

**The Gospel's Missionary Journey: Summary and Analysis; the Pivot Crosses the Atlantic: Its Theology, Its Establishment**

**VI. Summary and Analysis**

**A. Protestant Theology versus Religion:<sup>1</sup>**

Christianity in Europe proved to be far more important than one's nationality or race. Multiple areas of advanced thought and intellect were discovered by Europeans because of spiritual growth, knowledge that was missing in non-Christian societies.

Certain essential truths, such as (1) the predominance of man over animal, (2) his unique personality, (3) his independence from the state, (4) his dominion over nature, (5) his free will, (6) and his responsibility to determine his own fate in time and in eternity, crystalized in the souls of advancing believers.

Such spiritual self-esteem did not occur overnight in the minds of European Christians. For centuries, both culturally and intellectually, Christianity was eclipsed by the Muslim world.

The Germanic hords who overran the Roman Empire were very appropriately described in their day as Barbarians. These people – and our ancestors – were crude, inhumane, primitive, backward, unrestrained savages.

Being saved and learning doctrine cannot change the thinking of a civilization – its culture, its attitudes, its modus operandi – overnight. How long does it take to convert and then renovate the souls of a completely uncivilized people to the point it changes and refashions its ethical, establishment, and doctrinal attitudes?

Well, the Barbarians overran S.P.Q.R. beginning with the sack of Rome led by **Alaric**, king of the Visigoths, in 410, and ending when the German **Odoacar \ō-dō-vā'kar\** deposed **Romulus Augustulus \rām'ya-las o-gas'cha-las\** as the last Emperor of Rome in 476.

About a century later, the Roman Catholic Church began to drift from orthodox theology following the reign of Pope Gregory the Great.

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<sup>1</sup> The major resource for this chapter is: Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, *The Intelligent American's Guide to Europe* (New Rochelle: Arlington House Publishers, 1979), 45–57.

But between the years 476, the traditional date for the fall of Rome, and 1517, the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, we find that it took 1,042 years for Christian thought to prevail among the Barbarians.

It was only after Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin developed Protestant theology that Europe began to approach the standards of civilization known during the golden days of Rome.

Up to that point, Islam was far more cultured and civilized.

Further, it was God's perfect timing to raise up a man of Luther's character and integrity in order to counteract the satanic thrust of **Renaissance humanism**.

It was really in 1511, when Luther was sent to Rome, that he was able to see the effects of humanism in the Renaissance. There he saw a return to the culture of Classical Greece and Rome emphasizing the humanist aspects of the ancient scholars.

Although Luther was not opposed to the restoration of Classical literature, he was highly opposed to building a culture on the humanist aspects of its writings. To that degree, he viewed the sages of ancient Greece and Rome as pagans, roasting in the everlasting fires of hell.

Luther subscribed to the medieval view of the universe as being a circle with God at its center. The Renaissance was introducing the cosmos as an ellipse with two focal points: God and man.

Luther considered this to be a betrayal of Christianity which he must fight to the end. He was correct in his analysis and his deepest fears were realized.

What we today recognize as traditional Catholic theology is deeply rooted in the idea of humanism which it picked up from the Renaissance.

The emotionalism of baroque art and architecture still attracts Catholic Renaissance thinking, while the Protestant world remains drawn to the more Gothic forms.

The baroque form reeks of self-indulgence. It is characterized by an absurd emphasis on elaborate ornamentation, excessive detail, and grandiose theatrics.

Baroque art and architecture are, simply put, overly ornate to the point of being just plain gaudy and speak of the lust for pleasure and exhibitionism, typical of humanism.

On the other hand, Gothic art and architecture are highly organized and symmetric. Its straight vertical lines and high reaching arches convey the image of reaching heavenward toward God.

Gothic form can be described as mathematical formula reduced to art and therefore displays the idea of absolutes.

So in reality, modern Christianity is not modern at all; Catholicism has retreated to the Ancient World while orthodox Protestantism has remained Medieval.

Such cannot be said of traditional Christianity in Western Europe at least as far as its theology is concerned. The Enlightenment Movement of the 16th and 17th centuries infiltrated Protestant thought. Rationalism intruded upon the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit and faith took a holiday.

The Enlightenment merged Greek philosophy with new scientific knowledge producing the human-viewpoint conclusion that through reason mankind could find wisdom and consequently achieve happiness.

The Roman Church sought to syncretize the philosophy of the Renaissance with the doctrine of the church.

Placed in the trappings of baroque art and architecture, Catholic clergy conducts masses abounding with meaningless rituals while dressed as though attending a masquerade ball.

When Protestantism joined in, it became the opposite of what the Reformers intended. The result was the creation of the Anglican Church or the Church of England.

It is from this aberration that the Puritans fled to Colonial America. They could put up with erroneous thought from where it was expected, but they refuted its invasions into the pulpits of England.

Orthodox theology had made too much progress to be destroyed by lust for the ostentation of ritual and the social gospel in place of Bible study and the preeminence of Christ.

It was clear to the Protestants that prosperity followed orthodoxy while Catholicism still courted poverty.

Only under Protestant theology had free enterprise emerged to bring this prosperity, a prosperity they viewed as an imputation of divine grace. And the motivational mind-set behind this prosperity was the Protestant work ethic.

While Protestant theology was being developed and circulated, a large colonial effort was simultaneously begun in England.

These settlements became an escape route for Protestants who found themselves in conflict with the Church of England.

## VII. The Pivot Crosses the Atlantic

### A. Its Theology:

The Protestants who left England and came to the Colonies seeking religious freedom were originally called Puritans. Their name described their belief that the Church of England was indeed corrupt and impure.

The Puritans were steadfastly opposed to the state having anything to do with the church. The spokesman who set the tone for this Protestant movement in England was **William Tyndale**. He viewed England as a Client Nation, like ancient Israel.

He taught that Britain was under the protection of the sovereignty of God, but only so long as she repented and purged the land of popish idolatry.

**Visual:**  
**5 Cycles**  
**of**  
**Disciplin**

Tyndale claimed that when England did this and then kept the laws of God, that God would prosper England. Otherwise, Britain would suffer the five cycles of discipline from the justice of God.

Tyndale's hope for England seemed to take a positive tone under **King Edward VI** (1537).

Protestantism flourished under Edward as its clergy was allowed to develop a systematic theology. The three components of a true church were worked out:

1. Communication of Reformation doctrine.
2. Consistent worship at a local church.
3. Church discipline.

However, the death of Edward brought **Queen Mary I of England** to the throne in 1553 which resulted in a return to Roman Catholicism.

Hope was renewed in 1558 when Elizabeth I began her reign, but things did not turn out as well as had been hoped.

Elizabeth issued two statutes: **(1) The Act of Supremacy** which placed her as the supreme governor over the Church of England, and **(2) The Act of Uniformity**, which mandated that English worship must follow the *Book of Common Prayer*. It was during Elizabeth's rule that Puritanism developed.

The Queen insisted that the clergy's vestments must be uniform. An opposition group arose against this saying that it smacked with the remnants of popery. By 1570, some of the Puritans had become Separatists, rejecting the whole idea of a state church.

What emerged was the formation of a number of independent local churches which elected their own pastors and began to conduct Bible classes. These "do-it-yourself" churches were considered anathema to Elizabeth and to the established church.

The enmity between the two factions flared in 1583 when two Separatist laymen were hung for selling tracts.

The conflict blew wide-open in 1593 when three pastors were hung for teaching outside the established church. The remaining Separatists got out of Dodge, fleeing to Holland as exiles.

In 1607 a group of Separatists from **Scrooby** \skrū'-bē\, England, fled to Holland and organized the Mayflower expedition. They left to establish **Plymouth Colony** in 1620.

They were all **Calvinists** and this original group is known as the **Pilgrims**.

They believed that mankind is totally depraved and that the state, like the church, was an instrument of God used by Him to control and combat the old sin nature.

Before leaving Holland to come to America, the Pilgrims signed the **Mayflower Compact** which stipulated the formation of a civil government within a Holy Commonwealth.

Only being a member of the church could one vote or hold public office. But they were flexible in that nonmembers enjoyed the security found in the basic rights of life, liberty, and private property.

As Calvinists, the Pilgrims believed that the Scriptures contained all the principles needed to run a government. For the individual it was firmly held that each person had his own personal destiny in the Plan of God.

This promoted the concept of hard work and diligence so that one might fulfill that destiny.

Since they understood mankind to be totally depraved, they felt strongly about allowing those in government to have too much power. It was this fear of too much power that led them to have a distrust for a system of majority rule.

If heathen majorities were given power, being ignorant of divine wisdom, they would become tyrannical.

**Rev. John Cotton**, a Puritan pastor is quoted as saying; "I do not conceive that God ever ordained democracy as a fit government either for church or commonwealth. If the people be governors, who shall be governed? As for monarchy and aristocracy, they are both clearly approved and directed in Scripture as the best forms of government in the commonwealth and in the church."

Individual rights were stressed in **Massachusetts Bay Colony**. The slightest infraction of the law was viewed as a threat to the order of society.

Protestant thought among the colonists asserted that God had not intended that citizens should subject their life and liberty to the will and pleasure of government.

Certain laws, based on Scripture, are established and given to the authorities to enforce for the protection of life, liberty, and property. These laws not only protected society, but bound the authorities from pursuing their own desires.

The law was a clear-cut line in the mind of the Protestant believer that established the mark where the ruler became a tyrant. For the Protestant colonist, when rulers became tyrannical, resistance to that ruler was a duty before God.

Private property was looked on as an extension of the individual. Consequently, legal safeguards against government invasion of property rights protected the individual as well.

Scripture mandated that they be very authority oriented, but that orientation was to the law not to man. Even a hint of oppression by government was viewed as an attack on individual rights.

Fear of tyranny led them to place heavy restraints on the powers they delegated to government.



The result was a culture that stressed minimum government shackled by legal restraint and maximum freedom controlled by individual responsibility.

### **B. Its Establishment:**

When our **Founding Fathers** gathered in Philadelphia in May of 1787 to draft our nation's Constitution, they were not men with absolutes.

There was plenty of argument and discussion; debate and oratory; but never was it on the subject of granting the government more power, but rather on how best to restrain it.

It is a difficult thing to delegate power to individuals that grants them authority over people and at the same time holds those authorities in check.

The Founders considered it a grave matter and a dangerous enterprise to allow anyone the opportunity to violate the rights of a free people.

Protestant theology had firmly established in their souls the doctrine that men are totally depraved, that by nature man is sinful and unable to please God.

They were willing to concede that the human conscience gave man a basic knowledge of right and wrong. But to trust men with the freedom of others was a flawed concept and needed restraint. They in no way bought the idea of the French Revolution, the bastard child of the Renaissance.

Under proper legal restraint, man could be expected to be a good citizen, to perform well in a job, and to be a loyal and faithful husband and father. Therefore, government must be strong enough to restrain the masses, but not so strong as to allow rulers absolute power.

Such concern was what inspired the Founders to set up a tripartite system of government with built-in checks and balances designed to restrain sin and regulate power.

Protestant theology had taught the Founders that the Bible contained absolute principles by which societies are to be governed. Knowledge of this theology and its absolutes naturally found its way into the founding documents of our Republic.