouched by any knowledge of the modern world, or of its technology, its advances, its knowledge. These pagans were many as against him. They were armed and he was not. For a time, it was a dangerous situation. The missionary knew, however, than in time their ways and their paganism would collapse before what he represented, Christ the King, and this gave him a holy boldness.

The early church felt a like advantage over the Greco-Roman world. St. Augustine who was a man of a temperamental disposition could write gloomily about the future at times. But he still felt Rome's beliefs were ridiculous, and he treated them at times with humour and as something that had no future.

The early church regarded its Lord as sovereign and its faith as the truth. It therefore looked, as St. Paul tells us, "for

Singles

by Ian Hodge, Ph.D.

April, 1997 was the first anniversary of the Port Arthur Massacre. The accused, Martin Bryant pleaded guilty, thus saving a long and agonising public trial. The repercussions of his murderous onslaught will remain forever, indelibly etched in the minds and memories of the people living at the time.

The media relished the fact that visitors from the Dunblane massacre in Scotland joined hands with those who suffered most at Port Arthur in continuing the call for gun control. Prime Minister Howard's response to the massacre with unified state gun laws has been achieved, and most states have given gun owners until later this year to sell their now illegal firearms to the government, where they will be trashed.

In the meantime, a political backlash against the status quo has begun in earnest with the formation of the One Australia party, led by Queensland independent Pauline Hanson. People around the nation, especially from rural Australia have rushed to join the new party and will help make it a force in future politics in the nation. It may, of course, have a limited life, and only time will tell whether the party can be established to be a permanent force in Australian politics.

The gun issue, however, is one of the issues that has probably helped the One Australia party. The political response to the Port Arthur killings was to punish the innocent, those who just happened to own a gun, or, at least, the wrong sort of gun.

It has not been possible to keep abreast of all the news comment on the Port Arthur massacre. But one of the issues seldom raised in debates over crime in general is the place of the family and its influence. That influence, however, is often felt to be rather vague.

George Gilder, in his book, *Men and Marriage* (Gretna, LO: Pelican Publishing Company, 1986, a revised version of his 1973 book, *Sexual Suicide*), points out that marriage is a stabilising influence on the barbarians — single men. While all men at some time are bachelors, the long trend of single-ness in our culture is a major cause for increased crime, especially the kind

a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness or justice."

Deadliest Sins

Fifth, the three deadliest offences for the Judaism of that time were apostasy or idolatry, bloodshed, that is, the shedding of innocent blood, and adultery. All three were offences against God, but they can also be offences against men. The early church, like Judaism, viewed these three as the deadliest. Their effect was not only to sever our ties with God but to disrupt society.

The modern church views adultery as essentially a personal matter. The

"Peace between man and God is the well-ordered obedience of faith to eternal law." — Augustine

Biblical view is that the family is God's basic institution, and adultery, treason against the family. It is the Biblical form of treason because in Scripture, the state is not as central to life as the family. These three deadliest sins were against God and society. Idolatry or apostasy meant a false foundation for life in every sphere, and therefore was an offence against life. Murder meant for Christians a rupture of society. The murderer makes his will god and he takes life which is God-created as though he, man, were lord over it. In brief, while faith in Christ was in the early church a very personal fact, and it meant putting one's life at risk to profess Christ, their essential confession was not a personal one, but an act of praise for the Great King over all Kings.

If someone were to write a history of testimonials, they would find a dramatic difference between the testimonies of the early martyrs and the testimonies of Christians today. They testified concerning Christ, not themselves. And the modern testimony is about "since I believe in Jesus all my troubles are over" which is nonsense. Their troubles usually begin.

The Christian's battle was on major fronts in the era from 70 to 138 A.D. It was old Israel or new, Lord Caesar, or Lord Christ. Who would prevail? The early church believed it would be Jesus Christ. It was a battle on all fronts. One involving every area of life and thought.

A New Morality

Sixth, this is related to a fact stressed in Augustine's *City of God* namely, "Where there is no true religion, there are no true virtues." Our faith, Augustine stressed, determines our life and our theology defines our virtues. Continuing Augustine's words, he said, "For although some suppose that virtues which have a reference only to themselves and are desired only on their own account are yet true and genuine virtues, the fact is that even then they are inflated with pride and are therefore to be reckoned vices rather than virtues. For as that which gives life to the flesh is not derived from flesh but is above it, so that which gives blessed life to man is not derived from man, but is something above him. And what I say of man, is true of every celestial power and virtue whatsoever."

In other words, theological order precedes moral order. Morality is not a human option but a divine mandate and a form of order coming from the very nature of God. For as pagan thought often stressed deification as salvation, orthodox Christianity did not summon men to put on Christ's deity but to put on the moral, the communicable aspects of the Godhead. True peace, Augustine held, is grounded in God and His moral order, and our participation, not in His deity, but in his perfect humanity. In Augustine's words, "Peace between man and God is the well-ordered obedience of faith to eternal law." Let me repeat that: "Peace between man and God is the well-ordered obedience of faith to eternal law."

Those who feel that theonomy is something new, had better go back and read the church fathers. "Peace between man and man is well ordered concord. Domestic peace is the well-ordered concord between those of the family who rule and those who obey. Civil peace is a similar concord among the citizens. The peace of the Celestial City is the perfect, and ordered, and harmonious enjoyment of God and of one another in God. The peace of all things is this tranquillity of order. Order is the distribution which allots things equal and unequal each to its own place."

Peace between God and man rests on the obedience of faith to God's law, as Augustine pointed out. Our strength, as Christians, is a moral strength. It is the power of God's nature as expressed in His law. We cannot become divine. It is blasphemy to think so. But we can become moral and thereby participate in

evidenced at Port Arthur. Divorce puts many men back on the streets as single men, and often this leads to a reversion of the actions of single men. Immaturity is often described as part of bachelorhood, and marriage has a habit of instilling in *the Barbarian* the necessary disciplines that can assist in leading to a settled maturity. In Gilder's words,

As far as society is concerned, however, the main problem of single men is not mental or physical illness, or related afflictions like alcoholism, loneliness, and sexual inadequacy. It is not discrimination or poverty. It is not that thriving old speciality of single men and their intimates: venereal disease. Single men have another way of getting the rest of society, however reluctantly and unconsciously, to take part in their problems. That way is crime.

... The central facts about crime are not racial: they are sexual. Groups of sociologists venturing into urban streets after their seminars on violence in America do not rush to their taxis fearing attack by marauding bands of feminists, covens of single women, or angry packs of welfare mothers... or, if the truth be known, of any group that contains men who are married to women.

Crime, like poverty, correlates far better with sex and singleness than it does with race. ... Even as adults, single men are some five times more likely to commit violent crimes than married men. Single men are convicted of the ultimate sexual violation — rape — five times more often, proportionately, than married men. ... (pp. 64-65)

In the other massacres in Australia (Hoddle Street, Strathfield, for example), singleness was a characteristic of the men whose rampage brought so much mayhem, death and destruction.

Unfortunately, there have been no real attempts in the political solutions to crime to bolster the family. When attempts have been made, social welfare has become the tool to apparently boost the family. It is not welfare or the lack of it, however, that is the problem. In fact, adding welfare in an effort to shore up the family is the fastest way to bring the family down. Welfare cannot help families without, at the same time, hurting other families. Money is taken from one group in society and given to others. This creates a problem in one family, having to pay taxes, while at the same time supposedly alleviating the needs of others. While the great dream is tax-

God's work and kingdom. And we have been regenerated unto good works.

Miracles

Seventh, Augustine held and the early church believed that God performed miracles because He is omnipotent and nothing therefore is impossible for Him. Moreover, Augustine — and this we forget because we don't like to believe it — emphatically affirmed his belief in continuing miracles. Modern churchmen usually hesitate to affirm that indeed this was a prevalent belief in the early church. Yet the fact remains that it was so. People prefer to dismiss such opinions, but their reality was clear and obvious, therefore the early church martyrs believed that the Triune God could rescue them from the arena and from the lions, if he chose. But in any case, they had a crown of glory awaiting them in heaven. And they died joyfully.

I have read the eyewitness account of the first known martyrdom to which there was an eyewitness account, and it's startling to see that even as they were being torn apart by the lions, they were in prayer, and were not aware that the lions were on them. And one of the martyrs called out to a guard, "When will you turn the lions loose?" And she was told by the guard, "Look at your body. It is disappearing into the lion."

They believed in the continuing and ever-present omnipotence of the Triune God and they faced their oppressors

with a holy boldness and an assurance of victory. One has only to read the New Testament, especially Paul's two letters to the Corinthians to realise the frailty, often immorality, and the real limitations of the early converts. Their strength was in the fact that they did not limit God. And too many people in the church today are more moral than those Corinthian Christians were but they limit God. The Corinthians and all the early Christians knew the greatness of Christ the King, and as a result, were far stronger than they were capable of being. Whereas we are too often weaker than we have any right to be.

Conclusion

IT WAS A FAULTY church, the early church, but it was a living church. It moved, not in its own power, but in the power of the Almighty.

ing the rich to give to the poor, the reality is that the rich, as a proportion in society, are not a big enough tax base for the welfare system to draw up. Therefore, taxes are taken from the largest single group, the middle class, and redistributed, not just to the poor, but to everyone. Voters are smart enough to demand that some of the taxes are returned.

The taxing of the middle class, however, have seen the reduction of this class as a percentage of society. We are increasingly becoming a two-class society, rich and poor, with a dwindling middle class.

In all this, the family is the great loser, because it is property that makes or breaks the family. By property, I do not mean just land. I mean the physical ownership of tangible goods. And this includes money. When the state confiscates the means of keeping the family together, it destroys the family. As evidence for this, we need only recognise that divorce rates are lower in higher income families. It is also in the wealthy that we see some of the strongest examples of family ties. We need only see how the Packers and the Murdochs have empires that pass from generation to generation.

Within the fractured family culture, singleness is a growing problem. Marriage is occurring later. Men (and women) are staying single longer. And when they do marry, the very vows that have helped to hold people of integrity together ("till death us do part") are omitted from the marriage service.

We should expect, therefore, that there will be no diminution of crime — and that includes the barbarous acts such as Port Arthur — in the foreseeable future. Until the links between family and property, family and stability, singleness and crime are admitted, there are unlikely to be any real resolutions to the crime problems of our age.