

ON THE RIGHT TO DISSENT

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**ON THE RIGHT
TO DISSENT**

**BY
PAUL FACEY**

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I have learned to yield this respect and honour only to the canonical books of Scripture: of these alone do I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error. ... As to all other writings, in reading them, however great the superiority of the authors to myself in sanctity and learning, I do not accept their teaching as true on the mere ground of the opinion being held by them; but only because they have succeeded in convincing my judgment of its truth either by means of these canonical writings themselves, or by arguments addressed to my reason.

— *St. Augustine of Hippo, Letter 82, §3.*

Since your most serene majesty and your highnesses require of me a simple, clear, and direct answer, I will give one, and it is this: I cannot submit my faith either to the pope or to the council, because it is clear that they have fallen into error and even into inconsistency with themselves. If, then, I am not convinced by proof from Holy Scripture, or by cogent reasons, if I am not satisfied by the very text I have cited, and if my judgment is not in this way brought into subjection to God's word, I neither can nor will retract anything; for it cannot be either safe or honest for a Christian to speak against his conscience. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise.

— *St. Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms (1521).*

PREFACE

THE OCCASION FOR THIS WORK

Whereas for most of my works the cause is simply my discerning of a need for clear and principled expositions on a matter with which I am familiar, the present work has an additional, personal motivation. On October 3rd, 2023, in the warehouse of my workplace and just before my shift began at 7am, I had the spontaneous thought to post a Tweet¹ briefly explaining why one can in principle question received knowledge of World War Two, including on the Holocaust and the nature of Adolf Hitler, and still be a Christian in good standing. I sent it, put my phone away, and got to work.

Checking the post throughout that day and the days following, I saw that it had exploded; hundreds of people either liking and supporting my contentions, expressing concerns, or essentially deeming me reprobate. I developed a small headache from responding to such critics, though it was certainly worth it; I wanted it to be clear that I would not walk back airtight truths for fear of the scorn of “Christians” who think it appropriate to bind the consciences of men to non-Scriptural, non-revelatory

1 This Tweet: <https://archive.md/13WS1>

historical claims. Weathering that storm was certainly worth it, as I became free to make such arguments more in the future with little challenge.

Though I expected such backlash and had prepared for it in the careful wording of my post, experiencing it was a completely different matter. I 'knew' in the abstract what some so-called Christians would say and do against me, but only after that post did I know such in the fullest sense. I was rightly angered, and so spent a season intensely dialoguing on the matter, making a number of allies and enemies along the way. I have largely moved on from this matter for other things, but not permanently; I always was going to publish more on these questions, of which this is among the first, and perhaps the most important.

Countless so-called Christians have no consistent standard by which to rightly divide controversies. Some on the 'Protestant' side will, in one breath, affirm the sufficiency of Scripture, such that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man or considered necessary for salvation.² Yet in another breath, they will hear a man expressing doubts or outright denial on the official history of a significant event, and respond by essentially damning that man to hell. As a devout Anglican, defender of the Reformation, and student of history, this reality angers me to this day, more than most other things. How dare a self-proclaimed son of the Reformation attempt to cut off from fellowship one who questions non-revelatory claims; how dare any rational man attempt to ruin the life of another merely for pursuing historical truth without taking for granted what was fed him by school textbooks and the state.

By God's grace, the past year or so has seen an accelerating destruction of the stranglehold the ruling mythos has over the common mind. More and more men are being emboldened to question the moral framework imposed on the West since the end of the Second World War. Unfortunately, this is not yet a

2 *The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion*, Article VI.

movement of the Church, but within the Church; many still hold these narratives as sacrosanct, and are thus seeking to discipline or even excommunicate those who challenge it. Numerous public controversies have broken out in that light, such as that between pastors Joel Webbon and Tobias Riemenschneider over a holocaust meme sent by the former's congregant to the latter, or with the stripping of Michael Spangler's office due to his public violations of secular orthodoxy. Many more cases like this have cropped up, and many more will for the foreseeable future.

It is this immense infighting in the Church and the long-standing deception that has come over most Western Christians on this matter that provoked me to write this book. I will not pretend to be some neutral, enlightened centrist who claims both sides are equal parts right and wrong, that the real solution is my nuanced 'third way;' such a pretense is beneath me. With respect to substance, the New Christian Right is fundamentally correct, both on principles and the particulars (though the latter largely depends on the influencers one is speaking of). The (shrinking) majority of Christian laymen and ministers who, consciously or not, uphold the Post-War Consensus (PWC) are in the wrong, often through no fault of their own, as the PWC is something ingrained in the Western man from primary school. Those who are conscious of the matter do bear some degree of culpability, however, depending on just how informed they are.

The following work is my attempt to correct this error, for the glory of God, and the honour of the saints.

September 2nd, 2025.

EPISTULA AD CLERICOS

Paul Facey, a simple lay Christian of the Sydney Anglican Diocese; to any and all clergy who read this book, but especially the bishops and priests of the Anglican communion, and my own priests most of all.

The shift in Christian discourse has become impossible to ignore, visible even to those outside of the internet. Numerous propositions of history and ethics, once taken for granted and scarcely challenged by any except the socially ostracised, are now fast losing their hold on the common mind. Many are now challenging these beliefs more overtly than would have been socially or politically possible just a few short years ago, as well as resurrecting old perspectives long abandoned by the Church and European civilisation at large.

It is quite likely that you see this trend as a negative. I say ‘quite likely,’ since most clergy are in my experience not the kind to propose radical, culturally taboo ways of thought. You see the rise of public questioning of the Holocaust, of racialist rhetoric, and even admiration for Adolf Hitler; you see these things, and are now worried about the young men in your church being taken in by wicked ideology. Therefore, these men must be confronted and called to recant these views.

I, through this book, argue that this is the wrong approach.

When you see young men in your own parishes entertaining these views, to immediately respond with suspicion or condemnation is to assume the frame of the world, and not that of a worldview grounded in the Apostolic faith or the creation order. By this I mean, that the ubiquitous cultural frame that sees ‘Nazism,’ ‘racism,’ ‘Holocaust denial’ (or at least, things called by those names) as uniquely evil is in fact just that, a cultural frame, and not an organic or logical outgrowth of Christian theology or good philosophy.

By this, I do not mean that National Socialism is a good ideology, or that everything called ‘racism’ is not sinful, or that the Holocaust did not happen. This book will not litigate these issues in themselves, not fully anyway. Rather, I am concerned with the meta-discussion; the discussion about the discussion. By what standards do we Christians judge certain views to be acceptable or erroneous? And for the latter, whether it is a tolerable or intolerable error in an ecclesial community? Most importantly, do we employ the same standards in all such situations, or do we sometimes use a second, unequal standard for what the world deems the chiefest of evils?

It is my contention that, with respect to these culturally central issues, countless Christians do indeed use a separate standard from what they do in other matters. On any number of doctrinal questions, a good Anglican will use the measure of Article 6 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, that any doctrine not contained within nor provable by Holy Scripture is not to be considered necessary for salvation. And yet, that same Anglican will see a friend express doubts or outright denial about the official narrative of the Holocaust – an event obviously not contained in Scripture – and attack his integrity, or even his salvation. It is manifest; there are two separate standards being employed, and only one of them is Christian. And this is not a baseless speculation on my part. I know cases of this occurring, including against myself, and sometimes not even for actually expressing a taboo opinion on

these issues, but merely for saying that a Christian may have certain such opinions.

This cultural frame has been the number one cause behind the systematic destruction of Christianity across the world. In the place of sin, we have bigotry; instead of Satan, we have Hitler. The events of the last century have been formed into a mythos upon which a new religion has been founded, yet which countless Christians have been deceived into thinking is just the application of Christianity in a modern context. The disproportionate and arbitrarily visceral reaction to violations of this mythos should be evidence enough for you as to this reality. By way of another example, how do you think a random pool of people in our society would react to someone blaspheming Christ in public, versus someone yelling 'Heil Hitler' or 'Death to Jews'? In fact, ask yourself and respond with all honesty; how would you react?

If the Church is to reverse its current decline, if she is to reverse the degeneracy of the past few decades, and if she is to be the pillar and foundation of truth (1st Tim. 3:15), she must hold to a pure and undefiled faith, grounded solely in the principles of Holy Scripture and natural law. As a consequence, she must ignore the moral and social priorities of the unbelieving culture, and assess all such issues solely by the aforementioned divine standards. The Church, being the bride of Christ, is not spoken to or commanded by anyone but Him, and she must act accordingly.

I pray that you stand up to be part of this return to true Christian principle, and that this work is of utility to you towards that end.

Yours in Christ,
Paul Facey

September 2nd, 2025.

STATEMENT OF THE QUESTION

In the early-modern period, theological treatises often began with a ‘statement of the question,’ a small section at the start of a work or chapter thereof which clearly defined the issue to be addressed. This is especially visible in Reformation-era Scholastic tomes like the *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* by Francis Turretin and *A Disputation on Holy Scripture* by William Whitaker. A major part of this section was a comprehensive listing of questions that will not be addressed yet which are similar enough to the actual question as to potentially be confused with it. This practice was—and I believe is—essential to maintaining clarity in the work, directing the mind of the reader according to the intention of the author.

To this end, the following work is *not* about:

- Whether particular opinions—on race, politics, and so on—are permissible or sinful.
- Whether certain historical events —especially the Holocaust—actually happened, or to what extent the common story is factual.
- Whether the New Christian Right or Dissident Right is a good political movement.

Rather, the central question of this book is one which logically precedes all of these: By what standards may we determine whether a proposition of any sort—historical, theological, ethical, etc.—can be disputed by people without compromising Christian fellowship or rational integrity, even if the position one holds on such is ultimately incorrect? Put another way, on what matters may Christians in good standing before God and the Church disagree? And by what principles may we distinguish such matters from those which, to greater or lesser degree, difference of opinion should not or cannot be tolerated? In short, up to what point does one have the right to dissent?

To answer this question, the book is divided into three parts:

Part I concerns the principles of the issue, establishing the standards for discerning what matters are and are not able to be peaceably disputed in the Church.

Part II concerns the application of these principles in a series of case studies: the Received History of the Second World War, Racial Egalitarianism, the Jewish Question, and National Socialism. Essentially, the most dangerous issues to discuss today.

Part III takes on a slightly different nature. Whereas the first two parts are of a scholastic nature, this section chiefly concerns practical wisdom; how to engage in these debates in a Christian manner and how to avoid getting into trouble with your peers, or at least minimising the damage.

My desire is for this work to inform Christian men of all persuasions on the nature of proper and improper areas of Christian disagreement, as well as proper and improper conduct in dialogue and debate. To lay my ambition on the table, I hope this book is instrumental in reuniting the conservative Christian sphere in a unanimous understanding of the truth of the matter. Men of both sides know that greater enemies exist who threaten the Church and even our very lives. A division of this scale could

therefore prove to be a fatal mistake if it is not fixed, or if such a fix is not unity in truth but an 'agree to disagree' attitude.

PART I
ON PRINCIPLES

QUESTION 1:

WHAT RATIONAL AGENTS ARE REQUIRED TO BELIEVE.

To begin a book on the right of men to dissent from certain ideas, it is necessary to begin with what men *are* required to believe, specifically what is required *by nature*. By this it is meant, that man, being ζῷον λογικὸν καὶ θνητόν, a rational and mortal animal,³ is able and thus required to comprehend rational matters in order to live according to his nature, and not just generally, but, as it will be later argued, that there are particular ideas which are *of themselves* necessary for men to know. But before continuing, this proposition cannot be asserted without first explaining the foundations upon which it rests, that being: what obligates us to do certain things, and not others? What is ‘good’?

For this issue, I will here give a brief Christian answer: ‘goodness,’ by definition, and as a first principle, is that which all things tend towards. In other words, when things act according to their nature, they are doing what is good. As it is written, “And

3 Porphyry. Isagoge: ch.3, *On Difference*.

God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.”⁴ For man specifically, living according to human nature is good, while violating that nature is evil. The Confucian *Doctrine of the Mean* attests to this in its opening line: “What Heaven has conferred is called The Nature; an accordance with this nature is called The Path of duty; the regulation of this path is called Instruction.”⁵ Further, all things have their being and nature from God; it therefore follows that God is the grounding of all good. Finally, as God created all these things according to *His* nature, for *His* pleasure and purposes, it follows that He is *the* good to which all things *ultimately* tend.

From the aforementioned, all that is good is only good as far as it relates to God; conversely, evil is the contravention of the will or nature of God. This will and nature manifests in creation itself, especially in man, whom God made as His image on earth, meaning that man in particular is intended to be a reflection of God. Thus, for man to be good is, in essence, to live according to His nature, and this includes knowing certain basic truths. That, I hope, answers the question of what ‘good’ is, and from that why we ought to follow our nature.

Moving on, the matters with which man must be acquainted by nature—again, being a rational animal—are derived from *natural revelation*. For the sake of precision, ‘natural revelation’ refers to those moral and metaphysical truths of the world that can be discerned by human reason without the aid of supernatural revelation. From this we may distinguish between *natural theology*—truths about God and divine things discernible from nature through reason⁶—and *natural law*—moral truths discernible from

4 Gen. 1:31.

5 Zisi. *The Doctrine of the Mean*: §1.

6 Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Contra Gentiles*: 1.3.

nature through reason. This paradigm is directly affirmed by the blessed Apostle in his letter to the church in Rome:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.⁷

He speaks there of men that are neither Jewish nor Christian, meaning that *even they*, without the special grace of God, can still discern a bare minimum about Him from creation. Notably, this example from the Apostle demonstrates that among the essential propositions which man by nature must know is the existence of God, the originator of our own nature and the ultimate end to which we are created. Without Him, there would be no sense of the true, the good, and the beautiful, only what 'is' without reference to *τέλος* (*telos*). Atheism, then, is an abomination to human nature, comparable in severity to – and in a sense even worse than – sodomy. The same follows for other realities proper to our nature, including the very idea of living according to one's nature (both human nature generally and more specific natures such as sex), and the particulars of living by such natures.

From the preceding it likewise follows that God is the ultimate standard by which we ought to orient our lives. Epictetus beautifully illustrates this:

⁷ Romans 1:18-21.

We see then that the carpenter when he has learned certain things becomes a carpenter; the pilot by learning certain things becomes a pilot. May it not then in philosophy also not be sufficient to wish to be wise and good, and that there is also a necessity to learn certain things? We inquire then what these things are. The philosophers say that we ought first to learn that there is a God and that he provides for all things; also that it is not possible to conceal from him our acts, or even our intentions and thoughts. The next thing is to learn what is the nature of the Gods; for such as they are discovered to be, he, who would please and obey them, must try with all his power to be like them. If the divine is faithful, man also must be faithful; if it is free, man also must be free; if beneficent, man also must be beneficent; if magnanimous, man also must be magnanimous; as being then an imitator of God he must do and say every thing consistently with this fact.⁸

In other words, becoming “wise and good” (which are proper ends to man’s nature, and thus ought to be pursued) entails the acknowledgement of the source of man’s being (God) and the imitation of that source (faithfulness, freedom, beneficence, and so on). It is only by knowing and imitating God that we can properly live according to our own nature. However, as *supernatural* revelation teaches us, the corrupted state of man’s nature means that we cannot help but do this imperfectly, often terribly.⁹ Even across the many peoples of history where we can see the natural law at work, many failures to abide by that same law are visible. The Romans knew well that a divine power governed the universe; they also codified the murder of infants in their very constitution.¹⁰ The Greeks practically invented

8 Lucius Flavius Arrian. *Discourses of Epictetus*: 2.14.

9 Rom. 3:23.

10 *The Twelve Tables*: Table IV.

philosophy; they also lusted after young boys.¹¹ History thus teaches us the power of sin over our natural faculties to discern the good, therefore necessitating direct divine revelation. Ambrose of Milan explained it best:

Here is one reason that the Law was unnecessary and became necessary, unnecessary in that it would not have been needed if we had been able to keep the natural law; but, as we did not keep it, the Law of Moses became needful to teach me obedience and loosen that bond of Adam's deception which had ensnared his whole posterity...

Consider another reason. The Law of Moses was not needful; hence, it entered secretly. Its entrance seems not of an ordinary kind, but like something clandestine because it entered secretly into the place of the natural law. Thus, if she had but kept her place, this written Law would never have entered in, but, since deception had banished that law and nearly blotted it out of the human breast, pride reigned and disobedience was rampant. Therefore, that other took its place so that by its written expression it might challenge us and shut our mouth, in order to make the whole world subject to God.¹²

Against Neo-Calvinistic Biblicism

The aforementioned effects of sin on man's intellect has recently led to a certain movement of Christians who oppose traditional conceptions of natural law. These Christians—whom I have termed 'Neo-Calvinistic Biblicists'—have concluded that natural law as a concept is at best useless and at worst dangerous. We are not pagans who rely on mere human reasoning through the lens of

11 E.g. the *Elegies* of Theognis (6th cen. B.C.), wherein he expresses his "love" for a boy named Cynrus.

12 Ambrose of Milan. *Letter 83*.

sin, nor what seems right in a corrupted natural world. Divine revelation alone is our guide, and to appeal to anything but that is to deny the sufficiency of Scripture. A major representative of this philosophy is Joseph Boot, president of the Ezra Institute and author of a recent tome on Theonomic thought titled *The Mission of God*, in which he dedicates a chapter to critiquing the use of natural law by Christians. The chapter is, in my opinion, quite disjointed, but I will here provide the most relevant quotes that illustrate his points.

The main rival to biblical law in Christian thought has been variations of natural law theory. Natural law theories are a speculative and complex combination of metaphysical and moral philosophy with a long history; notably articulated as far back as Aristotle, and then in some measure ‘Christianized’ by Thomas Aquinas, with some original insights and development. Thomistic scholar D. J. O’ Connor explains, “the theory of natural law which is the basis of St. Thomas’ ethics turns on the idea that human nature is constituted by a unique set of properties which can be understood and summed up in a definition.” The idea here is that things ‘are what they are,’ and so we must understand the ‘essence’ of things, including the human person, in order to develop or recognize rational moral action. The ideas of ‘good’ and ‘being’ are essentially equivalent terms because good is viewed as a property of all existing things. Evil is viewed as the absence of good in a manner analogous to darkness being the absence of light, or silence the absence of sound, or cold the absence of heat. In other words, “Evil is present in a thing to the extent that it lacks some degree of realization for which its nature fits it.” Thus by rational deliberation on the essence of things, one is meant to be able to come to understand right moral action. This moral action

is not an identifiable body of laws but a highly controversial abstraction.¹³

After a brief look at the history of the concept of natural law (as he understands it), Dr. Boot critiques it thusly:

[F]or Christians to try and save modern civilization by an appeal to natural law (disconnected from the God of Scripture and his revealed law), is to appeal to classical philosophy and constitutes a death wish. St. Paul certainly does teach that all human beings know the work of God's law even though they may not be consistently conscious of all its precepts – they recognize by created instinct the work of God's law on their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to this reality (Rom. 2:14–15). However, though people know the work of God's law, in rebellion they don't want to obey it. Just as they see God's attributes and power in creation but refuse to honour God and worship the creation instead, so they know God's requirement and sanctions in their conscience but rebel against it. As a consequence, God hands them over to a depraved mind (Rom. 1:24) and they then live in terms of that (Rom. 1:29–32). Thus the work of God's law known by common grace (not by natural law) serves only to condemn people in their sin and rebellion, and does not provide an alternate law structure to biblical law, since rightly understood (not perverted or suppressed), the law in man's being only confirms God's written law (Rom. 2)...

Flinn points out that at the heart of the Calvinist view of biblical political theory is that the civil government must be under God's law, or be blasphemous. Furthermore, "unless we are willing to grant this doctrine and build upon it, there can be no Christian politics; there can only be humanistic politics, which, when practiced by Christians, is idolatry." The

13 Joseph Boot, *The Mission of God: A Manifesto of Hope for Society*. Wilberforce Publications, 2016: 8.3.

upshot then of natural law theories in whatever form it is presented is that authority is shifted from God to man, from revelation to nature and reason...

Simply stated, how can anyone determine for himself or others a minimum content of natural law that binds all people and can therefore be coerced by legislation without being hopelessly arbitrary? O' Connor wrestles with the difficulty of providing precepts of social morality within natural law theories, showing that they can offer only a description of salient facts about the human species and typical human desires, followed by a recognition of the obvious that "it is necessary, if men are to live together at all, to have certain rules protecting their personal safety and property and ensuring that degree of mutual forbearance and respect that will make social living tolerable." Or, as he otherwise states it, "Do as you would be done by." O'Connor thus sees the root of the natural law problem clearly, noting that such a view prescribes no unconditional moral imperatives. "We are given no reason why we ought to act in a particular way. And this fact emphasizes once again the difficulty facing any attempt to base morality on human nature." The inescapable result of such thinking means, as Rushdoony has pointed out, that "lacking the transcendental standard which Scripture provides, other systems inevitably turn to an immanent one and absolutize the state, the individual, or some other aspect of life."¹⁴

These block quotes were the best I could find that provide the essence of Boot's explication of Neo-Calvinistic Biblicism. That would be my first critique; he needs to be more succinct. Other than this, I have three counters in response:

First, Boot never provides a meaningful response to a particular Christian theorist or tradition of natural law. He does

14 Ibid.

name-drop Thomas Aquinas, but never responds to his articulations of natural law and his defences thereof, whether from the *Summa Theologiae*, the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, his many *Quaestiones Disputatae* and *Opuscula*, his voluminous Biblical commentaries; nothing. Rather, Boot orients his entire critique in the chapter towards a couple of one-sentence summaries of the thought of Aquinas from D. J. O'Connor's *Aquinas and Natural Law: New Studies in Ethics*, followed by his own quippy, hostile interpretations of those summaries. Suffice to say, this is woefully insufficient for the aim of the chapter.

Second, taking for granted the articulation of natural law laid out so far in this book and in other recent Reformed Christian works on the subject,¹⁵ and which are yet representing a long-standing tradition, Boot severely misrepresents the foundations and function of natural law. He insinuates that natural law represents an “alternative law structure to biblical law.” On the contrary, natural law is itself revelation from God, since it is God who created man and the universe, and He did so with general and particular intentions. This has commonly been articulated as one of the ‘two books’; one being of Scripture, and the other being of nature, both with the same divine author.¹⁶ This error by Boot is

15 Stephen Wolfe, *The Case for Christian Nationalism*. Canon Press, 2022; David Haines & Andrew A. Fulford, *Natural Law: A Brief Introduction and Biblical Defense*. The Davenant Institute, 2017.

16 E.g. Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*: Pars II, 11. “Ratio autem ad intelligentiam praedictorum haec est: quia primum principium fecit mundum istum sensibilem, ad declarandum seipsum, videlicet ut homo per illum, tanquam per speculum et vestigium, reduceretur in Deum artificem amandum et laudandum. Et secundum hoc **duplex est liber, unus scilicet scriptus intus**, qui est Dei aeterna ars et sapientia, et **alius scriptus foris**, scilicet mundus sensibilis. Cum igitur esset una creatura, quae sensum habebat intus ad cognitionem libri interioris, ut angelus, et alia, quae totum sensum habebat foris, ut quodlibet animal brutum; ad perfectionem universitatis debuit fieri creatura, quae hoc sensu duplici esset praedita, ad cognitionem libri scripti intus et foris, id est sapientiae et sui operis.”

compounded when he claims that the “upshot” of “natural law theories” is that “authority is shifted from God to man, from revelation to nature and reason.” Of course, Christian natural law theorists completely deny this, and will rightly respond by noting that it is not bare nature *as such* which is the principle of authority, but God revealing Himself *through* nature, in an analogous (but not identical) manner as when He reveals Himself through Scripture. Simply claiming otherwise without any argument is pure question begging on the part of Boot.

What follows from the above is that even unbelievers can discern with his natural faculties at least *certain things* about God’s character and His intention for the created order, such that Christians can meaningfully draw from them to improve our own thought. Of course, what *Christian* natural law traditions *universally* acknowledge is that sin corrupts man’s faculties to such a degree that he will inevitably make critical errors in his reasoning, which is why God then gave us supernatural revelation, as explained by Ambrose earlier. This corruption, though touching *all* of man’s faculties, is not *absolute*. Nonetheless, supernatural revelation became morally necessary due to the manifold errors brought about by sin, as even a certain natural law theorist writes:

[H]uman reason is very deficient in things concerning God. A sign of this is that philosophers in their researches, by natural investigation, into human affairs, have fallen into many errors, and have disagreed among themselves. And consequently, in order that men might have knowledge of God, free of doubt and uncertainty, it was necessary for Divine matters to be delivered to them by way of faith, being told to them, as it were, by God Himself Who cannot lie.

Did I just quote Boot again? Or James White? Bahnsen? Van Til? No; this is Thomas Aquinas.¹⁷

Third, Boot's one actual argument against the umbrella of natural law theories that does not wholly depend on strawmen is quite poor. He asks the question: how do we know what natural law precepts are correct? Who gets to decide? Natural law at best provides merely descriptive statements, and no "unconditional moral imperatives."¹⁸ This is why we need the definitive —'magisterial,' if you will—authority of the written word of God. I use 'magisterial' here, because Boot's argument is in fact the same one forwarded by many Romanists against the Reformation. They will point to the observable issue of numerous "Protestants" all upholding the principle of *Sola Scriptura*—the very thing Boot is arguing for here—and how they yet all disagree on many questions of interpretation. From this, they reason that Scripture alone is insufficient for doctrinal certainty, and another authority that norms our interpretation of it is therefore necessary. The counter-reformer Francis de Sales, an early pioneer of this argument, makes the case after having outlined a hypothetical debate on Biblical interpretation between himself and the Continental Reformed theologian Theodore Beza:

I quite admit, be it said in passing, that he who shall enquire of Theodore Beza will say that you have reasoned better than I, but on what does he rely for this judgment except on what seems good to himself, according to the pre-

17 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*: II-II, Q.2 A.4.

18 As an aside, I find this phrase from Boot to be in contradiction with his own paradigm. "Unconditional moral imperatives" imply epistemic neutrality; that is, moral imperatives not 'conditioned' upon anything, they just exist. Of course, basic Presuppositionalism (and Biblical teaching) predicates or 'conditions' truth, goodness, and beauty on God. In this sense, then, there are no "unconditional moral imperatives." They are all grounded at some level of a descriptive condition that yet bridges the is-ought gap.

judgment he has formed of the matter long ago ?—and he may say what he likes, for who has made him judge between you and me? ...

I am not in doubt, as to whether we must give belief to the holy Word ; —who knows not that it is in the supreme degree of certitude? What exercises me is the understanding of this Scripture—the consequences and conclusions drawn from it, which being different beyond number and very often contradictory on the same point, so that each one chooses his own, one here the other there—who shall make me see truth through so many vanities? Who shall give me to see this Scripture in its native colour?¹⁹

If references to Scripture are replaced with natural law, you get Boot's exact argument. He is therefore implicitly borrowing from the tradition of Romanist skepticism, a well-documented yet little appreciated strain of the Roman tradition.²⁰

Of course, pointing to how a bad faction posits a similar argument does not itself make the original argument false, and so I will offer here the same response to Boot's argument as I do to the formally identical Romanist one: The mere existence of disagreement over the interpretation of a thing does not entail that this thing is not sufficiently clear in its content, nor that men are incapable of arriving at a correct understanding thereof without another infallible authority. Other factors like the sinful inclinations of men respecting intellectual matters may be at fault. Further, pointing to this confusion does not at all address arguments for a particular understanding of the thing in question. In the case of Biblical interpretation, complaining about how many disagreeing interpretations there are does not address

19 Francis de Sales, *The Catholic Controversy*: Art. III ch. 1.

20 For an overview of this historical reality, see Richard H. Popkin, *Skepticism and the Counter-Reformation in France*.

reasons given for a particular interpretation. In this case, complaining about contradicting understandings thereof does not address the evidence given for a particular understanding of the same. Citing epistemic peer disagreement in this manner is a way for one to *appear* intellectually self-aware, but without having to do real legwork by directly confronting the claims before him. So I simply respond with this: I do not care what this or that other natural law theorist claims, because it is completely immaterial to what I am saying. I am asserting what I believe is the proper sense of natural law and have given reasons X, Y, and Z for it. Please refute that.

Conclusion

To conclude with a basic answer to the chapter's question, the basic set of those things which a man ought to *intrinsically* know includes, at minimum, the following:

- I. That there is a God.²¹
- II. That He created us with a particular nature.²²
- III. That we ought to live according to that nature (thus, there is 'good' and 'evil').²³
- IV. That we ought to imitate God in accordance with that nature.²⁴
- V. That He is worthy of worship.²⁵

21 Ps. 14:1; Rom. 1:20.

22 Gen. 1:26–27.

23 Rom. 2:14–15.

24 Follows from Gen. 1:26–27 * Rom. 2:14–15 taken together, as well as passages like Rom. 12:2, Eph. 5:1–2, etc..

25 Rev. 4:11.

For expediency, rather than argue at length for each of these claims from natural law (a whole book in its own right), I provided citations from Scripture that express or presuppose these natural principles, for the satisfaction of my intended Christian audience. That said, these propositions are proper to man's rational nature in themselves; therefore, men have "no excuse," per the blessed Apostle, to be ignorant of these things. The properly functioning conscience is fully aware of and thus bound by these claims.

What I hope to have demonstrated here is not an exhaustive list of propositions that the rational man must know; I am confident that there are others I have not included. Rather, I give this basic list, first, because they are the most clear points of natural revelation both from nature and supernatural testimony; second, in order to demonstrate the *kinds* of claims that I argue to be the sort that man is *per se* bound to believe, given a functioning rational faculty. These claims are a) essential to human existence and flourishing, and b) immediately touch the conscience upon observation of the world. This is in contrast with most other contingent facts, such as the diameter of the earth, the recipe for pepperoni pizza, or the historicity of a certain event. Outside of specific conditions – to be discussed in the next chapter (see 'On Culpable Ignorance') – these contingent facts are not in themselves necessary to affirm, and may therefore legitimately be questioned by a man operating with the proper use of reason in accordance with his nature.

We have now established the foundation upon which the rest of this book will rest. As such, this discussion is not sufficient in itself, but invites further questions which must be answered, chief among them being the nature of the conscience, the mechanism by which truths of God and nature are pressed upon our hearts. Further, there are conditions whereupon a man may be bound to

affirm contingent propositions. We will explore these issues in the coming chapter.

QUESTION 2:

THE NATURE OF THE CONSCIENCE, AND BY WHAT MEANS IT BINDS AND IS BOUND.

The Definition of Conscience

It is necessary to first establish what is meant by the ‘conscience’ (Lat. *conscientia*). A solid definition is forwarded by Robert Sanderson, an English divine and Bishop of Lincoln in the 17th century, who had a modest role in the 1662 revision of the Book of Common Prayer. “Conscience therefore,” says Bp. Sanderson, “I define in short to be, a faculty or habit of the practical understanding, which enables the mind of man, by the use of reason and argument, to apply the light which it has to particular moral actions.”²⁶ This understanding fits best with the blessed Apostle’s use of the Greek equivalent, *συνείδησις*. The most salient passage, Romans 2:12–16, reads as follows:

26 Robert Sanderson, *Ten Lectures on the Obligation of Human Conscience*. 1660: Lecture 1, ch. 1. NOTE: I gave touchups to the text on capitalisation to make it more readable.

English (NASB 1977)

For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law; and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; for not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, **their conscience bearing witness**, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.²⁷

Some key words have at this point been cited as denoting ‘conscience’ in the classical languages; in Latin, *conscientia*, and in Greek, συνείδησις (and, in later Scholastic moral theology συντήρησις). A number of issues abound in the development and definition of these terms, especially in the debates of the medieval Scholastics; for example, the distinction between an eternal, infallible conscience versus a fallible, empirical one.²⁸ These issues, being much more speculative in nature, or focused on the use of particular words as opposed to the concepts they signify, fall well beyond the scope for this book. Nonetheless, I will point the reader interested in such things to Hendrik Stoker’s *Conscience: Phenomena and Theories* as a work which discusses these

27 Greek text (SBLGNT): “Ὅσοι γὰρ ἀνόμως ἥμαρτον, ἀνόμως καὶ ἀπολοῦνται· καὶ ὅσοι ἐν νόμῳ ἥμαρτον, διὰ νόμου κριθήσονται· οὐ γὰρ οἱ ἀκροαταὶ νόμου δίκαιοι παρὰ τῷ θεῷ, ἀλλ’ οἱ ποιηταὶ νόμου δικαιωθήσονται. ὅταν γὰρ ἕθνη τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα φύσει τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν, οὗτοι νόμον μὴ ἔχοντες ἑαυτοῖς εἰσὶν νόμος· οἵτινες ἐνδείκνυνται τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου γραπτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν, **συμμαρτυροῦσιν αὐτῶν τῆς συνειδήσεως** καὶ μεταξὺ ἀλλήλων τῶν λογισμῶν κατηγορούντων ἢ καὶ ἀπολογουμένων, ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὅτε κρίνει ὁ θεὸς τὰ κρυπτὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου διὰ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.

28 Hendrik Stoker (trans. Philip E. Blosser), *Conscience: Phenomena and Theories*. University of Notre Dame Press, 2018: p.36.

historical questions surrounding the conscience, along with a wider discussion on the conscience itself. But I will also quote a salient portion from Stroker on a problem that has arisen in the attempts of philosophers to define the conscience:

In addition to the inevitable bias and limitation inherent in any theoretical system, philosophers are not always inclined to let objective reality be the primary determining factor in their systems, but they prefer, rather, to impose their systems upon reality. Their inclination toward a subjective bias, influenced largely by their personal interests and particular historical development, tends to render their concepts and systems distorted and misleading. In most systems, those influences that are based on personal and historical considerations tend to be more perceptibly evident than those based merely on facts or on reality alone. Indeed, some philosophers have attained heights of arbitrariness in their conceptual distortions of factual data. At the same time, each system has at least a partial truth that it tends to universalize into an all-encompassing truth that applies to every sphere, far beyond those areas where it is objectively applicable. No system is possible without at least an ontically founded partial truth. Otherwise it would become sheer nonsense.²⁹

I take this as a sober reminder for how an investigation like this should be conducted. Though theoretical presuppositions are an inevitable necessity (as the Van Tillians of the world will tell you *ad nauseam*), discussions of such must always be grounded in clear, observable reality. Outside of axiomatic truths of which the contrary is impossible, our theories must conform to what we observe, because these theories are being posited as explanations

29 Ibid: pp.32–33.

of the empirical, thus predicating them on the nature of the empirical.

The Nature of the Conscience

From the above considerations, we see that the conscience behaves as a quasi-distinct entity in the human mind that judges our actions. Now we will briefly survey the observations of our ancestors – spiritual, intellectual, and hereditary – on the nature of the conscience; that is, its purpose and its functions considered in the concrete, beyond the basic definition already provided.

We will begin with the 1st to 2nd century Stoic philosopher Epictetus, who speaks of the “guardian” or “daemon” that God has placed within men as the judge of his actions:

But who tells you that you have equal power with Zeus? Nevertheless he has placed by every man a guardian, every man's Daemon, to whom he has committed the care of the man, a guardian who never sleeps, is never deceived. For to what better and more careful guardian could He have intrusted each of us? When then you have shut the doors and made darkness within, remember never to say that you are alone, for you are not; but God is within, and your Daemon is within, and what need have they of light to see what you are doing?³⁰

While not called such, the faculty he describes here is without question what we today call the ‘conscience.’ Of special note is the emphasis placed on the daemon’s role as an all-knowing judge, a panopticon of the mind. Men of a well-formed conscience can attest to this phenomenon.

30 Arrian, *Discourses of Epictetus*: bk. 1 ch. 14.

The Judean philosopher Philo of Alexandria—a contemporary of Christ and the New Testament, and himself an appropriator of Stoic thought—gave a similar account of this same faculty possessed by every man:

[E]very soul has for its birth-fellow and house-mate a monitor a whose way is to admit nothing that calls for censure, whose nature is ever to hate evil and love virtue, who is its accuser and its judge in one. If he be once roused as accuser he censures, accuses and puts the soul to shame, and again as judge, he instructs, admonishes and exhorts it to change its ways. And if he has the strength to persuade it, he rejoices and makes peace. But if he cannot, he makes war to the bitter end, never leaving it alone by day or night, but plying it with stabs and deadly wounds until he breaks the thread of its miserable and ill-starred life.³¹

Finally, the ancient Confucian philosopher Mengzi (or 'Mencius') made the following observations:

Mencius said, 'All men have a mind which cannot bear to see the sufferings of others. ... When I say that all men have a mind which cannot bear to see the sufferings of others, my meaning may be illustrated thus: even now-a-days, if men suddenly see a child about to fall into a well, they will without exception experience a feeling of alarm and distress. They will feel so, not as a ground on which they may gain the favour of the child's parents, nor as a ground on which they may seek the praise of their neighbours and friends, nor from a dislike to the reputation of having been unmoved by such a thing. From this case we may perceive that the feeling of

31 Philo of Alexandria, *On the Decalogue*: §87. Found through this paper: H-J Klauck, *Accuser, Judge and Paraclete - On conscience in Philo of Alexandria*. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 1999: 20, #1, pp.107–118.

commiseration is essential to man, that the feeling of shame and dislike is essential to man, that the feeling of modesty and complaisance is essential to man, and that the feeling of approving and disapproving is essential to man. The feeling of commiseration is the principle of benevolence. The feeling of shame and dislike is the principle of righteousness. The feeling of modesty and complaisance is the principle of propriety. The feeling of approving and disapproving is the principle of knowledge. Men have these four principles just as they have their four limbs.³²

Notwithstanding the imperfections of Greco-Roman, Judean, and Confucian thought, they each yet had a good grasp of the natural faculties God has placed in man, which, though greatly damaged, were not completely ruined by the Fall. The shared testimonies of such distant and contrasting figures strongly indicates the observation of a real phenomenon, and this is buttressed when we consider various comments by the ancient fathers of the Church, men guided by the Holy Spirit and informed by Holy Scripture, the infallible interpreter of natural law. Augustine recounts in his *Confessions* the time when his own conscience rebuked him for the unnecessary delay in coming to the Christian faith, during and after hearing the conversion story of a man called Ponticianus:

I supposed that the reason for my postponing 'from day to day' (Ecclus. 5: 8) the moment when I would despise worldly ambition and follow you was that I had not seen any certainty by which to direct my course. But the day had now come when I stood naked to myself, and my conscience complained against me: 'Where is your tongue? You were saying that, because the truth is uncertain, you do not want to abandon the burden of futility. But look, it is certain now, and the

32 Mencius, *Gong Sun Chou* I: 1.6.

burden still presses on you. Yet wings are won by the freer shoulders of men who have not been exhausted by their searching and have not taken ten years or more to meditate on these matters.' This is how I was gnawing at my inner self. I was violently overcome by a fearful sense of shame during the time that Ponticianus was telling his story. When he had ended his talk and settled the matter for which he came, he went home and I was left to myself. What accusations against myself did I not bring? With what verbal rods did I not scourge my soul so that it would follow me in my attempt to go after you! But my soul hung back. It refused, and had no excuse to offer. The arguments were exhausted, and all had been refuted. The only thing left to it was a mute trembling, and as if it were facing death it was terrified of being restrained from the treadmill of habit by which it suffered 'sickness unto death' (John 11: 4).³³

In his *Commentary on Romans*, Origen of Alexandria comments on Paul's use of 'conscience' and gives his own summary view on its nature:

Certainly the Apostle says that those who have the law written down in their hearts make use of the testimony of the conscience. Consequently it appears necessary to discuss what the Apostle is referring to by "conscience," whether it is something substantially different from the heart or the soul. For it is said elsewhere of the conscience that it condemns and is not condemned, and it judges man but is itself not judged. As John says, "if our conscience does not condemn us, we have confidence before God." And again Paul himself says in another passage, "this is our boast, the testimony of our conscience." And so I perceive here such great freedom [of conscience] that indeed it is constantly rejoicing and

33 Augustine, *Confessions*: 8.7.

exulting in good works but is never convicted of evil deeds. Instead it rebukes and convicts the soul to which it cleaves. In my opinion the conscience is identical with the spirit, which the Apostle says is with the soul as we have taught above. The conscience functions like a pedagogue to the soul, a guide and companion, as it were, so that it might admonish it concerning better things or correct and convict it of faults.³⁴

Most interesting from Origen is his view of the conscience as an infallible guide that itself is not judged, being identical with the “spirit” and so the teacher of the soul. Immediately following this section he speaks of the soul of the righteous being united with the spirit after death, but the soul of the unrighteous being separated from the spirit and “tak[ing] its place with the unbelievers.” It will be argued later that the conscience is in fact judged, contra Origen, and that it can err, contra the implication of his argument that it does not. Nonetheless, his attestation of it being distinct from the soul is relevant and well taken.

Finally, a lesser-known witness is the Pseudo-Macarian homilies, written in the late-4th or early-5th century. The 15th homily includes this section, wherein the function of the conscience is described in detail:

Suppose there were a very great palace, and this were deserted, and became full of every evil smell, and of many dead bodies. Well, the heart is Christ's palace, and it is full of all uncleanness, and of crowds of many wicked spirits. It must be refounded and rebuilt, and its storechambers and bedrooms put in order ; for there Christ the King, with the angels and holy spirits, comes to rest, and to dwell, and to walk in it, and to set His kingdom. I tell you, it is like a ship furnished with plenty of tackle, where the captain disposes of

34 Origen, *Commentary on Romans*: 2.9.3.

all, and sets them their tasks, finding fault with some, and showing others their way about. The heart has a captain in the mind, the conscience, which is ever judging us, thoughts accusing or else excusing one another.

You see that conscience will not slubber over such thoughts, which comply with sin, but at once judges them. It tells no lies. It attests what it must say before God in the day of judgment, as though judging us continually. Suppose there be a chariot and reins ; the animals and all the apparatus are under one driver; so when he pleases, he is carried along by the chariot at a great rate, and when he pleases, he stops it. Whichever way he pleases to turn it, there it goes along with him. The whole chariot is in the driver's power. In like manner the heart contains many natural faculties bound up with it, and it is the mind and conscience which chides and guides the heart, and calls from sleep the natural faculties that spring in the heart. The soul has many members, though it is but one.³⁵

Finally, that the conscience behaves as a functionally distinct judge over a man's thoughts, words, and deeds is clear not only from these ancient authors, but principally from experience (from which these men also draw), proven anytime a man thinks, says, or does a thing, only for a voice or feeling to intrude and say, "You should not have done that." Hence, the conscience is not merely a man's thoughts, opinions, desires, or preferences; it is a unique judge placed over each man by God from which none can escape, not even the unbeliever who knows not God. None, that is, except the most depraved of men, whose difference from the animals appear only to be of degree, not kind. As an aside, this is especially critical in the context of Romanist apologetics and polemics, where certain figures have – at least by implication – equated the

35 Pseudo-Macarius, *Homily 15*: 33–34.

conscience with a man's mere personal preferences. This false idea has been thus corrected.

The overall nature of the conscience is well summarised by Paul Strohm in his *Conscience: A Very Short Introduction*, particularly as regards the extreme variation of manifestations of the conscience:

Conscience refuses any settled or unvarying content. It can justify generous self-sacrifice, but selfish individualism as well. It can motivate an act of charity or an act of terror. The dictates of conscience can be Christian or pagan, divinely based or resolutely secular, selfishly nationalistic or generously international. Even its gender remains uncertain: conscience may be male or female, a disembodied voice or a parental one, may [*sic*] even speak in chorus as public opinion. Equally variable with regard to source and location, conscience may be heard as a prompting voice within or as a commanding voice from without, and often both at once: an uncanny presence which knows everything about us yet retains an outside loyalty, whether to a deity or to a common good. Excellent things and some terrible things have been done in its name; much reasoned social betterment and occasional mad exceptionalism.

Conscience is, perhaps by definition, inconvenient. The individual visited by conscience usually feels, at least initially, that he or she was doing fine without it. Moreover, if conscience is variable with respect to its location or its content, some elements of what might be called its 'personality' remain distressingly the same. Wherever and whenever encountered, its characteristic habit is to goad,

prick, wheedle, denounce, and harass rather than to mollify
or assuage...³⁶

Notwithstanding the author's silly dichotomy of "selfishly nationalistic" and "generously international," his overview is vivid and compelling. Conscience can take nigh endless forms, justify nearly anything, but in all cases it seeks to judge and move a man in a certain direction. What direction it takes distinguishes a formed conscience from an unformed one, which will now be considered.

Formed Versus Unformed Conscience

Following earlier discussions on goodness and natural law, the 'formed' conscience denotes a conscience that is acting according to its proper, God-ordained nature; correctly judging right and wrong in the thoughts, words, and deeds of an individual. Conversely, an 'unformed' or 'malformed' conscience is that which fails to fulfill that purpose. Given the nature of psychology and sanctification, we cannot speak of 'formed' and 'unformed' as a pure dichotomy, like being pregnant versus not pregnant. We must rather treat these as the ends of a 'spectrum' (as much as it pains me to use this word), in which all men are more or less formed than one another. Some men have so well-formed a conscience that we can rightly speak of it as 'formed' in general even if it occasionally messes up, as is inevitable in this life (unless one holds to the doctrine of 'entire sanctification'). Likewise, some men have so seared a conscience that it can clearly be called 'unformed,' even if sometimes it rightly judges a blatant evil as

36 Paul Strohm, *Conscience: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2011: p.2.

evil, like if a professional hitman refuses to target women and children. Many others still may be closer to the middle, having a conscience that gets many things both right and wrong. It is the lifelong struggle of the Christian to see his conscience further and further perfected as far as is possible.

An important question arises from this consideration; are men bound to follow an erring conscience? Numerous Christian authors have tackled this question over centuries, but a fairly easy answer can be discerned when we appreciate basic distinctions. Here is the scenario: A man believes a certain thing to be evil, when in reality it is a good. As regards his own conscience, his subjective apprehension of the matter, it would in fact be evil for him to do so anyway, because he perceives an action as evil yet chooses to commit it anyway; this is a sin against conscience.

‘Objectively,’³⁷ however, his action was not evil, because what *he thought* was evil was *in fact* not. Vice versa, let’s say he perceives something as good – in fact, a necessity – and yet it is in reality an objective evil. The same conclusions apply but in reverse; for him to not do so would be *subjectively* evil, because he is neglecting to perform what he perceives is a necessary good. But if he *were* to do it, he would be objectively committing evil. The Thomistic blog *Ite ad Thomam* breaks down the issue very well with, as you may guess, a focus on Aquinas’ thought on the matter,³⁸ which I happen to think is a great benefit on this issue. The final words of the blog on a scenario like the one just

37 I always qualify references to “objective” morality by noting that, strictly speaking, there is no stance-independent morality; it is wholly predicated on God and His nature. Practically speaking, this is ‘objective’ to us, as God is utterly foundational to and pervasive within creation. Technically, however, this means that our morality is predicated on a subject.

38 Don Paco, *A Reader Asks: Does an Erring Conscience Bind?*. *Ite ad Thomam*, 2009.

mentioned are most apt: “with a malformed conscience, ‘damned if you do it, damned if you don’t.’”

The Binding of the Conscience

The next salient question that must be determined is: By what means is the conscience bound, and by what means does it bind the individual

Critical to answering this is first answering what it means to “bind” with respect to the conscience. *First*, as the question makes clear, the conscience both *binds* and *is bound*. Respecting the former, it exercises this authority over a man, and respecting the latter, it is acted upon by a higher authority, which will be elaborated on shortly. *Second*, and per Sanderson’s definition, the function of the conscience is to apply knowledge to particular moral actions; for example, “I see a man who is not watching his wallet on a public table; but I know theft is wrong; therefore, I will not take his wallet.”

In light of the above, to *bind* a conscience, then, is to restrict the possible conclusions it may come to, often to just one. So, say a man has no concept of the immorality of coveting another man’s wife; his (malformed) conscience frees him to covet or not covet. But when it is revealed to him by a missionary through the Holy Scriptures that to covet another’s wife is sin, that man’s conscience is now bound to not permit covetousness. This case makes explicit what was outlined earlier in an abstract manner: what the conscience binds a man to do or not do *is not mutually inclusive* with what is good, even though it ought to be bound to what is good. This critical matter will be elaborated on soon.

Next, for the conscience itself to *bind* a man is for that conscience to judge a man’s actions, both actual and hypothetical, and declare to him what is and is not permissible. In the same

example, this same man now sees his neighbour's wife and finds her very beautiful. His imagination begins to entertain a scenario where she belongs to him, but his conscience—now properly formed—steps in and condemns such thoughts. Once again, a conscience can indeed “bind” one to error, but only *de facto*. It only has the *right* to bind to truth, per its natural function. Thus, a ruling of the conscience against divine or natural law is little more valid than a local judge ruling against the Constitution of the United States, though it still *practically* binds (in a psychological sense) until it is directly rebuked.

In light of this, it is necessary to distinguish between a binding *de jure* (by right) and a binding *de facto* (by fact), particularly with respect to the conscience being bound. The latter can in principle be done by any authority by means of coercion; however, the *right* to bind the conscience is reserved to God alone, for reasons which will soon be explicated. This distinction is why one may find the Reformers arguing, on the one hand, that the Church of Rome “binds” the consciences of men to error; yet, on the other hand, that God alone *can* “bind” the conscience.

In addition to providing concrete demonstration of what it looks like for the conscience to bind and be bound, the above illustrations also show the precise *means* by which the conscience is bound, which is the question we are most concerned with. The answer, in sum, is twofold: *ultimately*, by God; *proximately*, by moral knowledge, or the ‘light of reason.’

Concerning God as *ultimate* cause of the conscience being bound, this power belongs to him alone. To quote again from Bp. Sanderson:

The conscience, we must observe, ultimately resolves itself into that fixed *law*, which is imposed by God upon a rational creature, as He is the lord of the conscience, and the supreme

lawgiver, Who first infused it into the soul of man, and is the witness of all her actions, and the judge of them, and Who alone has power *to save and to destroy*, according as she has obeyed or violated His commands. *There is one lawgiver*, says St. James, *who is able to save and to destroy*.³⁹

And further on, in elaborating in detail what things may bind the conscience:

[I]t appears that there are four degrees of such things as lay an obligation upon the conscience: for instance (to explain more distinctly what has been observed, and to shed some light on what I have yet to say), 1. The commands of God oblige *properly* of themselves, and by their own intrinsic force; 2. The laws of men, and the injunctions of superiors oblige the conscience, yet by no other power or authority than by virtue of divine law. 3. We are bound by the contracts we made of our own accord, because they were our *own choice*, and properly our own act, when we had full power to have kept ourselves disengaged. 4. The law of avoiding *scandal*, or of not giving offence, likewise obliges the conscience, but by *accident* only.⁴⁰

His arguments for this basic framework of how the conscience may be bound are thorough and detailed, and I encourage the reader to set time apart for reading his own words, as they are quite informative and edifying. I will summarise them here:

The first degree of obligation—divine law—obliges a man's conscience *in itself*, that is, without any other justification outside of He Who gave that law; and this is considered the *supreme* rule of conscience (under which is another rule, to be explained soon). The other three degrees are *relative*, in that they cannot oblige in

39 Sanderson: Second Prelection, §3.

40 Sanderson: Fourth Prelection, §6.

themselves, but only as far as they derive from a precept of the divine law. Hence, a pastor has the right to call a parishioner under his care to repentance from manifest sin, not because that pastor possesses authority *in himself* to do so, but because he derives that right from God. As such, God alone has the “proper and direct power of command over the consciences of men,” and we are only bound to *human* laws insofar as they conform to divine law.

That God alone has this ultimate power of the conscience is derived from these proofs:

1. Where James the Apostle writes that “There is one lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy” (James 4:12).
2. God alone knows the “inward motions” of the mind and conscience, and therefore He alone can prescribe law thereunto; for the law cannot judge matters it does not know. As further consequence, human laws only oblige the “outward motions of the body to an outward conformity.”
3. The natural state of the conscience is as a mediator between God and man; therefore, anyone besides God who attempts to directly bind the consciences of men is claiming illegitimate authority.

From these considerations, the first conclusion follows, that “the proper rule of the conscience is what which God the supreme lawgiver has prescribed to it.” Following this is the “next and most immediate rule of conscience,” which is subordinate to the first; “that light which in that instant presents itself to the mind,” or, the light of reason. For this, the Scriptures bear witness. Christ said, “Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?”⁴¹ A

41 Luke 12:57.

presupposition presents itself, that there is a natural light of reason for judging right and wrong. More profound is the blessed Paul's testimony: "When the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these men, having not the law, are a law unto themselves, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile either accusing, or else excusing one another."⁴²

One point at which I will depart from Sanderson—or rather, nuance his point further—is his claim that human laws only command the "outward motions of the body to an outward conformity." In one sense, this is true, for the reasons given above. There is, however, a sense in which human authorities do bind the conscience, but as a 'proximate' cause, as mentioned earlier. Just as the 'light of reason' acts as a proximate cause by virtue of its conformity to the will and nature of God, so too do legitimate human authorities acting within their office, assuming their office involves the binding of consciences. As a concrete example, let us say a man has fallen out with a friend and refuses to reconcile with him. This man's priest is informed of the situation, and the priest – having investigated the issue fully – tells the man to reconcile with the former friend, who also happens to be in the same parish. At this point, the man's conscience—assuming it is properly formed—would respond, "This priest has a legitimate office from God, and He is exercising a legitimate function therein; therefore, I must yield to his command and pursue reconciliation. Otherwise, in disobeying my priest, I am disobeying God, and therefore will be liable to divine judgement." In situations like this, the conscience is indeed "bound" by human authorities, but proximately; not of their own authority, but insofar as they conform to the authority vested in them by God. This phenomenon may be considered a combination of the *direct*

42 Rom. 2:14-15.

authority of God with the *proximate* authority of reason over the conscience; one rationally apprehends the reality of a divinely established human authority over him, and thus is conscience-bound to yield to it, insofar as it properly exercises its legitimate office.

Sanderson provides more conclusions and arguments, but the above suffices. To be clear, I provide them not out of droning repetition, nor out of presuming such claims are true because a respected theologian and ecclesiastic said them. As Arrian recounts of Epictetus: a young man boasted in the theatre that he spoke with wise men, and so he too was wise. Epictetus only replied, "I too have conversed with many rich men, yet I am not rich!"⁴³ I repeat Bp. Sanderson's arguments only after having analysed them and confirmed their soundness. I encourage the reader to read his full lectures on the matter for a fuller account, along with the work of another English divine, Jeremy Taylor, on the same matter.⁴⁴

Returning to the basic conclusion, that the conscience is bound *ultimately* by God alone and *proximately* by the light of reason (knowledge, be it of natural law, legitimate functions of lesser authorities, etc.), there is one final element to consider before we have an adequate understanding of the conscience upon which we may answer later questions. As already argued, knowledge proximately binds the conscience. But not only *can* it bind the conscience, but it is in fact *necessary* for binding to occur; a fact that will prove critical later in this book. This is proven by the nature of the subject; conscience, being the application of knowledge to moral actions, *by its definition*

43 Fragment 170 of the fragments of Epictetus, from George Long, *The Discourses of Epictetus; with the Encheiridion and Fragments*. George Bell & Sons, 1877.

44 Jeremy Taylor, *Ductor Dubitantium, or the Rule of Conscience*. James Flesher, 1660.

requires knowledge, otherwise there is nothing to apply to moral action. Etymology likewise testifies to this reality, ‘conscience’ being of the Latin *conscientia* (lit. ‘knowledge with’), and of the Greek equivalent *συνείδησις* (same literal meaning). Additionally, the blessed Apostle explicitly denotes this rule in his letter to the Romans; “for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there violation.”⁴⁵ Thus, a conscience is not bound unless there is first knowledge of the matter. This deceptively simple point is in fact the most profound in its ramifications for this discussion, and this will become clear later on. However, there is now an edge case we must discuss which, *prima facie*, seems to refute the necessity of knowledge in the binding of the conscience; culpable ignorance.

On Culpable Ignorance

For culpable ignorance, the case is as follows. Could one not be found culpable in certain cases of ignorance of contingent matters beyond the natural law? For example, let us imagine a security guard whose duty it is to patrol the building to which he is assigned and to regularly check the security camera monitors. Now let us say a robber was clearly caught by a security camera sneaking into the building, and the guard, rather than watching the monitor, was facing the opposite direction and playing on his phone. Though the guard did not see the robber and thus had no knowledge of his crime, is not the guard yet culpable for failing to catch him? Or say a man holds a professorship in classical history, specialising in ancient Roman political history, but in his course completely neglects to discuss Julius Caesar. A student confronts him, puzzled, and the professor just replies with “Julius who?” Was his conscience *directly* bound to know and teach the life and acts of Julius Caesar? No, because he did not have knowledge

⁴⁵ Rom. 4:15.

thereof. But is he not still *culpable* for *not* having that knowledge when he should have?

The simple answer to the above cases is yes. For the professor, because the nature of his office⁴⁶ required that he would know and teach the deeds of Julius Caesar, *and* he had ample opportunity to acquire that knowledge (the university library, Google, even an LLM query). For the security guard, because his job included a regular observation of the security camera, which he was neglecting. In these cases, guilt is imputed not for merely being ignorant of these facts, but because such facts were required knowledge for these men in their offices, which they *are* cognisant of. So, one is culpable of a certain ignorance only insofar as it relates to something else which is known to the conscience.

But we must now head off a potential absurdity; that ignorance of any seemingly significant fact is a case of culpable ignorance. This position is implicitly held by many today, especially regarding one specific event of mid-20th century history (see Part II). This standard is easily shown false with the same examples above, along with countless others, along with other arguments. *Culpable ignorance* is in play *if and only if* the person's own station—say, a teaching job—requires him to know specific things. For the rational agent, these are the things of the natural law, as established in the prior chapter. For a Christian, these are the articles of the Christian faith, which are essential to *being* a Christian (see Q3 below). By contrast, one cannot be expected to know and assent to every fact, even allegedly important ones, if only for the simple reason that not all knowledge (even that of

46 An important nuance to include here; “office” or “station” does not here exclusively refer to a formal position or title, but broadly any conditions a man may possess in which he ought to know/assent to such things. It could be as simple as being an amateur theologian who debates such matters online; if you are claiming knowledge of theology, you are obliged to know what pertains to theology, and will be guilty if found wanting in that regard.

world-changing events) is available to all persons, but also because the nature of man in itself does not require knowledge and assent to all propositions, even “significant” ones. This principle will be thoroughly demonstrated in the case studies of Part II.

Therefore, culpable ignorance is established *if and only if* one is (a) in a certain position (b) that by its nature must possess certain knowledge, and (c) there was no circumstance that prohibited the acquisition of that knowledge. The last criterion here calls back to the concept of *invincible ignorance*, an idea most often found (in my experience) in Romanist moral theology, and the opposite of culpable ignorance (or, per Romanist and Scholastic terminology, vincible ignorance), in that it denotes an ignorance for which one has no power to overcome, and therefore is not to be held guilty for such. Aquinas distinguishes these concepts in his usual succinctness thusly:

Now it is evident that whoever neglects to have or do what he ought to have or do, commits a sin of omission. Wherefore through negligence, ignorance of what one is bound to know, is a sin; whereas it is not imputed as a sin to man, if he fails to know what he is unable to know. Consequently ignorance of such like things is called invincible, because it cannot be overcome by study. For this reason such like ignorance, not being voluntary, since it is not in our power to be rid of it, is not a sin: wherefore it is evident that no invincible ignorance is a sin. On the other hand, vincible ignorance is a sin, if it be about matters one is bound to know; but not, if it be about things one is not bound to know.⁴⁷

Only when these criteria are established for a given man, and he is found ignorant of relevant knowledge, may he be imputed with culpable ignorance

47 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*: I-II, Q.76, Art.2.

Before we move on, we must acknowledge another form of culpable ignorance. Whereas the above concerns *passive* ignorance—failing to know what one ought to know through inaction—there can be a form of *active* ignorance by way of withholding rightful assent to that which you ought to know and believe. That is, you have knowledge of sufficient premises that lead to a particular conclusion and you know—whether explicitly or in your conscience—that it leads to a certain conclusion, yet you refuse explicit assent to such (internal and/or public). To use the prior examples, perhaps the security guard does see the robber in the CCTV monitor. Given this knowledge and his job, he knows he ought to intervene. But instead, he shrugs and goes back to playing his Switch. Or in the case of the professor, say he has read all the relevant sources on Julius Caesar, has critically analysed them, and found them to be airtight in proving the existence of that figure. Yet, he refuses to believe Julius Caesar existed. Given all that has been discussed prior, these too are cases of sin against the conscience, and perhaps even moreso than passive culpable ignorance, as one *has* the requisite knowledge yet refuses to accept what follows. And because the person does in fact ‘know’ the conclusion to some degree—again, whether explicitly or in his conscience—he is not *strictly* ignorant of it, but is ignorant insofar as he refuses assent, which is one of the three classical criteria for knowledge (justified true *belief*).

Now, culpable ignorance is a sin of failing to know or assent to things which one’s station requires. In short, knowledge of conditions, but ignorance of what follows. There is a sin in the opposite direction as well, wherein one knows (or rather, *claims* to know) something, yet without sufficient grounding. This is condemned by what is commonly known as the *burden of proof*, which we will now explore.

The Burden of Proof

In simple language, the burden of proof is the obligation one possesses to justify that which he claims to be the case with sufficient (empirical) evidence and/or reason. For example, if a man is on trial for the crime of murder, the prosecution has the burden to provide sufficient proof of his alleged crime to the court. Or, in a more common case, if a man brags to his gym mates that he can bench press more than all of them, he has a burden to demonstrate this, or be (rightly) ridiculed for lying or cowardice.

The aforementioned is more than well known enough that it scarcely needed repeating. However, what many people do not know is that the burden of proof is a double-edged sword. On one side, and as commonly acknowledged, he who claims X to be the case has a burden to prove such through whatever evidences or reasons are required. Without sufficient proof, he is making a claim without proper grounding in fact or reason, which is contrary to natural and divine law, and so a sin against God and conscience. However, as is less commonly recognised (and often opposed by certain rabid atheists), the burden of proof equally applies to he who claims *not-X*, for a claim to the non-reality of a thing is yet still a positive claim to reality; that is, it *is true* that X *is not* the case. The only position on any given matter without a burden of proof is to have no position at all; that is, agnosticism.

In short, then, he who makes any claim to truth—whether it be that something *is* or *is not* the case—by necessity has a burden to demonstrate such, whether to those to whom he made the assertion, or to his own conscience. For it is a matter of natural law and divine obligation that man assents to truth and rejects falsehood, and to discern what is true from what is false by necessity requires the knowledge of sufficient antecedents (evidences and reasons; collectively known as ‘proofs’) which

demonstrate such. Thus, to assent to a proposition or make an assertion without sufficient justification is, minimally, a sin against conscience. Later in this book, I give what I believe are the necessary criteria for one to truly satisfy their burden of proof, with an emphasis on questions of history (though applicable to all intellectual discussions).

Conclusion

Here ends my overall account of the nature of the conscience, the central means by which God chooses to condemn or vindicate men before Himself and in their hearts. As this book is centred on the question of what things Christians may or ought to dissent from, the conscience necessarily plays an out-sized role in the final answer, which is certainly reflected by this chapter's immense length. The conclusions arrived at here will be decisive in the final answers we arrive at.

QUESTION 3:

WHAT CHRISTIANS ARE REQUIRED TO BELIEVE.

The *essence* of the Christian faith may be defined as the content of the Apostles' Creed, among the earliest formal creeds of the Church, and itself the product of numerous local creeds.⁴⁸ A common form of the Creed is as follows:⁴⁹

I believe in GOD THE FATHER Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth.

And in JESUS CHRIST his only (begotten) Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary;

48 For further discussion on the development of the creed, including the forms it took in different Christian authors and regions, see: Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes*. 6th Edition, Harper & Brothers 1931: Vol. 2 (The Greek and Latin Creeds, with Translations); R. P. C. Hanson, *Tradition in the Early Church*. Wipf & Stock Publishers. 1962; Wolfram Kinzig, *A History of Early Christian Creeds*. De Gruyter, 2024.

49 English, Greek, and Latin texts may be found in Schaff, p.45. Schaff derives the Latin and Greek text from a 17th century edition. It is close in form to the Latin and Greek creeds that are attested to by Rufinus of Aquileia (*Exposition of the Creed*) in the fourth century, among others.

suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell [Hades, spirit-world]; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven; and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the HOLY GHOST; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body [flesh]; and the life everlasting. Amen.

Establishing this definition is done simply for the sake of defining a basic point of reference. One could disagree and say the essence of Christianity is the *Nicene* Creed or ‘no creed but Christ.’ All that matters is, whatever the definition, we have a clear, limited set of propositions which a Christian *must* affirm, lest he cease to be a Christian. Indeed, Christianity—and any other labelled religion or ideology—*must necessarily* have a core set of essential propositions, because these are what distinguish it from other systems of thought, and what make it possible to say that *this* is Christian, but not *that*. Otherwise, “Christianity” is just a word arbitrarily applied to whatever ideas one likes, and not actually a defined school of thought; anything may be called “Christianity.” This is why it is necessary to establish *that* there are essential claims in the faith, whatever those happen to be.

With that said, a particular reason to set the definition as the Apostle’s Creed is that this creed has beautifully distilled the very essence of the faith as stated by Holy Scripture. Though the Scriptures contain many propositions which must be affirmed, only a small set of these can be said to define Christianity *in its essence*, that is, without which it would not be. Thus, we may say that the existence of King David—though true and a required affirmation by Christians—does not itself constitute the *essence* of the faith. Only those things which are the direct object of the Christian faith are of its essence; thus, God the Father, Jesus

Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. We may be certain of this essential breakdown of the faith because of the clear and universal attestation of these teachings throughout all teachers of the Church in all times and places; from Christ Himself, the Apostles, and the fathers of the primitive Church onward.⁵⁰

Beyond this, however, other propositions may also be required belief for Christians. Although they are not of the essence of the faith, they may be that which forms the *foundation* of the faith. The aforementioned example of King David is illustrative. His existence is not a direct confession of Christians, i.e. “I believe that there was a King David over the united monarchy of the Kingdom of Israel.” His existence *does*, however, underlie the claims of Christ in the fulfillment of prophecy, especially respecting Christ’s lineage from David as the prophesied eternal king.⁵¹ No David, no royal lineage, no Christ. Further, even if there was no such connection, David’s existence is revealed by the very word of god, and thus to deny David’s existence—even if it were *in itself* of no consequence—would be to deny the very word of God, thus destroying faith in Him. In this sense, one may still be called a Christian, albeit an errant or heretical one, for he still affirms the substance of the faith, while denying another necessary proposition(s). We may be certain of the necessity of affirming all that is within Scripture, since, just as with the claims of the Apostles’ Creed, such was universally held by Christ, the Apostles, and the primitive Church. But even here, because these other claims are not themselves of the essence of the faith, a Christian could be *ignorant* of them yet still be a Christian; for example, when the Gospel was first brought to the Germanic tribes who

50 Cf. Hanson, *Tradition in the Early Church*.

51 Isaiah 11; Jeremiah 23:1–6; Matt. 1:1–17; Luke 3:23–38; etc.

were then baptised and confessed the true faith. Perhaps some or many of them did not also immediately know the particulars of biblical history which yet formed the foundation of the faith. Nonetheless, their faith was complete.

As should be clear, this assumes a traditional account of the nature of the faith and the authority of the Holy Scriptures, the 'Bible.' To liberal "Christian" readers I say, first, repent and believe, but second, my thesis can be adapted to a liberal paradigm of the faith, as it pertains not so much to one specific account of the content of the faith, but rather that content's relation to the Christian in contrast with matters beyond it. I do not advise making such an adaptation, since it would encourage your continued heresy.

Finally, it is necessary to note that, since the earlier discussed content is *definitional* (that is, of necessary confession) to a Christian, and this definition is *sufficient*, it follows that what is not contained therein is *not* definitional, and therefore not *in itself* a required belief for Christians. This basic, logically unassailable fact is the most important launching point for this book's thesis, a simple yet devastating counter to the apologists of the Post-War Consensus in the churches.

So, to summarise, since a Christian, *by definition*, affirms the essence of the faith, and, *by consequence*, must affirm all else that God has revealed; and since these collections of true propositions represent the totality of what Christians *as Christians* must affirm; and since they are not the totality of all (potentially) true propositions; it follows that there are true propositions which a Christian is not *per se* required to affirm. These range across all fields; metaphysics, natural philosophy ('science'), economics, technology, *history*, and so on.

On (In)Tolerable Disagreements

The question of discerning when disagreements become intolerable is a difficult one to parse. The boundaries of what are and are not acceptable disagreements among fellow men and especially fellow Christians have not been given the due attention they deserve until recently, but even then not to an adequate degree. The most recent serious work dedicated to this question has come from Gavin Ortlund, chiefly through his book *Finding the Right Hills to Die on: The Case for Theological Triage*. Here, he establishes four levels of Christian doctrine, from absolutely essential to adiaphora, and what the proper Christian response to disagreements on such things ought to be. These categories are as follows:

- First-rank doctrines are *essential* to the gospel itself.
- Second-rank doctrines are *urgent* for the health and practice of the church such that they frequently cause Christians to separate at the level of local church, denomination, and/or ministry.
- Third-rank doctrines are *important* to Christian theology, but not enough to justify separation or division among Christians.
- Fourth-rank doctrines are *unimportant* to our gospel witness and ministry collaboration.⁵²

We have here a good start towards an answer, but other issues arise when these categories are probed, which Ortlund himself admits for the second category.⁵³ Some second-rank doctrines, as he explains, come close to first-rank importance, but others to that of the third-rank. Discerning this can be tricky, but that will be dealt

52 Gavin Ortlund, *Finding the Right Hills to Die On*. Crossway, 2020: p.19.

53 Ibid, p.97.

with shortly. A further issue arises concerning the definition given for second-rank doctrines, which I find to be not as precise as it should be. Doctrines which are held so highly as to “frequently cause Christians to separate” only speaks to the weight they hold in the psyche of many Christians and not to their objective value, although Ortlund does clearly intend the latter given what he writes in the chapter on such. So, this definition ought to be reworded as follows: Second-rank doctrines are *urgent* to the health and practice of the church such that they *ought* to cause Christians to separate from erring members at the local, denominational, or ministerial level.

We return to the difficulty of defining just what is second-rank as opposed to first- or third-rank, which Ortlund discusses. Perhaps the first step at a clear criterion is to recall the distinction laid out earlier in this chapter; those propositions which are *essential* to the faith, versus those propositions which are not essential, yet *clearly* testified by the authoritative sources of the faith, such that the willful denial of such is to deny divine authority itself, practically putting someone in the same danger of hell as though he had denied an essential doctrine. Additionally, we can probe the actual effect that a difference of belief on a certain issue can have and discern its severity; that is, from either given perspective, does the opposite view compromise a) faith in Christ, or b) Christian moral living?

The above is a good start; however, it is commonly accepted that Christians can have amicable disagreements on the interpretation of Scripture and the severity of certain issues while yet recognising mutual brotherhood. Examples of this *can* include; Genesis chapter 1 as an actually six-day event, as opposed to an allegory for a multi-billion-year process; ‘Calvinism’ versus ‘Arminianism’; the nature of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist; Owenian ‘Limited Atonement’ versus Davenantian ‘Hypothetical

Universalism'; so on and so forth. Of course, I say these "can" be examples because many do in fact treat one or more of these issues as markers of true Christian orthodoxy and not of permissible disagreement. But I only cite them as illustrations for what is in fact a universal phenomenon; everyone grants that there is some controversy over Biblical interpretation or the importance of certain doctrines which does not compromise Christian faith and fellowship, and this intuitively makes sense. Surely our righteousness before God does not hinge on an explicit knowledge of the metaphysics of Christ's presence in the Holy Eucharist, right? But can this be justified in a principled manner? Was it not already granted earlier that to deny what Scripture teaches is to deny the faith by extension? In other words, if—hypothetically, and after thorough study—Scripture does teach a precise metaphysical theory of the atonement like Davenant's 'Hypothetical Universalism,' does not the denial thereof constitute the sinful denial of Scriptural testimony? How do we precisely determine the permissible degree of ignorance one may have of such? That is, whether God will absolve one for ignorantly denying a doctrine due to the complexity of its Scriptural support, or if He will not do so due to the simplicity thereof?

I will admit that a precise answer to this question still evades me. Many seem to avoid the question of how to discern whether a certain doctrinal disagreement of this kind constitutes a denial of the clear teaching of Scripture; and yet, it is a very real issue. Many cases are indeed clear to discern, such as the essential content of the faith according to Scripture, or the condemnation of homosexuality. Yet, there are certain edge cases wherein the Scriptural case is complex enough that one may honestly come to an errant interpretation, or where different sides give compelling reasons to consider a doctrine higher or lower in the order of importance, and I do not yet know how to morally account for this

in a precise manner. Until I come to such an answer, I will have to leave the question largely open, and just exhort Christians in the meantime to be careful and principled in their judging of what controversies do and do not compromise faith and peaceful communion. When I come to a complete and satisfying answer, I will be sure to update this chapter in a new edition.

Nonetheless, the basic metric provided above is still clearly true. There are doctrines that define the faith *in itself*; those which do not define the faith yet are of such importance or Biblical clarity that to deny them would entail a compromised faith or communion, and those which do not affect faith or communion. However one measures these, it is necessary *that* one has a consistent standard for such. Further, one confident standard we can affirm is the supremacy and sufficiency of Holy Scripture, per Article 6 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion:

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.⁵⁴

Thus, if Scripture does not require a man's assent to a certain proposition or performance of a certain act, it cannot be bound upon him for the sake of his salvation.

54 *The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion: Article 6.*

RECAPITULATION:

THE STANDARD OF RIGHTFUL DISSENT

The conclusions of the foregoing chapters will here be summarised in a single, easy-to-follow process with all the necessary conditions for discerning whether a person, assumed to be a Christian human, is required to believe a certain proposition. I hope for this to be one of the key practical fruits of this book, by which all Christians—clergy and laity—may measure whether a certain proposition is necessary to believe, and, consequently, whether a person who denies it is in sin.

For any given proposition...

Q1. Is it a precept of natural law?

- IF YES (Q1.1): Is it a *basic* precept of natural law?
 - IF YES: A man must affirm it, being essential to his nature.
 - IF NO: A man may not affirm it (i.e. by passive ignorance or intentional withholding of judgment; henceforth “passively or intentionally”).

- IF NO: A man may not affirm (passively or intentionally) or may actively deny it. However, active denial requires that he satisfied his burden of proof for coming to that denial. Additionally, active denial requires that it is not a true proposition in other areas (Q2 & Q3).

Q2. Is it a precept of the Christian faith?

- IF YES (Q2.1): Is it an *essential* precept of the Christian faith?
 - IF YES: A Christian necessarily must affirm it.
 - IF NO: A Christian may not affirm it (passively or intentionally). He may not actively deny it, as this morally presupposes that he did his duty in searching the Scriptures for the truth before coming to a conclusion; failure in this regard constitutes culpable ignorance. Further, to actively deny it with the knowledge that it is Biblical is a more grave sin.
- IF NO (Q2.2): Is it yet clearly taught in Scripture?
 - IF YES: See answer to 'No' under 2.1.
 - IF NO: A Christian may not affirm (passively or intentionally) or may deny it, provided that it is not a true proposition in other areas (Q1 & Q3).

Q3. Is it a proposition which must be known by a given station by its nature?

- IF YES: A man of this given station must know of the proposition.
- IF NO: A man of this given station may or may not know of the proposition, and may also deny it, provided that it is not a true proposition in other areas (Q1 & Q2).
- IF YES (Q3.1): Are or were there any uncontrollable barriers to knowledge of the proposition?

- IF YES: A man of the given station is *not* culpable for his ignorance of the proposition.
- IF NO: A man of the given station is culpable for his ignorance of the proposition.
- ALSO IF YES (Q3.2): Must one in the given station *affirm* the proposition (beyond merely knowing *of* it)?
 - IF YES: A man of this given station must know of and affirm the proposition.
 - IF NO: A man of this given station must know of the proposition, but may or may not affirm it.

Q4. Is there disagreement on any of the prior questions?⁵⁵

- YES (Q1): Depending on the nature of the proposition—i.e. its practical import to life—this could cause a break in fellowship.
 - YES (Q1.1): As above, but with even more danger due to the disagreement being over a *fundamental* premise of natural law, which is the foundation of common life.
- YES (Q2): As with disagreement over Q1, but greater risk of break in fellowship due to the Christian faith being the direct concern.
 - YES (Q2.1): There is a disagreement on the very essence of the faith, and thus a compromised fellowship with serious risk of rupture. Further depends on whether the party who says the proposition is not essential yet still believes it himself

⁵⁵ Unlike prior questions, the answers under Q4 are not prescriptions; they are rather descriptors of practical reality, to help those in disagreement over any of the prior questions come to an honest understanding of their relationship in light of their disagreement.

or does not; in the latter case, there is *ipso facto* disunity in faith.

- YES (Q2.2): Presents a risk but only depending on the nature of the issue itself and its practical import on Christian life and fellowship.
- YES (Q3): Could be more or less serious depending on the station in question and the parties' proximity to it, but would not itself be a cause for breaking of fellowship.
 - YES (Q3.1): Purely a question of situational facts; would not be a cause for breaking of fellowship, the conduct of the parties in discourse notwithstanding.
 - YES (Q3.2): Same as with disagreement on Q3.

PART II

CASE STUDIES

What follows is a series of the key scenarios in which the prior discussion on principles will be applied. These case studies are not random or minor, but represent what I believe to be the most misrepresented and suppressed areas of discussion in the modern Church, leading to their consistent mishandling by clergy. In these following chapters, a clear map is provided to all Christians—clergy and laity—for navigating the heights and the valleys of these issues, for discussing them with maturity and understanding, whatever conclusion one comes to, but – to be absolutely clear – with a special mind paid to dissident positions which have long been anathematised on poor grounds.

It is necessary to state plainly that I am not forwarding an argument for dissenting views on the topics of these chapters, at least not intentionally. For example, in ‘Whether Christians are required to affirm or not challenge the Received Narrative of the Second World War in principle,’ I do not forward any arguments against the Received Narrative of the Second World War or other like events. Rather, I only discuss the applied principles of the matter, whether Christians can hold such dissident views. The same holds for the section on racial egalitarianism; I do not forward arguments for Race Realism (well, except for one sneaky footnote), but only challenge claims that it is clearly denied by Christian Scripture and theology. Otherwise, as far as my argument is concerned, Christians can affirm or deny Race Realism and still be Christian. The same with the other two case studies on the Jews and National Socialism. In short, the case studies below answer the question of whether a Christian can hold certain opinions, not whether those opinions are correct. This is the meta-question that has been sorely neglected by the Church and her theologians; this book, and this section especially, corrects that error.

QUESTION 1:

**WHETHER CHRISTIANS ARE
REQUIRED TO AFFIRM THE RECEIVED
NARRATIVE OF THE SECOND WORLD
WAR.**

Positive Case

For the sake of precision, I will define my use of the term ‘the Received Narrative of the Second World War’ (or just the ‘Received Narrative’):

The total complex of historical propositions concerning the Second World War that are explicitly forwarded or tolerated by the dominant public-facing academic institutions, media organisations, and Anglo-European governments.

The most relevant examples of propositions in this complex include (but are not limited to): that there was a deliberate plan to exterminate the Jewish people by the German government

(whether before or some time during the war); that approximately 5–6 million Jews were murdered as a result; that Adolf Hitler was motivated by raw, irrational malice against the Jewish people.

Let us now assess the Received Narrative with the Standard of Rightful Dissent. Note: This is being done for the full complex of the Received Narrative, but may be applied to any claims individually therein (and they will come to the same result).

Q1. Is it a precept of natural law?

A. No; it is a complex of contingent historical propositions.

Q2. Is it a precept of the Christian faith?

A. No; it is a complex of contingent historical propositions not contained in or derived from Holy Scripture, the tradition of the Church, or systematic Christian theology. Answers 2.2 as well.

Q3. Is it a (set of) proposition(s) which must be known by a given station *by its nature*?

A. Yes, for historians of the Second World War, the 20th century, and of other historical sub-fields in which the Received History is an essential subject. Persons not in these roles may be ignorant of it without culpability. Q3.1 pertains to a specific, actual case, and so will be passed over.

Q3.2. Must one in the given station *affirm* the proposition (beyond merely *knowing of it*)?

A. I distinguish: *Per se*, these propositions may be denied by relevant historians, for they are only contingent and therefore *could* or *could have* been false (i.e. the events could or could have not happened). *Per accidens*, if the Received Narrative is

(a) true and (b) demonstrable given the available data interpreted through proper standards of historical method, an historian must come to affirm it *following* an adequate investigation; he may not affirm (passively or intentionally) until then.

Critical note: The office of historian does not inherently bind one to affirm any given historical proposition. Rather, historical propositions are contingent things which are evaluated *by* the historian. What a historian is bound to affirm *per se* is the historical method (the precise nature of such notwithstanding, just that there *are* standards by which sources are discovered, evaluated, and synthesised). All historical claims are thus in principle able to be scrutinised and, at least provisionally, denied assent by an historian.

Something else must again be emphasised: per the earlier discussion on the burden of proof, to *affirm* either way on the question of the Received Narrative (and especially the Holocaust) necessitates an ability to demonstrate the requisite evidence for the position. In other words, it is insufficient for a revisionist to watch a Bitchute documentary like *Europa: The Last Battle* and conclude from it that his entire social world is built on a Jewish lie. Likewise, an affirmer of the Received Narrative cannot just cite the racially motivated work of Jewish historians like Deborah Lipstadt as definitive proof of the Holocaust. Sufficient evidence is that which provides epistemic justification for the claim, having passed through the filter of sound historical method. So, verified documentation, artifacts, photography, witness testimony, etc. *or* the falsification of the same data, and all synthesised into a coherent historical narrative.

In summary, then: a person, including a Christian, may in principle not affirm or may deny the Received Narrative of the Second World War (but said active denial requires sufficient evidence, minimally for one's conscience). Thus, to obligate assent to the Received Narrative as a condition of reason or true Christianity, or to do so under pain of being accused (explicitly or implicitly) of moral failure, is to add to the natural law or Christian faith that which is not proper to either of those things, which is itself a severe moral error.

The above is a sufficient answer to the question. Unfortunately, the Received Narrative of the Second World War has long held a status of religious dogma in Western Society, and although this is just starting to change, it is still heavily entrenched in many social circles and institutions. Inevitably, then, objections to this clear and airtight reasoning will still be raised, which I have anticipated and answer below.

Objections

Obj. 1: The Holocaust is among the most well-documented and verified events in human history; therefore, nobody has an excuse for not knowing and affirming it.

I respond: Granting the truth of the event and extent of the evidence, the mere external reality of such does not immediately obligate assent thereunto. First, outside of certain roles, Christians and non-Christians have no moral obligation to know of or affirm the event. Second, someone may be ignorant of such evidence and, in the meantime, question, doubt, or lack belief in the Narrative. Further, it is in principle possible that the Holocaust, being a contingent historical event, *did not* happen, and that evidence could be found and correctly interpreted to this effect. As the conscience is not bound to affirm a proposition until it has

epistemic justification thereunto (exceptions of culpable ignorance notwithstanding), it is therefore legitimate for one to refuse assent until that justification is acquired.

Further, the only way that one could be guilty in not affirming the Holocaust narrative is if they are presented with sufficient evidence *and* that evidence survives the critical examination of that person. Only at this point is one required to assent to the propositions of the Holocaust narrative.

Obj. 2: Adolf Hitler was an evil, antichrist leader; therefore, no Christian can consider him to have been anything other than an evil leader.

I respond: As with Objection 1, the mere alleging of this fact does not obligate assent. To add to this, it is necessary to note that persons who give this objection and the prior one unwittingly assume that their mere say-so on the nature of the evidence is a sufficient witness to that alleged fact, that their authoritative pronouncement is definitive. In other words, the evidence is sufficient, because I (and other peers) say so, and if you question me, you are *ipso facto* denying truth and sinning against God. Now, when pressed, such persons will deny that they are making themselves a mini-pope, but their actions speak otherwise; such papal bulls were pressed against me on multiple occasions.

In sum, a man has every right to refuse assent to claims about the nature of the evidence in a controversy until he himself investigates such, just as the Reformation argued on matters of doctrine.

Obj. 3: It is a sin to deny the sufferings of others.
See above.

Obj. 4: Holocaust denial/revisionism is a trojan horse for ideologies like Nazism/racism/White supremacy/bad thing.

I respond: This observation of alleged correlative realities is itself irrelevant to the matter in principle. Further, there is no principled, logical relation between holding dissident views on the history of the Second World War and holding certain views on race or affirming a taboo ideology. Therefore, any apparent correlation between people holding the former and the latter views is due to a cause wholly separate from the actual nature of the former view; that is, a “racist,” “Neo-Nazi,” “White supremacist” is not so simply because he first adopted “Holocaust denial.” Some other factor—dare I say, one related to how “Holocaust denial” is treated in the prevailing culture—is responsible for such. But another important consequence of this is that Christians, *especially* pastors, priests, and bishops, have no right to impute sinful views to other believers (whether explicitly or by insinuation) merely because they hold to dissident historical theories.

QUESTION 2:

**WHETHER CHRISTIANS ARE
REQUIRED TO AFFIRM RACIAL
EGALITARIANISM.**

Positive Case

By 'Racial Egalitarianism,' I mean one or more of the following views:

- That race (whether continental-scale like European or African, or national-scale like English or Han Chinese) is not a valid principle of conscious social or political organisation, including and especially for the separation of peoples.
- That distinct races do not and cannot have genetic or epigenetic traits which induce a greater propensity for certain vices or virtues in members of that race.
- That it is sinful to make critical observations about whole races in general.

My choice of the word “Egalitarianism” is deliberate. Its common usage in present Christian intellectual discourse denotes the position of the near-total equality of the sexes, such as permits women to hold all positions of authority in the family, Church, and society as men do. This position is predicated on key presuppositions that deny certain metaphysical and biological differences between men and women such as would restrict certain roles to one sex or the other. Philip B. Payne—a New Testament scholar and one of the foremost proponents of (sexual) Egalitarianism⁵⁶ on the academic level—gives a list of 12 theological axioms from the Apostle Paul at the start of his major tome on the issue, *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, the twelfth one being as follows:

“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28) demands equal status and privileges for women as for men, just as Jas 2:1–13 does for economic status. In Christ, these groups do not stand on different levels but as equals. This was not just a theoretical comment about the question of individual salvation. Paul did everything he could to realize its implications in the social dimensions of the church, as his conflict with Peter in Gal 2:11–14 shows. The high proportion of women in Paul’s circle of ministry and the many Gentiles, slaves, and women in Paul’s churches confirms this. Surely Paul would object vehemently to the idea that Gentiles, slaves, and women can be saved but may not hold offices of leadership in the church. While not denying sexual differences, Gal 3:28 does repudiate any

56 In the context of Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism, Egalitarianism is not coextensive with support for homosexuality and/or transsexualism. Many self-proclaimed Egalitarians – Payne included – explicitly oppose such degeneracies, even though their theology opens the door to such.

second-class status or reduced privileges for women in Christ.

Similarly, 1 Cor 11:11–12 affirms, “Neither is woman separate from man, nor is man separate from woman in the Lord.” This repudiates any separate treatment or status for women from men, such as excluding women from teaching or leadership positions in the church. Paul’s theology of man and woman is grounded in these twelve theological axioms, each of which presupposes the equality of woman and man: creation in God’s image, the creation mandate and blessing, being in Christ, servant leadership, mutual submission in both marriage and church life, the oneness of the body of Christ, the priesthood of all believers, the gifts of the Spirit, liberty in Christ, inaugurated eschatology, and equal status in Christ.⁵⁷

Many in the Reformed world deny this theology, minimally citing clear verses of Scripture to the contrary, but in some cases even arguing from a fuller theological paradigm. However, some such persons will turn around and apply the same principles of Egalitarianism to questions of race, in the ways outlined earlier. Often, they may even use the same abused prooftext; Galatians 3:25. The above quote from Payne anchored its argument on that very passage; compare it now to the first two paragraphs of a letter from pastor and Marxist activist Michael “Martin Luther” King, Jr., published on the 10th of February, 1957:

All men, created alike in the image of God, are inseparably bound together. This is at the very heart of the Christian gospel. This is clearly expressed in Paul’s declaration on Mars Hill: “...God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, ...made

57 Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters*. Zondervan, 2009: pp.75–76.

from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, ...Again it is expressed in the affirmation, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” The climax of this universality is expressed in the fact that Christ died for all mankind.

This broad universality standing at the center of the Gospel makes brotherhood morally inescapable. Racial segregation is a blatant denial of the unity which we all have in Christ. Segregation is a tragic evil that is utterly un-Christian. It substitutes the person-thing relationship for the person to person relationship. The philosophy of Christianity is strongly opposed to the underlying philosophy of segregation.⁵⁸

The exegetical connection between Sexual and Racial Egalitarianism is thus made clear, being rooted in the same (erroneous) reading of the passage.⁵⁹ At least some Sexual Egalitarians – many, in my real world experience – explicitly acknowledge the connection as well.⁶⁰ Indeed, the connection makes sense; if “there is neither male nor female” denies any norms of social inequality between them (such as the male-only pastorate), how could “there is neither Jew nor Greek” fail to do the same for race? Conversely, however, if “there is neither Jew nor Greek” also calls for the total erasure of social distinctions between the races (such as intentionally monoethnic churches, at least for Whites), how could “there is neither male nor female” fail

58 Martin Luther King, Jr., *“For All . . . A Non-Segregated Society,” A Message for Race Relations Sunday*, February 10, 1957.

59 For a refutation of the Sexual Egalitarian reading of Galatians 3:28, see my video, *Galatians 3:28 - Proof of Egalitarianism?*. It equally applies to the Racial Egalitarian reading. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ud0zw2uIu5I>

60 E.g.; Katie McEachern, *Galatians 3:28 and Confronting the Past*. CBE Int., 2021.

to do likewise for the sexes? This is the critical dilemma of Racial Egalitarians who yet deny the pastorate to women.

Such Racial Egalitarians may respond that the above does not follow, as Scripture *clearly* denies women access to the pastorate; “But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet” (1 Tim. 2:12). This is indeed clear, but that does not mean the above does not follow; on the contrary, *modo tollendo*, it means that the Racial Egalitarian reading of Galatians 3:28 is also false. By way of a syllogism:

P1: If Galatians 3:28 affirms Racial Egalitarianism, then it also affirms Sexual Egalitarianism (logical consequence).

P2: But Galatians 3:28 does not affirm Sexual Egalitarianism (1 Tim. 3:28).

C: Therefore, Galatians 3:28 does not affirm Racial Egalitarianism.

This form of argument is known as a *modus tollens* (hence ‘*modo tollendo*’ above, ‘by modus tollens’). It involves a first premise that expresses a proposition and its logical consequence, followed by a second premise that denies the logical consequence, and a conclusion stating that the original proposition is therefore false. In other words, if a certain consequence does in actual fact follow from a proposition, but that consequence is independently refuted, then the prior proposition must also be false, for if it were true then so would its consequence. In this case, a Racial Egalitarian reading of Galatians 3:28 leads to a Sexual Egalitarian reading, but the latter reading cannot be true due to Scripture denying such elsewhere (and Scripture cannot contradict itself). Thus, the Racial Egalitarian reading of Galatians 3:28 cannot be true *if* the Sexual Egalitarian reading is false; one must either affirm both, or deny both. Of course, plenty of Racial Egalitarians

are also Sexual Egalitarians, and so they accept the consequence; even further, this passage is not the only one cited for Racial Egalitarianism. It will thus be necessary to directly attack the hermeneutical priors they adopt in order to demonstrate their error.

More importantly, the above digression shows that the denial of race as a valid category of social organisation is in fact a cousin of Sexual Egalitarianism, both under a larger category of ‘Egalitarianism’ simpliciter. Thus, when an informed Christian cringes at a pastor justifying females in the priesthood, he ought to have the same reaction when he hears a theologian condemning “racism.” That argument, however, will have to be made elsewhere. Here, I only seek to demonstrate the more modest claim that Scripture does not *require* belief in Racial Egalitarianism.

Now, as stated above, a Racial Egalitarian may accept Sexual Egalitarianism, and so would not be dissuaded by the above syllogism. I will therefore respond more directly to the exegesis given in favour of Racial Egalitarianism, focusing on the prooftext in 2nd Corinthians 5:16 (the most rhetorically powerful Racial Egalitarian prooftext, in my opinion). My response to this will in turn be applicable to the like usage of Galatians 3:28.

2 Corinthians 5:16

*Therefore from now on we recognize no one by the flesh; even though we have known Christ by the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer.*⁶¹

The Egalitarian: Paul here establishes a principle that our identity in Christ is our sole identity, and consequently that “fleshly” identities – race, nationality, etc. – are no longer to be

61 Ὡστε ἡμεῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν οὐδένα οἶδαμεν κατὰ σάρκα· εἰ καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν κατὰ σάρκα Χριστόν, ἀλλὰ νῦν οὐκέτι γινώσκουμεν.

considered in our relations. Therefore, we cannot use race as a meaningful factor in social organisation or civil law.

I respond: There are two issues here, one exegetical, and one by way of absurdity. To the absurdity first, this interpretation taken consistently would mean having absolutely no regard for *any* “fleshly” identity; that is, not just race and nationality, but culture, marriage, siblings, teachers, bosses, and so on. If we are to have no regard for racial identity, we also must have no regard for our parents. After all, we no longer regard them according to the flesh, but simply as fellow brothers and sisters. Thus, we have no special obligations of loyalty or obedience to our parents, any more than what we have to all other fellow Christians. And vice versa, parents have no more obligation to their children than they do to another Christian in their proximity. As the Racial Egalitarians I have in mind do yet affirm certain other obligations like in marriage in family, they could not accept this implication.

Of course, the argument *ad absurdum* does not refute the absurdity; what if it really is the case that Paul wanted parents and children, brothers and sisters, to have no regard for each other according to such categories? This is where exegesis and logic come in, first in the passage’s own context, then in accordance with the rest of Scripture, the *analogia fidei*. For the passage itself, the blessed Apostle speaks of the temporary and mortal ‘tent’ in which we live versus the eternal life in Christ for which we long. The former is fleeting, and we yearn for the latter. Yet even while we remain in the body, we have been reconciled to Christ by His death, and thus must live in accordance with that new heavenly reality, and not according to the “flesh.” Importantly, this “flesh” refers to our physical condition, especially our mortality and sinful state. In this respect, we look upon a fellow Christian not just as a Greek carpenter or a Persian aristocrat. We see each of these men the same; as brothers in Christ, united in one faith and in one

baptism. *And yet*, he is still a Greek carpenter, or a Persian aristocrat, or, as Paul himself says to the recipients of the letter, “[o]ur mouth has spoken freely to you, *you Corinthians*, our heart is opened wide.” They are still Corinthians, and as the collective of Christian Corinthians Paul addresses them, making judgements on their collective character and conduct, and exhorting them to live like Christ. Thus Paul, in the typical fashion of Semitic rhetoric, uses absolutising language to make a not-so absolute claim, in order to emphasise its critical importance. In this case, that we now “recognize no one by the flesh” does not mean that we abolish all categories of mortal social relations and obligations, but that we no longer see such things as the *highest* good or *ultimate* identity of *fellow Christians* (an important qualifier there, as most of the world would yet still be in in “the flesh”).

We see this nuance explicitly from the quill of blessed Apostle elsewhere, perhaps most clearly in his first letter to Corinth, chapter seven, wherein he imparts wisdom to the Corinthians which he yet distinguishes from the will of God (a critical distinction):

But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is **concerned about the things of the Lord**, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is **concerned about the things of the world**, how he may please his wife, **and his interests are divided**. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. **I say this for your own benefit, not to put a restraint on you**, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.

But if anyone thinks that he is acting dishonorably toward his virgin, if she is past her youth and it ought to be so, let him do what he wishes, he is not sinning; **let them marry.** But the one who stands firm in his heart, if he is not under constraint, but has authority over his own will, and **has decided this in his own heart, to keep his own virgin, he will do well.** So then, both the one who gives his own virgin in marriage does well, and the one who does not give her in marriage will do better.

A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. **But in my opinion** she is happier if she remains as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.⁶²

What this passage demonstrates—and the highlighted sections especially—is the both-and dynamic at play. Our devotion to Christ is ultimate, a higher good than all things of mortal life. *And yet*, those matters of mortal life are still good things which may be legitimately enjoyed by the Christian, and they may further still bring real social obligations with them. This is why Paul speaks of marriage as dividing one’s interests between God and the world; not because the one who marries is illegitimately attempting to serve two masters, but precisely because he now has a *lawful obligation to both*, which is why Paul speaks at the end of a wife being bound to her husband as long as he lives. Elsewhere, we see Paul teach that a man who “does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.”⁶³ More on this can be cited from the New Testament alone (so the closet-Marcionites have no excuses), but these suffice to make the point; Paul’s statement in 2nd

62 1st Cor. 7:32–40.

63 1st Tim. 5:8.

Corinthians 5:16 cannot be claiming that any natural principles of social relations—be it family, marriage, *race*, or any others—no longer have moral worth. Therefore, this passage does not deny the moral relevance of race for social organisation and activity.

As stated earlier, this response likewise works for prooftexts like Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11, as these are used to support the same argument of the non-existence of race as a moral category.

What therefore follows *at minimum* is that it is not contrary to Scripture to affirm the relevance of race as a moral category of social organisation and activity, to claim that certain races have a greater proclivity to certain sins due to genetic or epigenetic causes, or to make critical observations of a race as such. These are claims of metaphysics, history, and biology, and not of Christian confession. Therefore, they can be held in good conscience by Christians and debated with brothers in charity.

But then there is the question of natural law; is Racial Egalitarianism a precept of the natural law, whether of the first order or of later consequence? To answer this question would be to essentially argue for Race Realism, which is not the purpose of this chapter, not to mention that it would require its own book-length scientific investigation. Minimally, it is not argued for by Christian Scripture or theology, and so Christians may in principle investigate the matter for themselves. What *can* be said regarding natural law is two-fold; first, Racial Egalitarianism is most certainly not one of those self-evident truths that immediately touch the conscience, such as the existence of God; therefore, men may rightly interrogate the matter and withhold assent (even if Racial Egalitarianism was ultimately true). Second, and per the fourth question of the Standard of Rightful Dissent, disagreement on this matter could, though not necessarily, impair full fellowship and even require separation, depending on the context. By way of

example: A monoethnic church in a monoethnic society would not suffer in genuine fellowship if the congregants disagree on the matter, because there is no practical situation that depends on what is believed about the issue. But now let's say this church is being asked to take in a small number of families from another race; the Racial Egalitarians want to incorporate them into the main congregation, while the Race Realists wish to have them start their own separate congregation where they worship according to their own customs. Depending on just how important this question is, one side getting their way could result in the other being justified in separating, if not being required to do so.

The possible scenarios where differences on this question become relevant are potentially endless, especially when society beyond the Church is accounted for, and thus they cannot be exhausted here. What the above hopefully demonstrates is that the continuance of Christian fellowship depends on the actual effect a difference of opinion will have in the life of a particular fellowship.

Objections

Obj. 1: All races are equally made in/bear the image of God; therefore, all races are equal, and we cannot discriminate between them in the Church or civil society.

I respond: There is significant theological dispute in the Reformation traditions on exactly *how* certain people bear the image of God, or even *whether* unbelievers do.⁶⁴ Be that as it may, I will grant that all men of all races “equally” bear the image of God right now, even the unbeliever, notwithstanding how nebulous the term “equally” is.

⁶⁴ Lutheranism, for example, denies that unbelievers possess the image of God. See the *Defense of the Augsburg Confession*, Article II.

It does not follow that equality in bearing the image of God entails an exact, flat equality in social organisation. We take this for granted in numerous situations; the relations between men and women, parents and children, pastors and laymen, teachers and students, civilians and Presidents. All of these types of persons have asymmetrical social obligations, such as men needing to be physically and socially gentler with women, children having to obey the commands of their parents, laymen being under the spiritual care of a pastor. And yet, all of these persons bear the image of God. Thus, it follows that another set of asymmetrical relations according to racial difference is not a violation of the principle of the image of God. English and Ugandan Christians may mutually acknowledge each other as bearers of the image and brothers in Christ, yet also that it is socially optimal for both peoples to have their own exclusive lands, just as how Christian nuclear families have their own properties or apartments exclusively for themselves. Curiously, I never see the Racial Egalitarians attack this principle, even though races are but families writ large, and families races in a microcosm.

Obj. 2: Dividing ourselves according to race only breeds more racial resentment and hatred, potentially leading to violence. Breaking down racial barriers is the only way to peace.

I respond: This is an empirical claim and therefore requires empirical evidence to substantiate it, so anyone making this claim should be queried on such. Further, there is no principled difference between divisions according to race versus according to family (nuclear or extended), or even according to culture without regard for race. Why, then, is it permissible – even good – to uphold these differences, but not that of race? It is common knowledge that many conflicts have arisen and do arise on the basis of these divisions, and yet people rightly conclude that this does not negate the goodness of such constructs, only that work

needs to be done to stop conflict between different groups. As a great example, Racial Egalitarians will decry any idea of segregation in the Church or society, and yet take for granted that their own family homes are exclusively for their own families. Others may visit as guests, even stay for a while out of charity; yet, the understanding remains that they must eventually be on their way, inhabiting their own space. Even those who have a permanent arrangement of co-habitation with an individual or group outside of their family take for granted that others have the right to have a home exclusively for their own family. As race is but a family of families, and so the same social rights would ordinarily apply. This argument for Racial Egalitarianism backfires spectacularly, and so another must be sought out.

Obj. 3: The eschatological vision of the Old and (especially) New Testament is a reversal of Babel, where the nations come together as one before the throne of God. We see this in Isaiah's prophecy of a highway between Assyria and Egypt (Is. 19), where inhabitants of each will freely worship in either nation. This great reversal is directly commenced in the Apostles preaching to the mixed crowd at Pentecost in their own languages, unifying them around the Gospel (Acts 2). Finally, John's vision of a mixed multitude before the throne shows the fulfillment of this goal (Rev. 7). As the Church is meant to model itself after and prepare itself for the eschaton, it follows that we ought to break down racial barriers between Christians and the nations, not uphold them.

I respond: This objection, though perhaps the most sophisticated and (relatively speaking) well supported, still fails upon logical scrutiny. First, it assumes without argument that a spiritual unity and friendship *between* the races is identical with the nullification of the *social rights* of races to maintain their

distinctness. That there will be a highway between Egypt and Assyria does not therefore mean there will be no more Egypt and Assyria. In fact, this passage's imagery *presupposes* the maintained distinctness of Assyrians and Egyptians; otherwise, how could Isaiah identify that there are "Assyrians" in "Egypt" or "Egyptians" in "Assyria"? Mind you, I assume that Isaiah's vision here at least in part speaks of the earthly realities that precede the total completion of the eschaton, namely, global Christendom, which existed for a while (and by God will come again).

But granting for the moment—though I do not believe this—that the kingdom of heaven will mix all men into one "race," such that there are no distinct rooms for Germans and Arabs in the Father's house, it still does not follow that we must therefore do away with these distinctions in this life. After all, there will also be no more pain or tears; should we therefore work to sear our nerve endings and cut out our tear ducts, or drug ourselves into perpetual ecstasy? No. As the Church we must still work with the reality of pain, suffering, and death, and even seek goodness from these things. Likewise with race; even if such distinctions are ultimately erased, they *still* exist in our world today, and *still* exercise a critical role in the social constitution of man, try as the modern order may to pretend it doesn't exist.⁶⁵ Indeed, taken consistently, there will also be no more nuclear family units in the final kingdom, and our Lord Himself explicitly notes the dissolution of marriage (Matt. 22:30; Luke 20:35). And yet, we are still commanded to honour these relations in this life (e.g. Eph. 5:22–33). It thus follows *by necessity* that the visions of the

65 I will momentarily break this chapter's goal of not arguing for Race Realism by pointing the reader to a broad gloss of the scientific data concerning the social relevance of racial distinctions. Among many other places, such can be found in *Who Is My Neighbor?* (2nd ed.); also in *Anglophobia: The Unrecognised Hatred*. Social Technologies, 2023.

eschaton – however they are interpreted – do not therefore oblige the destruction of unique racial relations in this life.

QUESTION 3:

WHETHER CHRISTIANS MAY ACKNOWLEDGE THE JEWISH QUESTION.

Positive Case

Certain readers may have felt their hairs stand up upon reading the words “Jewish Question” in the chapter title, given its connotation today as established by popular textbooks and Hollywood films. Contrary to this mythology, the “Jewish Question” was not a unique invention of the National Socialist regime as a pretense for genocide, but rather a common point of academic discourse in Europe during the 19th and early 20th centuries. In fact, Jews were among the early participants in this discussion, such as Theodor Herzl—a pioneer of Zionism in the 19th century⁶⁶—in his work *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State). Among many such

⁶⁶ See the short biography of his life published by the World Zionist Organization: <http://www.zionistarchives.org.il/en/collections/HerzlArchive/Pages/HerzlBiography.aspx>

comments, he says the following in a chapter called 'The Jewish Question':

No one can deny the gravity of the situation of the Jews. Wherever they live in perceptible numbers, they are more or less persecuted. Their equality before the law, granted by statute, has become practically a dead letter. They are debarred from filling even moderately high positions, either in the army, or in any public or private capacity. And attempts are made to thrust them out of business also: "Don't buy from Jews!"

...Everything tends, in fact, to one and the same conclusion, which is clearly enunciated in that classic Berlin phrase: "*Juden Raus!*" (Out with the Jews!)

I shall now put the Question in the briefest possible form: Are we to "get out" now and where to?

Or, may we yet remain? And, how long?⁶⁷

Some other Jewish works on the matter from the period come from Karl Marx⁶⁸ and Moses Hess,⁶⁹ among others.

On the other side, European intellectuals were quite engaged with the topic, as should not be controversial. But among these were major Christian thinkers and scholars as well. One of these is Gerhard Kittel, whose name may sound familiar to those familiar with New Testament scholarship, as he was a co-editor of the 10-volume *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament). In 1933, he gave a lecture titled *Die Judenfrage* (The Jewish Question),⁷⁰ in which he gave his own analysis of the history and present state of the

67 Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State*: ch. II (The Jewish Question).

68 Karl Marx, *On the Jewish Question*.

69 Moses Hess, *Rome and Jerusalem: A Study in Jewish Nationalism*.

70 An English translation of the published lecture is being prepared by Sacra Press.

Jews in Europe, and how they ought to be managed. At one point, he even calls it the 'anti-Semitic question:'

Only a few have ever really taken the anti-Semitic question seriously in all its depth. In academic circles, people smiled and looked over their shoulders a little when race and racial biology were discussed as a question that concerned science in the eminent sense; but the people felt that the voice of blood and the question of the physical, national conditioning of our thoughts and feelings is more than just a slogan. Or: legal science was unable to defend itself against the casuistry of the Jewish lawyer who robbed the German farmer of his house and farm; the German farmer and craftsman felt that something was not right here. Or: for many years the intellectual leadership of the people was unable to remove the literary and journalistic filth, but allowed itself to be paralyzed by the nineteenth-century slogans of so-called intellectual freedom and the so-called "tout comprendre" and at best managed to make a few well-meaning academic protests; but the youth and people knew that, despite all these theories, there was a moral right to reject such things and, if necessary, to build execution pyres and throw stink bombs.

Other such works by 'Christian' (broadly conceived) authors at or before this time include Cajus Fabricius,⁷¹ Immanuel Kant (yes,

⁷¹ Cajus Fabricius, *The Jewish Question in the German Evangelical Church*. 1934. See *Positive Christianity in the Third Reich*, published by Sacra Press, for the text.

the Immanuel Kant),⁷² Richard Wagner (ditto),⁷³ Thomas Carlyle,⁷⁴ and Heinrich von Treitschke,⁷⁵ among others.

The above citations communicate one important point; the Jewish Question was not the fringe ramblings of rabid German occultists, but a central point of European intellectual discourse,⁷⁶ *including among Jews*. This should therefore compel us to pause for the moment and scrutinise the received wisdom of the post-War period on this matter, that any critical analysis of Jewish behaviour and negative observations thereof is evil. The Church Recumbent, in obedience to this new dictate, followed suit by inventing the sin of ‘antisemitism.’ One of the earliest such uses of

72 E.g. Immanuel Kant. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. 2nd Corrected Edition, Friedrich Nicolovius, 1800: Final footnote in §46 (p.100 of 2006 Cambridge University Press translation), describing the “Palestinians” (Jews) as “cheaters,” a “nation of merchants,” and “non-productive members of society.”

73 Richard Wagner, *Das Judentum in der Musik*. J. J. Weber, 1869.

74 Carlyle’s attitude towards the Jews is outlined in T. Peter Park’s *Thomas Carlyle and the Jews*. *Journal of European Studies* 1990: 20, #1, pp.1–21. Although the author strives to minimise the extent of Carlyle’s anti-Semitism, he still honestly discloses much primary source evidence of such.

75 Heinrich von Treitschke, *Ein Wort Über Unser Judentum* (A Word on Our Judaism). G. Reimer, 1880. An “anti-Semitic” quote from either this work or another by Treitschke can be found in English in Louis L. Snyder, *Documents of German History*. Rutgers, 1958: p.262.

76 For academic surveys of the Jewish Question in European thought, see: Paul Lawrence Rose. *German Question/Jewish Question: Revolutionary Antisemitism in Germany from Kant to Wagner*. Princeton University Press, 1990; Michael Ragussis. *Figures of Conversion: “The Jewish Question” and English National Identity*. Duke University Press, 1995; Shmuel Almog (trans. Ralph Mendel). *Nationalism and Antisemitism in Modern Europe, 1815–1945*. Pergamon Press, 1990; among other works. As an important warning, a significant portion of works on this matter are written by Jews, and so one should not just take their interpretations for granted due to the racial interest they may possess towards narratives that downplay or ignore potential Jewish guilt in historical confrontations. Rather, these works should chiefly be used as bridges to the primary sources. Recent advances in Large Language Model (‘AI’) technology have made automated searches for primary sources much easier and more comprehensive.

anti-Semitism (as opposed to a concept that could manifest in right and wrong forms) is a 1938 manifesto signed by 170 ministers of various ‘Protestant’ denominations, decrying anti-Semitism as a sin and even labelling it a threat to “democracy.” The manifesto was announced and quoted in a New York Times article published the following day.⁷⁷

More broadly, consulting Google’s n-gram viewer will reveal that the word saw its inception into relatively wide discourse in the early 20th century (though it was coined in the late-19th), but sees a sudden explosion of use from the early 1980s onwards, and another, bigger one around 2011. What specifically caused this is beyond my knowledge, but what is important is how the word has an overwhelmingly negative connotation in modern usage, denoting something routinely condemned in established Christian institutions. By contrast, its earliest usage saw a mix of negative, neutral, and positive connotations (such as in Kittel’s work quoted above).

And so we are forced to confront what is to many an uncomfortable question: Are all things that fall under the label of ‘anti-Semitism’ actually sins? And not the cases of activists calling everything Jews do not like “anti-Semitic,” but even those things which fall under the common, ‘sensible’ idea universally held for decades? We will answer this question now.

1. Hatred of Jews per se

To get it out of the way, this example is obviously a sin according to Holy Scripture. “Hatred of Jews per se” here is defined as desiring the physical harm and/or damnation of Jews merely by virtue of their being the Jewish race, regardless of any guilt or

⁷⁷ 170 CLERGY CALL ANTI-SEMITISM SIN. The New York Times, Feb. 22, 1938.

innocence they possess, individually or collectively. To clarify further, this is not to suggest that desiring the damnation of a person or group is ever acceptable even for things they are guilty of; as our God desires not the death of the wicked but that all be saved (1 Tim. 2:4), so do we.⁷⁸ One can desire justice for evils committed by men, and this includes forms of physical harm (flogging, the death penalty, etc.), but this is by virtue of the crime committed, not their mere being of a certain race.

2. Negative observations of Jews in general (or Jewish sub-groups)

This is where the fun begins. Examples of this “sin” include claims like ‘Jews are greedy’ or ‘Jews are subversives in their host countries,’ among many others (including more sophisticated, less abrasive statements). To cut right to it, claims like this are not sinful in themselves. They pertain to history, culture, social psychology, and more, but nothing that touches the doctrines of Christianity or reason directly. Now, one may retort that these claims are false and therefore slanderous, which would be sin. But this is a red herring; they have the *potential* to be true, being neither ruled out by Scripture or nature, and so cannot be refuted on the grounds of principle, only by empirical data. Anyone who makes an assertion about the Jews collectively has the burden to provide sufficient evidence, whether to his conscience, to interlocutors, or to the public forum. Conversely, however, anyone

78 Of course, this must be distinguished from the desire for God’s justice to be done, which includes the destruction of the wicked. This we not only *may* pray for, but *must*. Yet, to concretely impute this desire upon any given *person* is to ask God to withhold all grace from such a man due to his faults, despite the fact that God chooses *all* men in spite of his faults. This desire may also potentially violate the eternal decree of God, as even the most wicked of men in the present may yet be among God’s elect, to whom He will one day reveal Himself.

proposing the negation of such a claim (i.e. It is *false* that Jews are X) has the same burden of proof. As stated in Part I, the only person with no burden of proof is the agnostic.

3. Desiring or working towards policies regulating Jews in civil society

Examples of this include; prohibiting Jews from civil leadership and banning Jewish education (i.e. teaching the Talmud, the Mishneh Torah, etc.). Desire for or actions towards implementing these policies are not in themselves sinful, being precluded neither by natural law nor by Apostolic teaching. Nonetheless, as these policies are ‘harmful’ (being violations of ordinary natural rights) it follows that they can neither be desired nor instituted at will, but only upon the satisfaction of such conditions which make them prudent or necessary. Banning Jewish education is immediately justifiable due to its non-Christian and even anti-Christian, blasphemous content, such as in the Talmud’s reflection of abominable rabbinic views on Christ and the Mishneh Torah’s explicit repudiation of Christ’s messiahship. And for a ban on civil leadership, this is predicated on at least one of these being true of the collective Jewish people:

- They are not Christian.
- They are subversive.
- They are openly rebellious.

Or other necessary factors left unstated. Litigating all possible conditions would take a book in its own right,⁷⁹ but the main point

⁷⁹ Early Reformed authors discussed at length the question of how Jews ought to be managed in a Christian society. A notable example is found in Gisbertus Voetius, *Selectae Disputationes*: Pars Secunda, ch.4, *De Iudaismo*.

is that any collective punishments or restrictions leveled on a collective people must have a sufficient reason to be justified. But more pertinently, such civil measures are not in principle ruled out by the faith. No passage of Holy Scripture or theological proposition of the Christian framework condemns as sinful *in itself* a desire for or working towards civil policies directed against a specific demographic in response to their nature or habits, and nor is such a violation of natural law. To claim otherwise is to assert an absolute principle of inalienable rights of civic participation, which is not only not affirmed by Scripture or natural law, but is routinely denied by the former on the individual and collective level. And as Scripture is the perfect interpreter of natural law, it follows that the latter cannot say otherwise than what Scripture does, and so we need not go into specific depth on particular natural reasons for this.

Per Scripture and nature, men by default have a right to life, but this is rendered forfeit, minimally, by the act of murder (Gen. 9:5–6). Men have a right to property, yet it may be dispossessed if he deprives another of his property (Ex. 22:1, 7). Some men have a right to commune with the people of God, yet they may be banished if they sin gravely (Lev. 20:1–5; 1 Cor. 5:9–13). A select few men have a right to rule, yet it may be revoked if they defy the will of God (1 Sam. 15:26). “Rights,” if it is even prudent to use such loaded language, are conditioned and contextual, instantiated by time and place. Even those universal “rights” like life and property are conditioned upon God and nature, and God, being the author of nature, can revoke such rights at will. Those lesser rights like civic participation have lower-order conditions which may be more readily revoked, as they have more specific requirements to be attained than just being a living, rational animal, which the latter two examples above demonstrate.

Given that Holy Scripture treats not just individuals but collective nations as moral entities, it follows that they too have rights, and thus conditions upon which those rights depend, rendering them liable to revocation. Indeed, many cases of such are attested to in (and approved by) Holy Scripture, such as the revocation of the “right” to a homeland for the Canaanite nations, on account of their great iniquity (Deut. 9:4–6). For a more relevant example, the Lord declared through Moses that no Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the Lord even unto the tenth generation, because they did not aid Israel during the Exodus, and even sought to harm them (Deut. 23:3–6).

The above considerations clearly demonstrate that, in principle, a people may collectively engage in such evil as to warrant the deprivation of certain of their rights. As the Jews are a collective people, this equally applies to them as it does any other people. Therefore, it is wholly valid for Christians to entertain questions on the behaviour of the Jewish people and thus whether certain collective consequences may be levelled against them.

In our current context, this issue is also highly relevant for other groups, such as Pakistanis in the United Kingdom, or Han Chinese in Australia.

Objections:

Obj. 1: Antisemitism is a sin.

I respond: This accusation is meaningless, as various opinions and behaviours are labelled “antisemitism” by some, yet not by others. Many Jews will call plain New Testament teaching antisemitic.⁸⁰ Thus, without the attribution of this term to

80 For example, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s working definition of antisemitism. One of the dot points denotes “claims of Jews killing Jesus” as an example of “symbols and images associated with classic

concrete actions or opinions, it is an empty accusation. A number of such instances were already dealt with above.

Obj. 2: The Jews are not a uniquely malevolent people, and to suggest so is either sinful ethnic partiality, envy, or both.

I respond: Whether the Jews are or are not a uniquely malevolent people is an empirical claim, and one that is not excluded in principle by Scripture or nature; it is theoretically possible that a certain ethnic or religious people could be evil in such a manner or to a degree that others are not. Second, whether such is or is not true, the mere holding of that opinion is not evidence of “sinful ethnic partiality” or envy, as neither of those things are a necessary or sufficient premise upon which such opinions are predicated. One could arrive at these beliefs from honest investigation of Scripture, history, current society, or statistics, *even if* they are ultimately wrong, because Christians can honestly hold to erroneous epistemological assumptions that thus lead to erroneous conclusions. Therefore, any Christian levelling an accusation of envy or “sinful ethnic partiality” at someone with taboo views on the Jewish people has a burden to prove such with more than the person’s mere opinion.

Obj. 3: Romans 11 tells us that the root supports the branch, and so we cannot boast over the apostasy of the Jewish people.

I respond: To make negative claims of the Jewish people or to support policies of their special regulation in society is not ‘boasting’ over them, especially not in the sense intended by the blessed Apostle (to gloat that one is saved while another is not). These are wholly distinct propositions, and the former acts do not themselves entail boasting. One may respond that there is a *psychological* link, such that negative claims of the Jews or

antisemitism.”

endorsements of their civil regulation are *evidence of or will lead to* a sinful boasting over them. I say that this certainly *can* occur, and I have indeed seen cases of such. But I also *know* many cases where this is not the case, both among friends of mine and even among high-profile “anti-Semites,” such as the Roman priest Fr. James Mawdsley.⁸¹ Thus, there is no *necessary* psychological relationship between the aforementioned actions; rather, other conditions are required, such as personal hubris, which friends or foes of the Jews alike can both succumb to. Therefore, any Christian making such an accusation against one expressing negative views of the Jews has a burden to prove such with more than a mere feeling.

Obj. 4: The Torah speaks of having one law for all people, using ‘equal weights and measures.’ Leviticus 19:33–37: “When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. You shall do no wrong in judgment, in measurement of weight, or capacity. You shall have balanced, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin; I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt. You shall thus observe all My statutes, and all My ordinances, and do them: I am the LORD.” Given this, discriminatory civil policies targeting the Jewish ethnos (or any ethnos) are sinful *in principle*.

I respond: That all people of all origins in a civil society are, all else being equal, to be treated equally (i.e. not abusing them, not defrauding them, showing them charity as one would a native born, etc.) is granted. What this passage does *not* entail is that

81 Fr. Mawdsley’s Twitter/X account: <https://x.com/FrJMawdsley>. His Rumble account: <https://rumble.com/c/ScriptureandTraditionFrJM/videos>.

such persons – that is, foreigners (as the Jews are to European civilisation) – have rights to high offices like civil leadership; see the above discussion on how such rights are conditioned and not absolute. *Exempli gratia*, only those of the tribe of Levi could perform certain ritual duties (described at length in Numbers chapter 4); were there ‘unequal weights and measures’ between the Levites and the other 11 tribes? No, because this principle pertains to the treatment of people in the ordinary course of economic activity and justice, not universal rights of participation in every section of a society. Further, that this rule is given as the default is not the same as it being an absolute which could not be overridden by astringent circumstances. Indeed, the Torah itself levels unique penalties on other ethnicities due to such circumstances, such as in the earlier cited case of certain peoples not being permitted in the Assembly of the Lord.

QUESTION 4:

WHETHER CHRISTIANS MAY BE NATIONAL SOCIALISTS.

Positive Case

This question is, if you will, the final boss of Consensus thought. What Satanism is to Christianity, National Socialism, or “Nazism” is to the Post-War Consensus. Merely entertaining the thought that National Socialists were anything more than raw ontological evil will paint a man with suspicion at absolute best, and outright affirming National Socialism is among the most efficient methods of social and financial suicide in the West (although this is fast changing). So rabid has anti-Nazism become that the power seems to rest in the mere *words* themselves—Nazi, Hitler, Final Solution, and so on—and not so much with that which they signify. That is, everyone knows *that* ‘Nazism’ is bad, but scarcely a soul can tell you *what* ‘Nazism’ is.

Defining National Socialism and analysing it would take a book of its own to properly accomplish, and perhaps I will write it one day. But for now, this chapter will not seek to establish the

propositions of National Socialism and appraise them with nature and Scripture. It will rather address the deeper problem of the modern Christian's inability to soberly engage with ideologies they do not like which yet their brethren may subscribe to. This will be done by considering hypothetical scenarios. Just before doing so, consider this recommended reading list of what I have found to be *the* foundational texts that define National Socialism in its essence:

National Socialism Reading List

- *The 25-Point Program* by Anton Drexler & Adolf Hitler, 1920. The core platform for the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP), stating their ultimate policies in summary form.
- *The Programme of the N.S.D.A.P and Its Ideological Principles* by Gottfried Feder, 1927. A commentary on the core principles underlying the 1920 party program by Gottfried Feder, a foundational member of the NSDAP.
- *My Struggle* by Adolf Hitler, 1925. Adolf Hitler's own account of his ideological evolution over a number of years, culminating in his adoption of National Socialism.
- *A New Nobility of Blood and Soil* by Richard Walther Darré, 1930. An influential philosophical work on the National Socialist ideal of German society, being rooted in the inherent connection between the peasantry and the land, and that this peasantry itself is the basis of the social order, even of its noble class. He especially critiques the stratified hierarchies of Roman/Greek/Eastern societies as being foreign to the traditional Germanic way of life.
- *National Socialism: Its Foundations, Developments, and Goals* by Rudolf Jung, 1922. A work touching on Volk and

Reich, land laws and social economy, materialism and mammonism, the Jewish spirit, democracy, socialism, labor, interest, monopolies, and more.

In addition, I will also commend to the reader a work on how to properly read a book, aptly named *How to Read a Book* by Mortimer J. Adler. My coming book on reading the Church fathers will also give a lengthy account of this issue.

With that out of the way, a couple of scenarios will now be explored, along with what the Christian response to each of them ought to be.

Scenario one: National Socialism is compatible with Christianity. It goes without saying here that a Christian may therefore be a National Socialist.

Scenario two: National Socialism is incompatible with Christianity. This is where the real issue lies.

Applying equal weights and measures, one must approach this matter as he would any other ideology. As noted above, National Socialism is uniquely condemned in modern society, and as a consequence it is judged much more harshly for things done or held in its name than other ideologies are when the same evils are done or affirmed in their names. This cultural prejudice must therefore be consciously discarded in order to exercise fair judgement.

So, for a self-proclaimed Christian who also claims to hold to National Socialism, we must ask a few questions:

First, what is his understanding of National Socialism? It is critical to first distinguish between an ideology *as such* from an ideology *as subjectively apprehended* by a given individual. Thus, one can investigate this issue without having personal knowledge of National Socialism in its historic articulation. The aim of this

step is to discern whether what the person in question believes is compatible with natural law and the Christian faith.

Second, having discerned precisely how this person articulates his understanding of National Socialism, filter his propositions through the Standard of Rightful Dissent. Do any of them violate natural law? If so, immediately or by consequence? Do they violate an essential article of the Christian faith? Or a clear proposition of Holy Scripture?

Third, and *if* any of the propositions are in violation of the Standard at some point, of what severity is that violation? Determining this is necessary to discerning the appropriate response to such. But even with that, another question must also be asked:

Fourth, does the person hold these anti-Scriptural or anti-natural views *knowing* that they are so? Given the real phenomenon of felicitous inconsistency (a state of being honestly mistaken in such a way that does not compromise a genuine faith in Christ), Christian charity demands that the person is first confronted with cordiality, and not in an accusatory way (unless he be in an office that requires him to know better; see the discussion in Part I on culpable ignorance). *With that said*, felicitous inconsistency *cannot* be the case with those propositions which are *essential* to the Christian faith, and likewise with those most basic tenets of natural law that immediately touch the human conscience. In which case, greater urgency and pressure is warranted; *however*, except if the situation demands otherwise, a calm, charitable, if firm approach should be maintained, if only to better persuade the person to change his mind. Either way; having *clearly* demonstrated his error to him, and having allowed him to exhaust all reasonable lines of inquiry, the person would then be directly conscience bound to renounce his errant belief. If he still refuses, Church discipline is justified.

Fifth, and in the scenario where this person's *interpretation* of National Socialism is not morally erroneous, you should also investigate whether that interpretation is accurate. If it is accurate, then it would logically follow that National Socialism is compatible with the faith (Scenario 1). But we will here assume that the interpretation is incorrect. Like in the prior step, this should be demonstrated to the person in question in order to disabuse him of his misinterpretation of an ideology which, in its real essence, is contrary to the faith.⁸² But as with the prior step, this must be initiated with charity and understanding. And if in the same manner he refuses to acknowledge truth that was clearly demonstrated before him, he will be sinning against conscience, simply because he refuses to acknowledge demonstrable historical fact, even if those facts in themselves are of little or no moral import. Though less severe than *actively* and *knowingly* holding to immoral propositions, this still is still sin and indicative of a malformed conscience, which could require pastoral intervention.

This, in short, is how one should view and approach a brother in Christ holding to National Socialism, *granting* that it (or his interpretation thereof) is against Scripture or nature. What I hope to have emphasised most here is the burden that a man must fulfill before he can make accusations of sin or heresy towards a brother in Christ.

I wish to conclude this chapter by impressing upon the reader two things:

First, this is not a standard *merely* for National Socialists or National Socialism; it must be applied to *all* ideologies. Just as one may discern (and it *must* be discerned, not presupposed) that a

⁸² For yet another layer of distinctions, it is also possible for one to misunderstand an ideology they claim to hold, yet for the true understanding of such to still be compatible with the Christian worldview. This too is essentially scenario one.

friend's National Socialism contravenes the faith and should be confronted, so may one discern that another friend's Libertarianism contravenes the faith and should also be confronted. That this is not commonly done is not an organic consequence of applied Christian faith, but an effect of non-Christian cultural hegemony governing the priorities of the Church. If you are finding yourself suspicious of a friend who holds to National Socialism but not other secular ideologies like (Classical) Liberalism, then you need to ask yourself why that is.

Second, and more saliently, the error of National Socialism – and any ideology – must be *proven*, not *presupposed*. Given the dominant status of the Post-War religion, it is taken by most as *a-priori* truth that National Socialism is an evil ideology. But as Christians and rational agents, we cannot take such claims for granted, but must test them according to the principles of reason and faith. That is to say; if you yourself have not read the foundational literature of National Socialism, you have no rational grounds for openly asserting *as fact* that it is evil. Perhaps an intelligent friend you trust has done the reading and come to that conclusion, and you trust his judgement; ordinarily, this is fair enough. But if you decide to enter the arena of rational debate or confront another Christian who holds to that ideology, you are now presupposing knowledge of the thing itself and thus have the burden to demonstrate such. If you intend to go through the above steps with a Christian friend who professes National Socialism, *including* an analysis of National Socialism itself (not merely as it is interpreted by your friend), you must first study the ideology's authoritative documents and discern through dispassionate inquiry whether it really is opposed to the Christian faith. I point the reader back to the discussion on the burden of proof in Part I, which will be explicated in greater detail in the chapter dedicated to such in Part III. And to state again, this is true for engagement

with all ideologies; you likewise have a burden to read primary source Marxist literature if you intend to attack it, something which almost all lay Conservatives over the past few decades have neglected in the culture wars.

RECAPITULATION: AGAINST THE NEW POPERY

As alluded to at points in this book, the modern controversy in many ways mirrors the situation before and during the Reformation. The Church of Rome (governments and academia) imposes a strictly controlled theological and historical narrative (the Post-War Consensus) upon the masses and local churches (the same, plus other lesser institutions), and any dissent against this is responded to with, minimally, the destruction of one's public persona, or in some cases the force of the law. There truly is nothing new under the sun.

The 14th–15th century theologian Jan Hus, against the hegemony of Romanism, taught neglected Christian truths to the masses, and for his defiance was killed by the state at the behest of the Church of Rome. The historian David Irving questioned central aspects of the Received Narrative of the Second World War, and for this he was jailed in Austria, then expelled from the country after serving a reduced sentence. Many other cases like these pepper the history books and newspapers, and they are all

animated by the same Satanic spirit that has tried for centuries to replace divine truth for another religion.

The undeniable closeness of the modern situation to that of 16th century Europe necessarily calls for a new Reformation, a divorce from Babylon's new whore. Innumerable Christian leaders have bound the consciences of their flocks with doctrines that at best are not taught in Holy Scripture or the unbroken consensus of the Church; worse, social media has seen some such pastors extend their tyranny to laymen on the opposite side of the planet. These pastors will so often in the same breath speak of their commitment to Sola Scriptura and opposition to the "traditions of men," boldly declaring the liberty of the Christian conscience to examine all things according to Scripture and reason. But these Reformation principles have consequences for our modern context, and they cannot be discarded so long as one holds to them. To affirm that the Christian has a free conscience until it is convinced by Scripture or reason necessarily means that he may withhold assent to or even come to deny essential claims of the Post-War Consensus. In other words, if you as a pastor hold to the principle of Sola Scriptura, you must tolerate Holocaust revisionism, scepticism, and denial in your flock; this is an unavoidable, deductive conclusion of the principle of Sola Scriptura.

Using the principles established in Part I, this section applied them to what I judged to be the most essential claims of the PWC which modern clergy have sought to bind upon the faithful. Many other such claims exist, often as smaller parts of these larger issues. The case studies serve as exemplars of how to apply the principles established in Part I, and it is my hope that both laymen and clergy will adopt these principles in the controversies they engage in, rightly discerning the weight of different matters and soundly

judging whether intra-communal dissent on them is possible. This, and not according to the dictates of the new Popery.

PART III

PRACTICAL WISDOM

This final section of the book is the least academic and the most practical, providing some final lessons on engaging with the present controversy (and future controversies of like nature). It is one thing to know the principles of rightful dissent, another to know how they apply to a situation, and another still to know how to engage it yourself. As such, this section is especially intended for my allies in the New Christian Right, so that we may conduct ourselves in a most Christian and prudent manner, denying Satan and his agents every opportunity to destroy our persons and our movement, while also ruthlessly purging foreign ideologies from the Church.

LESSON 1:

KEEPING THE 'CHRISTIAN' IN THE NEW CHRISTIAN RIGHT

You now have a firm basis in rational principles by which to judge when and what kinds of dissent are permissible, whether to maintain amicable disagreement or break fellowship entirely. This was further buttressed with practical cases in which those principles were employed. Now it must be asked; where to from here?

Simply knowing these principles, even cases of application, is insufficient. Now you have to ensure that these are communicated with clarity to your peers without causing undue division. Otherwise, it was utterly pointless for you to read this work, except perhaps for personal intellectual stimulation, which is fruitless on its own. Here, I will provide key points of wisdom in how to engage in discussions on such taboo matters. In a sense, whereas the body of this book was my critique of the post-War, normie-conservative paradigm of the Christian worldview, this chapter constitutes my advice to and even admonishment of the New Christian Right, with whom I identify. They are

fundamentally right in overall substance, but more and more I see a failure in wisdom, prudence, and grace in many within the camp, and I wish to counter this, lest the New Christian Right become just another reactionary movement with substantial truth yet which is overcome by its zealotry and creates new errors. With that said, this is how to pursue uncompromised truth without compromising your character.

1: Establish Your Purpose in Dialogue

You must begin with establishing why you are engaged in a given debate to begin with. This is true both for your general involvement and for specific discussions you enter into. Let us assume that you want to engage in the debate over “antisemitism.” You have strong opinions against the mainstream opinion, believing that the Jews are uniquely condemned in Holy Scripture and are especially evil today. You see a thread on the issue that you can jump right into. Before you engage, however, you must ask yourself; why do I want to debate this issue? What value do I place in it? Am I just wanting to defend an edgy opinion, perhaps get a hit of dopamine from winning debates? Or, do I actually see the importance of this issue and wish to see the truth prevail? The latter is the only proper motivation. Arguing for argument’s sake is useless, even sinful; they are tools for the proliferation of truth and the destruction of error.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, Faramir gives among the most famous and profound pieces of wisdom in the Middle Earth mythos:

War must be, while we defend our lives against a destroyer who would devour all; but I do not love the bright sword for its sharpness, nor the arrow for its

swiftness, nor the warrior for his glory. I love only that which they defend: the city of the Men of Númenor; and I would have her loved for her memory, her ancientry, her beauty, and her present wisdom. Not feared, save as men may fear the dignity of a man, old and wise.⁸³

Here, the great Faramir embodies the Christian ethic in war, physical or cultural. We do not love war for war's sake, nor in itself the destruction of our enemies. We only wage war in the hope of its end, to see peace in our time, to preserve our people and secure their flourishing. The same follows in the case of fighting any issue for the New Christian Right. We do not love, in and of themselves, the arrests of our enemies, mass deportations of foreigners, the execution of child murderers, or the public humiliation of false teachers. We only pursue such out of a love for that which they are employed. This is the absolute first thing that you, a Christian, must establish for yourself: Why are you in the discourse? Do you have a meaningful goal, or do you just want to win a debate?

“For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.”⁸⁴

2: Know What You Know, and What You Do Not

As one engaging in dialogue and debate, you must have a comprehensive self-understanding of what subjects you have sufficient learning in, and which ones you do not. Many a public figure has been publicly embarrassed when their true ignorance on an issue was exposed, an ignorance they were not aware of. Indeed, this has happened to me on at least one occasion. Even more than this, you may discover that your existing opinion is incorrect, or at least unrefined. If so, then you do not want to

83 J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Two Towers*. HarperCollins e-books, 2010: p.878.

84 Rom. 14:23.

engage in public defence of it. This issue was alluded to in the discussion on the burden of proof in Part I, and will be explicated in greater detail in the chapter following this one.

3: Pick Your Battles

Not every dispute requires your input; not every thread your comments. If an ongoing thread dispute is outside of your scope (see point I), you should probably ignore it. Likewise if it is on a matter which, though within your scope, you have yet to completely study (see point II). If you do not even have an adequate understanding of the matter (even if not comprehensive), you should definitely not engage. Passing all these checks, you should finally ask yourself; what will I gain by engaging in this dispute? Not necessarily what will I personally benefit from it, but how will I advance the wider cause I champion if I do engage? Even if only a little. If you see a dispute that is well within your scope, is a matter which you know well, yet from which you cannot reasonably discern a tangible benefit (even if only the persuasion of the interlocutor), then it is still best to move on with your day, all else being equal. Your time is limited and precious, and it should be partitioned with efficiency and clear goals always in the front of your mind. Persuading others or public optics wins are not the only kind of benefits; engaging someone just as practice for your own skill in live or text-based debate is also beneficial, but this must be an explicit reason for engaging, not a post-facto rationalisation for what was at heart a carnal desire to 'win.'

To summarise, you should join in or commence a debate of any kind only if a) it is within your scope, b) you are sufficiently learned in the particular matter in question, and c) there is a meaningful potential benefit in this particular engagement.

4: Never Compromise

The Lord said unto Moses:

You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a large and a small. You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small. You shall have a full and just weight; you shall have a full and just measure, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. For everyone who does these things, everyone who acts unjustly is an abomination to the LORD your God.⁸⁵

Likewise did Solomon write:

A False balance is an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is His delight.⁸⁶

Finally our Lord incarnate said:

Do not judge lest you be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.⁸⁷

85 Deut. 25:13-16.

86 Prov. 11:1.

87 Matt. 7:1-5.

When we engage in the culture war, we operate upon certain principles which we consider to be true and just, and which form the foundation upon which we oppose other visions of the world. Ipso facto, however, we are therefore bound by the same principles, to hold our own thoughts and actions to the same standard.

There is a real temptation among those who accept the otherwise true observations of the German jurist Carl Schmidt – that politics is fundamentally a question of friends versus enemies – to therefore hold themselves to one set of standards, and their enemies to another; in other words, “It’s good when we do it.” Now, I do not say this with respect to particular strategies, tactics, or actions employed against political enemies. As this is a culture war, we consistently hold that, from the legitimate perspective of our faction, it is good for us to seek the political destruction of our enemies, and it is bad when they attempt to do the same to us, just as in a conventional war, where it is good to us for ‘our’ side to capture enemy territory, but bad for the enemy to capture ours. I even extend this to breaking the rules of political procedure for the advancement of a higher aim, while seeking to handicap our enemies through forcing their adherence to the same rules (which is what the Progressive horde has done for decades, and how they have managed to achieve a cultural hegemony).

What, then, do I mean by “principles”? As I said earlier, there is a foundation upon which we operate, an ultimate standard of right and wrong. This is not something predicated upon the whims of political prudence as in the prior paragraph, but the nature and will of God Himself, Who never changes. Thus, we are not at liberty to break these standards, even in the pursuit of helping our friends and punishing our enemies (an otherwise legitimate aim), unless some higher good is threatened (an exceedingly rare scenario). From this comes the critical and precarious question of

just how we differentiate absolute principles from general yet malleable rules. This is a valid debate, and I will not pretend it is simple or resolved. I will nonetheless propose a couple of such principles that are most critical for us as the New Christian Right to always abide by, holding both our enemies and our friends to them:

First, measure all things by truth. If your enemy publicly promotes lies, challenge him in the open. If your ally does the same, it is prudential not to do so publicly, but it must be done either way; lies in pursuit of the good are still lies, and to base our advances upon such is to defeat the very purpose of our movement. Correct the errors of your friends in private, and push him to make a public retraction and apology (the benefits of such are articulated in step IX of the chapter 'Cancel-Proofing Yourself'). Even then, there could come a time where public correction of friends is necessary, if an error is pervasive enough (this very chapter may be considered an example of such).

Second, measure all things by goodness. If you condemn the actions of your enemy on the grounds that those actions as such are evil, spare not your friends from the same (though, once again, public versus private correction is a prudential matter). If your enemies brutalise an innocent White man, someone who did no wrong, call out that evil if it is your place (point III); if your friends do the same to an innocent African, condemn them all the same, and warn your direct co-belligerents against such actions. If your enemies praise a leader who engaged in actions which were of themselves atrocities, attack them; if your friends praise a 'right-wing' leader who did the same, correct them, and never, ever, take the excuse of "It's okay when we do it." Likewise, if and when you engage in less-than-kind actions in order to score wins against the enemy (e.g. leaking private discussions), do not decry that enemy for breaking the moral order when he does the same, except as a

strategy to break off their key supporters. You have at least implicitly agreed to certain rules of engagement, and so while you may fight such actions from the enemy, you have no ground to morally grandstand when they do so. This is yet another of the countless ways in which cultural war parallels conventional war: You do not complain that the enemy is shooting at you, but worry about not getting hit and then firing back.

Finally, do not read more into the above than what is literally stated, and do not try to weasel out with a “But what about when...” excuse. Ask yourself in your own heart, with nobody but God witnessing; are you trying to understand the moral law in order to actually abide by it, or in order to find every exception and loophole you can? If the latter, you have already broken the moral law in your heart, and God will not forgive you until you repent.

5: Maintain Grace

This is in large part my most urgent exhortation to the New Christian Right. There is a growing problem of disillusioned men lashing out in truly sinful anger against ‘normie’ peers and Boomers who challenge their thinking. Understandably, such men have this aggression from observing how fallen and depraved the world around them is, and in many cases have themselves been subject to unjust treatment by family, friends, colleagues, bosses, and sometimes even their own pastors. Nonetheless, Christians should be more than well aware – given our experience with the Progressive disease – that one’s personal experience and feelings do not excuse sin. But, before making such a condemnation, I will keep with the theme of this book by defining my terms; specifically, what I mean by ‘sinful anger.’

Sinful anger denotes nothing more than an anger towards a given object that is not justified. Most salient is immediate anger at fellow Christians who, out of ignorance, promote wrong views on faith, politics, or anything else of consequence. For brothers in Christ, anger must not be our default stance, not towards the person. Rather, we must understand how one can be honestly mistaken on issues, and in turn could be persuaded out of such positions through calm explanation, even if it takes time. Most if not all of those on the New Christian Right – myself included – can recall a time when we adopted the frame of the atheistic world, even while professing to be Christians. Virtually all of us at some point affirmed the Post-War Consensus. Yet with time we studied certain issues and did some significant reflection; many even spoke with others who were already free of the Consensus. Eventually, we woke up to the real problems facing us. But imagine if those we spoke with treated us with immediate hostility and derision, simply because we didn't see what they did upon our first encounter. One would rightly be offended, and likely would have been turned off of New Christian Right thought entirely. And yet, that is how many on the New Christian Right today react with their normie peers, and this is simply wrong.

I suspect that some New Christian Right men may claim to accept the above advice; however, as soon as they detect the smallest hint of snark or an insult from an interlocutor, the gloves come off. This too is wrong. Our desire to see as many as possible come to the truth also means that we must be willing to endure insults and slander, at least for a time. We may encounter a person who, at first contact, scoffs at our views and insults our integrity; responding in kind will only calcify a permanent animosity. However, if we deflect such insults with patience, responding with calm yet substantial challenges – rather than calling him a faggot – you will often find that your grace is contagious, and he who once

mocked you now desires real dialogue. I can attest to this in numerous cases in my own life, though given their personal nature I will not repeat them here (but such persons will know who they are). Of course, there are some who, no matter how respectful and sober you are, will continue to insult, slander, and perhaps try to destroy you. It is difficult to discern when this may be known, but my general rule is to continue in grace in an extended dialogue, and if despite numerous rounds of sober responses from you the interlocutor maintains his hostility, you may shake the dust off your feet and move on.

The Ethical Foundation

The above points of ethical conduct are grounded in two pillars, both of which were strongly implied already but will be formally stated here. First, to maintain virtuous, Christian character, that you may live a fruitful life and remain a faithful servant of God. Second, to maintain an impeccable witness before the world (generally conceived, believers and non's). The latter point is not, as is commonly believed, a call to contort yourself to whatever degree necessary so heretics and heathens will say nice things about you; rather, it means that you conduct yourself in such a way that even those who hate you cannot bring a meaningful accusation against you, try as they may. This is good for your own life, but also necessary for a movement engaged in a cultural war. Countless other movements and factions have been brought down by the terrible conduct of its representatives, and this has occurred so much in our own time that I do not feel the need to cite a case here.

I cannot impress the necessity of Christian conduct in our situation. It will mean the difference between a successful reversal of the West's destruction, and its acceleration.

LESSON 2:

BEARING THE BURDEN OF PROOF

A sub-section of the chapter on the conscience explicated the basic intellectual obligations of the individual in a dialectic; that is, the ‘burden of proof.’ Late into this book’s first draft I decided to create a dedicated chapter elaborating on the practical application of these principles, as this has been a chief concern in my own intellectual development, and consequently a major frustration when observing online discourse. The frustration is strongest when looking at “my own side,” so to speak, on the recently termed ‘New Christian Right.’ It is one thing to see ideological and religious opponents make errors on proving their claims; they harm their own cause, and thus benefit the truth. But it is another to see brothers in Christ make such errors; they must be corrected for the sake of their sanctification and the witness of the Church. And it is yet another, far worse thing, when those with whom you are on mission to purge such errors from the weaker brothers make the same errors; now the mission itself is in jeopardy. The latter is my chief concern here, although what I say

here is applicable to any context in which intellectual integrity is required.

There are two core aspects of the issue which will here be explicated; first, the moral obligations imparted to the one holding or asserting a claim in light of the principles earlier established; second, a set of prudential rules for best keeping to these obligations.

On Intellectual Obligations

RULE 1: If You Know Not, Speak Not

This is the first and most prudentially necessary rule of the burden of proof, and it thus warrants a special emphasis. Though it was implied in the section on the burden of proof in Part 1 ch. 2, it must be articulated as a direct moral imperative. Per the header; if you know not, speak not. If you do not know the facts of a crime, do not comment on it. If you have not read the primary sources for the battle of Waterloo, do not give your critiques of Napoleon's tactics. If you have not studied the relevant passages of Holy Scripture on a moral issue, do not give moral conclusions on it to others. As knowledge is grounded in justification, to claim to know something and argue for it is thus a claim to having justification for that; thus, not having that justification renders such a person a liar.

RULE 2: If You Want to Speak, Know

The obverse of the above rule thus follows: If you want to speak on a matter, study it. And "study" does not merely mean reading this or that book with correct-sounding opinions from a big name

scholar. No, your study must come to establish justified true belief. So, if you make a claim on genetics, you must find and confirm solid data from genetic science. If you make a claim on history, you must find and confirm primary sources for that claim.¹ This point is so critical that I feel it necessary to provide an illustration:

Two men observe an ongoing historical controversy; whether British imperialism benefited or impoverished India. Both of them want to get involved.

The first man searches ‘scholarly works on British imperialism’ on Google (or these days, Grok), and from this picks up Penderel Moon’s *The British Conquest and Dominion of India*. He reads the book and gleans its overall conclusions, but does not read beyond the author’s own presentation and interpretation of the evidence. He then follows this up by watching *The Unmaking of India: How the British Impoverished the World’s Richest Country* by Odd Compass on YouTube. After this, he digests a few blog posts from disgruntled Hindu nationalists and then proceeds to debate everyone he can online, speaking with confidence on the evils of the British Raj.

The second man begins the same way, searching for scholarly works on British imperialism, and even finds the same book. But upon reading the book, he does not take its conclusions for granted. He rather takes note of the sources cited and begins searching for them himself. He picks up more works on the topic and chases their primary sources too, followed by just directly searching for types of primary sources that would be relevant; all of this, in order to get as complete a scope as possible. With time he comes upon towers of primary sources; official colonial reports, personal testimonies from British and Indian persons alike, economic statistics from British archives, photographs; and all sources directly from the period and region, since these are in and of themselves evidence on the question of the nature of British

colonialism in India. It takes him months to come to conclusions on specific sub-questions, and over a year before he can make a general conclusion. But in doing so, when he finally begins engaging, he dominates the discussion and garners the respect of his peers, including scholars. But most importantly, his intellectual obligation was fulfilled, and his conscience satisfied.

Thankfully, not every intellectual issue is as demanding as the aforementioned, but they all carry the same kind of demand. In order to affirm a claim (whether internally or externally), you must have come to it on the foundation of evidence and reasoning which in itself establishes the truth of that claim, and not on proofs which can be as or more easily explained with a conflicting interpretation, or upon shaky grounds (e.g. a scholar's mere opinion; scholars are wrong on issues all of the time).

RULE 3: Lessen The Claim, Lessen The Burden

A burden of proof being high and difficult to satisfy is not an excuse for not upholding it. There was an anti-Calvinist Twitter account which asked Reformed critics for what they would need to read in order to properly understand 'Calvinism,' and I responded frankly; read through the foundational Reformed theologians who established the tradition, and not just John Calvin. This account responded by complaining that he does not have the time and money for numerous obscure books. Other than not being aware that virtually all of these texts are available online, I told him directly; if you are not willing to thoroughly read in the tradition, do not comment on it. I did, however, give him an easy way out of this; you can specify modern or neo 'Calvinism,' that which is grounded in easy-to-find & read 20th and 21st century texts.

Some issues of controversy carry an immense burden of proof for one or all sides. If you cannot fulfil it but still want to engage, there are a couple of things you can do:

First, you can focus on a sub-question of the wider issue, which is what I offered to that Twitter account above. Rather than attacking “Calvinism” in general, which requires wide reading of many old works, you can just critique modern articulations of Calvinism, the foundational texts of which are easy to find and read (e.g. Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck). As another example, one may encounter the debates surrounding the ecclesiology of the early Church (first to seventh-century A.D.). Thousands of pages of ancient texts constitute this field, many of which are not translated. Rather than cut corners or give up entirely, one can divide the question into easily digestible bites; say, the ecclesiology of 2nd-century Rome, or the ecclesiology of Irenaeus of Lyons. Not light issues, to be sure (having studied them myself), but far more manageable.

Second, you can lessen the certitude of your claim. Rather than asserting something for a fact, you can modify it with qualifiers; ‘It is probable that...’, ‘It is possible that...’, ‘I think that...’, ‘I lean towards...’. These claims and others do not carry the as high a burden as a direct assertion of fact, and the latter two carry the smallest burden possible, being a simple statement of your own opinion (although to even entertain an idea internally will demand *something* for your conscience to chew on; that which is at least reasonable, even if not proven). But as a consequence, you will not be able to object as strongly to opposing views.

Some Prudential Rules

On top of the principles established above, I will here provide some advice for prudentially fulfilling one’s burden of proof. These

are not strictly necessary, but I have found them important nonetheless:

I: Explicitly sketch a statement of the question. The beginning of this book provided a 'statement of the question' in order to precisely define the issue being addressed. Though you already know the question you are addressing merely by engaging with it, prudence suggests that you take time to pause and directly reflect on the matter, clearly outlining what you are and are not investigating or asserting. This will help you avoid falling into intellectual traps, such as accidentally affirming things you do not actually believe, or vice versa.

II: Suppress all personal and emotional investment in the matter. It goes without saying, but personal interests can distort how we view an issue, such as one's relationship to his mother when she is being investigated for murder. In such cases, it is necessary to pause and directly acknowledge your personal biases, not suppress them and pretend you are a cold analyst with no emotions. Having acknowledged these influences, their magnitude, and even their validity (unless they are actually disordered), you can then more easily lay them to the side when necessary.

III: Know what you know, and what you don't know, to a comprehensive degree. For the greatest security in disputation, you should not merely know an issue 'well,' even if that gives sufficient grounds for your beliefs in itself, but with such utter comprehensiveness that you have the highest certainty in holding the position you do and the least chance of being publicly called out and embarrassed. Some, likely most, may simply advise that you have a 'good' or 'strong' understanding of an issue before you engage (as was essentially stated in the main rules above), but I disagree, at least for the most serious of issues with which you are most invested. In such cases, your understanding, if at all possible,

should be no less than comprehensive before you engage. So long as there are relevant gaps in your knowledge of a matter, there are potential defeaters for your position that you are unprepared for, no matter how much else you may know; I have suffered the consequences of this myself. This rule is not absolute, but prudential.

A Likely Objection

Similar to the scenario I mentioned above with the anti-Calvinists, some may read this section and think I am demanding too much. It has always been normal for people to have opinions and debate them with others – in person or on the internet – even if they have only done some basic reading on the issue; this is just how the modern marketplace of ideas functions. You cannot honestly expect most ordinary people to become experts on a topic just to hold an opinion and debate it with others.

On the contrary, yes I can.

Historical perspective is absolutely necessary here. The modern norm of instant access to information on virtually every conceivable topic and the ability to debate such with people across the world is just that, a modern norm, an anomaly in the history of man. The ordinary man for most of history had barely any concern beyond his own survival and pleasure, and that of his community. If, like most people, you lived beyond the limits of a developed city, your exposure to intellectual matters beyond the concern of your immediate community was next to none. Even within the city limits, within earshot of speeches and a stone's throw away from public libraries, most ordinary persons – that is, non-elites – had at most a passive exposure to intellectual matters, and a much smaller amount at that. They were often too busy with actual labour to care too much. There was no internet, no world news

broadcasts, relatively few libraries with limited collections, and no mass transit to get one to such libraries that were beyond walking distance.

This reality gives one clear conclusion, that the ancient individual had far less exposure to information than the modern man, whether on intellectual, social, or political issues. Whereas a man today may think and talk about five separate controversies in one day due to the mass of information he consumes, the ancient man may scarcely discuss just one beyond his daily activities. Thus, until recently, it was simply not normal for men to have so much unorganised information at his fingertips, let alone to engage himself in debate over them. Men are naturally opinionated and argumentative, and even in the times before mass information there were calls to keep one's mouth in check. King Solomon teaches us: "When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise;"⁸⁸ and "He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him."⁸⁹ Again, this was in an age where such opportunities were far more rare; how much more necessary is this wisdom in an age of unnaturally vast information access?

88 Prov. 10:19.

89 Prov. 18:13.

LESSON 3:

AGAINST THE SHIBBOLETH

From the Book of Judges, ch. 12:1–6:

Then the men of Ephraim were summoned, and they crossed to Zaphon and said to Jephthah, “Why did you cross over to fight against the sons of Ammon without calling us to go with you? We will burn your house down on you.” And Jephthah said to them, “I and my people were at great strife with the sons of Ammon; when I called you, you did not deliver me from their hand. “And when I saw that you would not deliver me, I took my life in my hands and crossed over against the sons of Ammon, and the LORD gave them into my hand. Why then have you come up to me this day, to fight against me?” Then Jephthah gathered all the men of Gilead and fought Ephraim; and the men of Gilead defeated Ephraim, because they said, “You are fugitives of Ephraim, O Gileadites, in the midst of Ephraim and in the midst of Manasseh.” And the Gileadites captured the fords of the Jordan opposite Ephraim. And it happened when any of the fugitives of Ephraim said, “Let me cross over,” the men of Gilead would say to him, “Are

you an Ephraimite?” If he said, “No,” then they would say to him, “Say now, ‘Shibboleth.’” But he said, “Sibboleth,” for he could not pronounce it correctly. Then they seized him and slew him at the fords of the Jordan. Thus there fell at that time 42,000 of Ephraim.

This account is the origin of the “shibboleth,” or “shibboleth test,” a common idiom denoting a customary test that determines what class or group one belongs to, or whether one belongs to a particular group at all. Another example of such, this one from popular media, is the scene in *Inglorious Bastards* where the British spy among the Germans orders three beers by raising his ring, middle, and index fingers, only to be exposed by another German watching him, who then explains that Germans sign the number three with their thumb, index, and middle fingers. Thus, the man was exposed as a British agent.

On multiple occasions during the online controversy of Holocaust history, I myself have been asked by multiple persons I know – honest in their intentions and concerns for me – to simply denounce the Third Reich, Adolf Hitler, and Corey Mahler’s tweets. I can say what I want on matters of history, explore whatever questions I want; just denounce these particular figures, and all will be good. Perhaps due to my half-Lebanese blood, I have stubbornly refused these requests, and still do to this day. My refusal is not because I *endorse* the Third Reich, Adolf Hitler, or Mahler’s tweets; rather, it is due to the nature of these requests. They are not merely requests to state sober propositions; they are shibboleth tests, a signal of my allegiance to the Post-War Consensus (even if those who made such requests were not thinking this way). Why this is the case, and how shibboleth tests function in general, may be discerned by a foray into Speech-Act Theory.

Speech-Act Theory proposes that language is not merely propositional, but performative. That is, when we speak, we do not merely communicate concepts or beliefs, but we also *do* something. This can be distinguished between the immediate act of the speech and its external effects, which will be explored shortly.

Speech-Act Theory was largely pioneered by the British philosopher of language J. L. Austin⁹⁰ in a series of lectures later compiled into a book called *How to Do Things with Words*. We will first begin with his definition of the Speech Act (or the ‘performative sentence,’ as he calls it), given after he listed a few examples of such:

In these examples it seems clear that to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to describe my doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it. None of the utterances cited is either true or false: I assert this as obvious and do not argue it. It needs argument no more than that ‘damn’ is not true or false: it may be that the utterance ‘serves to inform you’—but that is quite different. To name the ship is to say (in the appropriate circumstances) the words ‘I name, &c.’ When I say, before the registrar or altar, &c., ‘I do’, I am not reporting on a marriage: I am indulging in it.⁹¹

90 Austin drew in part from the earlier material of the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, who, in his posthumously published *Philosophical Investigations*, formulated the concept of the ‘language game,’ which denotes how the meaning and function of words is dependent upon the contexts in which they are used, as opposed to language as a simple representation of logical propositions (as was the theme of his earlier *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*).

91 John L. Austin (ed. James O. Urmson), *How to Do Things with Words*. Harvard University Press, 1962 (repr. Martino Fine Books, 2018): p.6.

Given this definition, Speech Act *Theory* therefore denotes our understanding of the nature and function of the speech act. To this end, Austin divides the Speech Act into three distinct parts: locution, illocution, and perlocution. Kevin J. Vanhoozer succinctly defines these as follows:

Austin distinguishes three different things we do with words, three kinds of linguistic acts: (1) the locutionary act: uttering words (e.g., saying the word “Hello”); (2) the illocutionary act: what we do in saying something (e.g., greeting, promising, commanding, etc.); (3) the perlocutionary act: what we bring about by saying something (e.g., persuading, surprising). Whereas locution has to do with a sign system or langue, illocutions and perlocutions have to do with sentences, with language in action or parole. The notion of the illocutionary act enables Austin to distinguish between the content of what we say (e.g., the sense and reference of our sentence) and its force (i.e., what we are using the content of our sentence to do).⁹²

This basic division is to my mind quite sensible and meaningfully discerned from common experience, a key criterion for evaluating theories *about* common experience.

As a simple example of a Speech Act, let us say that I make a promise to a friend to pay for his lunch. The locutionary act is simply my stating of that promise, the very act of saying “I’ll buy your lunch mate, I promise.” The *illocutionary act* is the intended action that is performed *by my speaking*. That is, I have stated the words of the promise (locution), and in doing so I have performed a deeper action; actually *making* a promise (illocution). Then we have the *perlocutionary act*, denoting the *effect(s)* of my Speech

92 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and The Morality of Literary Knowledge*. Zondervan, 1998: p.209.

Act on the listener. By making the promise, I have *made my friend happy and appreciative*. Importantly, perlocutionary effects can be intentional or unintentional.

To summarise, the Speech Act that I performed was as follows:

- Locution: I said the words “I’ll buy your lunch mate, I promise.”
- Illocution: In saying these words to my friend, I *made* a promise.
- Perlocution: In saying these words and making the promise, I caused my friend *to be happy*.

This discussion of Speech Acts will suffice. Taking what has been shown, we can better consider the nature of a shibboleth test. In its original and perhaps most common form, a shibboleth is employed against someone without their awareness. So, the one being tested is not *deliberately* signalling his allegiance to one side or the other, but he is doing so *in effect*. Therefore, it is only the *perlocution*, or the effects of his response that signal his position, and in the original scenario from which we derive the term, it was the man’s mispronunciation of the word ‘shibboleth,’ unintentionally betraying his foreign origin.

Some ‘shibboleths,’ however, are known as such by both parties, such as in confirmation vows, where one is asked if they uphold the true faith and renounce Satan and all his works (at least in traditional formulae). In such a case, the respondent knows that his reply will signal where his allegiance lies, and therefore, his deliberate response will be an *illocutionary* act of declaring loyalty. Perhaps this may not be considered a proper shibboleth, but the practical event is the same. I submit that the modern call to condemn “the bad thing,” be it Adolf Hitler, Fascism, and so on, is *this* kind of shibboleth. Anyone engaged in controversial public discourse who is asked this question *knows*

that it is not merely a question of trivial preference, like asking whether he prefers KFC or El Jannah,⁴ nor a simple intellectual query, like his assessment of the (in)effectiveness of Prohibition. He who is asked this question is being asked to signal his allegiance in a cultural war; are you inside the club, or are you an enemy? And as soon as the one asked responds with “Yes, absolutely, I condemn these things,” he is now in the vice grip of the Post-War Consensus, under a constant expectation to live up to his public moral stand against the Great Satan that is “Nazism.” Even more, those who ask for these condemnations often do not know themselves that they are foot-soldiers of the PWC. From my own experience, and without naming any names, I *know* this is the case, and perhaps some readers do too. Many of our ‘normie’ friends honestly hold to the claims of the Post-War Consensus, and from this they grow a genuine concern for friends whom they perceive to be “flirting” with “dangerous” beliefs, and so naturally ask those friends if they would denounce those ideas. No agenda, no shekels from the ADL, just an honest (if misguided) concern. *And yet*, despite their lack of such intentions, their requests for condemnations are *in effect* a shibboleth test, because it is borne out of a quasi-religious belief in the propositions of the PWC, such as Adolf Hitler being *so uniquely evil* that to even pronounce his name is an assault to the ears, and to speak of him in *any good terms whatsoever* amounts to blasphemy. Out of concern for your social salvation, this friend asks you to condemn “the bad thing” and in doing so publicly reaffirm your loyalty to the PWC. Thus, when someone obliges the common request to condemn Hitler, National Socialism, and the like, he is not simply vocalising a set of beliefs in his mind; he is offering a pinch of incense to the current world order.

I will stress, as I begin to close this chapter, that it is not a personal, mental repudiation of Adolf Hitler, or National Social-

ism, or an affirmation of the Received History of the Holocaust *as such* which are signals of allegiance to the Post-War Consensus. Mere unvocalised beliefs are not acts of loyalty to any system, because they are not acts at all. Nor is it a prostration to the PWC to even state such beliefs in *every* context, such as good-faith intellectual discourse. It is simply as specified above: when someone asks you to repudiate such ideas (mostly in public, but sometimes in private) in order to demonstrate your loyalty to social orthodoxy, to respond accordingly is to bend the knee.

There is another reason for my defiance of PWC shibboleths, outside of their subversive nature. One simply does not have a moral obligation to answer them, because nobody has the right to demand that you pass a public test act to satisfy their personal concerns. By “demand,” I do not merely mean an explicit command like “Condemn this or else.” As is the case for these shibboleths, these demands can be framed as simple questions; “Do you condemn X?,” or, “You do condemn X, right?“. As already shown, there are contexts in which these are not mere questions, but tests levelled against you. In the same way that a random classmate has no right to assign you homework, your peers have no right to test your adherence to social orthodoxy. You can answer them as you wish, and it may even be prudent to in certain situations.

I will end this chapter with a story from my Bible college days which, upon recent reflection, I believe caused my present defiance of secular shibboleths. It was during a lecture, I believe on Christian spirituality, being taught by an older pastor, very kind, wise, and socially conservative (take note). I cannot remember what was being discussed (I believe something to do with Christian morality), but one of the students started an increasingly agitated exchange with the lecturer, until he threatened to leave the class unless the lecturer openly condemned

homosexuality then and there. The lecturer, without hesitation, simply said goodbye, and that the student could leave. Sure enough, this student left the room. The lecturer then casually affirmed the sinfulness of homosexuality to the class (a requirement at this college), but also told us that he would not be ordered by any student to say this or that at his command. A few minutes later, the student came back and apologised, though that is neither here nor there. As already stated (and with greater confidence after having typed up this account for the first time), I am quite certain that this is what inspired me to defy shibboleths from those who are not my superiors.

The discussion in this chapter is my full reasoning for why I refuse to submit to shibboleth tests for the Post-War Consensus, even if I would otherwise agree with what is asked. I will happily discuss my honest views of these matters in a good faith context where I am not also signalling allegiance to a false religion. I encourage other men to take this same stand against those who are not your spiritual superiors yet who presume to play that role.

LESSON 4:

CANCEL-PROOFING YOURSELF IN ELEVEN ESSENTIAL STEPS

As solid as the arguments in this book are, they are only that—arguments. No matter how airtight an intellectual case may be, it alone cannot grant victory. If you lose the support and respect of your peers, you will have achieved next to nothing, apart from your own enlightenment.

A number of young men – especially in their twenties – have experienced suffering in their social lives just for being open with taboo (yet Biblically allowable) views. One great case of this is of Ryan Turnipseed, whose mere association with Corey J. Mahler and TrebleWoe of the Stone Choir podcast—not agreement with everything they said, mere association—saw him ambushed by his own pastors⁹³ and eventually excommunicated from his parish in the LCMS.⁹⁴ Thankfully, another LCMS parish pastor investigated the matter and saw Ryan’s innocence, then took him in as a

93 Ryan secretly recorded the meeting on the matter, then posted it in an X thread: <https://x.com/TurnipMerchant/status/1659277784299053058>

94 His announcement of the excommunication with video at the end of the thread: <https://x.com/TurnipMerchant/status/1790827395798159452>

member.⁹⁵ Nonetheless, Ryan still endured major spiritual abuse and slander by authority figures in his life, spreading to the wider online world.

I, for my own part, came close to a similar fate, and I explained the scenario in the preface to this book but will do so again as a refresher. On October 4th of 2023, I made a Twitter post, completely unprompted, on why a Christian may *in principle* believe essentially any conclusion on the history of the Second World War, the Holocaust, the character and rule of Adolf Hitler, and so on.⁹⁶ In response, I received a fair degree of support from like-minded persons, but also a lot of hatred and slander, even from a Sydney-based pastor. My post was deliberately precise in its language; I did not forward *any* conclusions on the history, merely that it is not a matter of faith, and so Christians may in principle disagree on the matter. An airtight point, something that no Christian, especially ‘Protestants,’ could disagree with, lest they believe in post-Apostolic revelation (or an infallible magisterium ala the Ecclesialist traditions of Rome and the East). And yet, I was called a Nazi,⁹⁷ an antisemite,⁹⁸ a piece of shit,⁹⁹ and more—often by alleged “Christians.” An important authority in my life personally messaged me on the day, concerned with what I was saying. But due to my clarity and patience in explaining what I was and was not saying – not only to him but to all other good-faith friends and observers who chose to ask me about my post rather than publicly dogpile on me – the wave of hatred against me essentially amounted to nothing, thus inoculating me from severe ostracisation and, to this day, leaving me free to publicly write on

95 The pastor, Fr. Mark Lovett, gives his reasoning in this podcast: <https://www.gottesdienst.org/podcast/2024/5/29/tgc-386-ad-fontem>

96 The Tweet: <https://archive.md/13WS1>

97 <https://archive.md/xbxW6>

98 <https://archive.md/BuFNy>

99 <https://archive.md/U0vWk>

this issue more and more. The occasional bad actor has still tried to slander me and turn my friends against me, and others still occasionally join in. And yet, their efforts have all failed, and I still maintain connections not just with fellow Dissident Rightists but even in mainstream life, all while being an open book about my beliefs. Further, the incident is what eventually inspired this very book.

What follows now will be my advice for men who wish to be open about their sincere, pre-1945 beliefs without being socially or professionally destroyed. These steps have been formulated from my own experience in being the target of cancellation attempts, including much trial-and-error. But it must also be emphasised that these steps are not a *guarantee* to avoid *all* cancellation; certain circumstances will make cancellation more or less probable, perhaps even inevitable; in the latter case, you may wish to just keep your views a secret. Apart from that, what these steps *will* do is mitigate the consequences of cancellation attempts as much as possible without forcing you to renounce honestly-held views. In a number of circumstances, these steps can stop cancellation wholesale. Either way, they will be a great and necessary help for anyone whose convictions are hated by the world. With that said, let us begin with step 1.

STEP 1: Be Sure You Are Right

All of the coming advice is predicated upon your beliefs being *true*. If what you believe is wrong, it is a pure waste of time to risk cancellation over such. In some cases, certain views in the Christian paradigm are indeed so heinous that one *should* be cancelled for them. In other words, *not all cancellation is wrong*. Absolute freedom of speech is not a Christian principle. What is a Christian principle is the liberty to affirm the truth, and to freely

entertain or debate ideas which are not themselves in violation of the faith.

STEP 2: Be Articulate

After confirming exactly *what* you believe, you need to know *how* to articulate it. You can have a beautiful system of thought outlined in your head; your intellect could make Aristotle look like a Special Needs student. But if you cannot adequately express it to others, you will expose yourself to ridicule and condemnation.

Should you ever engage in serious discussion about your beliefs, *especially* in a less-than-friendly setting, you must know *exactly* what you are saying and what you *are not* saying, and all the precise categories and nuances involved. It is a feature of hostile discussions for people to assume or even impute strawmen upon you, even if unintentionally, since they assume that someone who believes controversial proposition A must also affirm proposition B, even if they are not logically connected. Worse, men on the defensive who are being overwhelmed with questions and accusations may unintentionally adopt views imputed on them that they do not actually hold, or at least imply that they do hold such views.

Avoiding this scenario means knowing *exactly* what you believe down to the jot and tiddle, having a sharp mind and keen ear that can detect when you are being misrepresented, *and* having the fortitude to call out such misrepresentations (more on this in Step 8).

STEP 3: Assess Your Status with Social Orthodoxy

After discerning your view as being true, you must now discern whether it is *socially* orthodox in your circles, or at minimum can be tolerated. If your view is accepted in common discourse (even if not the only common view), you have nothing to worry about. We will thus assume a situation where your view is at best looked at with suspicion by most, if not outright condemned. Once you discern this to be the case, the following steps must be followed.

STEP 4: Make Friends in High Places

In the spaces you frequent in life—your work, your parish, your extended family, etc.—make friends with everyone you can, especially those with the power in those spheres (whether formal or informal). As a Christian, and a real friend, you *should* be friends with such people anyway, and *not* primarily for this purpose of avoiding cancellation. Nonetheless, having such people as genuine friends has the added bonus of giving you the benefit of the doubt in their minds if and when your controversial views are revealed (or, as in the best cases, they may be open to full persuasion). This is especially important with those who have authority in your life, be they your boss, your priest, and so on. If you are genuinely close with them, they will not join in a hate campaign against you and cast you into the street, but will *at a minimum* seek an opportunity to discuss your views and understand you. Without giving personal details, this is exactly what happened with me, when a number of friends and a mentor asked me about my October 2023 post. Because of our existing relationship, they extended charity to me, and, after a number of conversations we came to a mutual understanding even when disagreement continued, ultimately because I was able to show how my views did not violate Biblical orthodoxy. On the flip side,

this *also* means that you are obligated to extend charity to those in your life with views you do not like (as discussed in an earlier chapter). That said, befriending those in power in your life is a critical way to shore up your defences before any controversy breaks out. The same should also be done for one's online circles and connections, but your offline connections are the priority, as that is where cancellation can *truly* hurt.

STEP 5: Let Your Views Marinate

This step requires a keen sense of reading the room, but the benefits cannot be understated. When the situation permits, let your views gradually emerge in conversation. Even if they are extremely controversial, it is possible to express them to your normie friends¹⁰⁰ without freaking them out (at least, not too much). It is next to impossible to give exact parameters for how and when to do this. Ultimately, you just have to be someone who can read other people well enough to know what they would tolerate and what they would shout you down for. If this is not you, work on that immediately. I can, however, offer some general factors to look out for in judging whether or when to drop your hot takes:

- Is your friend(s) more or less open to taboo discussions? More is better, less is worse.
- Is your hot take(s) relevant to the conversation? If yes, good. If not, do not bring it up, *unless* you can naturally steer the conversation where it needs to be.
- Is the mood relaxed and jovial, or tense? The former is more conducive to controversial topics.

100 I am assuming here a 'normie' who is at least generally reasonable and sociable. Certain mental deficiencies will obviously affect how to apply this step with them (if you can at all).

These are some of the key factors to observe before exposing others to your controversial beliefs. But ultimately, these are just general rules, to be applied prudentially by one who knows how to read people and social settings. That ability is critical not only to this step but to the entire project of avoiding social destruction; cultivating it must be a priority.

STEP 6: Beware Streisand's Ghost

At this step, we will assume that someone is now attacking your controversial views in public. When this happens, you may be tempted to immediately respond; but you must hold yourself back and assess the moment.

There are situations where the best course of action is to do *nothing*, at least in public. By way of example, say there is a small account engaged in a targeted hate campaign against you. However, because of his smallness, his posts are gaining little to no traction. Maybe one or two of your friends catch wind, and you would be wise to discuss the matter with them (see Step 7). Apart from that, however, nothing else happens. In such a case, you may be tempted to taunt, troll, or even just argue with the guy making the accusations anyway, *especially* if you have a sizeable public platform, allowing you to rally significant support behind you. But, and I cannot stress this enough, *do not engage*. By engaging with an otherwise ignored hater, you will inevitably give him greater attention. This phenomenon has its own name, the 'Streisand Effect',¹⁰¹ named after the American singer Barbara Streisand, who in 2003 attempted to sue a photographer for taking and uploading a photo of her house to the internet. The photo was only one among thousands and was part of a coastline

101 Definition and origin of the term can be read here:
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Streisand-effect>

photography project, not an attempt to stalk Barbara Streisand. Nonetheless, before the lawsuit, only a tiny handful of people ever saw the photo, and perhaps even less knew to whom the house belonged. After the lawsuit, the photo spread all over the internet, viewed by hundreds of thousands, and likely by now millions. In other words, in trying to stop the spread of allegedly damaging information, Streisand only amplified it by multiple orders of magnitude.

The same will happen to you, especially if you have a public platform of even a modest following. If you openly engage an otherwise tiny, ignored voice whining about you, his voice will now grow in magnitude, all from your help. Therefore, while he remains a nuisance of no consequence, *ignore him*. In time, he will either somehow raise the issue into a wider controversy, at which point direct engagement may become necessary; or, as is much more likely, he will tire out and stop his whining. The following steps will assume the former scenario.

STEP 7: Be Proactive

In this step, you are not merely the target of no-name hecklers, but are now a matter of public controversy, with concern-posting and active opposition converging against you.

The moment you catch wind of the storm, you need to move. Start by finding the posts, emails, statements, or whatever it was that started the public controversy. Carefully pour over what was claimed about you and begin planning a response (more on this soon). Also keep track of who interacts with it, who responds to it and in what ways. Your first priority is discerning the reactions of those who are personally close to you, are important connections in certain spheres, or who wield authority in your life. If they express some kind of shock or concern at the revelation, whether

in public comments or to you privately, you are to immediately offer to talk with them about the matter, ideally in person, but other modes may suffice.

STEP 8: Be On the Offensive

While you are speaking with concerned peers, you want to be crafting a response. Provided that you have made the requisite preparations from earlier steps—ensuring your view is in fact true, discerning where it stands in relation to social orthodoxy, and having a precise articulation of it—you will be able to (and will *need to*) make it so thorough and decisive a response that any good-faith onlooker of average intelligence will be compelled to side with you, even if they do not ultimately agree with your views. There are three essential elements your response must include for it to be most effective:

First, it must be *direct* and *precise*. You need to identify the attacks of your enemy and directly answer them; no beating around the bush, no distracting from the claims, just a direct response. And in that direct response, you must give a precise articulation of what your view is and how your enemy is wrong (and, if applicable, a liar, or an idiot).

Second, you must *own* your views. You cannot cower away from or disavow views which you honestly hold yet which your enemy cites against you (excluding strawmen, obviously). You must confidently own your views and even reassert them, while maintaining an articulate and respectable posture, and not ‘sparging out,’ as we say in Australia. Taking public and enthusiastic ownership of controversial views you hold will lead many to respect you far more than earlier, even if they strongly disagree with you. By contrast, when you show signs of cowardice, attempting to distance yourself from what you said *and still*

believe, bad actors will smell blood in the water and further propagate a sense of shame about your positions to those around you. Their power to do so is greatly handicapped, and in some cases eliminated, when you simply reply “Yeah, I believe that. And?” This, however, does depend on the social acceptability of your view, per Step 2.

Third, you must *frame* your response in a favourable *narrative*. That is, don’t just provide point-by-point refutations of your enemy’s attacks and leave it there. Rather, package them within a larger narrative which you communicate to the reader in order to (hopefully) reset their understanding of the situation, thus boosting the effect of your individual points. By way of example, say the public controversy is over your allegedly “heretical” views, which are in fact orthodox yet are being called out by an enemy; let’s call him John. Rather than simply reply “John is wrong, my views are orthodox for reasons A, B, and C,” you should supplement this with something like “and I hold these views from the consistent interpretation of Scripture according to the universal faith of the Church; so, John is actually condemning holy Scripture, and therefore he should face church discipline.” This is just an example; the possible situations and options for prudent responses are manifold (and ordinarily, a response will need to be much more detailed than the example). Critically, this example of reframing is not just a narrative that you happen to like, but one which appeals to the priorities of your peers (doctrinally-conscious Christians), establishing an effective point of common ground with them. Conversely, had you framed John’s slander as a Jewish assault on the White race, it may not have gone down so well.

With these elements all working in tandem, whether in one post or in a series of back and forths, you will be able to take charge of the situation and turn it against the one seeking your

destruction, assuming a largely good-faith audience (which is not a given these days). But I again must stress, this is *all* predicated on your view being *true*—thus always being rationally defensible one way or another—and on you knowing *exactly* what you do and do not believe. It is also to a greater or lesser degree predicated on your pre-existing rapport with those watching from the sidelines.

STEP 9: Admit When You Are Wrong

This step may be the hardest for some. It is highly likely, perhaps even inevitable, that you will make a claim in public that you later find to be incorrect. Maybe you looked back at what you said and, upon reflection or discovering more information, realised that it is incorrect. Or worse, you were publicly refuted by an opponent in an argument. What do you do in such a terrible situation?

Simple: Admit your error.

Yes, it really is that simple. Will it hurt your ego? For sure, at least on the first occasion. But you must do so anyway, for these reasons.

First, and principally, it is Christian conduct. The confession of faults to wronged parties is a central obligation of our faith (Num. 6–7; Jas. 5:16; 1 Clem. 51¹⁰²). In making public claims, you are knowingly speaking to anybody who sees them. Thus, if you publicly assert falsehood, you are not merely speaking to the wind, but (unintentionally) lying to any and all onlookers. Therefore, an equally public apology and retraction is necessary. Or, if this occurred in a more private setting, an apology to that space would be required.

102 I do not cite 1st Clement as proto-canonical Scripture; however, as it is a significant Christian letter from the first century written by Roman elders who most certainly knew Peter and Paul, it carries immense authority in its testimony to the Apostolic message.

Second, it deprives your opposition of ammunition. Many an online thinker has had his reputation ruined because he refused to address and own up to a glaring error he made, giving license to his enemies to mock and harass him over the matter, and in turn dissuade others from giving him the time of day. A recent such case is found in Jason Thor Hall ('Pirate Software' on YouTube and Twitch), who ruined his own meteoric rise in online fame by refusing to admit errors that were otherwise not that serious.

If you own your error and make a correction, *without* making disingenuous excuses, your own enemies no longer have a weapon with which to bludgeon you. And this is most of all the case in a broadly Christian theatre of discourse, as is the intended context of this book. No matter how subversive, hateful, and rabid "Christian" enemies can become, one thing they *cannot* get away with in public is withholding forgiveness from a clearly genuine apology. This current cultural civil war between the New Christian Right and the pseudo-traditionalists is in large part a struggle over who truly embodies the lived values of Christianity. Although there is dispute between the sides over what some of those values are, *nobody* disputes the centrality of forgiveness. If, hypothetically, you made a glaring error in a debate, were called out on it, and then gave a no-nonsense apology and retraction, what can your 'Christian' opponents do? If they gloat over your error *after* your apology, they only show themselves to be false Christians, now vulnerable to severe condemnation. Most—dare I say all public Christian actors know this, and so even if they still despise your very being they will stop short of rubbing a corrected error in your face, if only to preserve their own reputation. In the exceptional case where they do so anyway, they just gave you and your allies a silver bullet.

All of this, however, becomes less effective if you make frequent serious errors that require apologies. While your

Christian opponents may forgive you, they will have grounds upon which to publicly question your general reliability and integrity. So, the best protection is just to not make any premature claims.

STEP 10: Document Everything

Many things will occur in a developing controversy, including things which nobody sees coming, sometimes involving past events and hidden sins. At every opportunity, you want to keep verified receipts stored and easy to find again. Public threads, private conversations, emails, videos; every medium by which cultural and intellectual warfare is being engaged. At a minimum, this should compel accountability on your part, which is necessary. But it also prepares you for any unforeseen scandals that may arise.

A common example of such is when an opponent misrepresents the course of a private conversation in order to make you look bad to some degree. Assuming that his insinuations or accusations are actually false, having the conversation saved in some form that can be posted elsewhere will allow you to publicly confute your opponent's claims in a way he cannot weasel out of.

For another example, I will appeal to a real life case. A man had moved from Germany to the United States and joined the church led by Joel Webbon, a Reformed Baptist pastor. He made the mistake of sharing a dark yet (what he considered) funny meme with his old pastor in Germany, Tobias Riemenschneider. He then violated his former parishioner's trust and sent it to other major pastors in the US, chiefly, James White (Apologia Church, Arizona) and Douglas Wilson (Christ Church, Idaho), who then started publicly airing this matter and creating a public scandal. Eventually, a pastoral call was scheduled between Benjamin and Tobias, with two other pastors joining Tobias and Joel Webbon

joining on behalf of Benjamin. What nobody except Ben knew was that he had recorded the entire conversation, and when it eventually became public it revealed that an overt conspiracy was formed against Webbon on account of this controversy. More still, it showed Tobias attempting to compel Webbon to take church discipline against Benjamin if he did not ‘repent’ of his conduct. This, in flat contradiction to Tobias’ own earlier claim that there was no effort on his part to push for such a thing.¹⁰³ Consequently, Riemenschneider’s reputation took a colossal, perhaps irreparable hit in public discourse, when a conversation he thought to be private was fully recorded and posted for the public to see. This was solidified when Eschatology Matters – a channel that had consciously taken the role of being a bridge between the two sides, and where Riemenschneider’s response was first uploaded – publicly announced that they took the video down because of the clear falsehoods they discovered in light of this new evidence.¹⁰⁴ All of this, because one man decided to record the whole discussion, rather than just trust that his opponents would act with honour.

This is the power of keeping receipts.

STEP 11: Win

When your defences are secure, go after the ones trying to cancel you; not out of personal vengeance, but to compel repentance and stop their destructive campaign. If they express a true apology and repentance, you must cease and forgive. Until then, work towards

103 Pr. Riemenschneider’s response to Webbon, which was released before the meeting recording was made public (the false claim is made from 7:12 to 8:15): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bWDa_VUzKF8

104 I cannot find the original Tweet by Eschatology Matters (it appears to be deleted), but it is referenced and quoted in a thread by Pr. Douglas Wilson: <https://unrollnow.com/status/1851721288265667052>

their complete social discrediting, lest they eventually find a way to destroy you. As long as they face no consequences for their actions, they are free to try out new ways to destroy your reputation, even your job security. You must search for all their errors, all possible dirt. Anything that can be publicly exposed without significant cost to yourself should be collected and, when the moment arrives, published, so as to discredit your enemy's accusations. That which is exposed must in some way be relevant to his claims or his character, not superfluous (e.g. he once cheated at Mario Kart). Even a summarised articulation on how to do this well would require another book, so I will simply point one to some good works that touch on this, along with the exhortation to always maintain Christian virtue (which, to be clear, is not the same as not responding or refusing to 'play dirty').¹⁰⁵

105 Robert Greene, *The 48 Laws of Power*. Penguin, 2000; Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*; Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*; Claus von Clausewitz, *On War*.

CONCLUSION:

A RETURN TO TRADITION

I cannot but lament whenever I sit down and open an old Christian treatise from before the modern age; the theological depth, the precision of language, the rigorous adherence to logic. Of course, as the Modernists will note, there were simplistic works from that time as well, and there are rigorous works in the modern age. Against this, I point to the trends of these ages. Whereas, for example, early-modern Reformation theologians were all rigorously trained in logic, no such expectation is required of modern theologians. The late Dr. Michael Heiser made note of this problem, contesting that all doctoral students in Biblical studies should be required to take a course in logic.¹⁰⁶ We can see the fruits of this not being the case in modern works of theology and history; frequent imprecision and two or more sides talking past each other. The Christian Nationalism controversy is a truly beautiful example of this problem, in that it is almost completely one-sided regarding who employs logic (the Christian

106 A post on his blog noting how he has said this more than once, followed by recommending a resource on logic: <https://drmsb.com/resource-on-logic/>

Nationalists; those engaged in theological retrieval) and who relies on sloganeering (the opponents thereof).

The problem extends to matters beyond academic theology and of more immediate cultural import, those issues which this book addressed. So many lay and ordained Christians are inept at rightly applying divine revelation to current issues; worse, some have this ability and yet, knowingly or not, refuse to employ it in the same, principled manner as they do elsewhere. Yet it is a critical mark of the Christian to not be taken in by the priorities of the world, but to assess them by the one standard of divine revelation, revealed in two modes (natural and supernatural).

My own Christian journey has been defined by an absolute adherence to principles, including when I personally hate where they lead. In such cases, I force my emotions to conform to that reality, even learning to love it (when such is appropriate). I do this, because if I at any time surrender principle in order to hold on to an appealing belief, then what is the point of studying intellectual matters? If I sacrifice truth at any one point, what prevents me from doing the same anywhere else? It would be more consistent for me to live as a hedonist.

This work, my first published book, is the fruit of almost two years of direct reflection, but also the result of my entire Christian journey. I do not want my insights to stay with me, but to flow into the Church Catholic and to rescue the bride of Christ from the pit in which she finds herself. I pray that Almighty God makes this so.

In the name
of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit:
Amen.

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