

Position Paper

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO BOOK REVIEWING?

In Defense of *Political Polytheism*

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by Gary North

When I wrote *Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism*, I expected to make few friends and extra enemies in the "Christian America" circles, the "Divinely Inspired Constitution" circles, and the "Equal Time for Jesus" circles. I also did not expect to see many reviews of the book. What you cannot answer, yet have to answer, is best left to rot in the shadows, if possible.

So far, I have seen only one published review. A second is coming soon. The reviewers are all Presbyterians. They are all Calvinists. But *Political Polytheism* failed to persuade them on many things. My response here is necessary for me to demonstrate that what has been published so far is not merely superficial but downright bizarre. *Political Polytheism* obviously remains a problem for the critics. If the best they can do is what they have done so far, then the book's thesis remains unscathed.

The art of book reviewing is no longer taught. In the 1950's, college-bound students wrote book reports throughout high school. Book reviews were common in college. In graduate school, they were mandatory. They are basic to any academic specialty. Scholarly journals rely on them.

Every review must summarize a book's thesis. A scholarly review must do the following: (1) identify the author's "school of thought"; (2) present any unique features of the book; (3) note any serious errors; (4) evaluate the author's performance in presenting his thesis; and (5) assess the book's importance, especially in the academic field. A "plain vanilla" review ends here.

Then there is the hatchet review. The reviewer has several tasks in addition to what we have already covered: (1) concentrate on the book's weaknesses and errors; (2) show how these errors undermine the book's general thesis; (3) show that the author ignored an alternative interpretation of the facts that he did get correctly; (4) show how he ignored other books or literature that point out the alternative interpretation; (5) show what the author should have concluded. The master of the hatchet review in the field of modern history was the late A. J. P. Taylor, the most prolific historian in modern times, whose books fill a large bookcase.

Then there is the smear review. This is the critic's substitute for a hatchet job. Writing a smear review is thought to be necessary in the eyes of some critics when they are unable to produce an acceptable hatchet job. The marks of a smear review are these: (1) it accents minor errors, or possible minor errors; (2) it implies that these minor errors are representative of the author's scholarship and the book generally (3) it presents completely bogus errors as if they were

real - imputed arguments which make the author look like a fool or a charlatan; (4) it ignores anything in the book that reveals the invented arguments as fakes.

A lot of critics write smear reviews, thinking they are mere hatchet jobs. What I find is that virtually all of the reviews published about Christian Reconstruction are either plain vanilla reviews (not too many of these) or smear reviews. I never see a well-executed hatchet job. This saddens me. I regard a well-executed hatchet book review as one of the high arts of modern civilization. It is fast becoming a lost art.

The Minnesota Twins

In the very first issue of a new quarterly Presbyterian journal, *Contra Mundum* (against the world), located in Fridley, Minnesota, two authors, Roger Schultz and T. E. Wilder, present a lengthy review of *Political Polytheism*. The authors are not known to me. Their review appears in the Summer, 1991, issue (forthcoming; I have the page proofs). I shall refer to them as the Minnesota twins, or just "the twins."

As I go along, I shall present some of my rules of book reviewing. I got 'my start in the scribblers' profession by writing book reviews for the local newspaper. I learned what must be done. Rule number one: If you are not well known, it is wise not to choose controversial books to interact with. Especially, do not come out with both barrels blasting, since your barrels are likely to be .22 Derringers. If you come out with your gun blazing against someone who is known to carry the equivalent of a .44 magnum, not to mention a 30.06 semi-automatic with an 8-power scope, you are likely to experience immediate discomfort. If you have not mastered the field in which you are bringing your critical appraisal, then you are taking unnecessary risks. If you do not have ammunition in reserve, be sure that your first shots take out your victim.

The twins devote five pages to their review. This is longer than a typical review. On the whole, they say, *Political Polytheism* is a good book. They do summarize the book's overall thesis accurately. They understand my use of the five-point covenant model, and why the book is divided into three sections: biblical covenantalism, halfway covenantalism (Christian pluralism), and apostate covenantalism (secular humanism). They correctly state that I call for a confessional, Trinitarian civil citizenship. They argue that I have not gone far enough in my civil covenantalism - the kind of criticism that I generally approve of. They think I should have called for a more detailed confession from candidates for public office

than from voters. After all, they argue, church officers must swear to a more rigorous creed than laymen do. (They seem to want to require Presbyterian creeds for all civil officers – an effective way to blow Athanasian pluralism a part.)

Van Til: Not a True Calvinist

The twins then say that I am unwise to rely on the writings of Cornelius Van Til because Van Til's system opposes the Calvinistic and Reformed doctrine of divine sovereignty "in a paradox based dialectic" which "permeates all his thinking." Dismissing the entire corpus of the work of Van Til in two short paragraphs is, to use restrained language, a bit eccentric. This is another attempt to criticize me for not going far enough because I have avoided a total break with Van Til. That is to say, the twins are saying that I really do not understand Van Til, implying that Rushdoony doesn't either, and neither do Frame, Jordan, Sutton, etc., etc. As I say, this is eccentric. In any case, the accusation deserves a book, not two brief sentences.

Rule: don't overplay your hand in a book review. First write a book demonstrating your point, and then refer to it in the review. At least you should refer to a competent volume by someone who proves your point. The more bizarre your accusation, the more comprehensive the book should be.

North: Speed Demon

They write, "Perhaps North rushed his work into print because of the urgency of the hour." This language is reminiscent of Archie P. Jones' review in *Letter from Plymouth Rock* (July, 1990). Jones, a Calvinist Presbyterian, wrote his review for a premillennial, dispensational, natural-law-promoting, "the Constitution is Christian," "America is a Christian nation," "pluralism is God's holy way for politics" newsletter. Jones asserted categorically, "*Political Polytheism* was a rush job."

I can well understand Dr. Jones' concern about my excessive speed. I employed him in 1980, paying his salary for a year so that he could finish his doctoral dissertation, which he had begun seven years earlier. And he finished it, too, in June of 1991. Now, when it takes a man eighteen years to write a doctoral dissertation in political theory, he may well regard my writing of *Political Polytheism* in the year after I had written *Is the World Running Down?* as "a rush job." The key issue is not my speed; it is the book's accuracy.

Did I rush the book into print? That depends on how fast I normally write. The reader should decide. I normally write 30 to 50 double-spaced pages a week. It is now Tuesday evening, July 2, 1991. Since yesterday morning at 6 a.m., I have written a 20-page newsletter and a 29-page essay for a forthcoming *Festschrift*. The first draft of this report is now 26 pages long. This is typical of my writing schedule. Tomorrow, I will finish this position paper and edit an 18-page essay that I dictated last Saturday. Thursday, July 4, I fly to the Navaho nation to do a series of videotaped interviews. So, is this position paper incoherent as a result? Is it disorganized?

In 1986, I wrote *Conspiracy: A Biblical View, Fighting Chance, Honest Money, The Sinai Strategy*, rewrote *None Dare Call It Witchcraft* into *Unholy Spirits*, edited the *Biblical Blueprints Series* and wrote an introduction for three of them. This in addition to my normal yearly output of 34 newsletters. (I also ghost-wrote half a book.) In 1987, I wrote *Liberating Planet Earth, Inherit the Earth, Healer of the Nations, Dominion and Common Grace*, and wrote introductions for seven more of the books in the *Blueprints Series*, plus the 34 newsletters. So what? This is normal. I am not just starting out in this business.

Does this writing schedule make my material incoherent? Have you ever heard anyone say, "Gary North writes unclear books"? Nasty, mean, arrogant, outrageous books, no doubt; but unclear? In the period in which *Political Polytheism* appeared, 1989, I was also finishing my 1,300-page commentary on Exodus 21-23, *Tools of Dominion*. It appeared a few months later. *Political Polytheism* was an appendix to *Tools of Dominion*, as I say in the first two sentences of *Political Polytheism*. I was busy. So what?

What these two non-writers of books have failed to grasp is that it is often easier to read a longer book than a shorter one, if the longer book repeats its themes and explains the argumentation, if it gives examples (they take space) that illuminate the arguments. Mathematics books are short. Are they easy to read? Can they be read rapidly just because they are short?

Rule: don't make a fool of yourself in public. Don't just say a book is unclear; quote an unclear passage or two. Don't just say "This disorganization makes it hard to find and assess his views, as important qualifiers may be 150 pages away." Give three examples. They offer none.

North: Ninny on Natural Law

Following Van Til's pioneering work in philosophy, my book argues that natural law theory is a false rival to biblical law. Therefore, I conclude, any civil covenant based on natural law theory is a false covenant, biblically speaking. I argue that the reliance on natural law theory by American colonists led to the creation, first, of a halfway covenant (the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation) and then, second, to the affirmation of an apostate covenant (the U.S. Constitution).

The twins say that I argue that the American Christian colonists' acceptance of natural law theory was a compromise. "North suggests that all attempts to use natural law are examples of compromise and/or apostasy." I confess: I really do believe that eighteenth-century natural law theory was a compromise position for Christians. What would the reviewers expect me to argue, that natural law theory was correct then, but it is wrong today? That it wasn't compromise then, but it is now? That Van Til should have accepted Newtonianism as valid *covenantal common ground* in 1789, but he legitimately rejected it as apostate today? What do they think- I have 'been arguing throughout my career? *Natural law theory is covenantally wrong and is a compromised position*. It has been ever since the early church apologists adopted Stoic natural law theory to buttress the revelation of the Bible. What do the reviewers think Rushdoony was arguing in *By What Standard?* What do you think Van Til's apologetics is all about? This is like having some humanist say, "And not only that, North says that the Bible is God's inspired Word. You know: infallible!" True, but not particularly relevant. Not exactly a giant debating-point victory, either.

They continue, assessing my accusation of compromise regarding eighteenth-century natural law theory: "That is not true. While some Christians undoubtedly relied too heavily on natural law in their political theories, they acknowledged the supreme authority of the scriptures and used natural law to illustrate biblical truths, persuade unbelievers, or search for common ground." They say that the colonists' use of natural law was no more sinister than my use of Austrian economic theory. They neglect one point, however: I have used the Bible to restructure Austrian economic theory. The colonists used natural law theory in abandoning almost all references to the authority of the Bible in political discourse.

The thesis of the third section of my book is very, very clear: it was what *Jefferson, Adams, Washington, Franklin, and*

Madison did with natural law theory that mattered politically. They transformed the colonies into an apostate civil society. They got Christian legislators to vote for, and Christian leaders to approve, a halfway covenant (the Declaration of Independence) and then an apostate covenant (the U.S. Constitution). My book discusses how Witherspoon and the other Christian advocates of natural law theory were suckered: first, into a halfway covenant by Jefferson; and second, into Madison's apostate covenant.

Question: If it was not eighteenth-century natural law theory that served as the moral and judicial basis for this transformation, what else was? Do we find references to the authority of Scripture in *The Federalist*? Do we find many Bible references in the Anti-Federalist tracts? No. Why not? Because the debate was framed in terms of natural law theory, the rights of man, and the history of secular republics. The three authors of *The Federalist* called themselves "Publius," not "Moses" or "Joshua."

It is one thing to say that I am wrong about natural law theory. It is quite another to ignore the thesis of 300 pages of my book with respect to colonial political philosophy, and also ignore the fundamental apologetic thesis of the Christian Reconstruction movement (following Van Til) – anti-neutrality, anti-autonomous man – and then tell the reader that there is nothing wrong with natural law theory.

Rule: reviewers should review a book in the light of the author's other books and his school of thought's books. To treat a movement's central thesis as if it were peripheral in the book being reviewed is the mark of third-rate reviewing. Unless the reviewer has time to refute the whole movement's fundamental thesis – e.g., the apostate nature of autonomous man's natural law theory – it is best to note the author's argument and move on.

North: Nut on Newton

I begin Part 3 with a necessary identification: the source of the particular form of natural law theory that was dominant in eighteenth-century English thought. There is no doubt who that was: Sir Isaac Newton. It was Newton the physicist who gained for natural reason the authority necessary for Christians to believe that natural reason, irrespective of biblical law, is sufficient to construct a productive political order. The publication of Locke's *Two Treatises on Civil Government* (1690) followed Newton's *Principia* by three years. The triumph of Newton made possible the almost universal acceptance of Locke's contractualist political philosophy. This is such a conventional interpretation of the origins of modern philosophy that it is amazing that anyone would question it.

Newton was a Unitarian (in those days, sometimes called an Anan). He rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, but he did so secretly. Had he admitted this publicly, he would have lost his job as the Director of the British Mint.

I also point out that Newton had an even more secret side. He was a practicing alchemist. That is, he was deeply involved in the occult. This fact was suppressed by his contemporaries and his successors after his death in 1727.

Finally, I point out that a pair of clerical agents of Newton captured English Freemasonry in 1717-24, and converted it from an officially Christian movement (it always had an occult underside) into a religiously neutral society based on a self-valedictory covenantal oath. Freemason then became a substitute for the Church.

The twins save most of their slings and arrows for Part 3 of the book, on apostate covenantalism. More to the point, they save their big guns for two aspects of that thesis: (1) Newton was a Deist and occultist, and (2) Freemasonry was

a major organizational and ideological force in the coming of the American Revolution. They should also have mentioned that I trace the appearance of modern Freemasonry in the 1717-24 period to two of Newton's disciples: James Anderson (of Anderson's Constitutions) and John T. Desaguliers, both of whom were Protestant ministers. But that is where I make some very crucial connections, so they do not mention it.

They announce: "In keeping with a tendency to identify key villains in history, North launches a diatribe against Isaac Newton." (What tendency? Where else displayed?) They go on to say that "Errors occur throughout his exposition. He says, for example, that only the purchase of Newton's papers by [John Maynard] Keynes did the scholarly public learn about Newton's alchemy, whereas in 1888 Cambridge University Press published a catalogue of Newton's books and papers at Portsmouth including works on alchemy." Well, it looks like they've got me now! Poor old North: trapped by the master bibliographers from Fridley, Minnesota.

I wrote: "That he was also an alchemist is a fact that was deliberately concealed from the public for at least two centuries by those who had access to his private papers, and is still never found in textbooks, although the detailed biographies of Newton do discuss the fact." That Newton studied alchemy, some Newtonian scholars knew about before 1936. (I challenge you to find a word about this in any lower-division college history textbook.) What they did not know until Keynes' purchase of Newton's papers was that he was an adept, a man who was immersed in alchemical experiments day and night.

The twins can read. They can see that I cite Frances Yates on these points. The late Miss Yates was one of the most respected historians of early modern European thought. Her book, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964), revolutionized Renaissance studies. She proved that Bruno was an occultist, not a scientist, and that many of his supposedly rationalist peers were also occultists. She led a whole school of students who have produced incredibly detailed studies of Renaissance and early modern occultism. Here is what she says of Newton and the unpublished papers. "The most startling revelation from the unpublished papers is the fact that Newton was not merely interested in alchemy (as has always been known), but that he devoted more time and energy to this Hermetic pursuit than he did to his mathematical studies" (*Ideas and Ideals in the North European Renaissance*, vol. 3, p. 270).

The twins say that Cambridge University Press in 1888 listed Newton's alchemical papers. This means that readers knew that he had written something about alchemy. The reviewers give the reader the impression that the public had access to these papers. No one had access to them until Keynes bought them, according to Yates. Our reviewers have therefore taken on Yates, calling her woefully ill-informed, simply by implying that I am woefully ill-informed when I cite her. It would have been wise to have cited exactly where and when Newton's supposedly unpublished alchemical papers were in fact first published. Yates could be wrong, and if so, then I am wrong, but it is my policy to defer to master historians in their field of expertise unless I know primary source evidence that refutes them. If this be shoddy scholarship on my part, I openly confess.

They go on to say: "Citing numerous studies, which when consulted are found to contradict North's interpretation of Newton. . . ." They cite no example. They need to tell the reader exactly which sources I cited that tells the opposite story from what I said that it says. They need to cite the page numbers. It is not good enough simply to assert that this is the case. Above all, they need to cite Frances Yates, Betty Dobbs, and Margaret Jacob, since these are the

authors I relied upon most heavily to develop this section of the book.

Jones, too, rejects my thesis on the influence of Newton in American colonial thought. It just couldn't be true. Why? "If the Framers and ratifiers held to such a view, then why did our early statesmen not conduct the national government accordingly, but rather conducted it as a Christian government?" Right, such statesmen as Washington (a Grand Master Mason who refused to take Holy Communion), John Adams (self-professed Unitarian), Thomas Jefferson (self-professed Unitarian), and James Madison (the leader of the pluralistic, no test oath *coup*). There is an answer to Jones' rhetorical question, however, the one I keep referring to in my book: *the voters were Christians*. This is why Jefferson never published his scissors-and-paste New Testament, with all traces of Jesus' miracles and divinity removed. He knew what the political results would be.

North: Dork on Deism

The twins say of me that "He sees Newton as the fount of the rationalism that in actuality preceded him by a century in Anglican theology. . . ." In the very first sentences of *Political Polytheism*, I tell the reader that the book is not intended to stand alone. In the second sentence, I wrote: "It grew out of a series of shorter appendixes that I had added to my book, *Tools of Dominion*."

If the reviewers had turned to *Tools of Dominion*, they would have found Appendix C, "The Hoax of Higher Criticism." I turned this appendix into a separate book, also called *The Hoax of Higher Criticism* (1990), just in case someone neglected to read *Tools of Dominion*. (Billions of people have.) On pages 1064-67 of *Tools*, there is a subsection, "A War for English Civilization," in which I identify the English Deists' attack on the authority of the Bible as the source of both Biblical higher criticism and rationalism. On this point, I quote James Barr's introduction to Henning Graf Reventlow's monumental study, *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World* (SCM Press, 1984).

Reventlow's exhaustively footnoted study traces the history of just those Anglicans-- Deists all -- who preceded Newton. I quote Reventlow's conclusion on page 1066. As you read it (please read it), keep in mind the reviewers' dismissal of my knowledge of Newton's Anglican predecessors.

Only as a result of the attack by Deists on the authority of Scripture (preparations for which were made, against their own intentions, by Latitudinarians, Locke and Newton), an attack which they made step by step, did the legacy of antiquity in the form of natural law and Stoic thought, which since the late Middle Ages had formed the common basis for thought despite all the changes of theological and philosophical direction, remain the one undisputed criterion. This produced a basically new stage both in the history of ideas and in the English constitution. This position already contains the roots of its own failure, in that the consistent development of the epistemological principles of Locke and Berkeley [sic] by Hume shown showed that its basic presuppositions were untenable. However, two irreversible and definitive developments remained, which had made an appearance with it: the Bible lost its significance for philosophical thought and for the theoretical foundations of political ideals, and ethical rationalism (with a new foundation in Kant's critique) proved to be one of the forces shaping the modern period, which only now can really be said to have begun (*Authority*, pp. 413-14).

The twins go on to note that North "accuses Newton of holding deist views, though North is clearly unfamiliar with what deists believed." Clearly unfamiliar? (At least I'm not unclearly unfamiliar.) And no doubt equally unfamiliar with

this history is Henning Graf Reventlow, with a mere 78 footnotes in his chapter on Lord Herbert of Cherbury, and a pathetic 536 footnotes in his chapter on the Latitudinarians. (I cite Reventlow in *Political Polytheism*, p. 323n, where I say: "This neglected book is a gold mine of information on English political philosophy through the mid-eighteenth century." Our reviewers ignored this fruitful lead.) And when was "The Heyday of Deism," according to Reventlow? After Newton's *Principia*. (*Authority*, Part 3, chapter 3.)

Rule: when you shoot from the hip too fast, you are liable to shoot off an important appendage.

The twins conclude this section with a final note: "North is not familiar with the last decade of Newtonian research. In fact, most of what he says about Newton is wrong." Not merely some of what I say. *most*. End of argument.

If you wonder why I have developed the reputation of regarding my published critics as half-baked, overconfident, and intellectually handicapped, search no farther for an answer.

North: Moron on Masonry

If a society is not Christian, it has to have a covenantal substitute for the Church. In eighteenth-century European society, both Anglo-American and on the Continent, there was only one possible institutional rival to the Church: the Masonic clubs. I therefore discuss their influence in the American Revolution, beginning with the famous Boston "tea party," which was organized and executed by the St. Andrews Masonic lodge, which had its headquarters at the Green Dragon Tavern.

This presentation outrages the twins: "Another problem with this section is North's fanciful emphasis on a Masonic conspiracy." My conspiracy theory could not be true. Why not? Because I cited Masonic historians. North "relies on Masonic historians who, even North concedes, are not the most reliable." This is reminiscent of Archie Jones' review: "He also uncritically accepted the claims of Masonic historians about the numbers and influence of Masons in the American 'Revolution' and the Constitutional Convention." Uncritically? Here is what I wrote on pages 430-31:

Leaders on both sides of the Constitutional debate were members of Masonic lodges. There is a problem in knowing precisely how many. Lodge membership was not always flaunted by members, and historians have not paid much attention to the subject. Tatsch said that 18 of the 56 signers of the Declaration were Masons, and 18 of the 39 signers of the Constitutional Convention (J. Hugo Tatsch, *The Facts About George Washington as a Freemason* (New York Macoy, 1929), p. xiv). Roth reduced this to possibly a dozen signers of the Declaration (Roth, *Masonry in the Formation of Our Government*, pp. 154-64). Heaton placed it at nine (Ronald E. Heaton, *Masonic Membership of the Founding Fathers* (Silver Spring, Maryland: Masonic Service Association, [1965] 1988), p. xvi) [At this point I included a lengthy footnote on the unreliability of one historian's estimate, which was too high.] Heaton says that 13 of the 39 signers of the Constitution were Masons: Bedford, Blair, Brearley, Broom, Carroll, Dayton, Dickenson, Franklin, Gilman, King, McHenry, Paterson, and Washington. Of these, five had been or later became Grand Masters. [Bedford (Delaware), Blair (Virginia), Brearley (New Jersey, but in 1806), Franklin (Pennsylvania), Washington (Virginia, but in 1788).]

It is true: I sometimes cite Masonic historians. So what? I also show which ones are reliable and why. This criticism is the old ploy of "we just didn't have the energy to check out anything North cited from these studies, but he relies on Masons to prove it, so we don't have to." Passable rhetoric; lazy (or nonexistent) scholarship. It is the standard ploy

of humanists against anything scholarly that Christians write. Serious reviewers should avoid this approach.

Let me tell you what Dr. Jones means by my supposedly “uncritical acceptance” of Masonic historians. He means that he has never before looked at any of the evidence regarding colonial Masonry, but he does not like its implications for his belief that the U.S. Constitution is a Christian document. He has devoted his career to arguing that the American Revolution was a Christian movement. My book appears as a betrayal, and he resents it. But he cannot prove that it is incorrect. So he appeals to rhetoric. It is the reviewer’s version of the traditional debating technique: “When you don’t have the facts, shout loudly and pound the podium.” Jones bold faces and italicizes his sentences.

All three reviewers failed – I believe deliberately – to mention my citations from the work of Bernard Fay (Little, Brown, 1935) and Dorothy Ann Lipson (Princeton University Press, 1977), both of whom are non-Masonic historians, and both of whom tell at least part of the story. This tactic of silence will fool naive and trusting readers. That is why it is so perverse morally.

The twins continue: “In arguing for a monolithic Masonry, North does not mention that Masonic organizations had serious power struggles.” Monolithic? Here is what I wrote:

The fact is, however, that the “craft” was divided by the mid-eighteenth century between “Ancients” (lodges started a generation after the formation of London’s Grand Lodge in 1717) and “Modems” (which the Grand Lodge called itself). Masonic historian Sidney Morse says that the “Ancients” were often lodges of sea-faring men. These men were excluded from membership in the Grand Lodge-connected lodges in Boston and Philadelphia because of their inferior social status, so they started lodges of their own. The St. Andrews lodge of Boston, better known as the Green Dragon Tavern lodge, headed by Joseph Warren at the time of the Tea Party affair, was an “Ancient” lodge begun in 1752, the year after the founding of the first “ancient” lodges in England. The St. Andrews lodge could not settle its continuing dispute with St. John’s, the older Boston lodge, which resented these upstarts. Only with the victory of the Americans in the war and the severing of ties with the Grand Lodge did the original lodge make peace. Thus, the age-old distinctions of status and wealth began to undermine the original egalitarian goal of Masonry (pp. 474-75).

In the previous chapter, on page 435, I wrote: “In Philadelphia in 1775, where the first Continental Congress met, there were approximately one thousand Masons, although we do not know on which side they fell out initially. As the war progressed, the ‘Ancient’ lodges became dominant in Philadelphia.” So, I admit my ignorance in print – and thereby suggest a fruitful Ph.D. thesis topic – and I am ignored by these ever-so-scrupulous reviewers, who have a strategy: *ridicule the author by means of highly selective quotations* – or nonquotations, in their case. (Note: not once in their critique of Part 3 do they cite a single complete sentence of mine from Part 3.) With selective quotations, I am easily dismissed as a defender of “monolithic Masonry.”

Rule: When a reviewer says that an author does not say something, he must make sure he in fact did not say it. Universal negatives are extremely dangerous in any book review, especially if it is a long book.

Then they really let me have it: “Nor does he prove that Masons were dedicated conspirators and revolutionaries; most probably saw the lodge as nothing more than a social club.” They no doubt believe that they have really wiped me out, since I had written on page 475 that “Masonry cloaks its operations by means of parties and conviviality.

Many of its own members do not suspect that it has ulterior motives, the main one being the substitution of a different cosmology from that taught by the Church.” I only said *many*; they, however, said most *probably*. How can North withstand such powerful arguments? So, it’s on to the next list of criticisms!

North: Kooky over Conspiracy

What Jones hates, and what the Minnesota reviewers also hate, is my argument that the Masonic lodges were the *ordy* major intercolonial organizations that acted as a *relatively* unified body, other than the churches. I argue for a conspiracy. But professional historians and political scientists are never, ever supposed to argue for conspiracies. That would make things hinge on individual men’s covenantal commitments and actions.

The Minnesota twins say: “Another problem with this section is North’s fanciful emphasis on a Masonic conspiracy.” Again, “Unfortunately North hurts his credibility and the book’s argument by chasing Masons down the back alleys of American history.” Great rhetoric; stupid argument. Why stupid? Because of the whole book’s thesis.

What is the thesis of the entire book? There *must always be a covenant*. There must therefore always be an oath, implied or explicit. I devote ten pages, 472-82, to the topic, “Rival Covenant.” I show how the Masonic covenant structure parallels the biblical covenant’s five-point model. But none of the reviewers mentions this. I devote pages 482-85 to “Rival Oaths.” Again, silence.

Since I argued that the U.S. Constitution is a rival civil covenant – “new covenant, new god – I had to show where the rival model came from and who promoted it. But this means that I had to argue for a conspiracy. Why? I say why very clearly:

I have called the [Constitutional] Convention the first stage of a *coup*. I have argued that Masonic influence was important both in terms of the philosophy of the delegates and their membership in the lodges. If the entire nation had been Masonic, then this would not have been a *coup*. But very few colonists were Masons. Prior to the Revolutionary War, there were about two hundred lodges in the thirteen colonies. Their combined membership was somewhere between 1,500 and 5,000. Yet the total population of the nation was about 2.5 million. By 1800, there were perhaps 16,000 members. Thus, to argue that the Constitution was essentially Masonic is necessarily to argue for a conspiracy.

Christians ratified it. They must have been ignorant about the long-term effects of their actions. They must have been unaware of the covenantal implications of their decision. The defenders of the document were able to appeal to a common body of opinion regarding religious freedom and the supposed tyranny of Christian creeds. They presented to the electorate a supposedly creedless covenant – there are no creedless covenants – devoid of any explicit religious oath. The Christians failed to recognize the true nature of the inescapable implicit oath: the sovereignty of the People, meaning the official sovereignty of five Supreme Court judges and the real sovereignty of a massive, faceless, Civil-Service protected bureaucracy (pp. 439-40).

Jones argues from *a priori* logic: “Since it is impossible to prove that there was a Masonic conspiracy to secularize the Constitution or that the Masons present did succeed in such an attempt. . . .” Normally, historians proceed from the facts to the conclusions; not Jones. He begins with what he says is impossible and then proceeds to his conclusion. This is so much easier, research-wise. No waste of eighteen precious years!

North: Worthless on WitherSpoon

Rev. John Witherspoon was the president of the, College of New Jersey (later Princeton College), where virtually all colonial Presbyterian ministers were trained. He was a staunch Calvinist and an equaUy staunch promoter of natural law theory, especially in political philosophy. He taught James Madison and several other signers of the Constitution. He was the only minister who signed the Declaration of Independence. He was the most influential pro-Patriot minister in the colonies, a fact well-known to the British Army, whose off icers once executed another minister because they mistook him for Witherspoon.

Second fact: in the same period that Madison was planning the Constitutional Convention in order to centralize American government, 1785-88, the Presbyterian Church was in the process of centralizing its government. Both bodies met in the same week of May, 1787, to finalize the proposed new covenants. These facts are not known by most Christians or even most specialists in U.S. colonial history (I am one of them, and I learned about it only in mid-1989).

The twins cannot successfully rebut my discussion of Witherspoon's natural law politics or my discussion of the centralization of the Presbyterian Church. So, they take a very clever approach: they combine the two arguments. They say that I argue that Witherspoon masterminded the ecclesiastical centralization. They are silent regarding the existence of the move toward centralization (and political pluralization) of the presbyterians when the Church revised the Westminster Confession of Faith to transform it into a pluralist document, which it became when the new Confession was ratified in 1788.

The twins summarize my thesis regarding the transformation of the Presbyterian Church in 1787-88. Then they attempt to refute me, but not directly, since this cannot be done. I have set forth the historical facts, not opinions, regarding this transformation. Their strategy is nothing short of brilliant and nothing short of perverse. They say, "North's case here is weak, at least judged by his treatment of John Witherspoon, whom he sees as a catalyst for apostasy in the Presbyterian Church." Notice what they try to do: shift the reader's attention from my central ecclesiastical argument regarding the transformation of the Presbyterian Church to my supposedly perverse treatment of Witherspoon. Then they drop all discussion of the pluralization of the Church. This is a classic example of point three of a smear review: "it presents completely bogus errors as if they were real - imputed arguments which make the author look like a fool or a charlatan."

Did I identify Witherspoon as an apostatizer? Why not cite a sentence that proves this statement. Because *there is nothing to cite*. I never said it or implied it. I did devote several pages to the Synods that centralized the church, 1785-88. Whom do I identify as the leader? John Rogers. "The main figure on the committee was New Side leader John Rogers, who had served on all of them since 1785" (p. 546). I did not even mention Witherspoon in this regard. I specifically said that the minutes of the 1785 Synod do not reveal who made the overture for centralizing the church (p. 544).. Not once in the book's section on the move toward a centralized church did I mention Witherspoon (pp. 544-46).

The reviewers write: "Witherspoon did not want to centralize, liberalize, and bureaucratize the Presbyterian church, as North implies." Implies? There is not one sentence in the book that says anything of the kind. They *are lying through their teeth (or their word processors)*. AU I did was cite Witherspoon's own words regarding his lack of concern regarding Presbyterian government:

"Every question about forms of church government is so entirely excluded that . . . if the twins [the students] know nothing more of religious controversy than what they learned here, they have that Science wholly to begin." Thus, concludes [historian Leonard] Trinterud, James Madison did not learn about Presbyterian polity from Witherspoon (p. 548).

I did not argue that John Witherspoon was the catalyst for anything Uke apostasy in the Church. Good grief; I'm the fellow who has spent 30 years (on and off - mostly off) in writing a book about J. Gresham Machen's break with the Presbyterian Church USA. Even in that manuscript, I never use the word apostasy regarding the Machen-era church. How could I possibly regard the Presbyterian Church of 1788 as apostate? It is absurd. No, it is worse than absurd. It is modern Reformed Presbyterian rhetoric on Christian Reconstruction.

What the reviewers do here is *lie*. I cannot think of a softer word that accurately describes what they have done. They tell the reader that I have said something of Witherspoon - something really evil - that I never even hinted at. They bear false witness against me by saying that I bore false witness against Witherspoon. They had to do this so that the reader would not be aware of my case against Witherspoon's politics, which they discreetly do not mention.

The question that I *did* raise was whether Witherspoon accepted covenantal apostasy with respect to the *national civil covenant*. I argue that he did, and I use his own writings to prove it. Almost all the Christians did. (Patrick Henry was an exception. So was Samuel Adams, a Calvinist.) There was no debate over the covenantal issue in 1787 except in a few of the state ratification conventions, which I cited. Witherspoon was no "catalyst," except insofar as he taught Madison and several other Philadelphia Constitutional Convention their political theory. The Christians did not see what Madison was doing to them. Their spiritual heirs still deny it.

The twins insist that I greatly erred in my handling of Witherspoon's influence in the Synods of 1786 and 1788, which led to the revision of the Westminster Confession that made it into a politically pluralist document (which we are assured it is by every commentator on the 1788 revision). "North relies entirely in biased, second-hand accounts of Witherspoon; one by a liberal Presbyterian historian and the other by a neo-evangelical author he had earlier denounced." They refuse to identify these sources. I am not sure exactly which ones they mean.

Problem: the twins do not say exactly how the supposed bias of my sources led to false conclusions about Witherspoon's role. Providing such proof should be the task of a serious reviewer. But these reviewers are not serious. They are "puttin' on the style" for the 43 or fewer people who will actually read the first issue of their journal.

I used a book by James Smylie only to cite a Preface to the proposed new form of government. This Preface was, Smylie says, almost certainly proposed by Witherspoon in 1786. If the reviewers have evidence that Smylie was wrong, fine. Let them tell us what that evidence is. But the Preface's statement is a statement universally believed today. So, why all the fuss? It said:

God alone is Lord of the conscience; and bath left it free from the doctrine and commandments of men, which are in any thing contrary to his word, or beside it in matters of faith or worship;" Therefore they [Presbyterians] consider the rights of private judgment, in all matters that respect refigion, as universal and inalienable: they do not even wish to see any religious constitution aided by the civil power, further than may be necessary for protection and security, and, at the same time, be equaf and common to others.

Did the twins have in mind Jacob Patton's Popular *History of the Presbyterian Church* (1900)? I used this book only to cite his reprint of Witherspoon's 1789 message to George Washington (p. 547). I never mentioned anything about Patton's opinion of all this. This had nothing to do with any manipulation of the church by Witherspoon.

In short, these reviewers are arguing, I am clearly a defective historian because in this section of the book I cite secondary sources when they reproduce a significant primary source – a source that is not easy to locate and which I have never seen anywhere else. Well, mea culpa! I guess they have my number. I do sometimes cite primary source documents that are reprinted in narrative history books.

This whole argument is a repeat of their "North cites Masonic historians" argument. Their object should have been to prove why the cited historians' analysis was wrong, and why my secondary source's reproduction of a primary source document was somehow faked. They should then have referred the reader to reliable secondary accounts that prove the opposite of what I have argued. Anything else is just rhetoric. I believe in rhetoric; I insist, however, that it be backed up by scrupulous research and footnotes thereto.

North: Dummy on Documentation

Here I return to Dr. Jones' review. "*Political Polytheism*, particularly in its crucial third part, is flawed by faulty methodology and ignores, or fails to confront, key evidence at crucial points." Dr. Jones' review goes on for eight pages – an entire newsletter. Yet he does not again refer to any of the other two sections of the book. He accuses me of using "faulty methodology" throughout the book, but particularly in the third part. "Particularly" is usually contrasted with "generally," yet he offers not one argument, not one scrap of evidence, about anything outside of Part 3. At least the reviewers from Minnesota did summarize the whole book's thesis and tried to offer criticisms for every section. Not Jones.

The difference between a smear job and a serious, intellectual review is the relation between rhetoric and evidence. Jones is high on rhetoric and low on evidence, especially for Parts 1 and 2: zero evidence. Silence.

He notes that I argue that the Declaration of Independence is a deistic document written by deists and Masons. It was written under the direction of a five-man committee. I show that three of them were Masons: Sherman, Livingston, and Franklin. I show that three were Unitarian theologically: Jefferson, Franklin, and Adams. I cited the evidence from primary sources and secondary sources (seven footnotes on page 406). What does Jones offer in response? Only Wilmoore Kendall's assertion that the Declaration did not really establish a new nation. Not what you call rigorous proof. (Kendall was rarely sober. When he wrote that bit of wisdom, I think he was in his normal condition.)

Then Jones says that the signers believed in providence, "a concept incompatible with the 'Watchmaker God of Deism. . . ." "What English Deist ever denied God's providence in favor of a strictly watchmaker God concept? None that I know of. (None that the Minnesota twins know of, either.) Jones cites none, and cites no secondary source on the question.

Then he cites a statement by Leo Pfeffer (1953) that the state papers of the Continental Congress use the language of providentialism. But what is Part 3's thesis? That the Constitutional Convention was an illegal *coup* and that the states were still self-consciously Christian (except for Rhode Island, of course). In response, Jones cites evidence of Chris-

tianity in the states. But I use a flawed methodology, he insists.

Then he cites M. E. Bradford's study that most of the Framers were church members. So what? Most Masons in the American South are church members. Does this mean they have never taken a Masonic oath? The issue is: What was the theological-covenantal character of the documents the Framers signed? Madison organized the Constitutional Convention self-consciously to remove all traces of Trinitarianism from the national government. I present pages and pages of evidence for this thesis. Neither Jones nor the Minnesota twins refer to any of this evidence.

The main covenantal argument of Part 3 is that the Constitution states in Article VI, Section 3 that no religious test oath is legal for Federal officers. Since 1%2, no test oath has been legal for state officers. State officers had been required to take such oaths. Jones correctly notes that this is my thesis. So, one would expect a serious reviewer to prove try to disprove it. What does Jones do? He says the following. ". . . *the clause was proposed and approved by Christian statesmen.*"

When you have no facts, italicize and bold face your rejection of the other man's case.

It is interesting that the twins do not even mention my thesis on the oath. Yet I made it clear, throughout the third section that this was my central Constitutional thesis, that everything hinges on it. I wrote on page 410: "While the Preamble has received considerable attention, Article VI, Clause 3 has been almost universally ignored. Despite the silence of the commentators and historians, there is no single covenantal cause of the suppression of Christianity in America, and therefore in the modern world, than has had greater impact than the test oath clause. It is this clause that established judicially the anti-Christian nature of the Constitutional experiment." On page 689, I wrote: "Yet this crucial Constitutional provision is rarely mentioned today. The humanist defenders of the Constitution automatically assume it, and the Christian defenders either do not recognize its importance or else do not want to face its obvious implications. Instead, the debate has focused on Congress and the freedom of religion. This provision is not the heart of the Constitutional covenant; it is merely an application of it." I listed both in the index under "test oath: central feature." The twins somehow skipped over this.

It makes *you* wonder. Where did these self-appointed experts get their training in the art of book reviewing?

North: Loony on Lordship

The Preamble of the Constitution identifies the sovereign Lord of the Constitution "We, the People." Every textbook on the history of U.S. Constitutional law discusses this in relation to the general principle of the sovereignty of the people in eighteenth-century political thought. But this is all wrong, Jones says. The Constitution says that Jesus Christ is Lord of the civil covenant.

Jones knows in his heart that the Framers were Christians, because in Article VII we read that the draft of the Constitution was completed in 1787. That proves it! Why? Because the text refers to "the year of our Lord." Yes, A. D., or Anno Domini, proves it. Jones mentions that I brushed this argument aside as an argument so far-fetched that I politely refused to mention the name of the person who offered it (p. 404). (It was not Dr. Jones, however; I thought he was wiser than this.)

Jones says that this phrase constitutes a true Lordship clause in the Constitution – not only that, but the Lordship of Jesus Christ. This is just the beginning. Jones says that

in the U.S. Constitution, "*Transcendence* belongs to God, to Christ; the people are over the Constitution but under the Lordship of Christ." He says that "*Hierarchy and authority begin with Christ. He is over the people. . . .*" And, of course, "*Ethics and law* are to conform to Christ's standards. . . ." Naturally, "*The oath to support the Constitution is an oath to support a Christian fundamental law, to act in conformity to the Lordship of Christ.*" Finally, "*So far as succession, continuity and inheritance* are concerned, Christ will continue to be Lord." All this Jones derives from the words, "the year of our Lord."

Then comes his *coup d'grace*: "*Absolutely no one in the Constitutional Convention said a word of complaint, much less attempted to extirpate the Lordship clause from the Constitution.* It remains in the Constitution along with its crucial but neglected (or obscured) implications." Neglected or obscured? No argument here from me!

When you have no case, italicize and bold face your words.

Do you take seriously Jones' "year of our Lord argument, or do you take Article VI, Section 3 seriously: no test oaths? That article was eventually used by the courts to abolish the requirement of state officers to swear an oath to God. Yet in the pre-Revolution colonies (except in Rhode Island), they had to swear allegiance to the Trinity, and several also required affirmation of the Bible as the Word of God. But Jones says this is irrelevant. What is relevant is "the year of our Lord in the date. Has any Congress, President, or Supreme Court case ever mentioned any of Jones' conclusions in regard to the judicial force of "the year of our Lord? No. Has any historian? No. But we are expected to take Jones' word for it. Bizarre!

In Jones' entire review, "the year of our Lord is his only citation from a primary source document. Yet my methodology is deeply flawed - page after page of citations from primary sources. How do we know? Trust Jones. He knows.

North: So Much Better When Younger

Rhetorically, a good strategy is to play off an early essay or book by an author with his latest effort. The twins try this one: "For a good example of the position North now ridicules, read his 'The Declaration of Independence as a Conservative Document'" (1976). Again, "The North of 1989 is radically different from 1976." Radically different? In the next-to-the-last sentence of that 1976 essay - in the conclusion - I say that the Declaration was a *fusionist document*. In 1989, I called it a *halfway covenant*. This, you understand, reveals a radical difference. So the reviewers say. They seem to be saying, "Too bad North is no longer a first-rate historian the way he was back then."

It is inspiring to learn that my fans are very concerned about my reputation. They want me to salvage it. How? By adopting their views. Jones writes: "This reviewer hopes that the quality of *Political Polytheism* will not undermine the respect that Dr. North's more scholarly works have earned for him, and that his future efforts will return to the higher standard of historical accuracy of his previous studies." I offered only 771 footnotes in Part 3. Not enough. Mine is a flawed, deeply flawed, methodology. Too bad, isn't it? I used to be such a smart fellow.

Miscellaneous Gaps in North's Thinking

The twins say that my theory of covenantalism rests on a postmillennial vision of a coming revival. They are correct. Then they say, "It comes as a surprise that he has no theology of revival." It certainly came as a surprise to me, especially after I had to proofread the manuscript for *Millennialism and Social Theory* about seven or eight times.

They also add this: "He would have a larger audience if he were, well, nicer." Funny thing, though: they reviewed my book in the first issue of their journal.

I guess Bill Meyers sent his PBS TV crew to Texas to try to interview me (I refused) because he knew that I am really a nice guy. My reputation preceded me. I wouldn't want anyone to think Meyers did the feature on Christian Reconstruction, and cited (out of context) some of my writings on the program, because I tend to say outrageous things on occasion - outrageous from the PBS point of view.

Funny thing, though: Meyers never went to Westminster Seminary, or any other Reformed Seminary, to interview them about anything. I wonder why not. They sure are nice.

Conclusion

Someday I may encounter a serious critic, who has read my books and articles line by line, has found identifiable inconsistencies, and who can cite chapter and verse from as comprehensive a range of sources as I use, showing that I have misused the primary and the secondary sources. In short, someday I will come up against a serious scholar-critic who will give me a run for my money. It has not happened yet.

I will tell you how I will spot him. He will not resort to outright lies to make his case against me. I will tell you something else. I do not think he will be a Reformed Presbyterian. I have seen that kind of historical scholarship for too long. *Theonomy: A Reformed Critique* is representative. So are these book reviews. This is what passes for high-level Reformed Presbyterian scholarship today.

If you have read my book rebutting Westminster Seminary's attack on theonomy (*Westminster's Confession: The Abandonment of Van Til's Legacy*), you can understand my sense of desperation. There 'was a time when the Presbyterians were the masters of scholarship, especially in the field of church history. Who will defend the faith today? Who is equipped to take on the whole secular humanist world? People who write these sorts of critiques? Hardly.

What, in the name of God, is the church of Jesus Christ going to do when the crises hit? Leaders in formerly Communist societies are begging Western churches to send them scholars who can tell them what they should do. Who will we send? The Presbyterian book reviewers in Fridley, Minnesota? Or Archie P. Jones, who, if we are to believe his major argument against my view of the U.S. Constitution, would transform the Soviet Union into a Christian nation merely by adding "A. D., 1936" to Stalin's 1936 constitution - an officially pluralist document?

May God forgive us. Personally, I wouldn't.