

The Second Blessing: “One Alone Cannot be Excellent”

Robert Maynard
January 3, 2015



Robert Maynard

According to Unificationist teaching, the First Blessing paves the way for the Second Blessing of marriage and the “ideal family.” Keeping the blessings in order and realizing that one lays the foundation for the other is the key to creating an “ideal world.” This understanding is very similar to the Puritan notion of “Covenant Theology.”

Family and Community as the foundation for a just social order

As has already been discussed, Americans are well known around the world for our sense of Individualism. It is this characteristic that has led us to take very seriously the issue of individual liberty and the cause of human rights. What is often overlooked is that Americans have an equally strong sense of community. This of course is the community associated with voluntary associations rather than the forced collective community. Historian Clarence Carson dedicated a section on this theme in his book *A Basic History of the United States*. The section was called “The Voluntary Way.”

At first glance it may seem that a focus on individualism and a focus on community would be mutually exclusive pursuits. Such a misconception comes from a misunderstanding of American Individualism. The American sense of individualism is tied inseparably with its sense of community through what is called “Covenant Theology.”

In “The Source of American Individualism” I explored the notion that American Individualism came from the dignity afforded to the human individual as a being created in God’s image, who was at times called to stand before God as a bearer of that image. Such a person stands not only before God as a bearer of his image, but also before his fellow man as a reminder that humans are meant to be bearers of God’s image. This represents the dual aspect of the Covenant. The strength of individual character to stand before man and God as a bearer of God’s image in an unjust world is how American individualism should be understood. Such an understanding prevents the notion of individualism from degenerating into selfishness.

The Moral Theology of William Ames

As noted in the Bible, Man does not bear the image of God alone. At the point where Adam had come to realize his uniqueness, God said in Genesis 2:18, “It is not good for Man to be alone.” At that point God made a helpmate for Adam and the two “became one flesh.” There is a sense in which Man is incomplete and seeks a relationship with another to find completion, or excellence. It was this realization, which prompted American philosopher and theologian Jonathan Edwards to remark in the early section of his “Miscellanies” notebook, “One alone cannot be excellent”. Edwards was referring to the Trinity, but applied the notion more broadly. The early American Puritans’ view on this dual aspect of the Covenant was influenced by the British Puritan and moral theologian William Ames. Ames lived from 1576-1633 and followed in the footsteps of French Puritan philosopher Peter Ramus. Ramus was a moral philosopher who was more concerned with what constituted “the good life” than he was with abstract philosophical speculation. As pointed out by J. van Vliete in “The Moral Theology of William Ames: From Thomas to Westminster,” he applied this approach to theology and insisted, “theology is the doctrine of living well.” Ames went one step further, as Dr. van Vliete notes, and insisted that theology is the “doctrine of living to God.” In order to live to God, one must know God. In this Ames followed in the footsteps of John Calvin and Medieval Catholic thinkers in linking knowledge of God with self-knowledge. As Calvin put it, “Without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God” and “Without knowledge of God there is no knowledge of self.” This is so because part of us bears the image of God. As St. Paul put it in Romans 7:22, “In my innermost self I delight in the law of God.” Our very being is at some level linked to the spirit of God. As Genesis 2:7 tells us, God scooped up the dust of the ground and blew into it and Man became a “living soul.” Our sense of self or soul is derived from our relationship with God, and we are incomplete without that relationship. Again as professor van Vliete has pointed out Ames took this starting point and expanded upon it. He emphasized “doing” over “knowing.” Ames was reacting to a moral philosophy/theology that he saw as more theoretical than practical (theoretical apprehension). Even though it was qualified by using such action-oriented statements as “living blessedly,” it was still too theoretical for Ames. He set out to produce a moral philosophy/theology that was more of a practical guide to the holy life than a mere call for contemplation. The holy life may start with contemplation, but it must lead to action. This view accounts for the Puritan “work ethic”. Ames was seeking a much more hands-on understanding, because “theology is the doctrine of living to God.” It is called doctrine because it is divinely revealed. More importantly, humanity, made in the image of God, must realize that image by emulating Him and “since the highest kind of life for a human being is that which approaches most

closely the living and life giving God, the nature of theological life is living to God". This is accomplished by living in accord with God's will and to his glory.

Given that "living to God" presupposes knowing God, Ames touches on the issue of conscience: "The conscience of man (for I do not intend to treat of the conscience of angels) is a man's judgment of himself, according to the judgment of God of him." (Updated from 17th century The human conscience is not only a means by which we know God, but also a guide by which we judge our own actions according to that knowledge of God. Because submission to our passions has distorted our clear perception of God, our conscience must be informed by scripture. In addition, the will must be guided by a heart submitted to God. Again, professor van Vliete quotes Furthermore, since this life is the spiritual work of the whole man, in which he is brought to enjoy God and to act according to his will, and since it certainly has to do with man's will, it follows that the first and proper subject of theology is the will. Proverbs 4:23, From the heart come the acts of life; and 23:26, Give me your heart. Ames lays out his moral theology in a series of books under the title: Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof. In book one he elaborates on the conscience and its workings. His second book flows naturally from the first. Having examined the nature of conscience, Ames logically moves on to the definition of "cases" of conscience. "A Case of Conscience is a practical question, concerning [that] which the Conscience may [have] a doubt." This section is devoted to sin, entry into the state of grace, salvation, the ongoing flesh/spirit battle and conduct in the Christian life. Book three, Of Man's Duty in General, is an inquiry into "the actions and conversation of man's life" where Ames addresses the whole question of obedience to God. Ames asserts that the signs of true obedience are submissively placing God's will ahead of the will of the creature, even when that will does not appear to work towards one's advantage. This is to be accomplished by exercising those characteristics that are conducive to an obedient life. Such characteristics are the cardinal virtues of prudence, courage, temperance and justice, and by avoiding those tendencies that thwart an obedient walk, such as drunkenness, sins of the heart, sins of the mouth, etc. Books 4 and 5 explore an extended understanding of the Ten Commandments and how they are to apply to the daily walk of the Christian. Book 4, The Duty of Man Toward God covers the entire spectrum of the obedient Christian walk. Commandments one through four are addressed under the heading of "Religion" and cover the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. Chapters on "Pride against God" and "Consulting with the Devil," give positive instruction on prayer, confession, and singing, and are concerned with applying the second Commandment. Commandment three deals with the biblical use of the oath, the lot, and the sacraments in the context of worship to God. Book 4 closes with a chapter on commandment four, "The Lord's Book 5, "The Duty of Man Towards his Neighbor," focuses on the second tablet of the Ten Commandments. The exploration of commandments 5 – 10 covers such topics as justice, revenge, restitution, favoritism, love for neighbor, intercessory prayer, schism, humility, pride, and the mutual obligation between opposite classes of people for which the commandment on honoring of parents is the springboard. Here the hallmarks are respect for others and others' reputations and obedience of one class of citizen over another.

Sanctifying the Social Order

Clearly from the writings of William Ames, we see that the Puritan view of the twin duties to "love God above all else" and "love your neighbor as you must love yourself" created an elaborate worldview regarding human nature and the social order. Both the regeneration of individual human nature and the sanctification of the social order were a part of the covenant that God's people entered into with Him. That Covenant begins with the regeneration and calling out of individuals, but such individuals are to sanctify the social order. Sociologists like Max Weber often comment on the "Puritan work ethic" and marvel at how they were involved in so many seemingly "secular" pursuits such as economics and science. They could not understand how a people who did not view salvation as something earned would concern themselves with such matters and speculated that it was a way to prove their elect status. Such confusion came about because secular writers simply have no understanding of just how comprehensive the Puritan Covenant Theology actually was. The question was not merely one of the eternal salvation of the soul in the afterlife, but a question of the duties that we owe to God as a result of entering into a covenant with him. A covenant is not just about the blessings associated with salvation, but the duty owed to God. And tending to that duty owed to God results in realizing goals that make for the thriving of human life on earth. There is no aspect of human concern that the covenant does not touch upon. In all of these aspects we are to realize the excellence that comes with being the bearers of God's image. One such area is the social order. The Puritans believed that the fall corrupted the social order as God had originally intended it. Instead of a just social order, we see one rampant with exploitation and tyranny. As part of entering into a covenant with a just God, it is our responsibility to help bring about justice in a social order that has been corrupted by human deviation. As St. Paul says in the book of Romans, one of the consequences of the fall is that we have become slaves to our own passions. As an original blessing, God gave us the right to exercise dominion over the creation. The notion of true dominion, properly understood, is summed up in the Christian doctrine of "stewardship". There is no possibility for exploitation in such an understanding. The human fall has twisted the drive for dominion into the source of much exploitation and tyranny. The passion for dominion is so powerful that even secular writers have recognized its centrality in human affairs. Philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once noted that the basic driving force behind human striving was a "Will to Power" and first coined the phrase in part one of Thus

Spoke Zarathustra. He later wrote a separate book under that specific title. The question is whether such power is aimed at realizing ideals compatible with justice or with tyranny. Consistent with their notion of covenant, the early American Puritans saw it as their responsibility to sanctify the social order, which they saw as being corrupted by the human fall. They recognized the problems created in the social order by the perversion of the blessing of dominion. There were some differences of opinion as to how to go about fixing the problem. One issue was the notion of inequality.

Some, like the Presbyterian Calvinists, saw human hierarchy as a natural part of the social order. We do not all have the same level of gifts and grace and we are not all the same, so there is a natural hierarchy in human society. The problem from their perspective was that the fall had resulted in an ungodly hierarchy, which led to exploitation and tyranny. The answer was to institute a godly hierarchy that would exercise servant headship the way Jesus did with his disciples. Groups like the Congregational Calvinists leaned a little more toward the notion of human equality. The Quakers, on the other hand, favored complete equality and saw inequality as a result of the fall. They pointed to St. Paul's assertion in Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." In short, they saw the new covenant in Christ as calling for essential equality.

Eventually, the Quaker view won out and the notion of equality was enshrined in our Declaration of Independence as a right that we are endowed with by our creator. It is important that we not equate the equality aimed at here with the egalitarian leveling sought in the French Revolution. We are not all the same and do have different talents, gifts, degree of grace, etc., but we are equal before the law and equal in the eyes of God. Our equality is one of essence as human beings created in the image of God. The recognition of such equality does not cry out for a state imposed leveling of outcome as the Quakers demonstrated in their experiment creating a society ruled by "Brotherly Love." For a period of time they had virtually no state to do any such leveling and would have been appalled at the notion that a group of people or an institution would presume to be the arbitrators of a matter that was totally in the hands of God.

Another important criteria for the realization of justice, was the notion of "sphere sovereignty." Each entity that entered into a covenant with God was to exercise a certain sphere of sovereignty within which they were to realize their responsibility toward God. There was an individual covenant, which required individual sovereignty. There was the family covenant, which required family sovereignty. There was the Church, which required Church sovereignty. There was the community, which required community sovereignty. There were the various institutions of local, state, and national government, which required their sovereignties. It is from this notion that we get the idea of self-government and local control. Larger entities were not to interfere with the sovereignty of smaller entities by usurping their role. Instead, they were to aid them in the realization of their covenant responsibilities as the smaller entities were to help the larger entities realize theirs.

The Centrality of the Family

For the Puritans, the central institution of the social order was the family. In fact, they saw the family as the only natural institution that would have necessarily existed had there been no fall. The need for institutions like the Church and State were seen as being needed after the fall to deal with Man's corrupted sinful nature. The State has the function to "wield the sword" to prevent us from doing harm to one another. This is why it is the only institution possessing a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. The Church was seen as necessary to be the bearer of the message of salvation. The Quakers believed that they were living in the New Covenant Age where, according to the book of Jeremiah, God would "write his law on our hearts." In their view, there was no need for the institutions of Church or State. Regardless of their views on the institutions of Church and State, all groups agreed on the essential centrality of the family as the cornerstone of a godly social order. The key to the family was the union between a mature man and a mature woman. As Genesis 2:24 pictures it, man and women "become one flesh." They are incomplete without one another and each is completed by the other. It is important that the man and woman each reach a certain amount of godly maturity before entering into the marriage covenant, but their fuller completion comes through the relationship of one to the other. This is why men and women are polar opposites. Just as opposites charges attract one another in nature, the opposite personalities of men and women complete one another.

The union of opposites to create a greater reality seems to be a universal law. The opposite of the law of attraction is the law of repulsion. Like charges repel one another so as to create a greater opportunity for opposite charges to unite. In Genesis 2:18 God says, "It is not good for man to be alone." Not only is man completed in a relationship with woman, but he is prone to lead a life of destruction without her. Marriage provides a healthy channel for the erotic passions that are so prevalent among men. As Jewish Theologian Dennis Prager points out in his essay "Judaism's Sexual Revolution: Why Judaism Rejected Homosexuality": Societies that did not place boundaries around sexuality were stymied in their development. The subsequent dominance of the Western world can largely be attributed to the sexual revolution initiated by Judaism and later carried forward by Christianity. This revolution consisted of

forcing the sexual genie into the marital bottle. It ensured that sex no longer dominated society, heightened male-female love and sexuality (and thereby almost alone created the possibility of love and eroticism within marriage), and began the arduous task of elevating the status of women. The Puritans were especially aware of the extent to which human passions can become destructive when left unchecked. We become slaves to such passions rather than masters over those passions. The passions were seen as potentially a source of holiness, but were in need of being properly channeled so that they did not lead us down the road to destruction. The mastery of one's passions was a central theme of Puritan moral thought. Properly channeled, our passions were capable of driving us to the heights of excellence. The marriage between a man and a woman was seen as one of the most natural and fundamental channels of human passions. The only higher channel was the relationship between mankind and God. In addition to channeling the passions of men and women into a higher fusion where the two became one flesh, marriage was the first step toward establishing the family unit. Out of the marriage bond came children. Marriage was seen as the first step to establishing God's ideal of the family. Mere cohabitation did not represent the kind of commitment of the man and the woman to one another, which would serve as the basis of a stable family. The family was the cornerstone of the social order, thus the whole social order would be unstable without a stable family unit. The family was the one institution that combined the biological role of bearing children with the sociological role of raising children. The Puritans saw the role of raising children to be of utmost importance. After all, even animals bear children. The role of the Christian families was to raise children who were prepared to fulfill their covenant with God. While the covenant of an individual with God is determined by God's grace and the individual's faith, the Puritans believed that the proper raising of children could provide channels by which grace and faith could operate more effectively. To a young child, the parent is a Godlike figure and it is crucial that such figures project an image of God that does not hinder the child's relationship to God. An important part of raising children to realize their covenant with God is education. The "education of saints", as the Puritans sometimes referred to it, was primarily the responsibility of the parents and secondarily the responsibility of the Church. Early Americans would have considered taking the function of education out of the hands of parents and the Church and putting it into the hands of the State an act of insanity.

As has been mentioned several times, the Puritans were quite conscious of the destructive power of unfocused passions and often sought productive channels for their passions. One of the roles of education was to provide such a channel. Jonathan Edwards had once noted that true religion consisted of "holy passions." We are rational beings, but before we reach the age of reason, humans are driven by their passions. A solid education starts with the shaping of passions. It is important that young children are presented with an approach to education that encourages affection for good and disaffection for evil. The same is true for truth and falsehood, nobility and pettiness, etc. The kind of stories they read or watch are crucial in the shaping of the passions. So is the kind of music they listen to. If the passions are not channeled in a healthy way before the age of reason, then the powers of reason that do develop are not likely to result in a healthy mature individual. Reason has the power to rationalize all sorts of destructive behavior. On the other hand, the development of the rational/analytical faculties in someone whose passions have been channeled to appreciate the holy, the true, the good and the beautiful, can be an invaluable aid in living a Godly life. The same powers of reason so key to mathematics and science are also the faculties by which we weigh alternative courses of action in order to make a decision. While having affection for the aforementioned noble ideals is a start, deciding on a course of action that will manifest those ideals in our lives is important as well if those ideals are to be put into action. Along with focused passions and the right use of reason, it is important that we develop a persistence of will so we can see through a chosen course of action.

Next to the family, the most central institution of the social order was seen as the Church. Families were to invest themselves in assuring that the Church succeeded in fulfilling its role in realizing its covenant, and the Church is to support the family as well. Families and churches in turn played a key role in creating other voluntary initiatives, which addressed social needs. These voluntary associations aimed at fulfilling various social functions filled out the social order and created what classical liberal scholars called "spontaneous order." The notion was that the social order was better created by the spontaneous acts of free individuals than imposed by the State as an act of force.

The best known secular expression of this notion was Adam Smith's central work *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Though Smith is now better known for his work on economics entitled, *The Wealth of Nations*, he was a moral philosopher who was primarily concerned with the just ordering of society. In his work on moral sentiments, Smith suggested that there was a natural moral sentiment humans possess known as benevolence, which seeks what is good for another. Smith came from a Puritan family and this was the secular version of the teaching about loving one's neighbor and there being a part of our innermost self that delights in the law of God. Until recently, this approach to organizing society and realizing the goal of social justice defined the American approach. In recent decades, Americans have been swiftly adopting the top down command and control method of realizing the public good, where the government crowds out the roles of the other institutions in an attempt to impose its own notion of fairness. Besides being financially unsustainable and a threat to individual liberty, such an approach violates the "sphere sovereignty" of the many voluntary institutions of civil society. This causes them to weaken as government assumes their functions. Furthermore, as the social order becomes more

characterized by State-initiated force rather than individual-initiated voluntary choice, we are pitted one vs. another in attempts to get the State to take from others and give to us. This approach creates a war of competing interest groups that make a compassionate community impossible. Some people argue against the welfare state approach on the economic grounds that it is too expensive. Others argue that we could afford these programs if we would grow the economy more. Thus arguments against the welfare state often center on the cost aspects of the programs while failing to critique the approach on principle and its effectiveness at reducing poverty and helping people realize their human potential.

A more genuine critique of the welfare state approach would be to question the principle upon which it rests and not merely its cost. Is the top down approach of state control compatible with the nature of free human beings and is this approach likely to realize the public good or further aggravate the very social ills it is attempting to address? It is imperative that we ask such questions if we are to remain a free people.