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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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AGAINST CHRISTIANITY

John W. Robbins

Against Christianity
Peter Leithart
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Dr. Peter Leithart, who holds graduate degrees from Westminster Theological Seminary and Cambridge University, is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in America, a "Senior Fellow" of Theology and Literature at New St. Andrews College (Moscow, Idaho), and the author of several books published by Canon Press. His essays have appeared in the *Westminster* (Seminary) *Theological Journal*, *Credenda/Agenda* magazine (Douglas Wilson, editor), *Biblical Horizons* (James Jordan, editor), *First Things* (Richard John Neuhaus, editor), and elsewhere. Leithart is opposed to Christianity, as the title of his latest book shows.

Leithart describes his book as "bricolage," which is French for "puttering," an English word meaning "moving or acting aimlessly, idly, randomly." His book is written in the disjointed, oracular style of Friedrich Nietzsche, to whom Leithart (pronounced "light-heart") invites comparison. Nietzsche wrote about *Antichrist*. Leithart writes *Against Christianity*.

Some readers, still sleeping, might object, "But Leithart can't mean by 'Christianity' what the word ordinarily means." But that is precisely the point: Leithart does use the word "Christianity" in its ordinary sense as the name of a set of theological beliefs or a doctrinal system. Those readers have simply not been paying attention: There are prominent men in the PCA, a denomination that professes to believe the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, that deny openly and loudly, not merely in their cups, cardinal doctrines of the faith, and attack the Gospel publicly, aggressively, and with impunity. There is apparently no one in the PCA with the intelligence, the integrity, and the courage to identify them publicly as the Antichristians they are, and no court in the PCA has brought charges against them, let alone convicted them of heresy and removed them from office. The PCA heretics, far from being removed from office, are protected by a phalanx of pseudo-Presbyterian grunts who stubbornly defend them and attack anyone who criticizes them. This writer is acquainted with Elders who have left the PCA because it was impossible for them to discipline heretics entrenched in that organization.

"Christianity is the heresy of heresies, the underlying cause of the weakness, lethargy, sickness, and failure of the modern church."

– Peter Leithart
Presbyterian Church in America Minister

Here is Leithart's opening barrage against Christianity:

1

The Bible never mentions Christianity. It does not preach Christianity, nor does it encourage us to preach Christianity. Paul did not preach Christianity, nor did any of the other apostles. During centuries when the Church was strong and vibrant, she did not preach Christianity either. Christianity, like Judaism and "Yahwism," is an invention of biblical scholars, theologians, and politicians, and one of its chief effects is to keep Christians and the Church in their proper marginal place. The Bible speaks of Christians and of the Church, but Christianity is gnostic, and the Church firmly rejected gnosticism from her earliest days.

2

Christianity is the heresy of heresies, the underlying cause of the weakness, lethargy, sickness, and failure of the modern church [13].

He later repeats paragraph 1 on page 43, substituting the word "theology" for the word "Christianity."

The reader may be forgiven if he is shocked at Leithart's vicious diatribe against Christianity. The reader may have thought that the root problem of the modern church is its *lack* of Christianity. How foolish of him. It is not the lack of Christianity that has caused the failure of the modern church, but Christianity itself, at least according to PCA minister and Westminster Seminary grad Leithart. Christianity is "gnostic" (Leithart either does not know what the word means, or he deliberately misuses the word) and the "heresy of heresies." Leithart writes with the audacity of an apostate who understands that there is no court in the PCA that will accuse him, let alone remove him from office.

Leithart writes in the manic, episodic style of the 19th century atheist Friedrich Nietzsche, though Leithart does not enjoy Nietzsche's talent for epigrams. And Nietzsche is not the only 19th century atheist that Leithart resembles: In the opening paragraph of his book, Leithart adopts the sociology of Karl Marx in his attack on Christianity. Christianity, Leithart says, is an "ideology" developed by the ruling class (politicians and the intelligentsia) whose effect is to "keep Christians and the Church in their proper marginal place." Like Marx, Leithart regards Christian theology as an "ideology" developed and used for political and sociological purposes.

In addition to writing like one 19th century atheist and parroting the sociology of another, Leithart makes one logical blunder after another. Christianity, Leithart says, is the "heresy of heresies." This is reminiscent of another 19th century socialist, the Frenchman Proudhon, who informed the world that "Property is theft." Leithart's statement is reminiscent of Proudhon's, because both statements are literal nonsense, and for the same reason: The concepts *theft* and *heresy* logically depend on the concepts *property* and *theological truth* respectively. Theft and heresy can be understood and defined only within the context of property and theological truth. One cannot speak of theft in a universe in which there is no property; and one cannot speak of heresy in a universe in which there is no true theology, Christianity. The concept *heresy* requires and depends on the concept *Christianity*. An idea is heretical only if it differs from Christianity. To say that Christianity itself is heresy is to talk sheer nonsense.

And sheer nonsense is what Leithart talks. The trouble is, most professing Christians, if they were to read this evil little book, would not realize that Leithart is talking nonsense. They are so accustomed to hearing sanctimonious nonsense from the pulpit – nonsense-in-vestments that wannabe-priests solemnly intone as "mysteries," "paradoxes," "antinomies," and "tensions" – that they can no longer tell theological truth from theological lies.

Leithart adopts the sociology of Karl Marx in his attack on Christianity. Christianity, Leithart says, is an "ideology" developed by the ruling class.

Leithart continues: " I have stated a simple fact: the word 'Christianity' does not appear in the Bible, so it is quite impossible for the Bible to encourage us to believe or preach or practice Christianity" (13). Since Leithart is woodenly literal, let us play along: The Bible was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic, so it is not surprising that the English word "Christianity" does not appear in it. But there are plenty of synonyms for "Christianity" in the English Bible: "the faith once delivered to the saints," "my Word," "the Scriptures," "my doctrine," "my teachings," "the words of eternal life," "the whole counsel of God" and so on. All these terms and phrases refer to the revealed propositions that are reduced to writing in the Scriptures. They all refer to a body of theology, a set of doctrines. They refer to Christianity. Christianity *is* the propositions of the 66 books of the Bible together with their logical implications. Christianity *is* the set of Biblical doctrines.

It is this notion of Christianity as the set of Biblical ideas that Leithart rejects. He writes: "More important, however, is the fact that the Bible does not even have the concept of Christianity. This, of course, begs the question of what I mean by 'Christianity'" (14). (Leithart shows his ignorance of both logic and English usage by using the phrase "begs the question" incorrectly. The phrase means "to assume as proven what must in fact be demonstrated." Leithart uses it to mean "raises the question.") Here is Leithart's definition of Christianity:

> Christianity sometimes refers to a set of doctrines or a system of ideas. It is contrasted with the teachings of Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, or Islam. By this definition, Christianity is what Christian people believe about God man, sin, Christ, the world, the future, and so on [14].

In his first sentence Leithart describes Christianity as a "set of doctrines" or a "system of ideas." It is this notion of Christianity that he opposes. He denounces it as "gnostic" and "rationalist." This idea – supported by many Scriptures – the idea of "saving knowledge" is the idea Leithart hates and rejects. Then he goes on to say in his third sentence that

Christianity "is what Christian people believe." Tellingly, Leithart does not say that Christianity is what Scripture teaches, but that Christianity is what Christian people believe. The importance of this will become clear in a moment.

The notion that Christianity is "what Christian people believe," if intended to be a definition of Christianity, is, of course, an impossible definition. Leithart cannot know which people are Christian unless he first knows what Christianity is. C. S. Lewis made the same logical blunder in *Mere Christianity*, where he proposed to define "mere Christianity" as what most Christian people believe. But unless one first knows what Christianity is, one cannot tell which people are Christian. Such empirical definitions are worse than useless; they deceive both the writer and his readers. Leithart's procedure, as Lewis Carroll pointed out, also, in the 19th century, is equivalent to hunting snarks. But despite the foolishness of their procedure, there is a reason that both Lewis and Leithart make the same blunder: They both wish to deny that the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture is the only authority, and they both wish to make the Church the religious authority. This will become more clear a little further on.

Leithart is not content to say that the word "Christianity" does not appear in the Bible. He denies that the Bible contains even the idea of Christianity. It is missing not merely the word, but more importantly the idea. He explains further:

> The Bible, however, never speaks of such beliefs except as all-embracing, self-committing confessions of God's people. The Bible gives no hint that a Christian "belief system" might be isolated from the life of the Church, subjected to a scientific or logical analysis, and have its truth compared with competing "belief systems" [14].

So Christian apologetics, the intellectual defense of the faith (that is, Christianity) against other belief systems, is not only wrongheaded, but positively un-Biblical. There is no belief system, no systematic theology, no organized doctrine called Christianity in the Bible, Leithart says. Such doctrine and theology is the "ideology" of a ruling class of politicians and scholars designed to keep Christians and the church in their inferior place. By this tactic, Leithart hopes to disarm anyone inclined to defend Christianity against his attack.

Furthermore, Leithart tells us that "The Church is not a people united by common ideas, ideas which collectively go under the name 'Christianity'" (14). But that is precisely what the church is: "We have the mind of Christ" (*1 Corinthians* 2:16). Communion with Christ and with Christians *is* sharing the same Biblical ideas. It is not eating the same food (that cannot be done in any case, for what one person eats, another cannot eat) nor having the same emotions, but sharing the same theological ideas. That is why Paul wrote to the Philippians saying that he thanked God for "your fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now" (1:5); why he exhorted the Corinthians to "speak the same thing...be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (*1 Corinthians* 1:10). That is why John wrote that he declares the Gospel to his readers so "that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (*1 John* 1:3).

Leithart is not content to say that the word "Christianity" does not appear in the Bible. He denies that the Bible contains even the idea of Christianity.

Leithart's attack on theology/doctrine/ideas is part of a contemporary, widespread, and diabolical attack on propositional revelation. Scripture is *exclusively* verbal and propositional; it is not sensory or pictorial. Divine revelation consists of words, not images; it is addressed to the intellect, not to the senses; and there is nothing sensate or "sacramental" about it. Leithart's goal, and the goal of men like him through the centuries, is to replace the invisible Word with something visible – pictures, images, icons, statues, the sacraments, the institutional church, the priesthood, the Vicar of Christ. In their Antichristian religion, the visible, not the invisible, dispenses salvation. They cannot abide the notion that

> ...that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said unto you, You must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit [*John* 3:6-8].

Their religion, the religion of Leithart and his friends, is a descent into Magic – an attempt by earthy, sensate men to control spiritual things by their rituals, symbols, and incantations. That is why they teach that water baptism makes sinners into Christians; that the sacraments are efficacious in themselves; that there is no invisible church; and so on. Theirs, of course, is not the brilliant, pioneering thinking they foolishly think it is. They are traveling a superhighway built and paved by apostate churchmen in the Middle Ages when the light of the invisible Word was eclipsed by the darkness of the visible church, priestcraft,

and the idolatry of icon, statue, relic, sacrament, and pope. Theirs is a religion of Medieval Magic. (The reader should consult Carlos Eire's book *War Against the Idols*, available from The Foundation.)

Leithart admits that "the New Testament does use [the word] 'faith' to refer to a set of teachings," but he effectively denies what the New Testament teaches by adding to it: "'Faith' stretches out to include one's entire 'stance' in life, a stance that encompasses beliefs about the world but also unarticulated or inarticulable attitudes, hopes, and habits of thought, action, or feeling." To support this notion of faith as inarticulable attitudes and feeling, he cites the phrase "one mind" in *Philippians* 1:27, which passage I quote in full:

> Only let your conduct be worthy of the Gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake....

Far from supporting Leithart's point, this verse asserts what Leithart denies. Paul is exhorting the Philippians to act like the Christians they are, and with singlemindedness of purpose to suffer for "the faith of the Gospel" that they believe. There is nothing "inarticulable" or "unarticulated" about the faith. As for feeling, Paul's command is that they should *not* be terrified "in any way," but remain calm in the face of opposition and persecution.

Leithart continues his attack on Christianity:

> The Bible, in short, is not an ideological tract, and does not teach an ideology. Scripture does present a certain view of the world that has true propositional content. But [you knew that "but" was coming] it is an error, and a fatal one, to suggest that, once we have systematized the propositional content of Scripture, the result is a "worldview" called Christianity to which we can give our assent.... [14-15].

Leithart finishes the sentence, "and there is an end."Of course, no Christian theologian ever said "there is an end," and Leithart quotes no theologian saying that. What he is attacking are the ideas that (1) systematic Christian theology is a "worldview," that is, a set of doctrines; and that (2) one can assent to Christianity. It is not only understanding Biblical doctrine (that is, Christianity) that Leithart attacks, but also assenting to Christian doctrine. Christians, he thinks, are made "sacramentally" and communally by authorized representatives of the church; they are not made spiritually and individually by the Holy Spirit directly changing the minds of men. "The Church," Leithart pontificates, "*is* salvation" (32, emphasis is Leithart's). By this declaration he denies Christ's statement, "*My words* are Spirit and they are life." By his declaration Leithart intends to outdo the Romanists, whom he criticizes for having an inadequate view of the Church, thinking that it merely dispenses salvation, when in fact the Church *is* salvation.

A century ago, ordinary Presbyterian churchgoers would have recognized Leithart's words as the language of Liberalism and unbelief.

Lest a reader erroneously think that all this is academic and somehow irrelevant to "real life," I shall continue to quote from Leithart: " What Jesus and the apostles proclaimed was not a new ideology or a new religion.... What they proclaimed was salvation, and that meant a new human world, a new social and political reality" (16).

A century ago, ordinary Presbyterian churchgoers would have recognized Leithart's words as the language of Liberalism and unbelief, the sociological drivel of Walter Rauschenbusch and his cohorts. But their great-grandchildren cannot. They have been so confused by the social gospel, particularly by its rightwing form called Reconstructionism, that they cannot even recognize an attack on the Gospel of Jesus Christ by a Presbyterian churchman.

Leithart enthusiastically adopts the term and the idea of the "social gospel":

> Since the gospel is about the restoration of the human race in Christ, the gospel is a social gospel from the very outset [38].
>
> ...thus the gospel is sociology and international relations....
>
> ...thus the gospel is politics....
>
> If we are going to stand for *this* gospel, we must stand against Christianity [40].

Leithart, of course, is simply parroting Anglican bishop N. T. Wright and a dozen other apostate academics when he writes that "the gospel is politics." Notice that Leithart has come full circle: He began by denouncing Christianity as an "ideology" developed by politicians and the intelligentsia who use it to keep ordinary Christians in their place. Now he asserts that his gospel – which he emphatically denies is

Christianity – is inherently political, and that "salvation" means "a new social and political reality." It is Leithart who substitutes politics for soteriology and political ideology for theology. He falsely accuses others of what he himself is doing.

Later, in a chapter titled "Against Ethics," Leithart writes,

> Transformation of life, including social and political life, is not an "implication" of the gospel.... Transformation of life is not an implication of the gospel but inherent in the gospel, because the good news is *about* transformation of life [97].

In writing this, Leithart makes clear that he has a different message, another gospel, for the Gospel of Jesus Christ is *not* about transformation of life. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is about Jesus Christ and his finished work completely outside of us. The Gospel is *not* subjective, but objective. *It is not about us, but about him*. All forms of false religion that have a doctrine of salvation teach that their good news, their gospel, is about "transformation of life." Only Christianity, the uniquely true theology, says that the Gospel is good news about the forgiveness of sins through Christ's substitutionary atonement and the imputation of his perfect righteousness to believers. Missing from Leithart's gospel is any mention of, let alone discussion of, man's sin, God's justice, the propitiation of God's wrath by the death of Jesus Christ, and the imputation of his righteousness to sinners through belief alone. That is the "gnostic theology," the "belief system," that Leithart hates.

Missing from Leithart's gospel is any mention of, let alone discussion of, man's sin, God's justice, the propitiation of God's wrath by the death of Jesus Christ, and the imputation of his righteousness to sinners through belief alone.

Leithart is thoroughgoing in his Antichristianity: "Conversion thus means turning from one way of life, one culture, to another." In Leithart's religion, which is not Christianity, conversion is cultural and social. It is not spiritual, intellectual, or individual, despite Paul's command, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (*Romans* 12:2). The Greek word Paul uses, *nous*, is as thoroughly intellectual in its connotation as the English words "mind" and "intellect." Paul emphasizes the transformation of the mind, but Leithart finds that "gnostic" and "rationalist."

Like the rest of the medievalists in Moscow, Leithart is opposed to "modernity." He explains, "*Modernity* refers to the civilization of the West since about 1500" (17) – that is, since the Reformation. In the modern world, he laments, "Every individual and every group chooses its own values." Leithart longs for the good old days of iron clothing and serfdom when a totalitarian Church-State imposed its values on nations and individuals. He denounces political "liberalism," by which he means freedom, not statism. What really annoys Leithart in the field of politics is the idea of freedom, especially the idea of religious freedom. He writes, "the American church-state settlement is founded on heretical ecclesiology. It is founded on Christianity" (35). The "liberal order," by which Leithart means civil freedom, particularly religious freedom, "is a thoroughly hostile environment" (36). Leithart composes an obscene dialogue, which he sacrilegiously calls a parable, to augment his attack on religious freedom (135).

Christianity, that is, the faith once delivered to the saints, is not merely the "heresy of heresies," but also "institutionalized worldliness." Could Leithart's hatred of Christianity be stated any more clearly?

Leithart wants to save his beloved Dark Ages from being blamed for Christianity. He writes, "Though it has its roots in the patristic period, Christianity in its more developed form is the Church's adjustment of the gospel to modernity...." So, his words imply, Christianity has developed since the time of the Reformation. He continues: "Christianity is institutionalized worldliness, worldliness accepted in principle, worldliness not at the margins but at the center, worldliness built into the foundation " (17).

Christianity, that is, the faith once delivered to the saints, is not merely the "heresy of heresies," but "institutionalized worldliness." Could Leithart's hatred of Christianity be stated any more clearly? Nietzsche himself did no better.

Leithart's Antichristian theology – his Antichristianity – parts of which are set forth in this book, lead him to oppose economic as well as religious freedom. "McDonaldization" is a threat, because it represents "capitalist economic institutions" (34); "...what the world calls the 'operations of the market' the Church must sometimes label as oppression of the needy and grinding the faces of the poor" (54). Leithart is a socialist opposed to both religious and economic

freedom. He is a devout medievalist, that is, a devout totalitarian.

Chapter 2, titled "Against Theology," is a continued attack on Christian theology. Leithart does not realize that he himself has a theology, so his title "Against Theology," opposes his own theology. What he really means to say is "Against Christian Theology." He is not opposed to his own Antichristian theology. He writes:

> Formally, the Bible is not a "theology text" or a "catechism" that arranges doctrines in a systematic order. Paul's epistles have often been treated as mini-textbooks, but they are manifestly not. They are epistles, encyclicals, addressing specific issues in the churches.... Form cannot be stripped away without changing content, and when Paul's various statements on, say, justification, are removed from the epistolary and ecclesiastical context and organized into a calm and systematic and erudite "doctrine," they become something different from what Paul taught [43-44].

In this paragraph Leithart denies that the chapter on justification in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, which, as a PCA minister he has sworn before God and witnesses he believes and teaches, is Biblical. Not only that, he denies that every other chapter in the *Confession* is Biblical as well. *All* the *Confession* is organized into "calm and systematic and erudite doctrine," and therefore *all* the *Confession* is "different from what Paul [and Moses, Isaiah, and Jesus] taught."

Leithart, with the audacity of an apostate who knows that no court in the PCA will rebuke him publicly, let alone remove him from office, attacks the *Westminster Confession* explicitly:

> Theology [specifically chapter 2 of the *Westminster Confession*] tells us that God is eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.
>
> The Bible tells us that God relents because He is God (Joel 2:13-14), that God is "shrewd with the shrewd" (Ps. 18:25-29), that He rejoices over us with shouting (Zeph. 3:14-20), and that He is an eternal whirlwind of triune communion and love.

In the first paragraph Leithart quotes the *Confession,* and in the second paragraph he denies that the Bible teaches what the *Confession* says. This is an example that stands for the completely general principle that systematic theology is different from and a distortion of Biblical theology. Leithart is not attempting to correct the *Confession* on a single point; he is asserting that *no* systematic, calm, organized doctrine can be Biblical. Leithart relentlessly attacks systematic theology as un-Biblical and untrue.

Leithart arrives at his opinion that all systematic theology must be un-Biblical and therefore false by taking the principal assumption of so-called Biblical Theology to one of its Antichristian conclusions.

Leithart arrives at his opinion that all systematic theology must be un-Biblical and therefore false by taking the principal assumption of so-called Biblical Theology to one of its Antichristian conclusions. That assumption is that historical events and the chronological order of God's acts of revealing truth to men are more fundamental than, more important than, and somehow superior to the logical order of God's thought. It is a denial of this proposition: "Forever, O Lord, your Word is settled in Heaven" (*Psalm* 119:89).

Leithart makes his assumptions clear:

> With regard to content, theology frequently aims to deal not with the specifics of historical events, but with "timeless truths" of doctrine. But the content of Scripture almost wholly consists of records of historical events, commentary on events in prophecy and epistle, celebration and memorial of events in Psalms, and, occasionally, reflection on the constants of life in the form of Proverbs,

not with "timeless truths" (44). Leithart accepts the primacy of events and depreciates the notion of "timeless truth," thereby revealing himself as profoundly Antichristian, for Christianity is truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. "Timeless truth" is a redundancy, for all truth is timeless. Eternality is an attribute of truth, for God is truth.

This is true, not merely of such truths as 2 + 2 = 4, but of all historical truths as well: There never was a time when Christ was not the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. There never will be a time when Christ will not be the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. And lest someone think that I have tricked him by using that particular example of an historical event, I hasten to add a trivial example: There never was a time when the proposition "April 19, 2004, was a sunny day in Unicoi, Tennessee" was not true, and there never will be a time when that proposition will not be true. If true propositions about historical events could change into false propositions, they would not be true, and God would not be God. From all

eternity God decreed that April 19, 2004, would be a sunny day in Unicoi, Tennessee. It is a timeless, eternal truth. There are no truths that are not eternally true.

Truth, not historical events, has primacy. Christianity is not events, nor is it based on events. Historical events are the product of God's eternal decree. They are not surds in the universe. Christ was crucified on a certain date in human history because he was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Systematic theology antedates, produces, and explains all historical events; events do not antedate, produce, or explain theology. Leithart gets the relationship between Biblical theology and systematic theology backwards.

Leithart continues his attack on Christian theology and truth: "Even theology proper [the doctrine of God] does not deal with purely 'timeless' realities. And how can a 'doctrine of the atonement' be formulated as a set of 'timeless truths'"?

The answer to this last question has already been given: Christ is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The doctrine of the atonement is a timeless truth that antedates creation. Systematic Christian theology, far from being an ideology developed by politicians, is eternal. It is both chronologically and logically prior to history. Leithart would prefer that the doctrine of the atonement not be true than to admit that it is a timeless truth.

He writes:

> Theology is a product of Christianity and aids in its entrenchment. If theology deals with "timeless truths," then all the temporal things we encounter in life are outside the range of theology.
>
> But *everything* we encounter in life is temporal.
>
> Therefore, all life is outside theology.

First, Leithart's inference in his second sentence is a glaring *non sequitur*. His conclusion simply does not follow from his premise. I have already demonstrated – and the Bible is full of such examples – how truths about historical events are in fact eternal and timeless.

Second, it is a lie that "everything we encounter in life is temporal." Truth is eternal, not temporal, and we cannot live without thinking truth. We cannot think without using the laws of logic, which are eternally true because they are the way *God* thinks, and the way *we* think, because the *Logos* lights our minds (*John* 1:9).

Third, rather than all life being outside theology, it is Christian theology that gives life: "The *words* that I speak to you are Spirit and *they are life*" (*John* 6:63). Christian theology is living and it grants life to believers: *John* 1:4; 3:15-16; 6:68; *Philippians* 2:16, etc.

One of the reasons Leithart makes such false statements seems to be his pagan notion of what life is. For Leithart, intellectual life is not real life. Real life, reflected in the Bible, not theology, is "hair, blood, sweat, entrails, menstruation and genital emissions" (47). "Theology," he sneers, "is a 'Victorian' enterprise, neoclassically bright and neat and clean, nothing out of place" (47). "Let us not talk of theology. Let us talk about the Church's language and myth" (51).

Leithart opens his third chapter, "Against Sacraments," with criticism of the Reformers for "stripping the altars" (71) of icons, statues, and symbols. Of course, there are no altars – let alone icons, statues, and symbols – in Christian churches, and Leithart's altar-call is as pagan and idolatrous as Rome's. He criticizes the Puritans and Protestants for their hostility to visible religious symbols. He excoriates

> a Protestant tendency toward the "primacy of the intellect." It is rationalism, in that it reduces baptism and the Supper to a means for communicating information. But that is not what rituals are *for*. Treating baptism and the Supper as disguised sermons reduces them so they can be encompassed and tamed by Christianity [76-77].

Leithart derives his theology of rituals and sacraments, not from Scripture, which, to his chagrin and annoyance, contains nothing but true information, but from unbelievers full of disinformation. In fact, he derives his notion of the proper function of Christian sacraments from pagan religious practices in ancient Greece and Rome, quoting Simon Price at length (87-88). Sacraments are "rituals of a new society, public festivals of a new civic order" (77). What the ancient Greek *polis* did is what the new Church *polis* ought to do. What keeps us from seeing this, he opines, is our individualism, and he launches into a diatribe against individuals and individualism. Political liberals are always waxing eloquent about the plight of the poor and needy and their love for "humankind," but they loath individuals and individualism. Leithart writes: "The only 'individuals' in the Bible are idols and their worshipers.... And individualism is part and parcel of the heresy of Christianity" (77).

While discussing rituals, Leithart thinks of wedding ceremonies, and he discloses that he has no idea what makes a marriage: "Wedding ceremonies do not guard the *status quo ante* [funerals do, he says] but create a wholly new thing – a marriage – and confer, *ex opere operato*, a new identity upon a man and woman, the identity of husband and wife." Of course, wedding ceremonies do no such thing, let alone do it Magically, as Leithart says. (He uses the same Latin phrase Romanists use of the Mass.) What makes a marriage, what transforms an unmarried man and woman into husband and wife, is their articulated words expressing their

informed, rational consent to this new relationship. There is nothing magical about it; it is intellectual and rational. Leithart has the same pagan view of what makes a marriage as his friends Steve Wilkins and Douglas Wilson, whom I have discussed elsewhere. (The interested reader should consult my books *A Companion to The Current Justification Controversy* and *Not Reformed at All: Medievalism in "Reformed" Churches*.)

"Since there is no salvation without the Church, since, indeed, the Church *is* salvation, there is no salvation without the sacraments." –Peter Leithart
Presbyterian Church in America Minister

Lest the reader think that I have misrepresented Leithart as a sacramentalist (since he titles one of his chapters "Against Sacraments"), I quote: "Since there is no salvation without the Church, since, indeed, the Church *is* salvation, there is no salvation without the sacraments" (85). But we must understand the sacraments as Leithart teaches, not as Christianity teaches. Christian "sacraments flow out of and promote Christianity; and so I am against sacraments to the degree I am against Christianity" (81). But Leithart's sacraments are not Christian sacraments: His sacraments work *ex opere operato*, and they are indispensable to salvation.

Leithart titles his final chapter "For Constantine." He likes the fourth century Roman emperor who saw an apparition in the sky, or at least said he did, and became a "Christian." Leithart likes the idea of Christendom: an empire in which the Church occupies the position of primacy. Leithart writes: "...so long as Christianity reigns, the Church can never convert anything. Unless we renounce Christianity, we will have no Christendom" (123-124). Leithart is correct in viewing Christianity and Christendom as antithetical. The Christian Reformation of the 16th century shattered medieval Christendom. That is one reason Leithart criticizes the Reformers, Protestants, and Puritans.

Leithart quotes little Scripture in his book, but he does quote many unbelievers, including Aristotle, the Greek genius whose philosophy has corrupted churches and theologies for centuries; N. T. Wright, an Anglican bishop who promotes false gospels through his many books; the Nazi philosopher Martin Heidegger, whom Leithart calls "a prophet from among the Gentiles" (46); and the Romanists de Lubac and Danielou, whom he praises for resurrecting the medieval method of typological exegesis.

Against Christianity is a brazen attack on Christianity.