

THE OPEN SOCIETY AND BIBLICAL TELEOLOGICAL HISTORICISM
OR, THE PRACTICE OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TWO KINGDOMS IN THE
CONTEMPORARY WEST

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Abstract

In *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Karl Popper suggests there are two kinds of societies, the open and the closed. The open society is a liberal democracy. All other societies are “closed” societies. They are totalitarianisms. The closed and open society are distinguished from one another by teleological historicism. The closed society subscribes to a teleological history, and the open does not. All closed societies understand history progressing through a regulatory attribute towards a fixed aim.

Through the examples of Socialism and interventionism, we will discuss Popper’s concepts of teleological historicism, the closed society and the open society. We will exhibit how teleological historicisms error in their use of induction and how they lead to “the closed society.” We will then contrast the closed to the open society, discussing the two’s ethical systems.

After the exhibition of the three concepts, we will apply the reformed doctrine of the Two Kingdoms to Popper’s dichotomy, demonstrating the open society as the ideal of the City of God (the secular), repudiating the state’s teaching or practice of any teleological historicism. We will demonstrate that the ethics of the open society and Biblical ethics coincide in the ordering of a society.

Then we will demonstrate that the teaching of “a teleological historicism” falls under the jurisdiction of the City of God. With a discussion of Herman Bavinck and Albrecht Ritschl, we will demonstrate that the Bible teaches an objective *spiritual teleological historicism*, having a supersensory and supernatural aspect to its conception of history. The Bible teaches this

objective *spiritual teleological historicism* and it is part of one's faith, thus it falls under the jurisdiction of the City of God.

All to demonstrate that in following the two Kingdoms, the Christian cannot promote a closed society by associating with social and economic movements that subscribe to a teleological historicism and the installation of a Utopia. Any social, political and economic advocacy by a Christian must have in view the open society, leaving the teaching of a teleological historicism to the church. This practice of the two kingdoms promotes the flourishing of individuals and by their flourishing that of societies.

The Open Society and Biblical Teleological Historicism: The Practice of the Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms in the Contemporary West

On arriving to California, Tom Joad makes a simple observation. If all the “Okies” agree to work for nothing less, then the landowners would have to pay them a living wage. Due to Joad’s hope of organizing the Okies, the Californian landowners labeled *The Grapes of Wrath*’s protagonist a “red”. The McCarthyites blacklisted *The Grapes of Wrath* itself and labeled its author, John Steinbeck, a communist. Despite these efforts, Tom Joad has become an iconic figure in Americana, emblemizing the struggle of the great depression.

Socialism, Distinguished and Defined

Being a socialist, a red, however, is more than an advocacy for a high minimum wage. A belief in institutional or state regulations and safe guards to the free market is interventionism. A great deal of conservative figures, such as Theodore Roosevelt,¹ were interventionists. Interventionism assumes the right of private property. In light of the assumption, the state and other authoritarian institutions regulate means of production, guiding entrepreneurs, capitalist and landowners by regulations and decrees.² Interventionism is pragmatic. It regulates according to the present attitudes and situations of the free market, regulating consumption and distribution. For example, price ceilings and floors.

Some economists associate interventionism with socialism. Ludwig von Mises (1881-1973) suggests interventionism is “the mixing of markets”, the mixing of socialism and

¹ Due to his belief in governmental regulations on “industrial combinations”, Roosevelt was a “trust buster”. He, in the speech “The Control of Corporations”, states, “It is also true that there are real and grave evils, one of the chief being over-capitalization because of its many baleful consequences; and a resolute and practical effort must be made to correct these evils.” See Theodore Roosevelt, *Selected Speeches and Writings of Theodore Roosevelt*, Original ed. (New York, NY: Vintage, 2014), 71.

² Ludwig von Mises, *Liberalism* (Indianapolis, IN: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2010), 76.

capitalism.³ Mises' presentation of interventionism dismisses the ethical and sociological assertions of socialism. Since its practice may exclude socialism's sociological assertions, interventionism regulates according to present attitudes and situations. These regulations are determined democratically, dismissing Mises notion that interventionism leads to a totalitarian socialistic state.⁴ Though there is an increase in state-power,⁵ the practice of interventionism is democratic. As will be demonstrated, its adherence to present attitudes repudiates the accusation of socialism.⁶

Socialism Defined

Socialism is a belief in a “classless society” or a society consisting of one class.⁷ It is a utopianism. This utopia is not theoretical or conceptual, but a coming one. Karl Marx (1818-83) himself foretells the installation of a classless utopia. All particular social systems, according to Marx, bring about their own end. Due to its perpetual rapid adaptations of material conditions of production and life style, like feudalism before it, capitalism will self-deteriorate until it, itself, produces a new period in human history.⁸

Whether due to sociological or ethical causes,⁹ capitalism's self-destruction is certain. Marx believed in a regulatory attribute that governs history. In *The Communist Manifesto*, he

³ Ludwig von Mises, *Interventionism: an Economic Analysis* (Lib Works Ludwig von Mises Pb), New ed. (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund Inc., 2011), 54

⁴ Ludwig von Mises, *A Critique of Interventionism* (Large Print Edition), Lrg ed. (Auburn, AL: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2011), 44-67.

⁵ *Ibid.* 33-8

⁶ Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 5th ed., vol. 2, *Hegel, Marx, and the Aftermath* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), 130, 140.

⁷ *Ibid.* 137

⁸ *Ibid.* 135

⁹ Popper believes it is due to Marx's “method of social science”. (*The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Vol 2. 134.) Yet, *The Communist Manifesto* suggests an ethical cause. Marx references the moral bankruptcy of the bourgeoisie as his chief critique of the class. It is ultimately the proletariat's outrage over the moral behavior of the bourgeoisie that leads to revolution. In addition, in the chapter “the Moral Theory of Historicism”, Popper argues Marx's writings implicated an ethical condemnation of capitalism, stating, “his condemnation of capitalism is

states, "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."¹⁰ It is the struggle between the workers, the proletariat, and the owners of the means of production, the bourgeoisie.¹¹

Marx's conception of history patterned by class struggle is "historical materialism"¹². In the "Preface" to the *Contribution of the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx outlines a materialistic interpretation of history. It is a theory of cultural or social evolution. Marx argued that the expansion of the forces of production would govern the process of change in the institutional organization of a society.¹³ He states:

The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.¹⁴

At some point in the evolution of production, "the forces of production" conflicts with the existing institutional organization of a society. The existing institutional organization resists the adaptations mandated by the forces of production.¹⁵ The proletariat as a class, an institution of society, resists cultural or social change mandated by an evolution in the forces of production. Resisting the forces of production, the proletariat revolts against the bourgeoisie (the owners of the means of production). The revolt produces a new period in human history. In the new period,

fundamentally a moral condemnation" and *Capital* is a treatise on social ethics. The proletariat has an ethical responsibility to fight against socially unjust institutions, leading to the classless society. See Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, vol. 2, 199-200

¹⁰ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto (Penguin Classics)* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2004), 1.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Or the "materialist conception of history" or, as Popper refers to it, "economic historicism"

¹³ Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism: The Nation-State and Violence* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 2:8.

¹⁴ Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Intl Pub, 1979), 12. Popper quotes this very excerpt. He suggests it is often misunderstood.

¹⁵ Ibid.

the proletariat and the bourgeoisie are nearer one another in their social existence. Borrowing this structure from Hegelian mediation, Marx asserts the cycle then repeats until the two classes are no longer separate but one, coronating a classless utopia.¹⁶

The tension between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is the cause of the paradigm shifts in humanity that leads to the classless utopia. Due to this belief, Marx rejected utopic socialistic communities because they undermined the principle of the proletariat's self-emancipation and the class' ability of self-determination, dissolving the tension between the classes.¹⁷ He takes exception to utopic communities because they undermined the coming of the larger Utopia. The proletariat as a social institution (as a class) must revolt, coronating a new period of humanity. Giving an alternative to a revolution, the utopic societies undermine or delay the installation of the universal classless society.

Socialism is a Teleological Historicism

In *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Karl Popper (1902-1994) describes historical materialism as a teleological historicism.¹⁸ In a later work he states,

I mean by "historicism" an approach to the social sciences which assumes that historical prediction is their principal aim, and which assumes that this aim is attainable by the discovering of the "rhythms" or the "patterns", "the laws" or "the trends" that underlie the evolution of history.¹⁹

The adjective "teleological" highlights the belief that "the pattern" or "law" is progressing to a fixed end. A teleological historical theory is any sociological theory of history that views

¹⁶ Popper also labels Hegelian Mediation as a teleological historicism. *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Vol. 2

¹⁷ Barry Stewart Clark, *Political Economy: A Comparative Approach*, 2nd ed. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 56.

¹⁸ Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, vol. 2, 137-46.

¹⁹ Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 3.

humanity progressing through a regulatory attribute towards a fixed aim. Including the theories of Plato, Hegel and Marx, teleological historical theories understand humanity progressing (in the case of Plato, returning to) a Utopia.

The Error of Teleological Historicism

Popper takes exception to teleological historical theories because he is an inductive skeptic. He is skeptical of inferences that pass from singular statements or particular statements (such as accounts of the results of observations or experiments) to universal statements (such as hypotheses or theories).²⁰ Due to its necessity of using induction, Popper argued that empirical verification is logically impossible. A theory referred to as *fallibilism*. He equates the rationality of scientific methods (such as the hypothetico-deductive model)²¹ with inductive reasoning.²² In using induction, scientific rationality shares in the inductive fallacy. In accordance with *modus tollens*, scientific methods can only negate a theory. It cannot confirm it as true.²³

Take for example hypothesis (G) of the force of gravity. Mr. Scientist observes apples falling from a tree. He then theorizes hypothesis (G) as its cause. Thinking of a deductive prediction based on hypothesis (G), Mr. Scientist conjectures, “if hypothesis (G) is true, then test (g) will produce result (g).” Sure enough, test (g) produces result (g). According to Popper, however, to state, “Hypothesis (G) is true based on result (g)” is a logical error. In confirming hypothesis (G) based on result (g), Mr. Scientist exercised the inductive fallacy. He argued, if (A) is true then (B) is true, (B) is true thus (A) is true. A kin to saying, “Apples are red. Object

²⁰ Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery (Routledge Classics)*, 2 ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 3.

²¹ A four-step method: (1) Systematic observation of a phenomenon. (2) Conjecture an explanation of the phenomenon. (3) Give a deductive prediction based on the conjecture. (4) Test.

²² Peter Godfrey-Smith, *Theory and Reality: an Introduction to the Philosophy of Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 59.

²³ *Ibid.* and Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. 56

(A) is red thus it is an apple.” Object (A)’s redness does not verify it as an apple. All that can be said is, “Object (A) is red; therefore it *may be* an apple.”

All sociologists use induction and the construction of theories of historicism necessitate its use. Popper splits the study of sociology in two. There is the “pro-naturalistic” and the “anti-naturalistic”. The pro-naturalistic study applies what he calls “the method of the physical” or “the natural sciences” or “the nominalistic methodology.” It is a kin to the hypothetico-deductive model in its use of induction.²⁴

The anti-naturalistic method uses a “methodological essentialism.” It adopts the classical thinkers’ conception of knowledge, looking to the essence of things.²⁵ Though it does not always necessitate the use of “tests”, it too constructs theories based on empirical observations, passing from singular statements to universal. Popper states:

Although historicism is fundamentally anti-naturalistic, it is by no means opposed to the idea that is a common element in the methods of the physical and the social sciences. This may be due to the fact that historicists as a rule adopt the view that sociology like physics, is a branch of knowledge which aims, at the same time, to be theoretical and empirical. By saying that it is a theoretical discipline, we mean that sociology has to explain and to predict events, with the help of theories or universal laws (which it tries to discover).²⁶

Including historical materialism, the above problem applies to all sociological theories of history. There are empirical observations related to history. Due to the use of induction, the verification of sociological theories or hypotheses conjectured from these facts is impossible. Teleological historicisms and their accompanying assertion of a regulatory principle governing history and humanity are unverifiable.

²⁴ Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*. 25-8

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid. 31

The Closed Society: the Result of the Political Application of a Teleological Historicism

Since a sociological theory of history is unverifiable, it regresses in to nothing more than a worldview. A society that subscribes to a teleological historical worldview is a “collectivist society” or a “closed society”.²⁷ Popper takes exception to a closed society because it encourages social engineering²⁸ and ends in a totalitarian state.

In subscribing to a teleological historicism, a closed society promotes laws, taboos and economic structures that advances it towards its utopic end. Since a teleological historical theory ends in a utopic society, its political application ends in collectivism. The society as a whole becomes ultimate and individuals become penultimate. The individual sacrifices self-identity for the harmony and the flourishing of the society as a whole.²⁹ The state promotion of collectivism, in turn, leads to a totalitarian state.

The Ethics of the Closed Society

Since a closed society has in view an inevitable utopic end, it is aggressive to institutions and individuals that delay or arrest the *progression*³⁰ towards the utopia.³¹ A closed society has a simple ethic. Whatever arrests progress towards the utopia is injustice. Whatever promotes “progress” is justice. It is that which is in the interest of the collective. The state inevitably promotes the ethic through regulations and decrees. State institutions ultimately become the

²⁷ Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 5th ed., vol. 1, The Spell of Plato (London: Princeton University Press, 1971), 173

²⁸ Popper argues for methodological piecemeal social engineering. This is his eventual answer for the state’s role in social life, i.e. schools and social programs. Piecemeal social engineering excludes any universal application. Not having a hope for the future, it derives its decrees from present situations and attitudes. See Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*. 52-6

²⁹ Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, vol. 1, 173-5

³⁰ Popper takes exception to the term, arguing that which is inevitable is not always better. He also takes exception to the turn of phrase, “wrong side of history.” He asks, “If the Nazis where to have won, would that have made them right?”

greatest means of “progress”, leading to a totalitarian state.³² Closed societies exchange the “humanitarian ethics of the individual”³³ for this “totalitarian justice”.³⁴ It exchanges an ethical system that has as its aim the flourishing of the individual for the *progress* of the collective administered by the state.

The Open Society

Instead of the closed society, Popper advocates for “the open society.” Popper argues that societies should avoid collectivism. He states, “There is no return to a harmonious state of nature. If we turn back, then we must go the whole way—we must return to the beasts.”³⁵ The end of a society should be open. Individuals should exist as, and for, individuals with no fixed end for humanity.³⁶ Open societies are liberal democracies.

The open society is the opposite of societies such as those portrayed by Aldous Huxley in the *Brave New World* and Plato in *The Republic*. In Book VIII of *The Republic*, Plato argues that there are inherently different grades of people. There are those who have gold, silver, bronze and iron souls. Those with Gold souls should be rulers. Those with silver souls should be soldiers, being the auxiliaries of the gold souls. And so on.³⁷ In the *Brave New World*, the Alphas rule, and the Betas are their auxiliaries. And so on.³⁸ Both societies look to the state to determine

³² Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, vol. 1. 106-7. In the discussion, Popper is discussing the politics of Plato. Who has the opposite closed society of Marx. Plato argued for a rigid cast system and the arresting of change. Nonetheless, his sociological assumption about history, leads to the same totalitarian justice and a closed society.

³³ Not to be mistaken with the ethics of Humanism.

³⁴ An assertion that a society’s subscription to a teleological historicism necessarily ending in a totalitarian state is susceptible to Popper’s own critique of “teleological historicisms”. Popper is aware of the self-critiquing nature of his argument. He thus stresses the fact that his critique is a matter of opinion, not a proven theory. He begins *The Open Society and Its Enemies* stressing that the theories and interpretations found within are his opinion.

³⁵ Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, vol. 1. 200-1

³⁶ Ibid. 188-99

³⁷ Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 2nd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 222-49.

³⁸ Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, Harper Perennial Modern Classics (New York, New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2006), 3-5.

individuals' categorizations. The state bases categorizations on what is best for the society as a whole.³⁹

The Ethics of the Open Society

Being the opposite of “the brave new world” and Plato’s republic, the open society subscribes to “the humanitarian ethics of the individual”. It promotes equality and self-determination. It has as its end the flourishing of individuals not societies.

The open society has a teleological ethical system that has as its aim the flourishing of individuals, promoting equality among individuals and the individual’s ability to self-determine. Having no fixed end for history, state institutions should legislate based on this ethic of the individual. Using the old idiom, Popper asserts an individual’s liberty to swing his fist ends only where another’s nose begins.

An open society’s teleological ethic does not exclude it from having a normative code to govern legislation in keeping with the Bible. The difference in the Bible’s and open society’s ethical aims does not exclude the two from having mirroring practices. In *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, speaking of the ethical system offered by the Bible, John Frame argues that an ethical system may have more than one label. A system of ethics may contain aspects from more than one ethical school. Dependent on the aspect he is examining, the observer attributes the title of an ethical system.⁴⁰ A system may be teleological in aim and deontological in practice or vice versa.

³⁹ Ibid. and Plato, *The Republic*, 222-49

⁴⁰ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life (A Theology of Lordship)* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2008), 131-2. Frame suggests a tri-perspectival approach to ethics. Dependent on the aspect of the system being examined, Biblical ethics are normative, subjective and existential.

In regards to the open society, its teleological aim of self-determination and equality does not exclude it from legislating in accordance to a normative code. Indeed, when the open society's aversion to inductive speculation is considered, a normative code becomes necessary in legislating. If the legislator cannot foretell the consequences of a law, he legislates in accordance with a normative code. E.g., it is wrong to steal, tax evasion is stealing, and therefore it is against the law. The answer to the question "why is it wrong to steal?" is stealing inherently disturbs another individual's ability to flourish.

If one assumes the normative code for social interaction offered by the Bible best orders a society where individuals flourish, then the practice of the "humanitarian ethics of the individual" comes in the following of the Bible's normative code for social interaction. By giving direct imperatives, the Bible offers a normative code for life. This normative code is the Bible's deontological ethics. The Bible's deontological ethics has a subset for social interaction. It gives direct imperatives to govern social interactions. These direct imperatives are different from ones given to govern spiritual life.

For example, take the direct imperatives of "love your God" and "you shall not steal". Though both are direct imperatives, only one applies to social contexts (you shall not steal). The other (love your God) applies to the spiritual context. Though they inform one another in their practice, there is a distinction. The Bible's normative code for social interaction is the latter, direct imperatives a kin to "you shall not steal."

The open society and the Scriptures differ in their ethical aim. Yet, the open society adopts the Bible's normative code for social interaction, realizing it best promotes the flourishing of individuals. The humanitarian ethics of the individual and Biblical ethics differ in aim. They, nonetheless, have the same normative guide for social interaction, since a subscription to the

Bible's normative code for social interaction best promotes the flourishing of individuals. Both affirm the imperative "you shall not steal". The open society does so because it inherently disturbs another individual's ability to flourish. The Bible does so because it is an imperative given by God.

The Open Society and the City of Man

This modified humanitarian ethics of the individual are the ethics of Augustine's City of Man. The open society is the political and institutional structure for the City of Man. Augustine and the Reformers taught a distinction between the holy things of Christ's heavenly Kingdom (what Augustine called "the City of God") and the common things of the present world (what Augustine called "the City of Man").⁴¹ The distinction marks God's providential sustaining of the whole of humanity and his sustaining of the Church.⁴²

God rules both the City of Man and the City of God. He rules the City of Man (the secular) with laws, regulations and physical force for the sake of good order. He rules with "the sword." The jurisdiction of "the sword" is all things seen and done in the physical world.⁴³ The sword protects individuals' liberties, governing in accordance to the Bible's normative code for social interaction.⁴⁴ God rules the City of God by the church. The jurisdiction of the church includes all the instruments the Holy Spirit uses to produce faith, including the administering of the sacraments and the teaching of the Bible.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Augustine, *The City of God*, A Doubleday Image Book (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1958), 296-312.

⁴² David VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms: a Biblical Vision for Christianity and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 26 VanDrunen does not use Augustine's colloquial of City of Man and God. In addition, Augustin'es doctrine of Two Cities differs in some ways from the Reforms' doctrine of the Two Kingdom.

⁴³ Theodore G. Tappert, *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 37.

⁴⁴ Augustine, *The City of God*. 254-91.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 31

Each City derives its jurisdiction from the mandate given to “the Adam”⁴⁶ ruling over it. The City of Man derives its jurisdiction from “the first Adam”, the Adam of the creation account in Genesis. The City of God derives its jurisdiction from “the last Adam”, Jesus Christ. God gives the first Adam domain of the created world (the fish of the sea, the birds of the air and the livestock), governing with morality and rationality.⁴⁷ Jesus Christ is King of “the world-to-come”, the heavenly kingdom.⁴⁸

In accordance with the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms, the Christian should promote the open society as the ideal of the City of Man. He promotes the flourishing of individuals and by their flourishing that of societies. He does so by promoting the Bible’s normative code for social interaction. He argues, “The state should insure the liberty of individuals, ensuring good order by enforcing the Bible’s normative code for social interaction, leaving individuals to self-determine their ends.” The state promotes equality and the self-determination of individuals, leaving historicism to the City of God.

Biblical Teleological Historicism and the City of God

The teaching or practice of a teleological historicism of a society falls under the jurisdiction of the City of God. Simone Weil (1909-43) argued that an individual needs *l’enracinement* (roots). To thrive, an individual needs a sense of belonging. He needs to feel culturally and spiritually rooted. He needs to feel an association with something greater than himself. The individual needs a conception of his place in history, an understanding of the past

⁴⁶ A reference to 1 Corinthians 15.

⁴⁷ VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*. 37

⁴⁸ Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots: Prelude to a Declaration of Duties Towards Mankind* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 51

and an expectation of the future.⁴⁹ To apply Popper's language, an individual needs to subscribe to a teleological historical theory, placing himself within that theory. Weil asserts only Christianity can fulfill this "need for roots".

Like Popper, she argues the state's attempt to fulfill the need for roots is propaganda and leads to a totalitarian state. The state attempts to fulfill the need because of the subjugation of the church. As individuals turn away from Christianity, they turn to patriotism, turning to the state to fulfill the need for roots. In turn, when the state attempts to fulfill the need, it self-promotes. It sets its self as the purpose of human life, teaching the ethics and purpose of fascism or socialism.⁵⁰ Since schools stopped teaching Christianity, Weil argues, they have no choice but to start teaching Socialism.⁵¹

These pseudo-roots of the state leads to "uprooted" individuals. Only the Christian religion can fulfill the need for roots.⁵² Including Socialism, all other attempts fulfill the need for roots leaves the individual wanting or "uprooted". They are detrimental to the individual and the society as a whole.⁵³

Biblical Teleological Historicism

The Bible echo Weil's sentiment. It teaches a particular but objective view of history, salvific history. It reminds its reader of his past and promises him a destiny. It teaches a *spiritual teleological historicism*. The Bible has a fixed aim for humanity, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It teaches that providence orders humanity and governs history.

⁴⁹Ibid. 36-41. Roots are the ethics or obligations of the individual as well. Roots include the obligation the individual has to himself, other individuals and the society as a whole. (Weil, 1-35)

⁵⁰ Ibid. 98-150

⁵¹ Ibid. 9

⁵² Ibid. 185-9

⁵³ Ibid. 100-121

The *spiritual teleological historicism* the Bible teaches is dependent on the period of salvific history it is addressing. After the fall, Adam and Eve are to look forward to the promised “seed of the woman”, (Gen. 3:15 ESV) remembering from where they came. Before the Exodus, Moses is to tell the people, “The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.” (Exod. 3:15) In following the 10 commandments, the people are to remember “the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery” is commanding them. (Exod. 20:15) This reframe, “the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt”, is in constant repetition throughout the Old Testament. The Israelites in exile are to remember the God who brought them out of Egypt will bring forth a second David.

In the New Testament, the writer of Hebrews reminds his audience of “the great cloud of witnesses” that surrounds them, reminding them of the tradition and history of their faith. (Heb. 12:1) Asserting the importance of history to the Christian faith, Paul states, “But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain”. (1 Cor. 15:13-14) If Christ has not risen, then Christians “are of all people most to be pitied.”(1 Cor. 15:19). The Christian is to look forward to the Second Coming of Christ, finding hope in the return of his Savior.

The above demonstrates the place of history in faith. No matter the period of salvific history, “the believer” is given an understanding of the past and an expectation (a promise) of the future. To have faith is to anticipate the promised future and have the particular understanding of the past, placing the self within the history.

Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) submits this sentiment as the definition of faith. Faith is a trust in the Biblical witness and a belief in God's promises.⁵⁴ The belief that Christ has risen, that anyone who calls on his name will be saved (Rom. 10:13) and that he is returning. An aspect of faith is remembering what God has done in the past and what he has promised for the future. It is a particular understanding of history and a particular expectation of the future.

The Supersensory and Supernatural Teleological Historicism and Its Objectivity

The Objectivity of Biblical History

The particularity of the conception of history does not diminish its objectivity. Speaking of the place of history in Christianity, in dialogue with Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889),⁵⁵ Bavinck states, "History is not a matter of indifference in a single religion, but Christianity itself *is* and *creates* a history. Precisely because it is the perfect absolute and definitive religion, it is and has to be a historical religion."⁵⁶

Bavinck submits the statement to refute Ritschl's conception of Christianity. Ritschl argued, "The Christian religion has its origin in a special revelation." This special revelation "exists in a special community of believers and worshipers." The special community thus becomes the object of examination in studying the Christian faith.⁵⁷ The object of the Christian faith is not sensory accessible events witnessed to in its special revelation, but "the value

⁵⁴ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. James Bolt, trans. John Vriend, Vol. 1, *Prolegomena* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 565-68.

⁵⁵ And Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Kant's distinction between the noumenon and the phenomenon influences Ritschl. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. James Bolt, trans. John Vriend, vol. 2, *God and Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 116.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 595. Bavinck continues to stress that sin and redemption are historically rooted in the Christian faith, deriving from the fall of Adam and death of Christ.

⁵⁷ Albrecht Ritschl, *Three Essays*, trans. Philip Hefner (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 223-80

judgements” made of them by its community of believers and worshipers.⁵⁸ Christianity is not the truth-value of sensory accessible events witnessed to in special revelation, but “the value judgment” associated with them by the community of believers. What is important is the resurrection accounts meaning to the community of believers, not if Christ did or did not rise.

Bavinck takes exception to Ritschl’s assertion, understanding the sensory accessible events of the Bible’s teaching as the object of Christianity. He argues that the summation of two perspectives, the objective and the subjective, compose an individual or community’s faith. The objective perspective is the witness and teaching of the Bible, understanding it as a true witness to the sensory accessible events to which it attests. The Bible’s witness is in perfect keeping with these sensory accessible events. The subjective is the individual or community’s assimilation of the objective. Faith is the correct subjective assimilation of the objective. It is to trust the witness and believe its promises.⁵⁹

As the Biblical witness portrays them, the events are the object of the Christian faith. The important thing is that Christ has risen. If he has not risen, then the Christian’s faith is in vain. Understanding “the objective” as part of history, Bavinck asserts Christianity “is and has to be a historical religion.”

Popper and the Bible, the Supersensory and Supernatural

Having to be a historical religion, Christianity has a particular view of history. The Bible’s salvific history explains the whole course of history. It portrays the genesis, the course and the fixed end of humanity (the Second Coming of Jesus Christ). Explaining the whole

⁵⁸ Ibid. and John M. Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2015), 223

⁵⁹ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, 61-95

course of history, the Bible's teaching of history is a teleological historicism. It has a fixed aim for humanity, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It also has a force that governs history, providence.

Strictly speaking, the Bible's teaching does not fit into Popper's definition of teleological historicism. Teleological historicisms are an attempt to predict the future, through a pattern or law that explains the ordering of history. This pattern is derived from empirical data. This pattern leads to a fixed predictable end.

Since a force outside of the natural "laws" governs it, theories informed by empirical data cannot explain providence. It is supersensory. Being supersensory, providence has no (scientifically measurable) pattern or law that explains its operation. The cause of the installation of the fixed end of humanity is also outside the natural laws. The second coming of Jesus Christ is a supernatural event. The fixed end's installation and the nature of providence has a supernatural and supersensory element. Popper's classification of teleological historicism does not strictly apply to the Bible's teaching.⁶⁰

Nonetheless, the Bible teaches a force governs history. It also teaches that humanity has a fixed aim. Though it has a supersensory and supernatural aspect, the Bible teaches a teleological historicism. It teaches a *spiritual teleological historicism*.

Spiritual but objective

Despite it having a supersensory and supernatural aspect, the Bible's *spiritual teleological historicism* is objective. Recall Bavinck's objective-subjective composition of faith.

⁶⁰ Neither does Popper's critique. Since providence is not an empirically based theory, it does not use induction.

The Bible's witness was the objective and the individual's assimilation of it was the subjective. The Bible's teaching of providence governing the course of history (controlling all events) is the objective. It is an objective reality that providence orders and governs humanity. Though empirically unverifiable, the statement, "for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28) is objectively true. The proposition is not dependent on belief. Faith is only the correct subjective assimilation of this objective truth.

Teleological History under the jurisdiction of the City of God

Men's dispositions portray this objective reality. Humanity, Bavinck argues, has the notion of providence abetted into it. Men cannot bring themselves to believe that mere chance governs their future. He credits the popularity of Darwinism with this inability. Though men abandon the notion of God, they cannot give themselves to chaos.⁶¹

Bavinck's sentiment mirrors Weil's assertion that an individual has a need for roots. As seen above, the Christian faith and history are connected. "Christianity itself *is* and *creates* a history." The Scriptures teach that providence governs history and that humanity is approaching a fixed aim. The Bible proscribes the Christian a place in salvific history, offering him an understanding of the past and an expectation of the future. The Bible teaches a *spiritual teleological historicism*.

Since the Bible teaches one and one is part of faith, the teaching of a teleological historicism falls under the jurisdiction of the City of God. Recall that the instruments the Holy Spirit uses to produce faith including the teaching of the Bible was under the jurisdiction of the

⁶¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, 83.

City of God. The church and not the state should proscribe to society its teleological historicism, because the Bible teaches one and one is part of the individual's faith. The Church has the jurisdiction to teach society as a whole and the individuals that comprise it their place in history and their end.

Politics for what? The Practice of Doctrine of the Two Kingdom

Weil asks Cardinal Richelieu the satirical question, "Politics for what?" Richelieu's would be response is, "for the greater glory of the state." The answer prompts Weil to ask a second question, why should she struggle for this purpose? To which Richelieu has no answer.⁶² The question is that of the Christian. The Christian must always ask, "Politics for what?", "to what end?" When associating with political movements and social causes, he must ask "for what?" If the answer is associated with a particular teleological historical theory, he must disassociate himself with the cause.

In the public square, the Christian advocates for the open society. Following the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms, the Christian promotes a government (a sword) that legislates in accordance with the humanitarian ethic of the individual, leaving the church to teach a *spiritual teleological historicism*. He supports interventionistic institutional or state regulations and safe guards that are in keeping with the Bible's normative code for social interaction. He can and should support wage laws and safe guards for the vulnerable of society.

The Christian cannot support the institution or state that hopes to perpetuate a teleological historicism. When the state over steps its jurisdiction, attempting to teach a teleological historicism, the Christian argues against it. He argues societies teleological historicism falls

⁶² Weil, *The Need for Roots*, 148

under the jurisdiction of the church. In social advocacy, he cannot associate with any cause that perpetuates or spreads a teleological historicism that differs from the Bible.

In the final pages of *The Need for Roots*, Weil argues that western intellectualism is sick. The western man does not know his genesis nor his destiny.⁶³ Not knowing the story of humanity, he does not know his purpose.⁶⁴ The Christian cannot perpetuate this sickness. He must offer the antidote, sharing *the spiritual teleological historicism* found in the Scriptures. He cannot promote a closed society by associating with social and economic movements that subscribe to a teleological historicism and hope to install a Utopia. Whether in civil rights or economic equality, when a Christian looks to advocate social justice he must have in view the Bible's normative code for social interaction, celebrating and promoting the flourishing of the individual. He must always ask, "To what end?"

⁶³ Ibid. 289

⁶⁴ Weil argues for physical labor as the answer to being "uprooted", pointing to the garden of Eden and God mandate of the physical world to Adam. (Weil, 289-93)