

The Burden of Racial Guilt

A New Declaration of Independence

by Hugh Barbour, O.Praem.

*"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,
that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights,
that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."*

—The Unanimous Declaration of the
Thirteen United States of America

As I write I am sitting in Pitt County, North Carolina, where in 1775 my ancestor Matthias Moore signed along with his fellow citizens a declaration to King George III, called subsequently after the next year's fateful declaration "The Pitt County Declaration of Independence." Yet in reading the text I am struck by a fundamental difference from Jefferson's document:

We the Freeholders and inhabitants of the county of Pitt and town of Martinborough, being deeply affected with the present alarming state of this Province and all America—Do Resolve that we will pay all due allegiance to his majesty King George the third and endeavor to continue the succession of his crown in the Illustrious house of Hanover as by law established, against the present or any future wicked ministry, or arbitrary set of men whatsoever, at the same time we are determined to assert our rights as men and sensible that by the late acts of Parliament the most valuable Liberties and privileges of America are invaded and endeavor to be violated and destroyed and that under God the preservation of them depends on a firm union of the inhabitants and a sturdy spirited observation of the Resolutions of the General Congress, being shocked at the cruel scenes now acting in the Massachusetts Bay and determined never to become slaves to any power upon earth, we do hereby agree and associate under all ties of Religion, Honour, and regard for Posterity that we will adopt and endeavor to execute the measures which the General Congress now sitting at Philadelphia conclude on for preserving our constitution and opposing the execution of the several arbitrary Illegal acts of the British Parliament and that we will readily observe The Directions of our General Committee for the purpose aforesaid, the

Preservation of Peace and Good Order and Security of Individuals and private property.

Here there is no hint of independence at all; rather there is the assertion of loyalty to the house of Hanover and the respectful, if urgent, demands of subjects of the crown. There are no philosophical assertions about the rights of man or of a natural equality of all men under God, only the supposition of the rights of Englishmen, established by "the voice of justice and consanguinity," to borrow Jefferson's phrase from the latter declaration, a Virginian's momentary lapse into the mind-set of a pre-modern polity like that of his neighbors in the humbler colony to the south.

Similarly, a rather different document from Jefferson's declaration, the Constitution of the United States of America, makes no universal affirmations about God or human nature, leaving to the several states their own local identities and "peculiar institutions," avoiding the imposition from a central government of any doctrine, rational or revealed. Another ancestor of mine, Willie Jones, was a noted proponent of these constitutionally guaranteed states' rights at the time of the formation of the Constitution. Now Willie had no legitimate heirs through his son, who never married, but only through his daughters. Thus it is that I have been carefully informed that, even though the Jones name is found in my family, it did not come from Willie Jones. You see, Willie was the largest slaveowner in North Carolina at the time, and his son had a lifelong liaison with a slave woman to whom he was purportedly faithful, and he had several children by her. His descendants have done their genealogical homework, since in the case of their ancestress there are clear records. It happens then that I have numerous and identifiable mulatto cousins in the sixth degree. They live in New York. This, my real, albeit collateral kindred to black people, reminds me of the original unity of the human race: that ultimately all men are descended from two first parents and, thus, are all at least cousins, and, if we are to believe the evidence of

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mitochondrial DNA, all of those now alive on the earth are descended from a single woman in West Africa. (Note I do not say “single mother,” lest I provide a locus for today’s “conservatives” to rhapsodize on premarital pregnancy as a model for a purely pro-life society.)

The political philosophers of the Enlightenment, even as they rejected the ancient Roman Christian polity of Europe, were still determined in their understanding of the *status quaestionis* by the perspective of Christian theology, which understands human society in terms of original justice and Original Sin. Hobbes and Locke both began their considerations by an appeal to the original state of human nature, whether radically flawed from the beginning, as in the case of Hobbes’ satanic view of human relations, or originally good but incapable of safely attaining its end, as in the case of Locke. The state becomes on any account a necessary means of overcoming the inherent or acquired defects of our nature, a kind of natural agent of salvation.

These Enlightenment views of the original justice or injustice of the human race had this fatal difference from the view presented by Christian revelation: They had nothing to do with the actual, personal procreation of the individual members of a collective human society. The very notion of a human race as a state of affairs dependent on human generation and ties of blood is utterly eliminated. There was no accompanying history of how this state of affairs came to be, just the presentation of government as the dire or benign necessity of a fallen nature. The humanity in which there obtains the *bellum omnium contra omnes* or the right to a liberty inadequately guaranteed is an abstract entity, not the effect of a personal history of the descendants of Adam. It is to this original antigenealogical error that most of the difficulties of modern states in dealing with the question of individual liberty, equality, and authority can be traced.

In no field is this clearer than in the inability of modern society to deal with questions of human equality or inequality without ideological hysteria, whether by extremes of oppression or of license. Let us take a look at the serenely premodern perspective of Thomas Aquinas to see how true this is.

In the first part of the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas deals with the nature of man in his ideal state before the Fall. This ideal state is for him historical, and its hypothetical continuation provides a sort of default for determining what is most truly human from what is simply a consequence of human sin. In the fourth article of Question 96, he answers the query whether men would have been equal in the primitive state:

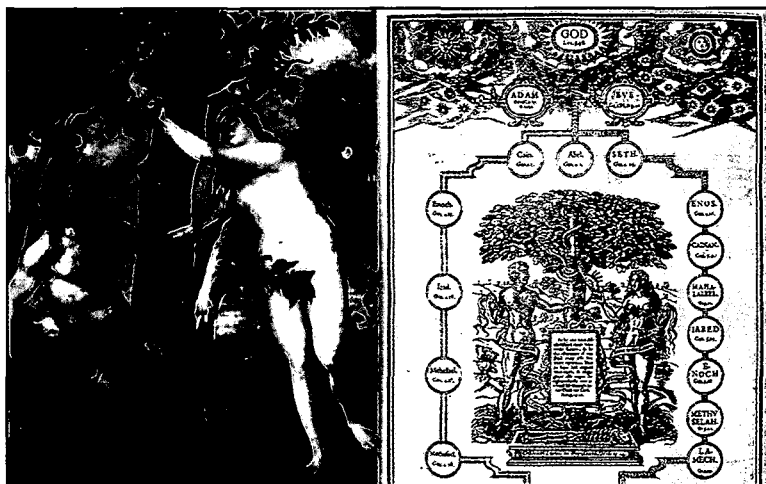
We must needs admit that in the primitive state there would have been some inequality, as regards sex, because generation depends upon diversity of sex: and likewise as regards age; for some would have been born of others; nor would sexual union

have been sterile.

Moreover, as regards the soul, there would have been inequality as to righteousness and knowledge. For man worked not of necessity, but of his own free-will, by virtue of which man can apply himself, more or less, to action, desire, or knowledge; hence some would have made a greater advance in virtue and knowledge than others.

There might also have been bodily disparity. For the human body was not entirely exempt from the laws of nature, so as not to receive from exterior sources more or less advantage and help: since indeed it was dependent on food wherewith to sustain life.

So we may say that, according to the climate, or the movement of the stars, some would have been born more robust in body than others, and also greater, and more beautiful, and all ways better disposed; so that, however, in those who were thus surpassed, there would have been no defect or fault either in soul or body.



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Thus inequality, whether acquired by moral and intellectual development, or as the natural result of bodily differences, is part of the original state proper to human nature. Inequality in human society is not a defect, but part of the original order of creation. So true is this that there would have been a real subjection of men to their masters, even before the fall, although not the subjection of slavery but of natural preeminence, as we read in the next article of the same question, which answers the query whether some men would have been masters to others in the primitive state:

Mastership has a twofold meaning. First, as opposed to slavery, in which sense a master means one to whom another is subject as a slave. In another sense mastership is referred in a general sense to any kind of subject; and in this sense even he who has the office of governing and directing free men, can be called a master. In the state of innocence man could

have been a master of men, not in the former but in the latter sense. This distinction is founded on the reason that a slave differs from a free man in that the latter has the disposal of himself, as is stated in the beginning of the *De Metaphysica*, whereas a slave is ordered to another. So that one man is master of another as his slave when he refers the one whose master he is, to his own—namely the master's use. And since every man's proper good is desirable to himself, and consequently it is a grievous matter to anyone to yield to another what ought to be one's own, therefore such dominion implies of necessity a pain inflicted on the subject; and consequently in the state of innocence such a mastership could not have existed between man and man.

But a man is the master of a free subject, by directing him either towards his proper welfare, or to the common good. Such a kind of mastership would have existed in the state of innocence between man and man, for two reasons. First, because man is naturally a social being, and so in the state of innocence he would have led a social life. Now a social life cannot exist among a number of people unless under the presidency of one to look after the common good; for many, as such, seek many things, whereas one attends only to one. Wherefore the Philosopher says, in the beginning of the *Politica*, that wherever many things are directed to one, we shall always find one at the head directing them. Secondly, if one man surpassed another in knowledge and virtue, this would not have been fitting unless these gifts conduced to the benefit of others, according to 1 Peter 4:10, "As every man hath received grace, ministering the same one to another." Wherefore Augustine says (*De Civitate Dei* xix,14): "Just men command not by the love of domineering, but by the service of counsel": and (*De Civitate Dei* xix,15): "The natural order of things requires this; and thus did God make man."

Thus it is that a natural inequality and a natural subjection are the original racial inheritance of human society, and this is seen as a requirement of liberty, not as its limitation.

Under what aspect are "all men created equal," then, for Saint Thomas? Surprisingly, for this we will have to go to the second part of his *Summa* for the discussion of Original Sin and its effects on the human beings descended directly, all of them, from our first parents.

There are two things in original sin: one is the privation of original justice; the other is the relation of this privation to the sin of our first parent, from whom it is transmitted to man through his corrupt origin. As to the first, original sin has no degrees, since the gift of original justice is taken away entirely; and privations that remove something

entirely, such as death and darkness, cannot be more or less, as stated above (Q73,A2). In like manner, neither is this possible, as to the second: since all are related equally to the first principle of our corrupt origin, from which principle original sin takes the nature of guilt; for relations cannot be more or less. Consequently it is evident that original sin cannot be more in one than in another.

There we have it: Since we are all equally related to our first parents, we are all equally affected by their moral fall. In the bodily order which transcends the Fall, this is not the case, since men are spread out in different climes with different customs, and their bodily inheritance is consequently, if only gradually, varied. It is this aspect of human equality that Locke was attempting to answer: the universal tendency to render our properly human happiness impossible of attainment and the need for some means to guarantee as far as possible this attainment. Given the fact, however, that all—rulers and ruled, bondsmen and free—are equally affected by this fallen state, the natural inequality upon which an ideal society would have been based is mightily altered by the consequences of the Fall. This is clear in the teaching that slavery as a form of social subjection would not have existed in the primitive state of man, even though every other form of human diversity would have been hierarchically ordered. Without the concrete sense of the unity of the human race by bodily descent, the modern theories of the state have been unable to distinguish adequately between a rightly ordered inequality and an effect of the Fall like slavery or its analogues, which ideally ought to be overcome.

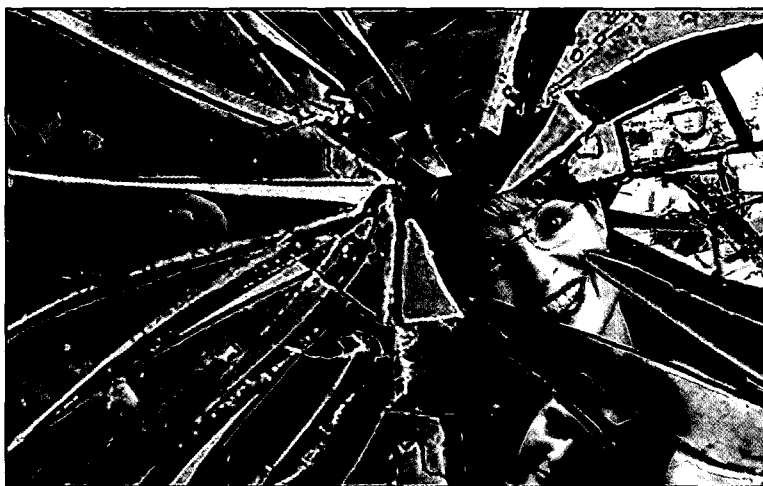
Vive la différence, the French say. Is there such a thing as racial guilt? Yes indeed, and it is the only thing in which human beings are universally equal. The restoration of a lost order requires a keen sense of what renders individuals and societies wholesomely unequal, and the defense of such social institutions that protect and foster the diversity of inheritance and accomplishment: the family, property, letters, enterprise, soldiering, and sanctity, the things our colonial forebears were seeking to maintain by limited government. Whatever may be the case in other cultures that do not possess the Christian Roman traditions of Europe, we will not find our way back to this ideal unless we abandon the suspicion of ordered inequality, which is the bloodless, but bloodletting, inheritance of modernity. From this illegitimate patrimony we must declare our independence. The text of our Constitution is one place to start, where the first intention is "to establish a more perfect union." The Apostle, after all, tells us that all are one in Christ Jesus; he does not say all are equal. His successor, your writer, a white, male descendant of royal subjects and slavemasters, a relative of slaves, one of the "poor banished children of Eve," holds this truth to be self-evident.



Pro-Choice Christians

Shattering Nature's Glass Ceiling

by Aaron D. Wolf



Melanie Anderson

After eight years of George W. Bush's "culture of life," which included well over 4,000 U.S. military deaths in Iraq and an estimated 1.25 million Iraqi deaths, abortion is back on the front burner, thanks to the presence of Sarah Palin on national television. Few were "energized" about John McCain before she entered stage right on the TV screen. Sure, *pace* James Dobson, they had still planned to "get drunk and vote for McCain" if the weather was decent on Election Day, but now voting has (once again) become a matter of Christian duty. Ann Coulter summed up the mood of conservative Christians in her column, titled "The Best Man Turned Out to Be a Woman." Contrasting Mrs. Palin with other potential running mates, the fellow barracuda struck: "As for former governor of Pennsylvania Tom Ridge and Democratic Sen. Joe Lieberman, the other also-rans, I can think of at least 40 million unborn reasons she's better than either of them."

Conservative Christians are eager to see themselves in Sarah Palin. She likes guns. She's a fiscal conservative. She knows the name "Pat Buchanan." She knows what secession is. She's pretty cute. She has five children. She's even a churchgoer, and at a church or churches that believe the Bible, even if those churches don't quite interpret it the same way. All of this would have been window dressing if she wasn't clearly and demonstrably against abortion. Oh, but she is.

So now we're excited, energized. Sarah Palin is on

our team. She's more on our team than John McCain is. She grandfathers him into our team. She's John McCain's better angel. She's our angel. Whatever she does is great, and whatever *they* say in attacking her is just wrong, wrong, wrong!

Christian conservatives are a savvy lot when it comes to politics. They have their years of grassroots experience in the Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition. They have learned from Rush, from Sean, from Bill, from Ann how to argue with a liberal and how to ignore the defeatist media. Turn that argument around. Track was conceived out of wedlock? *You're dang right he was. Sarah Palin's not afraid of sex and marriage!* She hasn't thought much about Iraq? *Heck, while you liberals are out there "thinking," she's sending her boy to the front lines!* Bristol is pregnant out of wedlock? *See above, pin-head! The Palins ♥ babies!*

In fact, every left-wing liberal-media criticism just underscores the fact that she is the perfect candidate. We need someone who is tough to stand up to the liberals. We need a pit bull. We need an Ann Coulter with lipstick.

And what about Hillary's glass ceiling? If that's all you care about, if you really want to be on the right side of history, how about this: We want a woman in the White House more than you do. "Our motto," says Ann Coulter, should be this: "Sarah Palin is only a heartbeat away!"

Now comes the ultimate hypocrisy from the ugly left: Sarah Palin has young children, including one with special needs. How can she choose government over home?

Well, that's just an outrage, says the pro-family Chris-

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