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**In This Issue** ..... 1

**The Idea of the Covenant of Grace**

By Henry Danhof

translated by David J. Engelsma ..... 2

**John Davenant:**

**A Jewel of the Reformed Churches  
or a Tarnished Stone? (2)**

Mark Shand ..... 20

**Kingdom and Church in "Christian" Reconstruction**

Ronald Hanko ..... 29

**Book Reviews** ..... 69



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# In This Issue

David J. Engelsma concludes his translation of the late Rev. Henry Danhof's treatise, "The Idea of the Covenant of Grace." In this section of what was originally an address given in 1919 to a conference of Christian Reformed Church ministers Danhof masterfully develops the whole concept of the antithesis. With copious references to Scripture Danhof shows how the antithesis is rooted in the covenant of grace established by God with His elect in Christ Jesus. Danhof clearly demonstrates how the antithesis works itself out in all of life and how the antithetical covenant of friendship with God will be realized at the return of Christ at the end of the ages.

We appreciate Prof. Engelsma's fine, readable translation of this significant work of Henry Danhof, a work as applicable to the Christian and the church today as it was at the beginning of this century.

Mark Shand, a second-year student at the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary preparing for ministry in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, contributes the second and last section of his work on John Davenant. We think the reader will agree with his well documented conclusions.

The Rev. Ronald Hanko offers a penetrating critique of the ecclesiology of the movement fathered by R. J. Rushdoony and known as Christian Reconstructionism. Rev. Hanko concludes that Christian Reconstructionism: "views the kingdom as something broader than and disjunct from the church; denies that the church is the goal and end of God's dealings with mankind; and trivializes the church, especially the church institute, and tends to define the visible church in terms of believers apart from and at the expense of the church institute." Rev. Hanko develops the concepts church and kingdom from Scripture and shows the relationship between these two and concludes his article with a warning against the dangers of Christian Reconstructionism. The appendices to which Rev. Hanko refers will appear in the next issue of the *Journal*.

Robert D. Decker

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# The Idea of the Covenant of Grace

by  
Rev. H. Danhof

Translated by David J. Engelsma

## Translator's Note.

This installment concludes my translation of Henry Danhof's *De Idee van het Genadeverbond*, the expanded text of an address given in 1919 to a conference of Christian Reformed ministers in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The three preceding installments appeared in the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* 30, no. 2 (April, 1997): 5-11; 31, no. 1 (November, 1997): 10-19; and 31, no. 2 (April, 1998): 13-23. An introduction to the translated booklet, "An Introduction to Henry Danhof's 'The Idea of the Covenant of Grace,'" was published in the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* 29, no. 2 (April, 1996): 51-61. This article showed the significance of Danhof's address for the controversy in the Christian Reformed Church in the early 1920s over common grace resulting in the formation of the Protestant Reformed Churches. It also related something of Danhof's later ministry.

Henry Danhof's profound treatise on the covenant is now available to the English reading public for the first time. The work was seminal for the doctrine of the covenant maintained and developed by the Protestant Reformed Churches. It demands to be taken into account by all Reformed theologians, including ministers, as they study Scripture's fundamental doctrine of the covenant of grace.

As in the preceding installments, all footnotes are the translator's, including the biblical references, which Danhof for the most part did not indicate. The chapter divisions also are the additions of the translator, as are the introductions to the chapters, in italics.

## Chapter 5

*In this section Danhof explains the development of the covenant of grace in Bible history, beginning with its revelation by God immediately after the fall. In what immediately precedes, Danhof proposes the*

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*organic development of the covenant of grace in history in connection with the development of all things under the providential government of God. The human race of elect and reprobate is "marvelously intermingled" in all kinds of close earthly relations. But the radically different relation in which they stand to God, love and fellowship on the part of the regenerated elect and hatred and enmity on the part of the unregenerated reprobate, is "the wedge which causes them, with their opposing world-and-life-views, to separate to the right and to the left in every sphere, even to the smallest details, and with compelling consequence." Thus history—world history—is, at its core, the story of the fearful struggle between the covenant people of God and God's enemies.*

This enables us to understand the course of history. Essentially, the covenant in its entirety was already present immediately after the fall. All that follows is development of this seed. However, the progress of the revelation of the covenant conception is bound up with the development of creation and humanity and of conscious life. Therefore, even the mention of the covenant is lacking here. And the spiritual difference between church and world fades completely into the background. God's grace seems to concern, not only the organic kernel but our entire race. Genesis 3:15 makes mention of the ruin of Satan and his kingdom. The Seed of the woman shall triumph. Only, the expression, "your seed," points to the coming struggle between the sons of God and the children of men. The characteristic difference between the elect and forgiven kernel of our race and the reprobate husk that surrounds the kernel during the present time is manifest in the different relation of hate and love in which they stand to Satan, to God, and to each other. Only with the ripening of the fruit does the everlasting kernel more and more break through the husk.

The different periods of this development, therefore, do not present to us any gradation in grace, as Cocceius<sup>1</sup> wanted. This is a

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1. Cocceius (1603-1669) was a Reformed theologian who taught for many years in the Netherlands. He made the covenant central in Reformed theology. He has been charged with having so sharply distinguished the various phases of the covenant in the Old Testament as to lose the oneness of the covenant and thus fall into the error of dispensationalism. Danhof, it will be noted, insists on, and explains, the unity of the covenant of grace in all the phases of its revelation.

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notion that would lead to the absolute destruction of the covenant idea. Rather, they present to us the formal phases of development of the life of the covenant in our race. With this, they present to us the working out of the principles of sin and grace: the concentration of spiritually similar elements and the progressive dissolving of the natural fellowship of spiritually dissimilar elements.<sup>2</sup> Each preceding phase is type and shadow of the following, more developed form of the covenant. The covenant of grace is never the kernel of a more common covenant, but, although essentially ever the same, it comes to manifestation always in higher forms. The forms develop. The form of revelation in Paradise is type of the form of the covenant with Noah, as this is shadow of the Abrahamic and as the form of the covenant with Israel is shadow of the New Testament form of the covenant. In like manner, this entire earthly dispensation is image of the everlasting form of the covenant.

The covenant with Noah, therefore, is the covenant of grace in its second phase of historical development. The new creation, the kernel of the first world, stripped of the old wrapping that perished in the flood, arises out of the water of baptism and beholds in the clouds of heaven the sign of God's covenant faithfulness.<sup>3</sup>

In a very short time, however, it itself has turned the somewhat altered and richer expression of God's good gifts and powers into an all-consuming curse, according to the manner of the operation of the principle of sin. The intertwining of church and state and the society of church and world in one and the same organization made possible the moral degeneration of our race and the establishing of the principle of the kingdom of Babel: the world-power inspired by Satan that is opposed to God. That apparently absolutely universal world-federation, which was hostile to God, seemed to leave God's covenant of friendship in our race neither root nor branch. The second world had come to the beginning of the end. The final end, however, was put off for ages by the confusion of speech and the separating of Abraham.

In Abraham, the holy line continues itself. God made Abraham to be a pattern of His grace and realization of the covenant before the face

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2. By "elements," Danhof intends people.

3. This view of the covenant with Noah differs radically with the popular view that the covenant with Noah was a covenant of common grace with all men involving merely temporal existence and earthly gifts.

of the peoples. The separation is only temporal and bears a typical character. The people that sprouts from Abraham is spiritually one with Adam, Seth, Enos, Enoch, Noah, Shem, Arphaxad, Heber, Terah, and the congregation of the new covenant. According to its spiritual kernel, it represents the elect humanity. In its separate existence as a people, it forms an antithesis with the heathen. Over against the whole world, it is of God's party.

Here, however, we do not yet have the everlasting and absolute antithesis between the kingdom of light and that of darkness. Israel in its historical existence is shadow, picture, prophecy, and preformation of that which comes in higher form in Christ and His congregation and in the kingdom of glory. Presently, God first returns to the peoples in His only-begotten Son, who according to the flesh is from Israel, in order to take to Himself a congregation from every race, language, people, and nation. God, therefore, returns to the peoples *through Israel*. Thus Abraham becomes a father of all those who believe, both from the uncircumcised and the circumcised, and an heir of the world. And with this, the middle wall of partition is broken, and, in principle, the separate existence as a people of Israel and the heathen is abolished.<sup>4</sup> From now on, neither Jew nor heathen will be able to maintain itself in its separate existence.

The congregation is the spiritual kernel of our race. On the day of Pentecost, humanity according to its spiritual kernel repeals the tower of Babel and Adam's breaking of the covenant; abolishes the confusion of language by its speaking in tongues and with this the dividing of peoples; and grants us a glimpse into the kingdom of glory. This entire earthly dispensation has come to the beginning of the end. It is the last time and day and hour. The entire creation is in travail,<sup>5</sup> and in the birthpangs the ripe fruit breaks through the husk. Out of the temporal wrapping, the everlasting kernel makes its appearance.

In this connection, two observations still need to be made. Historical Israel according to its typical aspect was not only an image of the congregation of the new day, but also pointed more directly to the kingdom of glory, past the entire New Testament dispensation. The

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4. Ephesians 2:14.

5. Matthew 24:8; Romans 8:22.

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outward appearance of Israel's existence as a people was shadow of the eternal dispensation. The church lacks that outward, typical feature. Although richer in spiritual goods than old Israel, since the shadows relating to them were fulfilled, she is, nevertheless, poorer in typical possession of physical and temporal treasures. According to his bodily existence, the New Testament believer is temporally subjected to the emperor, not to David. In that sense, he lives and dies in the world, not in the holy land. To be sure he has a king, a citizenship, a treasure of salvation, but as yet only in a spiritual sense. The shadow of the natural possession of everything in which old Israel could rejoice, sometimes to the point of dancing, has perished in the Babylonian captivity, not only for the Jew but also for him. Although Christ is in him and consequently the spirit is life on account of righteousness, even so, however, the body is as yet dead on account of sin.<sup>6</sup> During this dispensation, the kingdom of God does not come with observation.<sup>7</sup> God's children are in dispersion. They are strangers here below.<sup>8</sup> They have no earthly fatherland, indeed, no "home rule," like the Jews at the time of Christ. And this captivity of theirs lasts until Christ's return.

We do indeed, therefore, live in the last times. It is the last day, indeed the last hour. But still it is the last hour of this earthly dispensation; the everlasting day has not yet risen upon us. And now we certainly may not revert back to the old dispensation in order with the chiliast to expect fulfillment of the shadows that are as yet unfulfilled, during this dispensation. Even less may we conceive that fulfillment after the manner of the postmillennialists. During this spiritual dispensation there is no gradual progression in the fulfilling of the shadows. We never reach the eternal reality by our own effort. The transition from the one stage of development into a higher comes about by a special intervention of God. Although there is progression in revelation, consciousness, application, and expectation according to the nature of each dispensation, nevertheless, the dispensations do not thus gradually merge with each other. The church does not produce heaven,

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6. Rom. 8:10.

7. Luke 17:20.

8. Hebrews 11:13.



nor the world, hell. Presently, the everlasting dispensation is fruit of the final catastrophe.<sup>9</sup>

From this it follows that the relationship of the elect kernel of our race to the reprobate husk that temporarily surrounds it during the New Testament dispensation is spiritual-organic in nature. Along those lines proceeds the realizing of the covenant conception. That which at first lies hidden and intertwined in one and the same root comes to revelation, development, and separation by the Word of God that is "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."<sup>10</sup> Because no creature is hidden from the God of the covenant, but all things are naked and open before Him, therefore, with the full realizing of His covenant conception He will also complete the separation of spiritually dissimilar elements, both in the individual and in the community, as one separates chaff from the grain, no matter how these may share in the society of natural life and may formally agree.

## Chapter 6

*The aspect of the covenant that comes to the fore here is the "antithesis." The antithesis is the separation of the covenant friends of God from His enemies, and the warfare between the two parties throughout history. Historically, it was this confession of the antithesis that brought down upon Danhof and his colleague at that time, Herman Hoeksema, the rage of those who embraced common grace. On their part, Danhof and Hoeksema criticized the theory of common grace as the denial of the antithesis. In the treatment of the antithesis that follows, Danhof sets forth the antithesis as an aspect of the life of the*

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9. This penetrating objection to the dream of postmillennialism is characteristically Reformed. The church herself does not bring about the glorious victory of the Messianic covenant and kingdom in history. She does not bring about this victory even with the help of the Messiah. The final victory comes by a wonder of grace, that is, the coming of the head of the covenant on the clouds.

10. Hebrews 4:12.

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*covenant, if (as Danhof has earlier demonstrated) the covenant is viewed as fellowship with God. Antithesis is a covenantal truth. The reason then why "antithesis" becomes a foreign, even detested, word in Reformed circles and the reason why the reality of the antithesis disappears from the life of the churches and of the individuals is that there is little covenant consciousness in the churches. Nominally Reformed people do not know themselves as God's friends, and their life as friendship with God. For this reason they are able to cultivate friendship with the ungodly and enjoy fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.*

This spiritual-organic separating from each other of that which naturally belongs together occasions strife. This operation, however, is not carried out in a soulless body, but in a living organism. Moreover, this living organism resists this special work. Natural humanity is no stock or block, but an enemy of God. Passivity is an utter impossibility. Inspired by Satan, it resists and opposes God. According to its kernel, that human race must now be changed into God's friend. Such happens, in fact, in regeneration. As a result, the original organism of the human race lives, according to kernel and husk, out of two antithetically opposed and mutually exclusive principles. The principles of sin and grace work through. Adam's race becomes increasingly more like a house that is divided against itself. The one people rises up against the other people. Men hate each other and deliver each other up to prisons: the brother, his brother; the father, his child; the daughter-in-law, her mother-in-law. Indeed, the individual human is divided against himself. There is strife in one's own heart, in one's own house, in state and society, in the sphere of business and industry, of science and art, in each sphere of influence, along the whole line of all human deliberation, inclination, and practice, in ever increasing measure.

Strictly speaking, this entire fearful struggle is a warfare between God and Satan. As the covenant conception is from God, and its realization is through God, so also is the warfare of the covenant God's. The tightening of the band of the covenant, which for the elect kernel of our race is life, salvation, and communion of friendship and for the reprobate husk, death, destruction, and communion of wrath, takes place through God. In that absolute sense, man has no warfare on earth. Where, however, the devil, tempting man, attacked God in His king-

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dom, that is, in and for and through man, there God for the maintenance of His covenant also attacks Satan in the kingdom that Satan supposed himself to have established. In other words, God attacks Satan in and through man. The battleline in this warfare runs through the world of the children of men, dividing it into children of the light and children of darkness. In the final analysis, God and Satan fight each other through man. In this warfare, regenerated humanity fights for God against the entire kingdom of darkness, and unregenerated humanity, under the spell of Satan's enchantment, fights against the kingdom of light.

According to its regenerated kernel, humanity again guards the Lord's inheritance. As covenant companion of God, it fights the Lord's battle. It is very willing in the day of the Lord's power.<sup>11</sup> In the warfare for the cause of the Son of God, it finds its purpose<sup>12</sup> during this dispensation. In keeping with the original covenant conception, it maintains God's sovereignty over every creature, claims the entire life of creation in principle for Christ, and opposes everything that withstands. That is God's triumph over Satan.

In that warring people of the Lord, God's creation conception concerning man according to the principle of the covenant of grace is initially realized.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, by warring that people reveals that it, also on its part, stands in active covenant fellowship with God. It shows subjectively the enmity established by God against Satan and his kingdom. The covenant of works is fulfilled in the covenant of grace, and the rupture of sin is healed. God's thought, that man would build and guard a garden of the Lord, is realized, in principle, in the people that He Himself sanctified in Jesus Christ.

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11. Psalm 110:3.

12. *ideaal*.

13. Danhof speaks of God's "*creation* conception concerning man." The Creator's purpose with Adam on day six of creation week was not an unfallen race living peacefully and developing "culture" in and around Paradise. Rather, His purpose was the people of the covenant of grace in Jesus Christ, who are now battling, against huge odds, on behalf of the Godhead of the triune God.

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Out of this practical covenant view, the most outstanding children of God have lived in their best moments. Abraham's prayer for Sodom and the prayers of Moses and Daniel for Israel can only be explained out of their love to God. They did not pray for themselves and, strictly speaking, not even for the people of Sodom and the children of Israel. According to Genesis 18:25; Exodus 32:11-13; 33:12, 16; 34:8, 9; Numbers 14:13-19; Daniel 9:17, 19, these prayers were for God Himself. They purposed the maintenance of God's holiness, righteousness, covenant faithfulness, and honor.

Were not these men accepted of God exactly in this way? Daniel was a man who was very pleasing to God. With Moses, the Lord spoke face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. Abraham was called a friend of God. Undoubtedly, especially in their intercession these men were types of Him whose seeking of the honor of God can only be explained from His friendship to the Father.

Granted, neither as regards the children of God nor as regards Christ does the idea of friendship always stand on the foreground. Nevertheless, their life in fellowship with God reaches its zenith in this friendship. Certainly, Christ came to seek and to save the lost and, at the same time, has endured the cross and despised the shame for the joy that was set before Him,<sup>14</sup> while His work also aimed at the disturbance of Satan's kingdom. Nevertheless, in and through all of this He still purposed the honor of His Father above all. And this His love to the Father was friendship.

Similarly, God's child flees perdition, according to the very nature of spiritual life, keeps the Lord's commands, and strives after his own crown of glory. But even more he fights against the powers of darkness and for the coming of Christ's kingdom, out of love for the God of the covenant. For him, the friendship of his God exceeds everything else. God is his Creator, Lord, Father, but especially and above all his Friend. As far as he is concerned, all other communion is subjected to the fellowship of the friendship of God. Therefore, as formerly Enoch and Noah walked with God (Gen. 5:24; 6:9), so also in his best moments does the believer walk with the God of the covenant. In this he finds his life's goal and final destiny.

Even though it is true that the life of God's child does not always

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14. Hebrews 12:2.

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attain the heights of the conscious fellowship of the friendship of God, still his way of life often cannot be explained in any other way than from love to the Lord. Why would Enoch otherwise have continued prophesying of the Lord's coming for judgment until men sought his life?<sup>15</sup> Noah condemned the world by the ark that he built.<sup>16</sup> David conducted the wars of the Lord.<sup>17</sup> Elijah desired that the Lord would answer him by fire so that Israel might recognize that the Lord was God; in this connection, he slew all the prophets of Baal.<sup>18</sup> Even though he might have got away with simply not praying, Daniel kneeled three times a day on his knees before his God, exactly as always before, despite the firm command of the king.<sup>19</sup>

Believers of every age, place, and people "had trial of (cruel) mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented."<sup>20</sup> Why all of this, if not on account of their friendship to God? How else can persecution of the faith and martyrdom be explained than from the principles of hate and love with regard to God? The gathering together of Herod and Pilate with the Gentiles and the people of Israel against God's holy child Jesus, whom God had anointed, permits no other explanation.<sup>21</sup> The same holds for the roaring rage of Satan against the elect of God. Especially the prayer of the souls under the altar demands this explanation (Rev. 6:9-11).

Indeed, another reason for the existence of God's people here on earth cannot even be conceived. If that people has been created to

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15. Jude 14, 15; Hebrews 11:5.

16. Hebrews 11:7.

17. Hebrews 11:32-34.

18. I Kings 18.

19. Daniel 6.

20. Hebrews 11:36, 37.

21 Acts 4:27.

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proclaim God's praise, as Scripture teaches, and by grace has been made worthy and fit for this, how then would it ever be able to have for its task "to make this world better," "to create a social uplift," or the like? Also, how would such a thing harmonize with the doctrines of predestination, man's inability for good, and the organic development of the sinful life of our race?

Strictly speaking, it must then also be decisively denied that "in Christianizing of the social life the church finds its duty and opportunity." No! rather, in the struggle of all the ages the issue is the name of the Lord. That was the issue in Paradise. That was the issue between Cain and Abel, Lamech and Enoch, Abraham and the king of Sodom, Moses and Pharaoh, Samuel and Agag, David and Goliath, Nebuchadnezzar and the three friends of Daniel, Antiochus Epiphanes and Mattathias the priest, Stefan and the blinded Jews, Polycarp and the Roman emperor, John Hus and many thousands of martyrs and the false church of Rome. That will be the issue between the Lord's faithful witnesses and the antichrist.

That humanity, or even the more civilized peoples, has known how to develop itself unto a higher ethical life before God by the influence of the regenerated congregation cannot possibly be maintained by one who knows history. Rather, it appears from every page of history that the different spiritual relation to God has divided the members of the children of men throughout all ages.

According to that dividing line, the believer is of the party of the living God. Being of the Lord, he lives to the Lord, and he dies to the Lord.<sup>22</sup> His relation to God determines for him every other relation. He knows no duties or rights which do not proceed from the principle of the worship and service of God. He lives from that principle always, everywhere, in every sphere, and in every relation. And since his God is the God of the whole earth, nowhere is he neutral in relation to God. He serves God with wife and child; with ability and energy; by means of family, school, state, and society; and in relation to every creature. In this service of God, he opposes whatever resists God. And he serves God according to the demand of the circumstances and the nature of this dispensation. There is for him no isolated life of world-flight.<sup>23</sup> Even

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22. Romans 14:8.

23. *een afzonderlijk leven uit de schepping.*

less are there any spheres to which the antithesis of good and evil during this dispensation would not have to be applied to life. There is no culture independent of man, and consequently neutral. This holds also for science and art and for all work of man. Therefore, the believer never seeks anything in itself, that is, apart from its relation to God, but in everything he seeks God.

As regards the absolute difference of the deepest principles from which the unregenerated and the regenerated live in their relation to God, the believer does not seek any unnatural, premature division. Believing, he waits upon the Lord without impatience.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, he recognizes no essential wisdom for life that originates from creation, including a system of science on which all the spiritually dissimilar children of Adam might together build. But he maintains that the regenerated kernel of man, and they only, again in principle know all things by the anointing of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, as a Christian he makes mention in the hearing of the children of men of man's relation to God; of the redemption in Christ; of the regeneration of the Spirit; of the godly principles for our personal, family, social, and political life; of the true wisdom, science, and art; of right and justice; of morality and religion; and of man's past, present, and future. And he demands acceptance and application of this preaching of his, prophesying of Christ's return to judgment.

With this, he does not run ahead of the time.<sup>25</sup> He expects no salvation as regards the moral improvements of man in the future. He does not try to renew the earth. He desires true separation of church and state. He does not aim at any regeneration of family, school, society, magistrate, science, and art. The natural is indeed very really first for him, and only then the spiritual.

However, he will allow no false separation between nature and grace, no fictitious dividing of life into creation and regeneration. Humanity, as well as the entire cosmos, is for him an organism that on account of man's sin and God's grace lives from a twofold principle of

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24. Here Danhof warns against all rash, radical application of the antithesis. One thinks of the parable of the tares of the field in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43.

25. In this paragraph Danhof exposes the error of millennialism, e.g., Christian Reconstructionism, which expects *in* history that which God has destined for the *end* of history.

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life, according to the lines of election and reprobation. And since his own life roots in regeneration, therefore, as much as in him lies, he tries to direct the entire life of the organic whole of the creatures, according to the nature of this earthly dispensation, to the Creator of all things, who is worthy of this. In this way, his life becomes a serving of God out of love.

We who are called Christians because we are members of Christ by faith and thus are partakers of His anointing ought to do this also, so that we confess His name, present ourselves a living thankoffering to Him, and fight against sin and the devil with a free and good conscience in this life, and hereafter in eternity reign with Him over all creatures.<sup>26</sup> This is a demand. Now more than ever! On account of the seriousness of the time, our own weakness, the ever growing might of the enemy, and, most of all, for the cause of the Son of God!

No matter how many centuries may still separate us from the final end of this dispensation, as concerns the development of all sorts of connections and relations we undoubtedly stand at the beginning of the very end. According to its social aspect, human life in both church and world begins to be permeated with the Spirit of Christ and with the spirit of the antichrist. A further positive development of mutual earthly relationships is inconceivable. Indeed, the period of thorough decay can last for a considerable length of time, and many positive institutions, such as family, state, and society, could be replaced by more negative human institutions and organizations. However, Scripture does not seem to recognize such a radical development in the sphere of family and society.

Although we grant the possibility of such a development, it seems to us that, according to the biblical testimony on this matter, the institution of family life and the organization of society, as well as the relation of civil authority and citizen and of master and servant,<sup>27</sup> during the reign of the antichrist will not essentially differ from our present conditions and relationships. Regarding this question, recall the conditions at the time of the flood, in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, and at the destruction of Jerusalem. Recall also the outlining of the time of

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26. Heidelberg Catechism, Question 32.

27. *heer en knecht*. The reference is to our employer and employee.



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the final end by Jesus and in Revelation 13. Of course, there will be a difference of degree. For the rest, however, the types of the final battle seem to us to outline also the conditions of that time.

Then the possibility must be conceded of an extremely fast development of unregenerated, nominally Christian peoples unto the measure and intensity of hate and hostility against God and His witnesses that have been appointed for them. This speedy development is a very real possibility in light of the powerful concentration of all sorts of forces and powers, especially in the social sphere.

Our battle will then increase in severity and will then be fought on every side. The opposition between flesh and Spirit grows as the life of divided humanity here on earth develops itself. Principles work through. History proves this. If the difference between Cain and Abel had been merely a personal quarrel, rising out of different viewpoints in the matter of sacrificing, soon thereafter the children of Adam would have gone their own ways in choosing their calling, dwellingplace, and manner of life. However, already before the flood we discover in Lamech and Enoch respectively distinct features of a materialistic-humanistic and of a spiritual-theological world-and-life-view. Therein lay the beginning of the end of the first world. That must be understood.

The tower of Babel and the confusion of speech attendant upon it cause us to see the very first end of the second world. Already then, the concentration of the powers of wickedness seemed complete, but the perfection of this concentration is yet delayed. This is due to the interventions of God and the radical changes He brought about.

On account of the separation of Israel, the antithesis between church and world during the old dispensation displayed a national color. During the captivity, there was a brief, violent concentration of hostile powers under Antiochus Epiphanes, which enables us to view the final battle of the spirits in a sharply outlined, typical picture.<sup>28</sup>

After Pentecost and prior to Constantine, the nature of this battle was emphatically spiritual. In the final analysis, it had to do then

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28. Danhof refers to Antiochus Epiphanes more than once as significant for the hostility between the elect, believing church and the reprobate, ungodly world. Antiochus (d. 163 BC) was the king of Syria who persecuted Judah and attempted to destroy the worship of Jehovah God in the period between the testaments. This history is recorded in the two apocryphal books of the Maccabees. Antiochus is prophesied in the latter part of the book of Daniel.

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exclusively with the question about the nature of the authority of the emperor: whether the emperor ruled by the grace of God, yes or no. One should take note of this.

The dark middle ages brought about some abatement of the battle, but little essential change. The conversion of Emperor Constantine did not, in reality, introduce a period of power and rule for the true disciples of Christ. It was not the emperor, but Constantine who was converted. The false rest of the historical church of those days was not a victory seized too soon, but a victory that was wrongly conceived.<sup>29</sup> People did not understand that the emperor as such does not fall into the category of regeneration.

Later on, people understood that even less. For with the Reformation came unique development on this point. The battle was begun against the false church. Christendom now saw itself positioned over against the open enemy, heathendom, just as before, and over against a secret enemy, the false church in the church of Rome. From now on, the church must develop itself in the way of that twofold battle. Help from the state was now, however, by no means despised. To be sure, people sang, "We desire no earthly might," but they depended on the sword just the same. Especially in German lands, princes decided the worship of the country. But also in the Netherlands, church and state were wrongly united in more than one respect. And many among us still find nothing strange in this. We are still so accustomed to live in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in these matters. We live as though it were still the time when Gustavus Adolphus with thousands of brave soldiers rushed to the aid of the desperate congregation of the Lord<sup>30</sup> and when men, assembled in synod, decided on doctrinal differences under the protective custody of

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29. Danhof employs an effective play on words here: "*niet een te vroeg gegrepen, maar eene verkeerd begrepen triumf*."

30. Gustavus II Adolphus (1594-1632) was king of Sweden. He is popularly regarded as the savior of Protestantism in Germany by his military interventions and victories.

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Prince Maurice.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, we must carefully guard against every mistaken notion.<sup>32</sup>

The French Revolution changed the nature of the battle in a historical sense. The sphere of the conflict was greatly expanded. Over against the comprehensive life-and-world-view of Calvinism, the most beautiful fruit of the Reformation, the French Revolution posited its atheistic-humanistic program for the life of the entire human race. According to that program, the lights of heaven must be extinguished and the church doors, closed. The civil magistrate must rule by the grace of the people, and life in society is established according to social contracts. The battle, therefore, now encompassed every sphere of life. And it affected the practice and experience of all. The program set on foot by the French Revolution did not contain idle fantasies of this or that philosopher, but ideas which were applied practically and forced upon the world by a mighty people with the sword in its fist. This must be noted. The steel sword passed from the hand of those who promised to defend the truths of the gospel into the hand of those who placed themselves at the head of the enemies of Christ.

Obviously, this movement could not immediately succeed in all its efforts, because of the extremely negative nature of the movement that was initially necessary. Nevertheless, the principles work through, right up to our own time, in every sphere, among all ranks and stations, until the movement culminates in the coming and completion of the kingdom of man. From now on, the people of the Lord, especially Calvinists, have to fight, not only against heathendom and the false church but particularly against the ever increasing might of man who has "come of age" under the inspiration of hell. And this conflict extends to every sphere of life.

The development of the life of our race is now powerfully directed by liberation,<sup>33</sup> specialization, and union. The need for cooperation is

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31. The reference is to the Synod of Dordt in 1618/1619 which was called and supervised by Prince Maurice of the ruling house of Orange in the Netherlands.

32. That is, as regards the relationship of church and state. Danhof obviously was no friend of the idea that the state is called to defend the true church and punish heretics and other spiritual enemies of the church with what Danhof likes to call "the steel sword."

33. *emancipatie*.

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felt everywhere. Salvation is expected from organization, management, and system. Men work for union especially in the social and industrial sphere. One is permitted to maintain worship, provided that the worship is subjected to the judgment of man. Dividing-lines, however, must be done away with. As a result, like-minded people more and more unite in order together to work out their own fundamental principles, systematically and effectively, in the highly varied and complicated life of our age. Naturally, in this way the mingling of spiritually dissimilar elements ceases, and we get a grouping of powers according to the spiritual principles from which one lives. One should not expect anything other than this in the near future. The battle will concern the covenant of our God.

The typical picture of that coming battle we have in the very fearful struggle of the Maccabees against Antiochus Epiphanes. Then the battle concerned the holy covenant. However, it still concerned the covenant in its theocratic form.

Our battle becomes more spiritual in nature, although not in the sense that our enemy would make no use of the steel sword. He will indeed make use of the sword. Already today all kinds of "social reforms" are introduced with the help of the state. Everything is decided by the voting of the people. Presently, perhaps, such will be the case with the Christian school. Evidently even the family does not remain entirely unassailable.

All of this occurs while we, exactly because the issue has to do with principles about which men in the nature of the case may not vote, are not able to make use even of the few votes which we might have at our disposal in other instances. To place our confidence then in the outcome of the ballot-box would be very foolish. Counting votes we view as not only impractical but also as unspiritual. It is impractical because it is a foregone conclusion that every cause of a somewhat Reformed nature will be defeated at the ballot-box. It is unspiritual because the issue in our battle in a special sense consists of eternal, divine principles which are not to be decided by voting.

Those principles must be presented to all peoples plainly and clearly, so that the conflict exactly for this reason may grow worse. Then we are the most at home in our spiritual element. Then we are able to fight the most purely with spiritual weapons. Then as a result we stand the strongest.

Then pressure from the side of the enemy is bound to come. The enemy will know how to turn the temporal might of the emperor over the bodies and possessions of the children of men against the friends of Christ. All the types and preformations of the antichrist and his kingdom, as well as the experiences of the individual Christians who powerfully come to the fore in critical times, prove that such will indeed take place in the future. For this we must prepare ourselves beforehand. Also the fainthearted among us have to get ready. The issue will be the covenant of our God. There is no escape from the steel sword of our enemies.

However, because we fight on behalf of the cause of God, we are able to trust in the Lord who is truly Lord. He will accomplish it. His cause will triumph. And strengthened by His grace, we will not lose the crown. Redeemed from all the might of the enemy and more than conquerors, we enter into the joy of our Lord and into the everlasting covenant of the friendship of our God.

*Het Einde* ●

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# **John Davenant: A Jewel of the Reformed Churches or a Tarnished Stone? (2)**

**Mark Shand**

## **CHAPTER 4 The Teachings of Moises Amyraut**

As we have already observed, controversy concerning the extent of the atonement did not cease with the Synod of Dort. Due to the ambiguities contained in some of the statements which issued from Dort concerning the extent of the atonement, further debate ensued and this occurred predominantly within the Reformed Church of France.<sup>1</sup> Following Dort, the more conservative members of the Reformed Church of France sought to construe the Canons in such a way as to exclude unlimited or universal atonement. However, the liberals in France, and particularly those at Saumur, rejected that approach and felt at liberty to contend that Dort had not excluded universal atonement. Consequently, a storm of controversy emerged in France centered around Moises Amyraut, a Professor of Theology at Saumur. In 1634, only 15 years after Dort, Amyraut penned his controversial epistle entitled *Treatise of Predestination* in which he stated that:

the Sacrifice which Jesus Christ offered was equally for all; and the salvation which he received from His Father, in the sanctification of the

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1. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore in any depth the development of this controversy within the Reformed Church of France. However, it will be necessary to touch briefly upon the work of John Cameron and Moises Amyraut but only for the purpose of identifying those things taught by Amyraut and his school.

spirit and the glorification of the body, was destined equally for all—provided the necessary disposition for receiving it was equal.<sup>2</sup>

The publication of this work caused considerable disputation among the Protestant divines in France, a dispute which escalated to embrace the rest of Europe by the middle of the 17th century.

Before examining the position adopted by Amyraut, it is important to note from the point of view of our inquiries, that the views of Amyraut had their origins in those of John Cameron.<sup>3</sup> Cameron was born in Scotland in 1580. He subsequently moved to France where he was eventually appointed to the Chair of Divinity at the University of Saumur. It was his system of universal grace and unlimited atonement which Amyraut, who was his student at Saumur, imbibed and developed.<sup>4</sup>

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2. Moise Amyraut, *Treatise on Predestination*, in George Smeaton, *The Doctrine of the Atonement According to the Apostles* (1870: Peabody, MA: Hendrikson, 1988), p. 540.

3. *Ibid.*: Some have suggested that early in his life Davenant came into contact with and was influenced by the Amyraldian heresy through contact with John Cameron. This is said to have occurred when Cameron became principal of Glasgow University. Cf. Herman Hanko, *The History of the Free Offer*, (Grandville, Michigan: Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches, 1989), p. 82; Daniel Kleyn, *Davenant's Amyraldianism* (Grandville: Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches, 1994), p. 2. This contention has been challenged by George Ella. Cf. George Ella, "Bishop John Davenant and the Death of Christ: A Vindication," *New Focus*, August/September 1997, Vol. 2, No. 2, p.12.

One of the interesting assertions made by Ella is that Davenant could never have been tutored by Cameron. He bases this assertion on two reasons, namely, that Cameron taught at Bergues, Sedan, Bordeaux, Saumur, and Glasgow, colleges which Davenant never attended. Secondly, he observes that the relative ages of Cameron (c.1580-1626) and Davenant (1572-1641) would have precluded their having occupied the relationship of student and tutor.

The literature on the life of Davenant makes it doubtful that he was ever a student of Cameron.

4. Peter Bayle, *The Dictionary* (London, 134-38) Vol. 1, p. 261, speaking of Amyraut says:

He went to study at Saumur, under Cameron, who loved and esteemed him in a

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Cameron developed the doctrine of hypothetical universalism, namely that God wills the salvation of all men, on condition of faith, and that Christ's death was for all men, on condition of faith. Cameron declared that Christ died for no man simply, but on condition that men should be delivered from the world, and engrafted into Christ by true faith.<sup>5</sup>

As is evident, Cameron taught a dichotomy in the divine will of God, that is, between God's conditional and unconditional wills. As regards his conditional will, Cameron contended that God had universally determined to restore the image of God in mankind, and therefore purposed to send His Son to each and every man who believes in Him. As regards His unconditional will, God had specifically decreed to restore a select number to faith and it is they only whom He purposes to save. Furthermore, he taught that because of God's universal love and desire to bring all men to salvation, God had promised salvation to each and every man, on the condition that they believe. Consequently, he taught that the death of Christ was equally applicable to all men. However, that death was only efficacious to those who exercised faith.

Amyraut followed this same blueprint. In an attempt to fend off the charges which were frequently cast upon the Reformed faith, that it presented God as arbitrary, unjust, and insincere in that He created the

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particular manner; and he was for a considerable time a Student in Divinity.... It was from him Mr. Amyraut had the doctrine of Universal Grace, which made so much noise in France.... Never was a scholar filled with greater Veneration for his Master, than Mr. Amyraut was for Cameron. It is said he imitated him even to the Tone of his Voice and a certain Motion of his Head;

Amyraut writing of Cameron (cited in Brian Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy* [Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969] p. 43.) says:

I declare to you that whatever little I am able to offer in the explanation of theology, I owe this, after the reading of Scripture, to the insights that this great man has taught me. And after the grace that God manifested in giving the knowledge of His saving truth, I bless Him particularly that He has allowed me the close fellowship of this man, who, beyond the other excellent gifts that he had (and everyone has his strengths and weaknesses in this life), I judge that in his time he has not been surpassed in that part of theology which consists in the understanding of the Bible.

5. Smeaton, *op cit.*, p. 540.



reprobates for sin and then punished them for sinning; in offering in the gospel a salvation which He had no intention of conveying, Amyraut followed in the footsteps of Cameron and developed an extensive system concerning the extent of the atonement.<sup>6</sup>

In his teachings on the atonement, Amyraut, like Cameron, emphasized the dual nature of the divine will. His teachings were developed around the same distinction which Cameron made concerning the will of God, namely, that God has a universal, conditional will to save all men upon the condition of faith, but that He also has an absolute and irresistible will which leads men to that faith.<sup>7</sup> According to Amyraut, God, in accordance with His first will, desired the salvation of the whole human race. God, he said, desired to give them redemption upon the condition of faith.<sup>8</sup>

God procured the necessary means of salvation by sending His own Son to die for their sins. Therefore, Christ's death on the cross was universal. No one was excluded from its scope. All were invited to share in its fruits, provided they did not prove to be unworthy. However, the absolute will of God was of a different character. In accordance with that will, He determined to produce only in the elect the requisite faith for salvation.<sup>9</sup>

In conjunction with his teachings on the two wills of God, Amyraut advocated two decrees of God, a universal decree, in which God gave Christ as a Mediator for the whole human race and another decree in which He determined to give saving faith to a select number. In Amyraut's teaching, God foresaw that no one would believe in His unaided strength, and therefore a special decree was required whereby God determined that some should receive the gift of faith.<sup>10</sup> It is from

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6. Riger Nicole, *Moyse Amyraut: A Bibliography* (Garland Publishing., Inc. New York & London, 1981), p. 9.

7. Armstrong, *op cit.*, pp. 158, 192.

8. Stephen Strehle, "Universal Grace and Amyraldianism," *Westminster Theological Journal*, Vol. 51, Fall 1989, p. 348.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 349.

10. Smeaton, *op cit.*, p. 541.

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these views that the notion of a hypothetical universalism has arisen. To put it in slightly different terms, Amyraut asserted that God willed by an antecedent decree that all men should be saved on condition of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, God sent Christ into the world to die for all men. However, foreseeing that men of themselves would not repent and believe, God by a subsequent decree elected to bestow His grace upon a select number. These and only these will actually be saved.<sup>11</sup>

Amyraut's views have been summarized as follows:

1. Sin is the result of the darkening of the understanding.
2. God, moved by an earnest desire to save all mankind, decided to give in ransom His Son Jesus Christ, who died "equally for all men" and to make a universal offer of salvation to all men.
3. This offer is made sometimes more clearly, as when the gospel is preached; sometimes more obscurely, as in the case of the witness of nature to the heathen unreached by the gospel. Nevertheless God has predestined all men and every man unto salvation, provided they believe; and in nature there is sufficient presentation of the truth so that men may exercise faith if they will only do so.
4. Although man is not precluded from believing by any external constraint, his corruption has rendered him morally unable to accept God's offer. It is therefore necessary that God Himself should produce faith in the hearts of those whom He has chosen to redeem.
5. This He does for the elect, by a supernatural enlightenment of mind or by sweet moral sausion, which leaves intact the operation of the will.<sup>12</sup>

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11. Berkhof, Louis. *The History of Christian Doctrines*. (Baker Book House Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1975), p. 188.

12. Roger Nicole, *Moyse Amyraut: A Bibliography*. (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1981), pp. 9-10. Others have also attempted to summarize the Amyraldian position. Cf. *Universalism and the Reformed Churches: A Defense of Calvin's Calvinism* (Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia), p. 36.

1. The motive impelling God to redeem men was benevolence, or love to men in general.
2. From this motive He sent His Son to make the salvation of all men possible.
3. God, in virtue of a universal hypothetical decree, offers salvation to all men if they believe in Christ.

It is worthwhile noting that Amyraut sought to steer a course between the Arminian position and that adopted by the Synod of Dort. He attempted to tone down what he perceived to be the severity of the Calvinism enunciated at Dort. This was also Davenant's desire.

## CHAPTER 5

# A Comparison of the Views of Davenant and Amyraut

As observed at the outset, the teachings of Davenant have been equated with those of Amyraut. Having outlined the essential teachings of both men as regards the nature and extent of the atonement, it remains to attempt some comparison of the two. The question which needs to be addressed is whether the positions propounded by these men are essentially the same, or are there significant differences?

There is no doubt that their views exhibit significant similarities. Those similarities include:

- (a) that God has a general intention or desire to save all men, on condition that they believe in Jesus Christ;
- (b) that the basis of that desire is the love of God for all men;
- (c) that God has a twofold will: a conditional or general will that desires the salvation of all men, and an unconditional or special will pertaining to the elect alone;
- (d) that the death of Christ upon the cross was universally applicable to all men for salvation;
- (e) that God has bestowed His grace upon the elect to enable them to believe and to be saved and that this is of His sovereign good pleasure;
- (f) that the benefits of the atonement were not actually communicated to every individual, thereby securing salvation for all men;
- (g) that God denies the means of faith to the non elect by virtue of His good pleasure.

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- 4. All men have a natural ability to repent and believe the gospel.
  - 5. But as this natural ability was counteracted by a moral inability, God determined to give His efficacious grace to a certain number of the human race, and thus secure their salvation.

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Clearly, the similarities are substantial, but there are also some distinct differences.

Amyraut taught, as did Davenant, that Christ died for all, on condition of faith. However, man was incapable of appropriating that faith for himself. This dilemma was resolved by Amyraut, by contending that God by another decree purposed to give the requisite faith to a select number, namely the elect. Consequently, the atoning work of Christ on the cross was divorced from its application. Amyraut interposed the condition of faith between Christ's atoning work and salvation. Without faith being given to the elect, Christ's atonement on the cross had no application.

This feature of Amyraut's system distinguishes it to some extent from the position of Davenant. Davenant contended that Christ died for the elect according to the love and intention of God that He might bestow salvation upon His elect. In his understanding salvation, faith, and perseverance are given to the elect by and on account of the merit and intercession of Christ. In other words, in Davenant's understanding there was a direct link between Christ's atoning work on the cross and the salvation of His elect. For Davenant, the atonement merited its own application.

This draws a line of demarcation between the theology of Davenant and that of Amyraut, who insisted on a view of the atonement that meant that the atonement did not contain its own application.

Another area in which the two differed was that Davenant asserted that Christ actually established a conditional covenant open to all men on the condition of faith. His position therefore did not share the hypothetical nature of Amyraut's. It is true that Davenant insisted that the Father and the Son had some intention to save all, though he contended that that intention was conditional upon faith and therefore not absolutely efficacious. However, in dealing with the intention of the Father and the Son, Davenant did not subordinate the Father's decree to apply the benefits of Christ's death to the decree that Christ should make atonement for all mankind. In this he differed from Amyraut, who subordinated the two decrees by placing the decree of God to send Christ with a universal saving intention before the decree that the Spirit would apply the work of Christ to the elect alone. Davenant, rather than subjugating one decree to another, constructed his theology around a parallel order of those decrees, one having a

universal though conditional character and the other being particular and efficacious.<sup>13</sup>

That the views of Amyraut and Davenant were not on all fours is further fortified by the views which Davenant expressed as regards Cameron's views on the Atonement. As we have noted, Davenant, in responding to the queries referred to the English divines by the Reformed Church of France, addressed the doctrine that was espoused by Cameron, Amyraut's father in the faith. It is interesting to observe that Davenant does not embrace the views of Cameron with open arms. Rather, it appears that he felt no strong theological affinity with Cameron because he concludes his remarks with a general statement, "I think, therefore, that the opinion of Cameron was here badly expressed."<sup>14</sup>

Notwithstanding the differences, the overall thrust of the doctrines of Davenant and Amyraut are very similar. This is not particularly surprising, as both wanted to ameliorate to some extent the harshness that they perceived in the doctrine of limited or particular atonement. In the final analysis, while acknowledging that there were some differences between the two, it is not unreasonable to assert that Davenant was an Amyraldian, or at least a near Amyraldian

## CHAPTER 6

# Conclusion

It may well be that Davenant was a gifted man and that in many respects he contributed to the spiritual life of the Church of England. However, given the result of his teaching and that of men like Amyraut on the extent of the atonement it is difficult to perceive of him as a true Jewel of the Reformation.

The views of Davenant and Amyraut continue to plague the

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13. William Robert Godfrey, *Tensions within International Calvinism: The Debate on the Atonement at the Synod of Dort, 1618-1619*. (California: Stanford University, 1974), p. 185.

14. John Davenant, *On the Controversy Among the French Divines of the Reformed Church Concerning the Gracious and Saving Will of God Towards Sinful Men* (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1832), p. 568.

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Reformed community. Indeed, the pendulum has swung so far that the doctrine of limited or particular atonement is being constantly assailed even from within the Reformed camp. Just as it was in the days of Davenant and Amyraut, men dislike that doctrine because it does not accord with their perception of a loving God who desires the salvation of all men. Therefore, it is disparaged and ridiculed.

The result of such views is to destroy the truth of substitutionary atonement and, at the same time, to deny the efficacy of our Savior's atonement. One might well ponder how it is that Christ could die on Calvary for the sins of all men, but yet not all men are saved? How can that be? It can only be, if Christ did not truly die for sin and if His atonement was of no worth. A serious error? It is difficult to perceive of an error more central to the work of Jesus Christ as the Mediator and Head of the Covenant.

The observation of John Owen regarding the impact of Arminianism in his day could equally be applied to the doctrine of limited atonement in this present age. Owen said:

The fate of our church having of late devolved the government thereof into the hands of men tainted with this poison, Arminianism became backed with powerful arguments of praise and preferment, and quickly prevailed to beat poor naked truth into a corner.<sup>15</sup>

Sadly, in our day the poor naked truth of the limited and particular atonement of our Savior Jesus Christ has been beaten into a corner. Nonetheless, it is the teaching of the Word of God and it is the means by which God's people can be assured that their sins have been blotted out. This truth is one of great comfort for the child of God. ●

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15. John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*. (The Banner of Truth Trust, London, 1967), vol. 10, p. 4.

# Kingdom and Church in “Christian” Reconstruction

Ronald Hanko

## Introduction

What we might call “Kingdom Theology” has become a kind of fad in Reformed and Presbyterian circles in recent years. That theology reaches its full development and is brought to its logical conclusions in the movement known as “Christian Reconstructionism” (hereafter CR). Nevertheless, most Reformed theologians and teachers today hold views of the kingdom that are not essentially different from those of CR.

This similarity of views is a reason, we are sure, that the criticism of CR by those who have stood aside from or opposed the movement has been muted or ineffective. Holding essentially the same view of the kingdom as does CR, they cannot effectively combat its influences.

We believe that this theology is at heart a rejection of the traditional and biblical teaching concerning the church, though this may not be immediately evident in the teaching of those who are not directly involved with CR. Only in CR teaching does one see it fully developed and see, too, its consequences for the doctrine of the church.

Like Dispensationalism, CR makes a disjunction between kingdom and church that trivializes the church and contradicts the testimony of Scripture concerning it. Our purpose in this article is to provide evidence of this from CR writings and to analyze the matter further, especially in order to show that the CR view of the kingdom is un-Reformed and unbiblical.

We wish to demonstrate first of all, therefore, that CR *does* make a disjunction or separation between church and kingdom. To say, as it says, that the church is the means or instrument or “nursery” or “boot camp” of the kingdom is not just to make the kingdom something wider than the church, but to make a disjunction between the two. A means

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or instrument is never the same thing as the end to which that instrument or means is used. In this regard CR is no different from Dispensationalism, which makes the same disjunction.<sup>1</sup>

It makes this disjunction by insisting that the kingdom of God and of Christ is not the church, but is to be thought of as a Christian civilization or culture, or as an earthly dominion by the godly over all life's institutions. This is one thing that will be evident from the quotations from CR writers.

The possibility of establishing such a kingdom is found in two things: first, in the doctrine of common grace or some such similar teaching; and second, in extending Christ's work as Mediator, particularly His mediatorial rule, to the whole world. We will explore the connection between the CR view of the kingdom and common grace in an appendix. We treat the whole matter of Christ's mediatorial rule both in the body of this paper and in another appendix.

Secondly, then, we want to point out that, by its disjunction between church and kingdom, CR makes the church of little account and plainly denies that the church is the proximate goal and end of all God's works in history (the ultimate goal being, of course, His own glory in the church). CR thus denies the plain testimony of Scripture in such passages as Ephesians 1:22, 23; 2:20-22; 3:20, 21; 5:27; I Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 12:22-24; I Peter 2:5-9; Revelation 2 & 3; 4:4; 7:15; 19:6, 7; 21:3, 10, 11, 22-24 (cf. also Hag. 1:8; 2:6-9; Ezek. 40-47; Ezra 1:1-4). In this, too, it leaves the door wide open to Dispensationalism.

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1. Indeed, this is only one aspect of the likeness between CR and Dispensationalism. At almost all important points CR teaching shows itself to be simply a regurgitated Dispensationalism. Note the following similarities:

- (1) The disjunction between church and kingdom;
- (2) The trivializing of the church by making it a mere means in history;
- (3) The carnal/earthly view of the kingdom and rule of Christ;
- (4) The Judaizing of the kingdom by virtue of the imposition of OT civil law;
- (5) The rejection of Scripture's teaching concerning a persecuted end-times church;
- (6) The notion that the coming of Christ for the glorification of the church is without precursory signs;
- (7) The inconsistently literalistic interpretation of OT and NT prophecy;
- (8) The view that the fulfilment of the OT theocracy is not to be found in the church but in an earthly kingdom (and that Judaized).



This trivializing of the church is done not only by making the church a mere means toward the establishment of the kingdom, but by redefining the visible church. CR writers define the visible church primarily in terms of God's people as believers, and de-emphasize the institute church. Some writers will even say, for example, that the institute church is hardly mentioned in Scripture. We will examine this new definition of the visible church in detail in an appendix, but it will also be evident in the following quotations.

This de-emphasis on the institute church not only further trivializes the church, but allows those who hold these views to define the calling of the "church" primarily in terms of the life of believers in the world, rather than in terms of the church institute's calling to preach the gospel, administer the sacraments, and carry out Christian discipline. In this way, CR denigrates the preaching of the gospel and other work of the church institute. That emphasis, too, can be found in the following quotations.

Finally, and in response, we wish to show that the view of kingdom and church promoted by CR is unconfessional, un-Reformed, and unbiblical. In proving that, however, we will be showing that those Reformed writers who hold views of the kingdom similar to CR are also wrong. Any attempt to make the kingdom something broader than or other than the church is wrong. Reformed theology and Scripture make them coextensive.

Before we go on, though, we must point out that we use the name "Christian Reconstruction" very loosely. There are many differences among those who are, to a greater or lesser degree, identified with CR. Some accept the name but do not hold all its teachings. Others hold most or all of its main teachings while rejecting the name.<sup>2</sup> Some whom we quote here have since left the movement. Nevertheless, the rejection of the Reformed doctrine of the church is found across the spectrum of CR writers, even among those who are only loosely identified with the movement or who only hold its main teachings. This is one reason for

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2. It is particularly in the UK that some refuse to be identified with the movement or its name. This is due to the excesses of the movement especially in the USA, excesses which some repudiate while continuing to hold the main teachings of the movement, presuppositionalism, theonomy, post-millennialism, and the particular view of the kingdom described in this paper.

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the large number of quotations from various "CR" writers. We want to show how pervasive these views are both at the center and at the fringes of the movement.

We have other reasons for the abundance of quotations, however. We also wish to show some implications of CR teaching on the church as they become evident in the words of the CR writers themselves. And, because a few of the CR writers seem to think that footnotes are *the* marks of scholarship, respectability, and truth, we are (to use one of Gary North's silly expressions) going to "stuff their mouths with footnotes."<sup>3</sup>

### **Reconstructionist Ecclesiology**

We intend the following quotations, therefore, to demonstrate (1) the CR view of the kingdom as something broader than and disjunct from the church; (2) the CR denial of the church as the goal and end of God's dealings with mankind; (3) the consequent CR trivializing of the church, especially the church institute; and (4) the tendency to define the visible church in terms of believers apart from and at the expense of the church institute. Many more such quotations can be found throughout their writings in spite of substantial differences among individual CR writers regarding the relation of the church to the kingdom.

Reconstructionism became in some ways a movement in the '80s with the advent of 'Tyler theology,' a largely 'high-church,' ecclesiocentric vision, mistakenly claiming continuity with the reconstructionist vision.<sup>4</sup>

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Certain writers wishing to be identified as Christian reconstructionists have criticised Rushdoony and Chalcedon for maintaining an excessively low view of the institutional church. Perhaps it had not occurred

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3. "Foreword" in Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *He Shall Have Dominion*, ICE, 1992, p. xv.

4. Andrew Sandlin, "Recapturing the Vision of Christian Reconstructionism," *Christianity and Society*, VI, 3, p.20. Note his rejection of the "ecclesiocentric vision" of so-called "Tyler theology."

to these critics that the ecclesiastical aspect of the vision of Christian reconstructionism was something more than a naive, unreflected dismissal of the institutional church (it is not), but reflects instead a serious studied conclusion after an evaluation of Christian and church history, not to mention of the Bible itself. Indeed, they are seriously mistaken who interpret Rushdoony's ecclesiology almost solely in terms of an assailment on the institutional church. It represents, rather, a creative development of Protestant theology, a potent ecclesiastical paradigm.<sup>5</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

This sentiment represents an incursion against and reversal of the reconstructionist vision, which does not perceive as obvious the opinion that 'men devote themselves most rigorously to the practice of the faith' in the institutional church. All to the contrary. Christian reconstructionism, following Rushdoony, holds that men must break away from the mediaeval, and to a lesser extent, Reformational notion that the institutional church requires a special degree of the practice of the faith.<sup>6</sup>

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The great contribution of the ecclesiastical paradigm of Rushdoony and Christian reconstructionism is to insist that Protestants be true to their own inner principles: mainly, this denotes the simple though staggering realisation that the church in any of its expressions is not the end, but *the means to the end*, in God's purposes for the earth. That end is not the church, but *the kingdom of God and of Christ*, when the kingdom is interpreted as God's reign on earth.<sup>7</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

We equally recognise the ministry of the church outside the barriers of its institution as it presses the claims of Christ in every sphere. We believe the institutional church is one valid institution among many in the advancement of the kingdom of God, and one expression of the church among several expressions.<sup>8</sup>

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5. *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 21.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

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\* \* \* \* \*

It should be clear now that, while government is a basic concern of Scripture, church and state as we know them barely exist in Scripture. It is the Kingdom of God which is basic, and we are commanded to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33).<sup>9</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

We know that the church, whether understood as the company of the redeemed, the congregation of visible saints, or the institutional expression of the covenant community, is a prime factor in the historical unfolding and advancement of the kingdom of God, which is the mediate reign of Christ on earth. But the church is only one factor or institution in the advancement of that divine reign. The church, the family, the state, and all other divinely ordained, legitimate, human institutions, must serve this one grand, irresistible end. They are co-extensive, but not identified with the kingdom.<sup>10</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

The absolutely ultimate task and calling of every Christian is not to build the church, Christianise the State, or even raise a godly family—important and essential though all of these are. *The absolutely ultimate task and calling of every Christian is to extend the reign of King Jesus in the earth in every possible sphere.*<sup>11</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

Thus the church is more than the local building and congregation. The term is closer in meaning to the Kingdom of God. It has reference to the called people of God in all their work together for the Lord.<sup>12</sup>

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9. R. J. Rushdoony, *Law and Society*, Chalcedon, 1982, p. 399-402, quoted in Sandlin, p. 23. The reference here is especially to the institute church. Note that according to Rushdoony the church in this sense is hardly to be found in Scripture.

10. Sandlin, "Recapturing the Vision of Christian Reconstructionism," p. 23.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

12. R. J. Rushdoony, *Systematic Theology*, Ross House, 1994, vol. II, p. 670. Here Rushdoony tends to identify church and kingdom, but only after redefining the church as "called people of God in all their work together for the Lord."

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Thus, since the fall, the church has a task of redemption through Christ. Man must be restored into fellowship with God; this fellowship requires the restoration of man first of all into God's grace; salvation. The work then is the application of the aspects of God's image, righteousness, holiness, knowledge and dominion, to every area of life and thought. The church is God's armory for this purpose. The church issues God's draft or conscription call, trains the troops for action, and sends them out weekly to conquer in Christ's name.<sup>13</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

The *ecclesia* is the *assembly* of those whom Christ governs and who are therefore called to govern the earth under God.<sup>14</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

The church is not primarily a building or an institution, although both can be manifestations of its life. It is a covenant people who believe and apply the law-word to all of life and who seek to bring men, nations, and all spheres of life under the dominion of Christ as Lord. Thus, while the church may be a building and an institution, and both can be important and needed aspects of its life, it is primarily a power and government at work in the world.<sup>15</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

The church cannot be restricted to the place of teaching nor to the teaching ministry. It is a dominion ministry, and this dominion is to be manifested in the life and work of the members.<sup>16</sup>

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13. *Ibid.*, p. 671.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 695.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 745. Here again and in the following quotation Rushdoony practically denies the existence and importance of the institute church and defines the church almost completely in terms of believers themselves. This is the "potent ecclesiastical paradigm" that Sandlin refers to above and that Perks further develops below.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 745, 746. This quotation expresses the inevitable trivializing of the preaching of the gospel that results from the CR view of the church.

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The life of the church is not to be directed to developing an institution but to establishing God's saving power in their lives and in the lives of others, and in bringing dominion into the lives of men and institutions. Church members are the people of God, and they must further God's reign and government.<sup>17</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

The battle for the rebuilding of Christian society and culture will be fought on two fronts in the next century: education and the media. These two fronts are the two fronts of the same battle field, and they are coming closer together all the time now. The battle for society will not be won in the church; most people don't go to church any more.<sup>18</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

With this in mind, it is helpful to note that Reconstructionists can be grouped in two 'camps.' One group emphasizes the importance of the local Christian day school and home schooling over the Church, and looks to education as the primary means of bringing Reconstruction to American life. The other group emphasizes the importance of the local sacramental body of the Church, and sees the Church as the nursery of the Kingdom.<sup>19</sup>

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It [the church] fails to see that the gospel and soteriology are not the end of God's plan for man, but the *means* to an end. The actual end is

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17. *Ibid.*, p. 746.

18. Stephen C. Perks, "The Implications of the Information Revolution for the future of the Christian Church," *Christianity and Society*, VI, 4, p.27. In this connection Perks also demeans and trivializes the preaching of gospel and the office of the ministry of the Word, denying that the former is the prime calling of the church today and that the latter is even a legitimate office in the church. Indeed the whole essay is a vicious assault on the Reformed doctrine of preaching (pp. 18-27; see also below).

19. James Jordan, "Christian Reconstruction: A Definition," *Journey*, November-December, 1986, p. 9.

*the subordination of all things to God through Christ by means of an earthly dominion of the godly.*<sup>20</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

God does not employ the institutional church as his sole or primary dominion agent, a conduit for the execution of the dominion commission. The church defined as his body, the sovereignly elected people of God throughout the earth (Eph. 1), is the agent through whom he will subordinate all things on earth to himself (vv. 22, 23). This implies no disrespect to the institutional dimension of the church, which maintains a crucial role in advancing the kingdom; in fact, the church is a 'boot camp' for the dominion commission. Nevertheless, when the institutional church begins to see itself as the repository of truth and the end of all God's dealings, it becomes an impediment to the actual task of the church, the people of God. Worse, it becomes an idol, no less evil than the ungodly state that arrogates to itself the prerogatives that reside in God alone.<sup>21</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

The primary function of the body of Christ on earth, therefore, is *not* focused on the Church but on the kingdom of God and thus on the Christian life, a life lived out in service to God according to his word. It is only with such a focus that the Christian works for or serves (i.e. worships) God in the totality of life and being, thereby bringing the whole of life into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). It is through this whole-life service and the effect this has on man's culture that the kingdom of God is realised in history.<sup>22</sup>

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20. Andrew Sandlin, *A Postmillennial Primer*, Chalcedon, 1997, p. 43.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 44. This is one of the most blatantly blasphemous of all these quotations in what it implies about the church and gospel, i.e., that the church is not the army, nor the preaching of the gospel the weapon in the battle to which we are called. The church is only a training-ground and the preaching of the gospel only a training exercise for kingdom. This is a complete rejection of the Reformed doctrine of the church.

22. Stephen C. Perks, *The Nature, Government and Function of the Church*, Kuyper Foundation, 1997, p. 66. Perks' ecclesiology is critiqued in Appendix II.

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The Christian faith is not centred primarily on the Church but on the kingdom of God and thus on the Christian life. And the kingdom of God is necessarily wider than the Church. The animating spirit of Christian service is outward: to go into all the world and preach the gospel, by word and deed. The building of the kingdom of God on earth is the primary focus of Christian service.<sup>23</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

The primary emphasis of the New Testament is on the kingdom of God, not the institutional Church. Indeed, the gospels hardly speak directly and specifically of the institutional church at all and with the exception of Mt. 18:15-20 Jesus in his ministry on earth did not give detailed teaching on this aspect of the Christian life.<sup>24</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

The role of the Church as an institution is ancillary to what was the primary focus of Jesus' teaching: the kingdom of God in the widest sense. His emphasis was on the kingdom and thus on the life of faith and obedience to God's word, by which the kingdom of God is manifested in history.<sup>25</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

But I have argued in this paper that the institutional Church, that aspect of the CHURCH'S life and calling whose function is the maintenance and practice of the Christian public religious cultus, has come to dominate the life and actions of the body of Christ, and has produced a doctrine of the CHURCH that is distorted and clergy-centred. As a consequence the wider concern of bringing in the kingdom of God across the whole spectrum of man's personal, cultural and societal life has been neglected.... The kingdom of God cannot be reduced to the institutional Church. It is much broader and all encompassing.<sup>26</sup>

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23. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 75, 76. Perks distinguishes between CHURCH and Church, defining the former in terms of the body of believers in general apart from any institutional connections. This, according to Perks, is the primary meaning of



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Finally, the function of the Church has been considered. Here we saw that the function of the Church is fivefold: (i) to teach the word of God, (ii) to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, (iii) to engage in corporate public worship and prayer, (iv) to care for those in need (the diaconal function), and (v) to maintain discipline in terms of doctrine and morals. All these functions, however, have as their primary purpose the equipping of the saints, the body of Christ, for their wider service in the world, i.e., the cultural mandate and the Great Commission—in the broadest sense what I have called Christian Reconstruction.<sup>27</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

The task of teaching in the institutional Church is a function of the ordained ministry. It is not the central activity or focus of the CHURCH'S calling, and neither is any other activity that may take place in the church.... It [the Church] has sought primarily its own increase and in so doing has failed Christ by failing to fulfil its vitally important, but limited, role of equipping the saints for service and dominion in the world.<sup>28</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

The kingdom of God (which includes the institutional church, but is broader than the institutional church) must rise, having 'incorrupted' the satanic dough of the kingdom of Satan with the gospel of life, including the life-giving reconstruction of all the institutions of culture.<sup>29</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

For example, the Westminster Confession, which to us Reformed catholics is arguably the greatest confession of faith ever written,

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the word *ecclesia* in Scripture. "Church," that is, the institutional church, hardly exists in Scripture, according to him, and has a very "limited role" in relation to the kingdom.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 82, 83.

29. David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, Dominion Press, 1987, p. 505.

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nonetheless equates the institutional church with the kingdom of God. We Reformed catholics believe this direct identity or linkage of the kingdom of God with the institutional church undermines true catholicity. The institutional church is indeed a valid dimension of the kingdom of God. But the identity of the two subverts catholicity. Nor can it do justice to the wideness of the biblical concept of the kingdom of God and of Christ. Limiting the kingdom to the church—and especially to the church's institutional expression—consolidates the principal work of God into a single sphere and forms a potential for ecclesiastical authoritarianism.<sup>30</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

Ray R. Sutton notes that the institutional church, as the Bible sets out, is supposed to operate as a government, with rulers, courts, trials, and judgments. The church in America has often declined to be a mere preaching point, but as important as preaching is, the church needs to recover its self-image as a true government on earth. Men trained to pass judgments in church courts will be able to step into civil office competently.<sup>31</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

When, however, the state fails to represent adequately the Kingdom of Christ, the church is left as the sole representative of the government of heaven. She must use her local organizations to model for and train up a Christian state.<sup>32</sup>

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30. Sandlin, "The Catholic Church: Reformed or Roman?" *Christianity and Society*, VI, 1, p. 26.

31. Gary North, "Editor's Introduction," *Christianity and Civilization III: Tactics of Christian Resistance*, Geneva Divinity School, 1983, p. xlv. This and the following quotations illustrate another aspect of the CR view of the church. Insofar as CR does speak of the church, it does not only make the church the instrument of the kingdom, but in the process politicizes the church as well, though not all would do so as blatantly as Sutton does.

32. Ray R. Sutton, "The Church as a Shadow Government," *Christianity and Civilization III: Tactics of Christian Resistance*, Geneva Divinity School, 1983, p.322.

Second, God's rule and realm extend to the world. Some try to equate Kingdom and church. Scripture, however, applies the kingdom to three spheres—the kingdoms of the world (Rev. 11:15), the individual (Lk. 17:21), and the church (Rev. 1:9). Since the fall of Satan at the Cross, God's dominion and domain cover the earth.<sup>33</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

This theology provides a rationale for perceiving the *world* as God's *Kingdom*. Thus, the operations of the world are to be viewed according to the inner workings of Christ's Kingdom. Governments that have not come to Christ are not to be seen as outside God's domain. Rather, they are to be *claimed* for Christ. When civil abdication occurs in a previously Christian society, the state is not to be given up to the Devil. Instead, it must be *recaptured* as that which belongs to God. The church's role, in this regard, is to function as a shadow government.<sup>34</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

As we have noted, if the state weakens, one entire sphere necessary to the expansion and preservation of God's Kingdom disappears. When the civil means of governing the world fails, the others must stand in the gap. This situation leaves the church with special opportunity. Using the means God has given her, she unlocks the gates of hell, captures the Satanic city, and eventually reestablishes a Christian government.<sup>35</sup>

### Analysis

We could make many more citations from these and other writers, but these are sufficient to prove that such views of the church are characteristic of CR teaching, and trace their origins, as Sandlin points out,<sup>36</sup> to the "father" of this lie, R.J. Rushdoony. They represent not a Reformed, but an essentially dispensational ecclesiology.

Such views are *not* a mere aberration in CR teaching. They are implicit and necessary, as necessary as the distinction between Israel

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33. *Ibid.*, p. 325.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 325.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 329.

36. See footnotes 5-7 above.

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(kingdom) and church is to all forms of Dispensationalism. They follow necessarily from the CR view of the kingdom as a Christianized society or civilization and *that* the central purpose of God in history.

We do not, of course, disagree with everything the CR writers say in these quotations. Nor are we interested in answering the much muddled thinking found in them, or in responding to their caricaturing of other positions. Our purpose is simply to focus on the CR view of church and kingdom and point out its errors.

We must say, however, that the CR disjunction between kingdom and church and consequent trivializing of the church explain much. It explains the movement's lack of interest in church reformation, i.e., in reformation of doctrine, worship, or government. It explains the willingness of individuals to remain in churches that are largely apostate, as well as the defection of a number of them to Greek Orthodoxy or Anglicanism. Certainly it is the explanation of the CR willingness to compromise not only with the Charismatic movement, but even with Rome.<sup>37</sup> When the church is only the means to an end, church membership, church reformation, and church purity matter little.

It is also, as we have suggested, nothing short of blasphemy. Nor do we say that lightly. To speak as CR does of the church is to slander the body of Christ, and to speak thus of Christ's body is to blaspheme Christ Himself and to make oneself worthy of the full ecclesiastical and civil sanctions (if they still apply) against blasphemy.

### **Church and Kingdom in the Confessions**

The CR disjunction between church and kingdom is foreign to the Reformed confessions. They, without exception, identify the two, and make that church the goal and purpose of all God's works in time.

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37. Documented in John Robbins, "The Reconstructionist Road to Rome," *Trinity Review*, 87, 88; Kevin Reed, *The Antinomian Streak in the Reconstructionist Movement*, Presbyterian Heritage, 1988; Thomas M. Chmelovski, "Reconstructionists Embrace Charismatics," *Christian News*, Jan. 4, 1988, p. 6; Bruce Barron, *Heaven on earth? The Social and Political Agendas of Dominion Theology*, Zondervan, 1992; Michael G. Moriarity, "The Dominion Pursuit: Will the Church Christianize the World?" *The New Charismatics*, Zondervan, 1992; as well as in various quotations in Appendix I of this paper.

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* mentions the kingdom in two places, and in both identifies it with the church, particularly the visible church. In the first, Chapter XXV, Article 2, the *Confession* states baldly that "the visible church . . . is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ," a statement that Sandlin simply dismisses as erroneous (footnote 30, page 8, above). It is interesting, too, that the *Confession* quotes Matthew 13:47 as proof of its statement, repudiating the usual CR exegesis of that parable and (by implication) their interpretation of the kingdom parables among which it is found.

That visible church is further defined as made up of the particular churches (XXV, 4). They are its "members." To it Christ has given the "ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God" and that for the "perfecting of the saints" (XXV, 3). The *Confession* knows nothing of a visible church defined almost exclusively in terms of believers and their life in the world. Instead, the *Confession* defines the visible church in terms of the church institute.

The *Confession* upholds this view of the kingdom in Chapter XXX, Article 2-4, where the keys of the kingdom are identified as the "Word" or "ministry of the gospel" and "censures." There, the function of these keys in shutting and opening the *kingdom* is described as excommunication from or admission to the *institute church*.

Furthermore, the *Confession* identifies the church as the object of all God's work in time: "As the providence of God doth, in general, reach to all creatures; so, after a most special manner, it taketh care of His Church, and disposeth all things to the good thereof" (V, 7, cf. also the *Larger Catechism*, 63). It is not merely a means to other ends, but the end to which all other things are the means.

The *Larger Catechism*, 191, is sometimes referred to by CR as evidence for their views of the kingdom. But this is to set the creeds against each other—the *Confession* teaching one thing and the *Catechism* another. Nor is it the teaching of the *Catechism* that Christ's kingdom is a Christianized society in distinction from the church. In the first place, the kingdom as it is prayed for in the second petition of the Lord's prayer is identified with the church. The prayer for the kingdom is, according to the *Catechism*, a prayer for the propagation of the gospel, the salvation of and bringing in of Jews and Gentiles, the ordinances and offices of the church, and the work of grace in the hearts of believers.

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The *Catechism* mentions the civil magistrate in this connection. Nevertheless, according to the *Catechism*, the prayer for the kingdom is only a prayer that he may countenance and maintain the *church*. In that connection, it makes the traditional Reformed distinction between the rule or kingdom of Christ's power and grace in the last phrase of its answer. Yet insofar as this prayer regards the kingdom of Christ's power it is only the prayer that He will exercise *that* kingdom "to these ends," that is, to the gathering, preservation, deliverance, and blessing of His *church*. The ecclesiology of Westminster is very different from that of CR.<sup>38</sup>

The *Three Forms of Unity* follow the *Westminster Confession* and *Catechisms* at this point. Questions and Answers 83-85 of the *Heidelberg Catechism* also identify kingdom and church. There, having named the keys of the kingdom to be "the preaching of the holy gospel, and Christian discipline, or excommunication" (83), the *Catechism* defines the function of those keys of the kingdom as admission to or exclusion *from the Christian church*.

Question and Answer 128 is the *Catechism's* explanation of the second petition of the Lord's Prayer. It defines the coming of the kingdom solely in terms of the work of grace in the hearts of believers and the preservation and increase of the church. It also describes the final glory of the kingdom as *heavenly* glory when it identifies the "full perfection of [the] kingdom" as that time when God will be all in all (I Cor. 15:15, 28). In the context in I Cor. 15 the clear reference is to the end of all things and the general resurrection.

This interpretation of Question and Answer 128 is confirmed in the explanation of Ursinus (the principal author of the *Catechism*) in his *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*:

From this definition we may infer and specify these particular parts of the kingdom of God: 1. The sending of the Son, our Mediator, into the world. 2. The institution and preservation of the ministry by him. 3. The gathering of the church from the whole human race, by the preaching of the gospel, and by the power of the Holy Ghost working true faith and repentance in the elect. 4. The perpetual government of the church. 5.

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38. Notice also *The Directory for Public Worship*, "Of Public Prayer before the Sermon," paragraph 8, which is, very obviously, an application of the second petition of the Lord's Prayer.

The preservation of it in this life, notwithstanding all the fierce assaults of the enemies. 6. The casting of all enemies of the church into everlasting punishment. 7. The raising of the church to everlasting life. 8. The glorification of the church in eternal life, when God will be all in all. Of this kingdom it is said: 'I have set my King upon the holy hill of Zion.' 'Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.' 'My kingdom is not of this world. (Ps. 2:6; 110:2; John 18:36).<sup>39</sup>

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The citizens of this Kingdom include, 1. The angels, who are confirmed in holiness. 2. The saints in heaven composing what is called the church triumphant. 3. The godly, or those who are converted and still living in the world, having as yet many cares and remains of corruption, composing what is called the church militant. 4. Hypocrites, who are members merely of the visible church, without being truly converted. These are merely apparent citizens, being members of the kingdom of Christ only in name. They are called citizens of this kingdom, as the Jews were called by Christ the children of the kingdom. (Matt. 8:12).<sup>40</sup>

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This kingdom comes to us in four ways: 1. *By the preaching of the gospel*, which reveals to us a knowledge of the true and heavenly doctrine. 2. By conversion, when some are converted to God, who grants unto them faith and repentance. 3. By increase and development. When the godly make progress in holiness, or when the gifts peculiar to the faithful are continually being increased in those who are converted. 'He that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy let him be holy still. (Rev. 22:11.) 4. By the perfection and glorification of the church at the second coming of Christ. 'Even so come Lord Jesus.' (Rev. 22:20).<sup>41</sup>

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39. Presbyterian and Reformed, no date, p. 633.

40. Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, p. 634.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 636. We quote at length from Ursinus because of claims that this answer of the *Catechism* supports the particular view of the kingdom favored by CR (G.I. Williamson, *The Heidelberg Catechism: A Study Guide*, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1993, pp. 217-219).

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The *Belgic Confession* in Article XXXVI likewise refuses to identify the kingdom of Christ with society or civilization in general, or even with civil government. There it insists that it is the duty of the civil magistrate to promote the kingdom of Christ and to do this by protecting "the sacred ministry," by countenancing "the preaching of the Word of the gospel everywhere, that God may be honored and worshipped by every one, as he commands in his Word." In other words, the kingdom is identified with "the sacred ministry." This is not the CR view of the kingdom, though they carelessly appeal to this article.

The *Belgic Confession* again identifies kingdom and church in Article XXVII, where the members of the church and they alone are identified as the subjects in Christ's kingdom. We read there: "This Church hath been from the beginning of the world, and will be to the end thereof: which is evident from this, that Christ is an eternal King, which without subjects cannot be."

The *Three Forms of Unity* also emphasize the importance of the church. The *Heidelberg Catechism* insists that Christ "is ascended into heaven for this end, that he might appear as head of his church, by whom the Father governs all things" (50). The *Canons of Dort* suggest that the focus of God's purpose and Christ's work is the church: "This purpose proceeding from everlasting love towards the elect, has from the beginning of the world to this day been powerfully accomplished, notwithstanding all the ineffectual opposition of the gates of hell, so that the elect in due time may be gathered together in one, and that there may never be wanting a church composed of believers, the foundation of which is laid in the blood of Christ, which may steadfastly love, and faithfully serve him as their Savior, who as a bridegroom for his bride, laid down his life for them upon the cross, and which may celebrate his praises here and through all eternity" (II, 9).

Nor do these creeds stand alone. Some interesting quotations are found in other creeds as well. The *Augsburg Confession*, for example, explicitly rejects the notions of the CR movement: "They condemn others also, who now scatter Jewish opinions, that, before the resurrection of the dead, the godly shall occupy the kingdom of the world, the wicked being everywhere suppressed [the saints alone, the pious, shall have a worldly kingdom, and shall exterminate all the godless]" (Part First, Article 17).

Along the same lines *Augsburg* says (Part Second, Article 7): "Wherefore the ecclesiastical and civil powers are not to be con-



founded. The ecclesiastical power hath its own commandment to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments. Let it not by force enter into the office of another; let it not transfer worldly kingdoms; let it not abrogate magistrates' laws; let it not withdraw from them lawful obedience; let it not hinder judgments touching any civil ordinances or contracts; let it not prescribe laws to the magistrate touching the form of the republic; as Christ saith, 'My kingdom is not of this world' (John xviii. 36). Again, 'Who made me a judge or a divider over you?' (Luke xii. 14). And Paul saith, 'Our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven' (Phil. iii. 20). 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, casting down imaginations,' etc. (2 Cor. x. 4)."

The *Confession of England* (1562) affirms: "that this Church is the Kingdom, the Body, and the spouse of Christ: that Christ alone is the Prince of this Kingdom; that Christ alone is the Head of this Body; and that Christ alone is the Bridegroom of this Spouse" (Article 4).

The *Confession of Saxony* states: "God will have us to understand, that mankind is not born by chance, but is created of God; and created, not to eternal destruction, but that out of mankind he might gather unto himself a Church, to the which in all eternity he might communicate his wisdom, goodness, and joy. And he will have his Son to be seen, for whom, and through whom, by his unspeakable wisdom, and infinite mercy, he hath repaired this miserable nature of men. Therefore, amongst men he would at all times have a company, whereunto he delivered the doctrine concerning his Son, and wherein the Son himself did institute and preserve a ministry to keep and spread abroad that doctrine.... Now what the Church is, the Son of God sheweth, saying, 'My kingdom is not of this world.' John xviii. 36" (Art. 11).

The *Confession of Sueveland* says: "Furthermore, seeing this congregation (the Christian Church) is the very kingdom of God, wherein all things ought to be appointed in the best order, she hath all kinds of offices and ministers. For she is the body of Christ himself, compacted of many members, whereof every one hath its proper work" (Art. 15). Clearly, then, and by all accounts, the CR view of church and kingdom is unconfessional.

### **Church and Kingdom in Reformed Theology**

The confessions exemplify the Reformed teaching concerning church and kingdom, but let us confirm the teaching of the confessions

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by citations from Reformed theologians.<sup>42</sup> We have already quoted from Ursinus and so here we turn first to Calvin and then to several others. Notice throughout the quotations from Calvin that he assumes that church and kingdom are synonymous, though he also identifies the kingdom with the inward work of grace in believers. This is characteristic of his writings on the subject. The following quotations show, however, not only that Reformed teaching identifies church and kingdom, but also that Reformed theology knows nothing of a kingdom that consists in a "Christian civilization" or "Christian culture" or future world dominion by the saints.

We see that God, who might perfect his people in a moment, chooses not to bring them to manhood in any other way than by the education of the Church. We see the mode of doing it expressed; the preaching of celestial doctrine is committed to pastors. We see that all without exception are brought into the same order, that they may with meek and docile spirit allow themselves to be governed by teachers appointed for this purpose. Isaiah had long before given this as the characteristic of the kingdom of Christ. 'My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words that I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.'<sup>43</sup>

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That the strength and utility of the kingdom of Christ cannot, as we have said, be fully perceived, without recognising it as spiritual, is sufficiently apparent, even from this, that having during the whole

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42. We do not deny, as we have said, that many modern writers, including the Reformed (A. Kuyper, Jr., Ridderbos, Zorn, Bright, Ladd, Berkhof, C. Hodge, etc.), often speak of the kingdom in a wider sense than the church, but they are out of line with the earlier Reformed theologians and the creeds. They do not make the sharp disjunction that CR does between church and kingdom and do not see the church simply as a means to the kingdom, yet even their view of the kingdom as something broader and more inclusive than the church more often than not has in it something of the CR "vision" of a Christianized society, and is inevitably founded on the unbiblical doctrine of common grace, whether that of Dr. A. Kuyper, Sr., or the more modern version of the same (see Appendix I).

43. Calvin, *Institutes*, James Clarke, 1953, IV, i, 5, vol. II, p. 284.

course of our lives to war under the cross, our condition here is bitter and wretched. What then would it avail us to be ranged under the government of a heavenly King, if its benefits were not realised beyond the present earthly life? We must, therefore, know that the happiness which is promised to us in Christ does not consist in external advantages—such as leading a joyful and tranquil life, abounding in wealth, being secure against all injury, and having an affluence of delights, such as the flesh is wont to long for—but properly belongs to the heavenly life.<sup>44</sup>

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Christ, indeed, gives his followers no dubious proofs of present power, but as his kingdom in the world is in a manner veiled by the humiliation of a carnal condition, faith is most properly invited to meditate on the visible presence which he will exhibit on the last day.<sup>45</sup>

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By announcing the kingdom of God, he called for faith, since by the kingdom of God which he declared to be at hand, he meant forgiveness of sins, salvation, life, and every other blessing which we obtain in Christ.<sup>46</sup>

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Although a definition of this kingdom has already been given, I now briefly repeat that God reigns when men, in denial of themselves, and contempt of the world and this earthly life, devote themselves to righteousness and aspire to heaven. Thus this kingdom consists of two parts: the first is, when God by the agency of His Spirit corrects all the depraved lusts of the flesh, which in bands war against Him; and second, when he brings all our thoughts into obedience to his authority.... We must next descend to the wicked, who perversely and with desperate

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44. *Ibid.*, II, xv, 4, vol. I, p. 428. This quotation and the following show that Calvin saw the fulfilment of the kingdom promises beyond this present life and consequently identified the realization of the kingdom with the glorification of the church.

45. *Ibid.*, II, xvi, 17, vol. I, p. 450.

46. *Ibid.*, III, iii, 19, vol. I, p. 525. Here we see that Calvin identifies the kingdom first of all with the rule of grace in the hearts and lives of believers, not with a "Christianized" society. This matter is discussed in more detail below.

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madness resist his authority. God, therefore, sets up his kingdom, by humbling the whole world, though in different ways, taming the wantonness of some, and breaking the ungovernable pride of others. We should desire this to be done every day, in order that God may gather churches to himself from all quarters of the world, may extend and increase their numbers, enrich them with his gifts, establish due order among them; on the other hand, beat down all the enemies of pure doctrine and religion, dissipate their counsels, defeat their attempts. Hence it appears that there is good ground for the precept which enjoins daily progress, for human affairs are never so prosperous as when the impurities of vice are purged away, and integrity flourishes in full vigour. The completion, however, is deferred to the final advent of Christ. when, as Paul declares, 'God will be all in all' (1 Cor. xv. 28).<sup>47</sup>

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21. The kingship of Christ is his power to dispense and administer all things pertaining to the salvation of man with force and authority, Ps. 2:6, Dan. 2:44, Luke 4:36.

22. The properties of this kingship are, first, its universality. It covers all ages, Matt. 22:43-45. It is relevant to all kinds of men, Dan. 7:14; Rev. 17:14; and it applies to all creatures so far as they in some way further or enhance the salvation of men, Eph. 1:21, 22.

23. Second, it holds sway in the very souls and consciences of men, Rom. 14:17.

24. Third, it dispenses everlasting life and death, Rev. 1:18.

25. Fourth, it is eternal, Dan. 2:44; 7:14.

26. Fifth, it brings the greatest peace and most perfect joy to those who are its heirs, Is. 9:6; Eph. 2:16; Heb. 7:2.

27. Therefore, this kingship is called throughout the Scriptures the kingdom of *God*, the kingdom of *Peace* and *Glory* (see the places above cited). It is also called the kingdom of *Light and glory*, the kingdom of *Heaven*, and *The world to come*, Heb. 2:5.<sup>48</sup>

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8. Faith looks to Christ and through Christ to God; likewise the

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47. *Ibid.*, III, xx, 42, vol. II, pp. 189-190—cf. also Calvin on Matthew 6:10. This quotation is particularly interesting in that Calvin speaks of the "humbling the whole world, though in different ways, taming the wantonness of some, and breaking the ungovernable pride of others," but understands it in terms of their salvation, not a reconstruction of society.

48. William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, Baker, 1997, pp. 133-134.

church which exists by faith looks to Christ as its head and through Christ to God. Therefore the church is called the *Body of Christ*, Col. 1:24; the *Church of God*, 1 Cor. 10:32; the *Kingdom of Christ*, Col. 1:13; and the *Kingdom of God*, Rom. 14:17.<sup>49</sup>

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*Sixteenth Question: The Kingdom of Christ.* Whether the economical kingdom of Christ is temporal and earthly or spiritual and heavenly. The former we deny; we assert the latter against the Jews. I. The third part of the mediatorial office is his kingdom (to wit, that dignity and authority with which he governs the church by his word and Spirit and defends and preserves it against all enemies).<sup>50</sup>

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V. As the constitution of the kingdom is resolved into two parts—eternal destination and calling, and inauguration in time—so its administration and exercise consist principally in four things: (1) in the calling and gathering of the church; (2) the conservation and government of the same; (3) the protection and defense of it against all its enemies; (4) the full and perfect glorification of it, to be made on the last day. The first three pertain to this life through grace; the fourth to the future life, in glory.<sup>51</sup>

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VIII. Second, the kingdom of Christ was adumbrated by various temporal kingdoms. Now corporeal and earthly things are not types of things both corporeal and worldly homogenous with them, but of better and more excellent (namely, of spiritual things). The figure must be inferior to the things figured by it; the shadow to the substance. Since the government of the Old Testament (adumbrating the kingdom of Christ) was corporeal, the kingdom of Christ must be spiritual.<sup>52</sup>

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XII. Sixth, the kingdom of Christ is not of this world (John 18:36).... It is not of this world as to origin because it is not constituted by the world

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49. *Ibid.*, p. 176.

50. Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1994, XIV, 16, vol. II, p. 486. This whole section needs to be read by those who hold a CR view of the kingdom.

51. *Ibid.*, XIV, 16, vol. II, p. 487.

52. *Ibid.*, XIV, 16, vol. II, p. 488.

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and by men living in the world like the kingdoms of this world. Rather it has God as its sole and immediate founder, by whose authority it was erected and by whose power it is strengthened. It is not of this world as to mode because the kingdoms of this world consist of and are defended by a multitude of subjects, number of provinces, crowds of cities, abundance of riches, bristling forts, armed garrisons and other external means, without which they would necessarily fall. But the kingdom of Christ . . . is conducted in a spiritual manner, recognizes no other honors and resources than righteousness, holiness, peace of conscience, salvation, and eternal life; no other arms than the Word and Spirit; no other fortifications than the protection of God. Pilate had this understanding of it; he clearly perceived that no prejudice could be created from it against the empire of Caesar; otherwise he would not only have agreed with the accusation of the Jews charging Christ with rebellion against Caesar, but would have been the first to think of taking him out of the way. However since, having dismissed this accusation of the Jews and Christ's own confession concerning his kingly office, he pronounces him just and innocent and desires him to be cleared from condemnation (for he knew that for envy they had delivered him, Mt. 27:18), he sufficiently demonstrates that he did not believe it was a temporal kingdom opposed to the sway of Caesar which Christ ascribed to himself.<sup>53</sup>

We find no support in all of this for the CR notions concerning church and kingdom. Rather, these Reformed authors, along with the Reformed creeds, explicitly disown their teachings.

### **Kingdom and Church in Scripture**

In studying the word kingdom in Scripture, one thing especially becomes obvious. First, there is no New Testament passage which shows that the kingdom of Christ is a "Christianized" world, in which men are either converted or subdued to the dominion of the godly. To come to that conclusion, one must first draw certain conclusions from the OT and then read them into those NT passages that speak of the kingdom. And, indeed, this is exactly what CR does. Its adherents take a passage such as I Timothy 4:8 or Matthew 6:33 and simply read into it their preconceived notions. We insist that this is the wrong way of doing exegesis. In light of the fact that the NT is the fulfilment of the

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53. *Ibid.*, XIV, 16, vol. II, p. 489.

OT, it is always true that the OT must be interpreted in light of the New. On the basis of the NT alone it would be impossible to support or even conceive of the CR view of the kingdom.

In the NT that kingdom is presented as belonging only to the elect (Lk. 12:32, Matt. 25:34). For that reason regeneration (Jn. 3:5), calling (I Thess. 2:12), faith (James 2:5), justification (Matt. 5:20), conversion (Matt. 18:3), sanctification (Matt. 7:21; II Pet. 1:10, 11), and finally glorification (Matt. 25:34) are necessary in order to have *any* part or inheritance in that kingdom. One must be "translated" into it (Col. 1:13). So, too, the ungodly are excluded entirely from that kingdom (I Cor. 6:9, 10; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5). It comes nigh them through the preaching of the gospel and its accompanying signs (Lk. 10:9, 11), but they have no part in it. They cannot even see it (Jn. 3:3) or know its mysteries (Matt. 13:11; Lk. 8:10).

The inability of the ungodly to see or know anything of that kingdom follows from the nature of that kingdom. It is the kingdom of truth (Jn. 18:36, 37), of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost (Rom. 14:17), so that where these are found the kingdom is there and where these are not found the kingdom does not exist. That kingdom itself and all that belongs to it, then, are spiritual and invisible in nature: its keys (Matt. 16:19), its weapons (II Cor. 10:4, 5), its armies (Jn. 18:36, 37), its character as a city and country (Heb. 11:1, 10, 13-16), its power and rule, which are the power and rule of grace in the hearts and lives of God's own (Luke 17:20, 21), and so also its victory (Col. 2:14). That victory has nothing to do with establishing a world dominion of the godly, but is the victory over sin and death accomplished by Christ in His dying and applied by the Spirit to His people.

The spiritual nature of this kingdom is further evident from the fact that the way of entrance into the kingdom (as for Christ Himself) is not earthly dominion and victory, but tribulation and suffering both for the church and for the individual child of God (Acts 14:22; II Thess. 1:4, 5). Indeed, in the latter passage persecution and tribulation are the "manifest token of the righteous judgment of God" that believers are "counted worthy of the kingdom of God." A kingdom in which believers do not suffer persecution is a kingdom in which they are not so counted worthy. Romans 8:35-37 is confirmation. There the Word assures us that *in* tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword—in being "killed all the day long" and "accounted as sheep

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for the slaughter" the citizens of the kingdom are *more than* conquerors. That this kingdom has nothing to do with earthly dominion by the godly over all of culture and civilization is similarly evident from the fact that the kingdom is everlasting (Lk. 1:33; II Pet. 1:11) and cannot be moved (Heb. 12:28). We see this, too, in the many references that call this kingdom the kingdom of heaven. Nor does that only mean that it comes from and is revealed from heaven (Matt. 12:28; Rev. 21:1ff.). It also has its termination, fulfillment, completion in heaven. This is so much the case that very often the kingdom is simply identified with heavenly glory (Matt. 25:34; 26:29; 13:43; Lk. 22:29, 30; I Cor. 15:50; II Tim. 4:1, 18). Nor is there the least suggestion in the NT that a period of earthly prosperity and ease precedes this completion of the kingdom for God's people.

In this light the many OT references to the kingdom must be interpreted. And, to be sure, the OT itself, when read in this light, gives the same clear testimony as the NT concerning the kingdom. The Psalms are a good example. There we read that it is only the just (Ps. 118:20), the sanctified (Ps. 24:3-6) who enter the kingdom, insofar as that kingdom in the OT was anything more than an earthly type and picture. That kingdom is presented in the Psalms as a kingdom of salvation (Ps. 20:6-9; 21:5; 53:6; 72:13; 130:7, 8) and that of the souls of God's people (Ps. 34:22; 41:4; 72:14; 121:7; 124:7); a kingdom in which they pray not for earthly peace and deliverance, but for salvation from sin and death. It is a kingdom of true peace (Ps. 29:11; 122:6-8) and, therefore, of light and truth (Ps. 43:3) and righteousness (Ps. 45:7). It involves not the subjugation but the complete destruction of those who are its enemies (Ps. 2:9; 21:8-11; 45:5). It is a kingdom in which the inheritance and glory and victory of the citizens are not temporary but everlasting (Ps. 37:18), but do not spare them persecution and suffering in this present age (Ps. 44:22; 141:7). Thus, insofar as that kingdom is also a nation it is the nation of the elect, not any earthly nation, political entity, or temporal civilization (Ps. 33:12). It is a city in which God is the God of His people (Ps. 48:14; 144:11-15), in which He dwells with them and is their God forever (Ps. 68:16; 132:14). It is the place of His covenant (Ps. 89:3ff.; 132:12).

That the church is the goal and end of all God's dealings with the human race is also clear from Scripture. We have already cited I Timothy 3:15, which calls the church "the pillar and ground of the truth"



and identifies it as the "house of God" and the "church of the living God." Both the double reference to the church as God's, and the fact that it is God's house, establish its importance. Add the truth that Christ is set as its chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:20; I Pet. 2:6), and there can be no doubt that the church is the end of God's purposes with men.

Ephesians 3:20, 21 explains why this is so. The glory of God's exceeding abundant power is revealed *in the church* by Jesus Christ through all ages, world without end, and so God Himself is glorified in the church. I Peter 2:5-9 presents essentially the same picture. The church, not a Christian civilization, is the spiritual house and place in which God reveals His glory.

Ephesians 1:22, 23 is, if anything, even stronger in that it calls the church "the fulness (completion) of him that filleth all in all." Reverently speaking, there is no *Christ* without His body, no more than there is any body without the Head. Indeed, the identification of the church as Christ's body ought to teach us that the church is central to all God's purposes.

From a slightly different point of view, Ephesians 5:27 sees the goal of all Christ's work (also as king) in the presentation of the church to Himself in holiness. Likewise, the letters in Revelation 2 & 3 and all the rest of the book are addressed to the church in view of Christ's coming for her. He will come to take her unto Himself (chap. 19:6-9) as the Bridegroom taking His bride. That marriage between Christ and His church is the goal and consummation of all history.

Revelation also shows the importance of the church by picturing it seated in the first circle around the throne (4:4) and serving Him there (7:15). So, too, the book closes its visions with the grand revelation of the church in her final glory (chaps. 21, 22). Thus is the church revealed as the goal of all the visions of the book of Revelation and of all Scripture. From the creation account in Genesis 1, through the whole history of the nation of Israel, and in the account of Christ's own ministry both personally and through His apostles, Scripture looks to this city and to her glory, for her glory is the glory of God Himself in Christ.

This kingdom always has the victory. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world (I Jn. 5:4). The moment believers are given the gift of faith and thereby brought into the fellowship of the church, at that moment they have the complete victory over all their enemies. They

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have that victory by virtue of the fact that the dominion of sin is completely overthrown in their hearts (Rom. 6:8-18). They have the victory by virtue of the fact that they are in Christ by faith and are in principle exalted and glorified with Him (Eph. 2:4-6). They have the victory because they have eternal life abiding in them and because the powers of darkness cannot snatch them out of God's hand (1 Jn. 2:24, 25; Jn. 10:28), not in the way of earthly dominion. And so the church as the company and covenant community of these victors is also victorious and stands throughout all history "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (Cant. 6:10), though only faith can discern its victory.

### **A Definition of the Kingdom**

What then is the kingdom of God and of Christ? It is here that careful definition is necessary in order to avoid the errors we have been describing. Such a careful definition must take into account the fact that Scripture does distinguish kingdom and church, at least to the extent of using these two different terms. Indeed, we cannot simply substitute the word "church" for the word "kingdom" in the majority of NT passages that speak of the kingdom. Nor may we simply ignore the fact that Luke 17:21 places the kingdom within every believer.

It seems to us, therefore, that the best way to define the kingdom is in terms of "the domain or rule of saving grace." We speak of *saving* grace, not because we believe there is any other kind, but in order to avoid confusion with the teaching of those who believe in common grace and who are willing to define the kingdom in terms of a rule of grace, as long as that grace is also seen as common.

To identify the kingdom as the rule of saving grace avoids, too, the danger of extending Christ's work as mediator beyond the elect, as well as the tendency to see His kingdom as something broader than the church. It also takes into account the statement of Jesus concerning the kingdom in Luke 17:21 and the difference between the words "kingdom" and "church."

That rule of saving grace, therefore, which is the kingdom, is

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54. We reject the "exegesis" of Luke 17:21 that interprets Jesus' words as meaning "among" you. The Greek word *entos* used in Luke 17:10 and translated "within" is used elsewhere only in Matthew 23:26 where the word very definitely means "inside" in contrast to "outside."

established first of all in the hearts of God's elect. In this sense the kingdom is "within" them.<sup>54</sup> And, we would emphasize, the whole of that kingdom is established there—its laws, obedience, customs, language, worship, warfare, spiritual "culture," and victory. In this sense, too, the kingdom is victorious in that the rule of grace completely overthrows and destroys the dominion of sin (Rom. 6:11-23).

At this point "kingdom" is very nearly synonymous with salvation, the coming of the kingdom synonymous with the gift of salvation, and entering the kingdom very much the same thing as "entering" salvation (cf. Jn. 3:5). That is not to say there is not still a different emphasis, and that Scripture does not have good reason for speaking in some passages of entering the kingdom rather than entering salvation. Nevertheless, essentially they are the same (Matt. 19:23).

The gospel as the "power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16), therefore, is also the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14). Regeneration (Jn. 3:5), calling (I Thess. 2:12), faith (James 2:5), justification (Matt. 5:20), conversion (Matt. 18:3), sanctification (Matt. 7:21; II Pet. 1:10, 11), and finally glorification (Matt. 25:34) are all necessary in order to enter that kingdom.

That rule of grace, however, as it is first established through regeneration in the heart, is not individualistic, but brings each believer into saving fellowship with Christ and thus also with His body, the church. Thus, the kingdom is also spoken of in Scripture as the whole company of the elect, what is sometimes referred to as the invisible church (Matt. 13:38; Heb. 12:22-28). Hebrews 12:22-28 is especially important. In order to receive a kingdom which cannot be moved (v. 28) we must "come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God ... to the general assembly and church of the firstborn" (vv. 22, 23).

In this sense only is the kingdom broader than the visible church. The kingdom, understood from this perspective, includes all the elect, both those who are already in glory and even those who have not yet been born or called. It is here that the coming of the kingdom is seen in Scripture primarily in terms of the gathering of the whole body of the elect into heaven—the glorification of the church—and entrance into the kingdom in terms of entering heavenly glory. Indeed Scripture very often simply identifies the final heavenly glory of the church and the ultimate victory of grace with the kingdom (Matt. 13:43; 16:28; 25:34; 26:29; I Cor. 15:24; II Pet. 1:11).

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It is at this point that we must attempt to distinguish church and kingdom and the use of the terms in Scripture. "Kingdom," we believe, looks at what is essentially the same thing as "church," but more from the viewpoint of Christ Himself and His work, than from the viewpoint of the citizens. "Church" sees things from the viewpoint of God's people themselves and their salvation. As the very word "church" reminds us, they are the "called out"—called out of the world, that is, and into the fellowship and body of Christ.

The concept "kingdom" really follows upon that and describes that same salvation from the viewpoint of the sovereignty of grace, and of the rule of Christ as it is established in and with the elect when they are brought in. "Kingdom" is used in Scripture, therefore, to emphasize the fact that grace *reigns*, i.e., that saving grace has an ordering and regulating function first in the lives of believers and then, by virtue of their connection to the body of Christ, also in the church, so that all is brought into willing obedience to Christ.

As far as the inner rule of grace in the heart is concerned, the word "kingdom" emphasizes several things, then. It teaches, first, that every aspect of the whole life of believers is brought under the dominion of Christ. Grace *reigns* and brings every thought and word and action into obedience to Christ (1 Cor. 10:4, 5). The concept "kingdom" leaves no room for "carnal Christian" teaching, for a denial of "Lordship salvation," or for Sunday-go-to-meeting Christianity.

Second, and in close connection, kingdom reminds us that grace does not just rule at the inception of salvation, but throughout. It is a whole *kingdom* which is established by grace in the hearts of believers, with all that that implies. They are made citizens and trained and used and blessed as such. Grace not only saves them, but continues to dominate every aspect of their life and bring it all in obedience to Christ. This, of course, is the answer to those who think of salvation primarily in terms of some initial conversion "experience."

Third, "kingdom" also emphasizes the *ordering* effect of God's saving grace. Our whole life is "disordered" by sin, and disordered because we are alienated from God Himself. Saving grace sets all to rights once again and makes of the believer a kind of "kingdom in miniature" in which there is a place for everything and everything in its place—in which his personality, his "gifts," his place and calling in life, and all the circumstances of his life are once more brought back into a proper relationship to God.

Thus, too, the concept “kingdom” describes the believer’s life as it is ordered in the body of Christ and among other believers. It is the rule of grace that gives him his “citizenship” in the kingdom of heaven and that regulates his life in that kingdom, providing him with necessary gifts, enabling and teaching him to use those gifts in the particular place and calling God has given him, and all with a view to the final glory of the church as the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

Here again we see the close connection between kingdom and church. To have a place and function in the kingdom is not essentially different from having a place and function in the church. Nevertheless, when we speak in that connection of “church” we are emphasizing more the organic connection between Christ and His members and the fact that they are alive together. When we speak of “kingdom” we are emphasizing more the total domination of grace in the individual and corporate lives of believers. Grace rules them individually and all together and forms them into a kingdom under Christ.

It is that ordering effect of grace that is implied in the word “kingdom” and that leads to a further identification of the kingdom with the institute church.<sup>55</sup> It is there especially that the ordering and ruling effects of grace are seen and become visible in the world. It is there that all things can be, ought to be, and are done decently and in good order. There everyone has a function with the particular gifts God gives and is able to use them for the advantage and salvation of the other members (Matt. 19:12; I Cor. 7:32, 34). There the keys of the kingdom are used (Matt. 16:19), and there the great means for the gathering of the kingdom is found, the preaching of the gospel (Matt. 4:23; 9:35).

Thus, too, Paul describes himself and his helpers in the gospel as “workers into the kingdom of God” (Col. 4:11). Their apostolic work

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55. We reject, therefore, the disjunction that is made (Perks, Rushdoony, *et al.*) between the visible church as institute and as body of believers. While there are passages that use the word “church” in reference to believers as believers, even then they are not viewed as believers apart from their connection to the institute church and through it to the body of Christ. In other words, believers do not exist and function except as members of the institute church (*Belgic Confession*, Article 28; *Westminster Confession of Faith*, XXV, 2). There exists no “church” that is simply believers as believers in the world apart from any connection to the institute church, nor is that the primary meaning of the word “church” in Scripture. See Appendix II for more on this point.

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was a work that he himself describes as having its purpose ("into") in the kingdom of God. Paul's work, by his own admission, was preaching the gospel, that is, preaching Christ crucified, for the salvation of God's elect and the gathering of the church (1 Cor. 1 & 2). There was nothing in his work of the aims of CR.

In all this, then, the *domain* of the kingdom extends no further than the rule of saving grace. But that is not to say that the kingdom of God does not come into contact with the kingdoms of this world. The very fact that both the individual believer and the church are ruled by the grace of God in Christ Jesus and that they are present in the world implies that they must inevitably come into conflict. And that, too, is according to the purpose of God, for that is the way His kingdom is gathered and the kingdoms of this world "fill up their iniquity" (Gen. 15:16). Nevertheless, Christ's kingdom extends no further than the rule of grace.

Whether or not the godly shall exercise earthly dominion, whether or not it is possible to set up a Christian state, is really beside the point. The kingdom is the rule of grace, and that kingdom is established and stands victorious now and forever in the salvation of believers and in the existence of the church. The number of people saved, the effect of Christians' presence in the world, even the kind of work the Christian does, politics or sweeping streets, economics or picking up trash, make essentially no difference.

Whether the church is a majority in the world or a very small minority makes no difference. Grace reigns in either case and is completely victorious, not only as far as the individual members of the church are concerned, but also as far as the church itself is concerned. No power on earth or in hell can destroy either. Whether Christians are able to influence the legislation and other life of the countries in which they live really does not matter as far as that victory is concerned. Grace reigns and accomplishes its whole purpose, first in their own salvation and then in the gathering and preservation of the church. That the Christian, whether changing tires or doing politics, lives consistently as a Christian in the place God has given him is the *whole victory* of grace.

That kingdom is represented in the world, then, both by the presence of the church and by the presence of believers. They carry that kingdom with them into the world. Nevertheless, that kingdom is in the world, not for the purpose of improving the world, or for the purpose of

bringing the world under the dominion of the church. That cannot be the goal of believers, for it is not God's purpose (Eph. 1:3-12). They live out of Christ as members of His body and *for* it as well. All their life centers in and focuses on the church, *just as does God's purpose and work*. That alone gives real, abiding purpose and value to the life of each Christian as he fulfils his calling, whatever it may be, here in the world.

Since the kingdom is the domain and rule of saving grace the ungodly are not included in that domain or "under" that rule. Even if they can be and are brought under the earthly dominion of the godly, that extends the kingdom of Christ not one whit. They remain, apart from the rule of grace, enemies of the kingdom, and the only thing to be done with them is to destroy them.

We would emphasize, too, that it is *grace* that reigns, not law. The law is the servant of God's people under the rule of grace (Gal. 3:24-4:4), but it is grace that rules—only grace that can rule in this sinful world. The CR idea that the kingdom is to be identified with the rule of law is a confusion, a principle denial of the whole work of Christ, and the foundation for a new legalism both within and outside of the church.

What is the kingdom, then? It is (1) the rule and work of grace in the hearts and lives of God's people; (2) the society or church into which all such are gathered as a direct fruit of that work and rule of grace, i.e., the church as the body of Christ and company of the elect as it lives in Him and has Him as its Head; and (3) *that same church* as it takes on a certain visible form in the world under Christ's rule and through the ordinances He has given. All which is to say that the word "kingdom," while looking at the church from a different viewpoint than the word "church," nevertheless is used in exactly the same way, to denote first what makes us members of the church, then the whole company of that elect church, and finally also that company as it is found in this present world and organized under God's rule in an institutional form.

### **Rule of Power and Rule of Grace**

We do not deny, of course, that Christ presently rules over the ungodly and over their kingdoms. That is not the issue, though CR does all in its power to present the matter so. We believe in Christ's absolute and present power over all the kingdoms of this world. We are even willing to speak of them loosely as Christ's kingdom (cf. Ames, above),

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but then *in a different sense* than the church is His kingdom. Properly speaking, however, only the church is Christ's kingdom, and His mediatorial rule extends only to the elect. We distinguish here, therefore, between the rule of Christ's grace and the rule of His power and insist that His rule over the ungodly is of an entirely different sort than His rule over His church. The differences are five. The differences regard the purpose, exercise, result, source, and ultimacy of Christ's rule.

(1) *Purpose*. Christ rules over the ungodly, first for the purpose of using them for the gathering, preservation, and salvation of His church. They are the chaff in relation to the wheat. Then, too, He rules them for the purpose of destroying them and all their works.

This is an aspect of Christ's rule inevitably overlooked by the CR. When they cite Daniel 2 as support for their view of the kingdom, for example, they never mention the fact that Christ's kingdom, portrayed by the stone that grows and fills the whole earth, attains its glory in the way of the complete destruction of the kingdoms represented by Nebuchadnezzar's image, not just in their subjugation. The same is true of their use of such passages as Psalm 2. The Psalm speaks of the heathen being broken with a rod of iron and dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel, not brought under dominion, either His or that of the godly. Indeed, it continues to be this way for all eternity, in that Christ continues to rule over them in hell, but solely for the purpose of executing on them the judgment given.

(2) *Exercise*. This rule as it is exercised over the ungodly is exercised through His providence. That is not to say that His mediatorial work as Priest (sacrificing and interceding), as prophet (in the preaching of the gospel), and as King (in ruling and judging) does not touch them. The fact that some of them in history come into contact with His mediatorial work "assists" them in filling up their iniquity, and in bringing upon them the fulness of the wrath and judgment of God. Nevertheless, they are not His "kingdom," nor is He "Mediator" over them. Indeed, He rules over all and executes His rule even where His name and glory as Mediator have not been published through the preaching of the gospel.

This is a critical point. If Christ can be said, properly speaking, to exercise mediatorial rule over the ungodly, i.e., that He is in some sense their mediatorial King, then the whole doctrine of mediation has



been undermined and with it the particular character of all Christ's work and of God's work and purposes through Him. Mediation has to do with Christ's mission and the purpose of all His work and of His offices. Mediation is, as Turretin says (*Institutes*, XIV, 5, vol. II, p. 391), "his mission and calling towards an offended God and offending men, reconciling and again uniting them to each other." Likewise Polanus:

The Mediator of reconciliation between God and fallen men is the *persona* who intervenes midway between a God angry at their sins and men the sinners, in order that by his own merit and satisfaction he may obtain from God for men and effectively bestow on them grace, remission of sins and all things necessary for salvation and also eternal salvation itself.<sup>56</sup>

(3) *Result*. That many of the ungodly do come into contact with Christ's mediatorial rule is obvious. The gospel is preached to them. They do crucify Christ, originally or anew. Christ does intercede against them. He does speak to them in His wrath. Nonetheless, even insofar as His mediatorial rule touches them, its result is wholly negative. The gospel is the best example of this. It does not subdue and "Christianize" them but hardens them, something entirely overlooked by CR. Indeed, one cannot have a gospel that hardens the ungodly in their rebellion and at the same time accomplishes their subjugation and the "Christianization" of society in general.

(4) *Source*. The fourth difference (following from the previous) is that this rule is a matter of sheer power or authority. Christ's rule over the ungodly is in no sense of the word *gracious* (the distinction is not between the rule of His power and of His authority, but between the rule of His power or authority and the rule of His *grace*). It is here that CR takes issue especially with the PRC. The PRC denial of common grace, also in the preaching of the gospel, rules out *a priori* any possibility of the ungodly being subdued to the mediatorial rule of Christ; any possibility that the gospel has any other fruit with them than that of hardening, increasing rebellion, judgment, and destruction; any possi-

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56. Quoted in Heinrich Hepppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Baker, 1978, p. 448. This is one of the crucial issues in the debate, in that CR insists on a universal mediatorial rule of Christ. For a further discussion of this point see Appendix II.

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bility that the culture, institutions, and citizens of this world can be “Christianized”; any possibility that He is their mediatorial King.

This, too, is crucial. The CR position with its insistence that the church and the gospel are the means to the kingdom, that is, to a Christianized society, is a fundamental denial of all the PRC believe concerning the gospel and the grace of God. One ends with a gospel which has a positive, though temporary, fruit as far as the kingdoms of this world and its citizens are concerned, a grace which is no longer particular, and ultimately and inevitably a cross which is for all. Regarding the latter, we would emphasize once more that it is impossible to separate Christ’s priestly and prophetic offices from His kingly office. If the one extends in some sense (usually very ill-defined) to the whole of civilization and culture and to all persons without exception, then so do the others.

(5) *Ultimacy*. Finally, the rule of Christ over the ungodly and their kingdoms is not parallel to and “equally ultimate” to His rule over the church. In every way and instance, His rule over the ungodly is for the purpose of the gathering, salvation, preservation, and glorification of His church. This is the very opposite of the CR teaching that the church is the nursery or means of the kingdom.

This view of the rule of Christ is the teaching of the early Reformed theologians and stands in flat contradiction to the cant of CR. For the sake of those unfamiliar with this distinction between Christ’s rule of power and of grace we offer the following quotations from Reformed theologians. CR, making no such distinction, simply assumes that any passage that speaks of Christ’s rule is supportive of their dominion dreams.

Of course the power of Christ does not extend merely to the community of believers, but also to their enemies, in fact, to all creatures generally in heaven and on earth, since Christ makes them serviceable to himself for the benefit of his kingdom. But the *regnum Christi* (kingdom of Christ) itself is only the kingdom of grace, the Church, and comprises (1) the *gubernatio* (government) and (2) the *defensio* (defense) of it.<sup>57</sup>

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57. Heppel, *Reformed Dogmatics*, p. 481. Notice too in these quotations that Christ’s mediatorial work, including His mediatorial kingship, is limited to the church.

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The kingly office is to govern and preserve the Church. The divisions of it are the government of the Church and the defeat of its enemies.<sup>58</sup>

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Christ's kingly office is the power and authority of the mediator, by which being constituted king and head of the Church he flourishes with supreme power in heaven and on earth and governs all things concerned with the Church with full rights and rules and perfects it both by the word and by the interior power of his Spirit; and guards it against the assaults and power of all sorts of enemies; and will at last crown it victor in heaven for ever, perfect in body and mind."<sup>59</sup>

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Hence it is not right, when it is said that according to Reformed doctrine the kingship of Christ also extends over the extra-Church sphere (of nature). Of course Christ has power over this also, but only for the purpose of exercising his mediating Kingship over the Church."<sup>60</sup>

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All things are subdued to this kingship and all creatures are its servants ... not because all men properly belong to that Kingdom, but because it could not be administered without that infinite power.<sup>61</sup>

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II. Before all things we must distinguish the twofold kingdom, belonging to Christ: one natural or essential; the other mediatorial and economical. Christ possesses the former over all creatures with glory and majesty equal to that of the Father and Holy Spirit. The latter (according to the economy of grace) he administers in a peculiar manner as God-man (*theanthropos*). The former extends equally over all creatures; the latter is terminated specially on the church. That is founded on the decree of providence, this on the decree of election. That is exercised by Christ inasmuch as he is God (*Theos*) and the Logos (*Logos*); this inasmuch as he is God-man (*theanthropos*). Hence it is called his 'mediatorial and economical kingdom' because it is a dominion peculiar to the Mediator and as it were his own according to the

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58. Wollebius, quoted in Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, p. 482.

59. Burmann, quoted in Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, p. 482.

60. Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, p. 482.

61. Burmann, quoted in Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, p. 482

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dispensation of grace. The other belongs to him by nature and is on that account called 'natural. The mediatorial belongs to him from the free institution of God because he constituted him King over the church (Ps. 2:6).<sup>62</sup>

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XIV. Although temporal kingdoms are subjected to Christ, his kingdom ought not on that account be temporal. They are not subjected to and administered by him temporally and in an earthly manner, but spiritually and divinely; even as the earth is under heaven and is ruled by him, it is not therefore done in an earthly but in a heavenly way. Indeed he reigns differently in the pious and the wicked: in the former by the sweet and healthful influence of the Spirit, as head; in the latter, by his own powerful virtue as Lord; but over both he extends a spiritual, not an earthly sway.<sup>63</sup>

## Conclusions

To make the kingdom wider than the church, as some later Reformed writers do, is possible only on the basis of a perceived "common grace," and is done in the interest of a kind of "social gospel"<sup>64</sup> and of building a bridge to the world at the expense of the antithesis. To separate kingdom and church, making the church something secondary, and to denigrate the church institute and the preaching of the gospel, as does CR, is blasphemous and ought to be dealt with as such. Modern "kingdom theology" is unconfessional, un-Reformed, and unbiblical. The ecclesiology of CR which brings that "kingdom theology" to its ultimate and logical conclusions is also gross sin.

Nor ought those who so denigrate the church and her calling be tolerated in any church. Indeed, the church that tolerates such teaching in its midst guarantees its own demise. They cannot be a blessing to

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62. Turretin, *Institutes*, XIV, 16, vol. II, p. 486.

63. *Ibid.*, XIV, 16, vol. II, pp. 489, 490.

64. See Appendix I for quotations illustrating the place of common grace in dominion theology and in the theology of all those who see the kingdom as broader than the church. On the basis of a perceived "common grace" they all believe the church has some sort of social and cultural mandate with respect to human society and civilization.

God's church who desire to use it only as a means to their own ends. They are like the man who marries in order to have someone to cook and clean for him but keeps his mistress (decked out in all her gold and glitter) on the side. Neither God the Father in His eternal decree, nor God the Son in His suffering, nor God the Holy Spirit in His presence, so view or use the church.

It must be emphasized, therefore, that CR is *not* just an eschatological position or a different millennial view. Like Dispensationalism, it is a system of belief, which at crucial points is directly contrary to the Reformed faith and to Scripture and cannot be tolerated in the church. The fact that CR is tolerated in many churches is an evidence of the weakness of those churches and the dishonesty of CR, which, with its view of the church, is nevertheless content to use it for its own ends. It must be eradicated, root and branch, from the churches if they are to prosper. There can be no neutrality!

### **The Danger of Reconstructionism**

We have often expressed our fears that CR, and even, to a lesser degree, postmillennialism, are dangerous in that they leave the church and the people of God exposed to the deceptions of Antichrist. We are convinced that the only earthly, social and political, "Christianized," religious kingdom of which Scripture speaks is that of Antichrist, and have warned of the possibility that those who follow CR teaching will find themselves working for *that* kingdom and deceived by it (II Thess. 2:10; Matt. 24:24). We recognize that CR mocks these fears, but we do not believe that we are merely "starting at shadows." The references in footnote 37, page 42, and the quotation from Francis Nigel Lee in Appendix I show clearly that CR is not only in danger of this, but is already cooperating with the antichrists of this world.

To add just another example, we recently received a copy of *Crosswinds* (vol. 1, no. 2, Fall 1992), a magazine published by Coalition on Revival, a "network of evangelical leaders from every major denominational and theological perspective who share a commitment to revival, renewal and reformation of the Church and society in America" (Masthead, p. 5). This Coalition was not a CR organization, though it included a number of prominent CR men. It did, however, share the CR view of church and kingdom. In this issue the Coalition published "25 Articles on the Kingdom of God," among them the following (p. 103):

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## 2. Definition of the Kingdom.

WE AFFIRM that the term Kingdom of God has several applications and may denote (a) the universal rule of Christ over all things, both redeemed and unredeemed; (b) the special, saving rule of Christ over His people; (c) the life, wisdom, holiness, power, and authority that Christ grants to His people; or (d) the permeating influence of the Word and Spirit in the world.

WE DENY (a) that the term Kingdom of God refers only to the providential rule of the Triune God, and (b) that Christ's rule and realm are limited to the Church.

In line with the view of the kingdom promoted by this organization and CR this issue of the magazine includes the following: (1) an article on the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, which suggests that joining the "European movement" is "an act of faith and commitment" (pp. 8-14); (2) a defense of the purely humanistic organization, the Boy Scouts of America (pp. 25-27); (3) an article on "The Prayer Revolution," that mentions uncritically "marching for Jesus," "intercession for the unborn," fasting as a "martial art," "Concerts of Prayer," and which reports with approval on a prayer meeting in Kansas City to which both "evangelical, pentecostal, and liturgical church leaders" and "five Native American Indian Chiefs" were invited (pp. 32-34); (4) an article carrying the title "Fresh Breezes," which is nothing more than an attack on the institute church and a plea for ecumenism (pp. 35-37); (4) a report on a "Prayer Summit" at which "an episcopal minister shared his burden for some Roman Catholic leaders who were unable to attend"—"We prayed," he says, "that they would be with us next time" (pp. 38, 39); (5) a proposal for reconstructing Hollywood by crusading for a "Motion Picture and Television Code" whose contents have no relation to the Christian faith whatsoever (pp. 85-87). All this is published, as the Editor says, in the interest of "Christians uniting to advance a Biblical worldview."

This kind of ecumenism, we would emphasize once more, follows from the CR view of church and kingdom and is the inevitable result of making the church merely a means or instrument of the kingdom. Nor can such a kingdom ever be the kingdom of Christ. Those who seek such a kingdom are already deceived and in danger of greater deception. ●

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# Book Reviews

**J. I. Packer, *A Biography***, by Alister McGrath. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1997. Pp.xii-340. (Price unknown, cloth.) [Reviewed by Herman C. Hanko.]

Although it seems strange to publish a major biography of a man while he is still living and working, and although this strangeness is compounded by the fact that the subject himself writes the "Foreword," this work by Alister McGrath does shed light on Packer's otherwise inexplicable involvement in the ECT (Evangelicals and Catholics Together). That may very well be the chief importance of the book.

McGrath gives a detailed description of the life of Packer and concentrates on some of the important events in Packer's work in the church.

Packer was born and raised an Anglican and has remained an Anglican to the present. He dabbled in the perfectionism of the Keswick Movement ("Let Go and Let God") but was cured by reading the Puritans; and he really made his reputation by a stinging attack on the Keswick Movement after his conversion from it. Packer

remained, at heart, a Puritan all his life, although of the John Owen-Richard Baxter type and holding to the Hodge-Warfield position on Scripture.

Packer was a lecturer at Tyndale House in Bristol, helped establish Latimer House in Oxford—established to promote evangelicalism in the Anglican Church, and returned to Trinity College in Bristol. In 1979 he left England and went to Regent College in Canada, a Plymouth Brethren institution, where he continues today.

All his life Packer was embroiled in controversy. Not only did he effectively demolish the claims of the Keswick Movement, but in Latimer House his first battle was to combat the union of Anglicanism and the Methodist Churches. From that moment on, he was embroiled in all the controversies troubling evangelicalism in England.

Perhaps one of the most serious of these battles was his disagreement with Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Lloyd-Jones advocated separatism, Packer did not. Packer, though somewhat on the sidelines, was involved in the confrontation

Britain. In the '70s Lloyd-Jones started the Westminster Conference in place of the Puritan Conference and refused to invite Packer to speak. Finally a bitter controversy with the liberal wing of the Anglican Church prompted Packer to leave England.

Although Packer would never commit himself on the question of the literal interpretation of Genesis 1, he did profess to believe in inerrancy. He defended the biblical position on women in office, which aroused fierce opposition, and he held to eternal hell against evangelicals such as Hughes, Stott, and Pinnock, who questioned the doctrine.

But the most interesting facet in Packer's life is his ecumenical involvement. McGrath points out that Packer's entire ecclesiastical life can be explained in terms of his "two-pronged approach": a loyalty to Anglicanism and a concern for trans-denominational evangelicalism.

It is quite possible that this two-pronged approach to affairs of the church was born in Packer early in his studies as an undergraduate at Oxford, where his study of George Whitefield led him to take Whitefield as "something of a role model, especially in relation to ecumenical activities and the fixing of priorities" (p. 22).

As early as 1970 Packer cooperated with Anglo-Catholics on some questions and issues in spite of disagreements. McGrath finds this related to Packer's involvement in ECT (p. 160). After he moved to Canada, Packer also had a hand in a four-day conference with Charismatics, in which a joint statement was issued which guaranteed that the things the Charismatics stood for would not create a rift in evangelicalism (p. 246).

There is something of a contradiction here in Packer's life. McGrath gives as Packer's reasons for leaving England: 1) The influence of Puritanism had run its course; 2) Free evangelical churches had turned from him under the leadership of Lloyd-Jones; 3) Evangelicalism in the Anglican Church was weakening; 4) A new approach to Hermeneutics bothered him; 5) The Charismatic Movement was taking over; 6) Under John Stott evangelicals had turned in a direction Packer did not want to go, and Packer had lost his influence. These reasons would not lead one to suspect that Packer would make his own personal peace with Rome.

Yet at the end Packer joined with ECT, and McGrath devotes the last part of the book to a discussion of it. McGrath gives a



number of reasons why Packer cast his lot with this group. Growing secularism (evidenced in the election of Bill Clinton in the US) and the growing militancy of Islam played a role. The moral chaos into which the world was plunging affected Packer greatly. The potential for trouble in South America, where evangelicalism was (and is) making major gains at the expense of Roman Catholicism was an element in Packer's decision. And the publication of a Catholic Catechism in 1994, which was orthodox in many respects, persuaded Packer that Rome had changed.

McGrath writes concerning Packer's involvement in ECT:

A number of leading evangelicals publicly endorsed the ECT statement, including, William Abraham, Os Guinness, Richard Mouw, Mark Noll, Thomas Oden, Pat Robertson—and Packer himself. In many ways, Packer here adopted the same set of principles in relation to dealing with Catholicism in 1994 as he had in his earlier dealings with Anglo-Catholicism within the Church of England around 1970. This is not a new development in Packer's thinking, but the extension of an existing understanding of the manner in which evangelicals should relate to

other Christians. It represents an excellent example of "grassroots co-belligerence." As Packer put it, the document "identifies the common enemies (unbelief, sin, cultural apostasy) and pleads that the Christian counter-attack on these things be co-operative up to the limit of what divergent convictions allow" (p. 270).

Packer's views on ecumenicity are further explained as follows:

In the spring of 1995, Packer took this approach (the approach of dialogue with dissenting groups) a stage further. He was invited to attend the Aiken Conference, organized by Orthodox Christians, which had been called to "test whether an 'ecumenical orthodoxy,' solidly based upon the classic Christian faith, can become the foundation for a unified and transformative vision to the age we live in." Packer's response to this question was strongly affirmative, and developed further his policy of "collaboration" within and across "great-tradition Christianity," in the face of opposition from fundamentalists within Protestantism, Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. Packer offered his readers a vision of a transcendent new togetherness

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resulting both within and across denominational line'. It was a powerful vision; it was also a controversial vision (p. 272).

Whatever kind of vision it may have been, Packer's name on the joint statements of ECT make me unspeakably sad. The truth of the matter is simply this: Packer (and those Protestants who signed the two joint statements now issued by ECT) have sold Protestantism and what it stood for through the centuries for a mess of ecumenical pottage. Their terribly erroneous presupposition is that Roman Catholicism represents in

some measure the cause of Christ. The fact is that Roman Catholicism has been for centuries and remains today an enemy of Christ and His church.

Yet, who can ever forget those wonderful books, "Fundamentalism and the Word of God" and "Knowing God." And who cannot but be thankful for Packer's "Introduction" to a reprint of John Owen's "The Death of Death ..." in which Packer eloquently came to the defense of sovereign election, limited atonement, and sovereign grace in the work of salvation? ♦

*Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*, by Mark A. Noll. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998. Pp. 335. (No price given) (paper). [Reviewed by Herman C. Hanko.]

The author, a noted church historian, has written this interesting book on the premise that most, if not all, of church history can be understood and interpreted in the light of twelve "turning points." It is true that the author begins by retreating a bit from this premise:

Attempting to select the twelve most important points in the

history of Christianity is a good exercise in itself. I have chosen the turning points treated in this book primarily because I think they reveal vitally important matters about church history, but also in part because these are events I know something about from my own teaching and reading. If the book inspires others to think about why the turning points found here are not as important as other possibilities, it will have been a successful book (13, 14).

The fact remains that the book makes a serious attempt to explain the whole of church history in terms

of these decisive moments or events in the life of the church. He almost succeeds....

A reader who is caught in this intriguing pursuit will be surprised to learn what twelve events are selected. A short journey through the book, a brief stop at each "turning point," and a sentence or two description of why it is considered a "turning point" will prove profitable.

The destruction of Jerusalem and the consequent independence of the church from Judaism is number one. Under this point, Noll treats the establishment of the canon of Scripture, the creation of the structure of church government, and the formulation of the ecumenical creeds.

Stop two is the Council of Nicea which defined the Christian faith concerning the crucial doctrine of the divinity of Christ and created the problem of the relation between church and state.

The Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon is next for it clarified orthodoxy in a unique way by beginning the translation of the truth from Hebrew concepts to Greek concepts. (The mention of Chalcedon is understandable; the reason for stopping is doubtful.)

So far so good, I think. But from here on things get a bit sticky. The next turning point is the estab-

lishment of the Benedictine Monastery because it was the real beginning of monasticism, was the most important event since the great commission (p.84), and greatly influenced for good all subsequent religious life.

The coronation of Charlemagne on Christmas in 800 is stop five. It is, claims the author, important for the development of the papacy and for the idea of Christendom.

Next comes the Great Schism between the Eastern Church and the Western Church in 1054 which divided the present Eastern Orthodoxy from Roman Catholicism.

Then comes the Diet of Worms, in which Luther made his stand for the sole authority of Scripture. Noll uses it as a jumping off point to describe the entire Reformation and has here an eloquent description of Luther's theology of the cross, first outlined at the Heidelberg Disputation. We can only say "Amen" to this choice.

But stop eight is dubious and also the ones that follow.

The English Act of Supremacy is important because it brought about the establishment of "self-consciously local, particular and national forms of Christianity" (179). The rise of Jesuit and Catholic renewal is given the honor of being a turning point.

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The conversion of the Wesleys and the establishment of a new piety is said to be the beginning of modern evangelicalism, and the relation between the pietistic movement and evangelicalism is here examined. The French Revolution of 1789 is interpreted as being the end of "Christendom" and religious responses to political, economic, and social questions. And finally the Edinburgh Conference of 1910 brings the list to a close.

The book is made more interesting and attractive by the inclusion of maps, charts, illustra-

tions, pictures, prayers, hymns, and quotations from ancient writings and liturgy.

The concluding chapter mentions some twentieth century turning points: the rise of Pentecostalism, the Second Vatican Council, the emergence of women into greater public visibility, Bible translations, and the survival of Christianity in Communist regimes.

Your list will be different, I am sure. But read the book for it is an interesting overview of the whole of church history. ♦

*Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. by James D. Bratt. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998. Pp. xiv + 498. \$29.00. (paper). [Reviewed by Herman C. Hanko.]

This important book, an anthology of Abraham Kuyper's speeches and articles, was prepared in the centennial year of Kuyper's Stone Lectures. It has some important things to commend it. It includes a brief biography of Kuyper; it has an introduction to each speech or article which explains the circumstances under which it was given and what is its main theme; and it includes material which has never before ap-

peared in English. This latter makes accessible to the English reader material from Kuyper which was heretofore unavailable.

One cannot very well go into a review of each speech and article. A few observations will have to suffice.

In his speech on "Uniformity: the Curse of Modern Life," Kuyper includes a discussion of the organic unity to be found in true diversity which is worthwhile in itself. And one wonders whether Herman Hoeksema's emphasis on the idea of "organism" may not have originally come from Kuyper.

The book includes a part of Kuyper's autobiography which

deals with his conversion. This is interesting reading. What is a bit disturbing is the fact that although this is *auto*-biographical, the editor, in the introduction, tends to spoof it a bit.

Several sermons are included, one Kuyper's farewell sermon in Utrecht. One is struck how these sermons contain almost no exegesis of Scripture.

Kuyper became involved in the Moody-Sankey revivals in England and praised them in a series of articles. Very shortly after these articles, Kuyper suffered a severe nervous collapse, which took him away from his work for fifteen months. The editor suggests that the two are related (p. 142).

Apparently Kuyper had second thoughts about these revivals, because after his health was restored, he wrote articles on Perfectionism and roundly criticized it.

Some material from Kuyper's *Gemeene Gratie* is included. The articles on this subject ran over a period of five years and were later published in three volumes. The editor, probably correctly, suggests that the development of Kuyper's common grace was related to his involvement in politics. It could very well be that, in fact, common grace was the justification for this involvement

and Kuyper's later coalition with the Roman Catholics which enabled him to become prime minister. The material included in the book will surely demonstrate why many saw Kuyper's common grace as a foundation and excuse for world conformity (p. 165).

Kuyper's speech on evolutionism reveals that he was "soft" on this heresy in the sense that he considered it possible that creation took place over long periods of time. But Kuyper does insist that Evolutionism and Christianity are two mutually exclusive systems and that trysting with Evolutionism is a source of danger to the church (p. 412). But his arguments are usually on the basis of science itself. And this always fails. Scripture is the rule of faith also with respect to creation.

This same weakness is shown in Kuyper's bitter and devastating attack on Modernism. It was a key speech which he made and forever severed any relation he may have previously had with Modernists. They hated him for that speech. Yet, the attack is launched on rational grounds and there is almost no reference to Scripture in it.

Kuyper's famous speech on "Sphere Sovereignty" is included in the book and ought to be read by anyone who has any regard for Kuyper at all.

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Taken together, the book demonstrates the vast learning of the man. It is sometimes mind-boggling. His penetrating insights into things lead one into unexplored areas of thought which are tantalizing to say the least. The book goes a long way to demonstrate the lengthy shadow Kuyper cast over the rest of the twentieth century. Kuyper was a great man.

*The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Church* (volume 1. *The Biblical Period*, volume 2. *The Patristic Age*), by Hughes Oliphant Old. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998. Pp. x-383 v. 1. \$35.00. Pp. viii-481, v. 2. \$42.00. (paper). [Reviewed by Robert D. Decker.]

These are the first two volumes of a comprehensive multi-volume study of the history of the reading and preaching of the sacred Scriptures. Old proposes to give us the history of the reading and preaching of Scripture from Moses to the end of the twentieth century. If Old is able to complete this ambitious project, and if the quality of the succeeding volumes is as good as the first two volumes, this series will quickly and deservedly replace the longtime, standard, three-volume *A History of*

He cannot be ignored. The church of Christ owes him a debt. It would be well that the church acknowledge this. And, last but not least, the book shows too what happens when a faithful minister of the gospel abandons his calling as minister and pastor to pursue a dream which Christ has not made the work of the church. ♦

*Preaching* by Edwin C. Dargan.

Old believes that preaching and the reading of Holy Scripture lie at the heart of the worship of the Christian church. He states his purpose in writing this history as follows:

So, then, the purpose of this work is to come to an understanding of how preaching is worship, the service of God's glory. We want to see how preaching in one age after another has been done as a sacred service. It is upon the doxological function of preaching, then, that we wish to focus, even though surely other dimensions of preaching will unavoidably come into view. Although we will elaborate our discussion with a great number of different answers from a great variety of times and places, our basic question will always remain very simple: How is

preaching worship? At the center of our discussion is, inevitably enough, Jesus.

Jesus came preaching.... At the center of Jesus' ministry was this reading and interpreting of the Scriptures, this proclamation that they had been fulfilled. He gave himself to us in his preaching as well as in the agony of his prayers, his baptism of fire, his drinking of the bitter cup, the suffering of his cross, and the victory of his resurrection. Jesus came preaching because he had been sent for this purpose by the Father. Similarly, Jesus sent his disciples out to preach: "As the Father has sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21). The earliest Church understood preaching to be at the heart of its mission... (v. 1, p. 7).

By studying the preaching of some of the greatest preachers in the history of the church, Old hopes to help contemporary preachers "recover what seems in our day to have become a lost art" (v. 1, p. 3).

Anyone looking for an excellent exegetical analysis of apostolic preaching will find it in volume 1. Old's fine analysis of Peter's Pentecost sermon (Acts 2), e.g., is by itself worth the price of the book (pp. 167-169). In volume 2 Old presents a first-rate history not only, but an excellent study of

the preaching of Cyrillic of Jerusalem, the Cappadocian Fathers, Cyrillic of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine, and many other of the "greats."

All these riches are given us in a fine, readable style of writing as the following quotation from volume one will indicate. This quotation is taken from Old's study of Paul's sermon to the Athenian philosophers preached on the Areopagus. Old is commenting on the apostle's concluding admonition wherein he tells the Athenians that "now God commands all men everywhere to repent." This is what Old says:

Polite apologetic has been put aside here. There was nothing diplomatic about telling the Athenians, of all people, that they were ignorant. To threaten the day of judgment was to reveal oneself as being hopelessly beyond the pale of polite humanism, and to affirm the resurrection was to kiss enlightenment a fond farewell. Be that as it may, essential to the missionary sermon has always been the call to repentance. No matter how disguised it may be, a call to repentance can never really be diplomatic or polite; it is always an affront to our self-sufficiency. The missionary sermon aims at baptism, even if baptism is not specifi-

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cally mentioned, and baptism is the sacrament of mortification (pp. 177, 178).

Each volume is enhanced by a detailed bibliography of both original and secondary sources and an index.

Pastors, teachers of Homiletics, but also lay persons will

benefit from these volumes. We fervently hope the Dr. Old is able to finish the series.

Hughes Oliphant Old served as pastor of a Presbyterian Church in Indiana for thirteen years. Currently he is a member of the Center of Theological Inquiry in Princeton, New Jersey. ♦

**Blame It on the Brain: Distinguishing Chemical Imbalances, Brain Disorders, and Disobedience**, by Edward T. Welch. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1998. 204 pp.\$12.99. (paper). [Reviewed by Robert D. Decker.]

This is a good book on a difficult subject, a subject which continues to occupy the attention of practical theologians, pastors, Christian psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and educators. The difficult subject is this: is what we call mental illness sin or sickness or does it partake of both? Our ministers and Christian school teachers ought to read the book carefully. They will find help in dealing with God's people, adults, children, and youth who experience depression, anxiety, and other like problems.

Welch, a counselor at the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation in Glenside, Pennsylvania and a Lecturer in Practical Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, states his goal with the book in these terms, "As Christians today, we want to avoid the ecclesiastical mistakes of the 1880s. This time, we want to listen to what people are saying about the brain, develop clear and powerful biblical categories, and bless both the sciences and the church in the process" (p. 26). While not agreeing with every detail of Welch's conclusions, this reviewer is convinced that Welch successfully achieved his goal.

The author offers two key definitions when he writes, "Any behavior that does not conform to biblical commands or any behavior that transgresses biblical prohibitions proceeds from the heart



and is sin," and, "Any behavior that is more accurately called a weakness proceeds from the body and is sickness or suffering. Sickness or suffering can also be caused by specific sin, but we must be very careful to have ample justification before we make such a link" (pp. 43, 44). The list of symptoms which can be categorized as physical or spiritual on the basis of the above two definitions is helpful (p. 45). Among the physical symptoms Welch lists: mental retardation, feelings of depression, feelings of panic, hallucinations, problems with attention and concentration, and mental confusion. Among the symptoms proceeding from the heart and which are therefore sinful, Welch lists: sexual immorality, lust, evil desires, filthy language, malice, greed, anger, rage, murder, strife, arrogance, boasting, disobedience to parents, unbelief, *et. al.*

In the third chapter, "Mind - Body: Practical Applications," (pp. 49-61) Welch considers, "... four practical principles that emerge from the mind-body discussion." These are:

- 1) The brain cannot make a person sin or keep a person from following Jesus in faith and obedience.
- 2) Each person's abilities—brain strengths and weak-

nesses—are unique and worthy of careful study.

3) Brain problems can expose heart (spiritual, RDD) problems.

4) Sinful hearts can lead to physical illness, and upright hearts can lead to health.

The reader will find very helpful chapters on Alzheimer's disease and dementia and head injury in Part Two, chapters 4 and 5, of the book (pp. 63-102). In these chapters we're told how to recognize the symptoms of these illnesses and injuries. The author offers as well a number of helpful suggestions on how to deal with the affected person and his/her family members.

Chapter 6 is a good, brief introduction to psychiatric problems. In this chapter Welch offers three important propositions:

1) "Psychiatric problems are always spiritual problems and sometimes physical problems." Surely no Reformed, Christian pastor or counselor would disagree with this.

2) "Psychiatric disorders sometimes respond to medication." In this helpful section the author points out that medications help some people and not others. He reminds us that these medications have side effects, some of which are long-term. In this connection

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Welch makes these points: "First, since we don't fully know the depth of someone else's suffering, we should be careful when offering our opinion about medication. It is easy to underestimate the extent of a person's pain. Second, we should remember that, in general, the alleviation of suffering is a good thing. And third, since the Bible does not clearly prohibit these medications, the issue is not whether medication is biblically lawful or unlawful; rather, the issue is how to make wise, informed decisions.... Whether a person takes psychiatric medication or not is *not* the most important issue. Scripture is especially interested in *why* someone is taking medication. And it is clear that medication is never the source of our hope. With these guidelines in mind, there is biblical freedom to try, or not to try, psychiatric medication" (pp. 111, 112).

3) "Psychiatric labels are descriptions, not explanation."

Chapter 7 is an excellent discussion of depression. In this chapter the author argues convincingly that "the basic steps of a biblical approach to helping them (depressed people, RDD) are similar to those you would follow to help people with physical problems.... First, you understand the experience of depression. Second, you

make tentative distinctions between physical and spiritual symptoms. Third, this distinction will allow you to focus on heart issues" (p. 115). Welch, while stressing the spiritual dimensions involved with depression, recognizes that, "depression *does* have physical symptoms." And, medical treatments of these physical symptoms can be helpful in easing or erasing these symptoms (p. 125).

A sane approach to this terrible problem, thinks this reviewer.

In chapter 8 the author deals with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). He offers many helpful suggestions for parents and educators who must deal with ADD children. Welch's comments on the "need for structure" are well taken (pp. 141, 142). The section on "Applying These Steps to Other Psychiatric Problems" (pp. 147, 148) is too brief to be of value and really begs the question, i.e., assumes what needs to be demonstrated.

In chapters 9 and 10 the author discusses biblically the sins of homosexuality and alcoholism.

There are a couple of weaknesses apparent in this book. One is that the author relies too much on secondary sources and another is that these sources, are often not the latest works. Some, in fact, date back to the forties, fifties, and

sixties. A good index and bibliography would have added to the

value of an otherwise very good book.



***The Book of Revelation (Revised)***, by Robert H. Mounce. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998. Pp. xxxvi+439. \$44.00 (cloth). [Reviewed by Herman C. Hanko.]

This commentary, a part of the revised set of commentaries belonging to the New International Commentary on the New Testament, is a strange book that took me completely by surprise. The author announces early that he is a firm believer in the premillennial position on Eschatology, but then proceeds to write a commentary which is helpful and worthwhile.

He informs us that he intends to argue for, because he agrees with, the futurist approach to Revelation. This is qualified a bit by a later assertion that both Revelation and Matthew 24 have a fulfillment near the time of their writing and a fulfillment at the end of history (p. 30). And this comes out in the book.

Some very interesting insights which we can glean from the commentary are the following.

He informs us that the common interpretation of the white horse which runs when the first

seal is opened goes all the way back to Irenaeus, although the author rejects it in favor of an interpretation which makes the white horse signify military conquest in general.

The judgments described throughout the book are, according to the author, judgments that take place throughout history and culminate in the end. The 144,000 are the new Israel, the New Testament church. This was an interpretation which surprised me, although Mounce is surely correct. The locusts of the fifth trumpet "have as their primary focus the ultimate conflict of God and Satan that brings history to its close" (pp. 190, 191). The sixth trumpet "portrays a plague of death brought upon people by the fire-breathing monsters from the underworld" (p. 197). Revelation 11:1-13 is "symbolic of the fate of the witnessing church during its final period of opposition and persecution" (p. 212). And Revelation 13 is a vision of Rome, but also of Antichrist.

Both the strength and the weakness of the commentary is the fact that it gives a detailed description of the vision, but is

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somewhat meager in the interpretation. But even this objection must be qualified, for the author follows the rule that the symbols of the book must be interpreted in the light of their use in other parts of Scripture. And his employment of this rule is very helpful.

One must be aware of a certain Arminian bias. In connection with the explanation of the sixth seal which, according to the author, has no future reference, he

writes: "No longer does the kindness and patience of God (intended to lead people to repentance, Rom. 2:4) restrain his righteous indignation against all who have, by their own free will, decided irrevocably for evil" (p. 304).

The price is rather steep, although not out of line with cloth-bound books in today's book market. It will be helpful in a study of Revelation. ♦

***From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition***, by John Witte, Jr. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997. x+315pp. \$24 (paper). [Reviewed by David J. Engelsma.]

Scholarly as this book on marriage is and objective as it tries to be, it is obviously occasioned by deep concern for the family in America today. The book is part of the series, "The Family, Religion, and Culture," which is devoted to a thorough study of the family in all ages and from many points of view.

Concern for the family in America and in Western civilization generally is well-founded. Witte makes every effort to be hopeful, but his conclusion is pessimistic:

It is hard to see the promise of these future benefits (for marriage in the West—DJE), however, in the current phase of the legal revolution of marriage in America. The rudimentary disquisitions on equality, privacy, and freedom offered by courts and commentators today seem altogether too lean to nourish sufficiently the legal revolution of marriage and the family that is now taking place. The elementary deconstructions and dismissals of a millennium-long tradition of marriage and family law and life seem altogether too glib to be taken so seriously. Yet the legal revolution marches on. And the massive social, psychological, and spiritual costs continue to mount up. The wild oats sown in the course of the American sexual revolution have brought forth

such a great forest of tangled structural, moral, and intellectual thorns that we seem almost powerless to cut it down. We seem to be living out the grim prophecy that Friedrich Nietzsche offered a century ago: that in the course of the twentieth century, "the family will be slowly ground into a random collection of individuals," haphazardly bound together "in the common pursuit of selfish ends"—and in the common rejection of the structures and strictures of family, church, state, and civil society (p. 215).

The cause of the dissolution of the family today is the view of marriage as merely a contract. This view took hold in America early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and became dominant in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Marriage is now regarded "as a 'terminal sexual contract' designed for the gratification of the individual parties" (p. 209). The result of this individualistic, man-centered view of marriage is that married life has become "'brutish, nasty, and short,' with women and children bearing the primary costs" (p. 214).

This has not always been the view of marriage in the West. Witte examines, in addition to the contractual model that prevails today, four other distinct models of marriage. They are the sacramental doctrine of the Roman

Catholic Church; Lutheranism's conception of marriage as mainly a social estate; the covenantal view of Calvinism; and Anglicanism's view of marriage and family as a small commonwealth.

The book is Witte's thorough, well-researched analysis of each of these five views of marriage in history. The analysis is theological, although Witte points out the civil, social, and legal implications of each of the models.

Of great interest and value are the solid historical research and the apt historical references: Calvin's "tepid endorsement of divorce and firmer prohibition against separation" (p. 105); Milton's advocacy of easy divorce and remarriage because, as his biographer put it, he himself "could ill bear the disappointment hee mett with by her (his recalcitrant wife—DJE) obstinate absenting: And therefore thought upon a Divorce, that hee might be free to marry another" (p. 179); the Anglican William Heale's paean to marriage:

Marriage of al humane actions  
is the one & only weightiest. It  
is the present disposall of the  
whole life of man: it is a  
Gordian knot that may not bee  
loosed but by the sworde of  
death: it is the ring of union  
whose poesie is Pure and

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endlesse. In a word it is that state which either imparadizeth a man in the Eden of felicitie, or els exposeth him vnto a world of miserie (pp. 174, 175).

Witte demonstrates that the history of marriage and the family in the West is degeneration: from binding sacrament to fickle contract.

But Witte's analysis must be challenged at exactly the crucial point of the *original* view of marriage in the Christian church. Witte's title begins with the Romanizing church of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and its construal of marriage as a sacrament. This was *not* the original "model" of marriage in the church and in the West that was influenced by the church. There was an earlier view of marriage, a view that prevailed for almost 1,000 years after the apostles. This view saw marriage as a lifelong, unbreakable bond symbolizing the relationship between Christ and the church, although marriage was not regarded as a sacrament.

The title, therefore, should have been, *From Bond to Contract*. Rome's 12<sup>th</sup> century view of marriage as a sacrament would then be a distinct stage in the decline of marriage.

Witte recognizes the historical fact, but does nothing with it.

In a very brief section of only four pages, which constitutes an introduction to the chapter, "Marriage as Sacrament in the Roman Catholic Tradition," he sets forth the doctrine of the early church culminating in Augustine.

Augustine's theory of the marital goods of procreation, fidelity, and sacrament was the most integrated Christian theory of marriage offered by the Church Fathers. But this theory was only a foretaste of the robust sacramental model of the High Middle Ages.... Augustine did not use the term "sacrament of marriage" in its later sense as an instrument or cause of grace instituted by Christ for the purpose of sanctification. For Augustine, the term *sacrament* meant only "symbolic stability." Later Catholic theologians would call marriage permanent because it was a Christian sacrament. Augustine called marriage a Christian sacrament because it was permanent (p. 22).

Useful as Witte's five models are, there is a more fundamental analysis of the doctrine of marriage in the history of the church and in the history of Western civilization. Marriage is either a bond established by God that is dissolved only by death or a contract arranged by the man and the woman

that is voidable at the pleasure of either.

It is noteworthy that, despite his avowed objectivity, Witte's last word is a powerful, almost impassioned, appeal to the biblical symbolism of marriage and family that pictures marriage as covenant-bond:

The family has specific "spiritual uses" for believers—ways of sustaining and strengthening

them in their faith. The love of wife and husband can be among the strongest symbols we can experience of Yahweh's love for His elect, of Christ's love for His Church. The sacrifices we make for our spouses and children can be among the best reflections we can offer of the perfect sacrifice of Golgotha. The procreation of children can be among the most important Words we have to utter (p. 219).



***Jesus Christ: Savior & Lord,*** by Donald G. Bloesch. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997. 304 pages. \$22.99 (cloth). [Reviewed by David J. Engelsma]

In this fourth volume of a projected seven-volume systematic theology, Donald G. Bloesch contends for the uniqueness and finality of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God become flesh, one divine person with two natures as confessed by Chalcedon. Bloesch defends the historicity of the virgin birth. Of the various theories of the atonement, which Bloesch knowledgeably catalogues and describes, he opts for "the classic and Latin views," that is, the doctrine of a "vicarious, substitutionary atone-

ment" that destroyed the powers of darkness (pp. 156, 157).

Bloesch takes his stand and argues his case, with constant reference to Scripture, in the face of the massive, pervasive assault on classic, creedal Christology in the churches today. As is also true of the earlier volumes in the series, a great benefit of the book for the student of theology is its erudite interaction with the leading theologians and theologies of the present day. The last chapter ("The Finality of Christ") is a foreboding account of the developed apostasy in the churches and of the corresponding godlessness of the nations of the West:

There is currently in the nations of the West a resurgence

of interest in the occult, a growing openness to Eastern religions and the rise of a naturistic mysticism. Pluralism is celebrated as something good in its own right; the destructive or demonic side of religion is conveniently overlooked. An inclusivistic mentality regards with disdain any appeal to a particular revelation or any absolutist claim to religious truth (p. 247).

The theology of Bloesch, however, will not be able to withstand the assault. As was evident in the preceding volumes, his theology does not rest on the solid foundation of an inspired Scripture, authoritative and reliable as the Word of God, and the Word of God only. For Bloesch Scripture is vulnerable to the criticism of the enemies inasmuch as it is an all too human word. The account of the fall in Genesis 3 is "figurative," not a real history but "primeval history." The result is Bloesch's candid denial of the doctrine of "inherited sin or guilt" (pp. 43, 44). But if man did not fall in Adam, why is Jesus Christ necessary, particularly in light of the relating of Christ and Adam in Romans 5:12ff.?

According to Bloesch, there are mythical elements in the Bible, extending to the record of events

attending the resurrection of Jesus (p. 128).

This doubt concerning Scripture shows itself in concession and compromise. Bloesch denies that belief of the historicity of the virgin birth is necessary for salvation: "Belief in the virgin birth is not necessary for salvation, since it did not form a part of the New Testament kerygma" (p. 104). While affirming the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the revelation of the true God, he is willing to recognize the world religions as "pointers to salvation.... The non-Christian religions should not be categorically or uniformly repudiated as agencies of damnation..." (p. 240). This is not the spirit or confession of the defender of the faith.

Bloesch informs us that he is developing "a centrist evangelical theology" (p. 11). It is emphatically not *Reformed* theology. Bloesch rejects total depravity; the enslaved will; predestination; and particular, sovereign grace. Of the greatest significance for Christology is his opposition to the Reformed doctrine that Christ died for the elect alone (pp. 167-170, 187). Bloesch's own view is paradoxical and incoherent. Christ died for all, but some will yet perish in hell. However, even in hell they are loved by God.



The paradox propounds heresy. The question that Bloesch must answer, but does not even try to answer, is this: if Christ died for all and if (as Bloesch has affirmed) the death of Christ was substitutionary atonement, how can (and *may*) some of those for whom atonement was made themselves pay for their sins in hell? Or this: if some of those for whom Christ died perish in hell, how could His death be substitutionary atonement? Or this: if Christ is the eternal Son of God in human flesh and if *He* died to redeem all, how can He fail and yet be the eternal God in human flesh?

The texts to which appeal is made in support of universal atonement are familiar: Titus 2:11; I Timothy 2:6; II Peter 3:9; and John 3:16.

Bloesch does not cover himself with glory in conducting his controversy with the Reformed faith. Unable to refute the Reformed theologians, he calls names: "hyper-Reformed" (p. 168).

In the intriguing chapter, "The Preexistence of Jesus Christ," Bloesch is right that the man Jesus Christ existed prior to the incarnation and that this existence was in the mind and decree of God. He is also right in finding the source of the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity in the triune life of God. But how does Bloesch escape subordinationism when he speaks of the second person's "humbling of himself" in the eternal, triune life of the Godhead? (p. 143). ♦

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