

The Word of God
for Our Generation

THE
Reformed
WORLDVIEW

David J. Engelsma
Herman Hanko

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Foreword



Angus Stewart

Everyone has a worldview, whether they are conscious or unconscious of having one and whether their worldview is relatively simple or sophisticated, consistent or inconsistent, true (i.e., biblical) or false.

Moreover, everyone *necessarily* has a view of themselves and the universe; God and man; right and wrong; the beginning, the meaning and the goal of all things—a worldview. Even if they deny the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and try to avoid thinking about many of the biggest issues of life, some sort of worldview, no matter how truncated or limited, is unavoidable.

The issue is what worldview will we hold? The worldview taught in the Scriptures and the Reformed confessions or one of the lying worldviews which suppress and pervert God's truth in unrighteousness and call forth His wrath from heaven (Rom. 1:18)?

This little book is designed to help Christians (and any others who may read it in God's good providence) to believe, understand, speak and behave in all spheres of life according to the gospel of the Lord Jesus revealed in the Holy Bible. In other words, its goal is that, by God's grace, our faith and life be more consciously conformed to a more completely and consistently Reformed worldview, over against the various Antichristian worldviews, especially those most prevalent and powerful in our modern, Western world. In this way, we will be obeying

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what Christ calls “the first and great commandment:” “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matt. 22:37-38).

There is a logic to the order of the chapters. Chapter 1 introduces, and gives an overview of, the Reformed worldview, while the next chapter explains the idea of the development of sin. Chapters 3-5 set forth our calling as regards various forms of wickedness: the “big lie” of postmodernism (ninth commandment), the ensnaring love of money (tenth commandment) and the ubiquitous promotion of promiscuity (seventh commandment) in our mendacious, covetous and adulterous generation. The final chapter of part 1 explains how the development of sin brings in a one-world Antichristian government.

These six chapters began life as the six main lectures at the biennial British Reformed Fellowship (BRF) Conference in Hebron Hall, near Cardiff, in Wales in the summer of 2010. After much transcribing, editing and even rewriting, they are presented here in a more permanent form and for a wider audience.

Our two main conference speakers, Herman Hanko and David Engelsma, emeritus professors of the Protestant Reformed Seminary in Michigan, USA, also preached at the Sunday services during the week-long conference. It was the will of the BRF membership that these fine sermons also be included in this book, especially as they dealt with issues related to our theme. In part 2, chapter 7, “The Unbreakable Scripture,” shows us the basis for our Reformed worldview: the infallible Word of God, while chapter 8, “The Call to Spiritual Cleansing,” summarizes our Christian life in this fallen, evil world as one of sanctification.

Saints from the various parts of the British Isles and several countries in continental Europe, N. America and Asia who had the privilege of attending the 2010 BRF Conference may require a word about the book’s title. The conference’s theme,

“The Word of God for Our Generation” is the subtitle, for the two main authors decided upon the more specific *The Reformed Worldview* as the main title.

The Reformed Worldview: The Word of God for Our Generation is the fourth BRF book co-authored by Profs. Engelsma and Hanko, the others being *Keeping God’s Covenant* (2006), *The Five Points of Calvinism* (2008) and *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (2010).¹

We hope that this new work is even more widely circulated and well received than the previous three BRF books! May it, too, serve the honour of our glorious triune God!

Rev. Angus Stewart
BRF Chairman

¹ All four of these books, plus many others by Profs. Hanko and Engelsma, as well as other excellent Reformed literature and box sets of CDs and DVDs, are available from the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church Bookstore (www.cprf.co.uk/bookstore). The distributors of *The Reformed Worldview* in N. America are listed opposite the Contents page. Most of the works of Profs. Engelsma and Hanko are published by, and available from, the Reformed Free Publishing Association (RFPA) in Jenison, Michigan, USA (www.rfpa.org).

PART 1: Chapter 1

The Reformed Worldview



David J. Engelsma

... All things were created by him [i.e., Jesus Christ, God's dear Son], and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist ... For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him ... whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven (Col. 1:16-17, 19-20).

Introduction

This book is an examination of important developments in the world of nations generally and in Western society in particular, in light of the Word of God. These developments loom large. They affect us all. To the Christian, they are threatening. They include the abounding of lawlessness; the abolition of truth and reality; wicked attitudes toward, and abuse of, money; thinking and practices regarding sex, for which the word “revolution” is not too strong; and the coming together of the nations of the world in one political entity.

The practical purpose of the book is twofold: instruction of the believer, especially the Reformed believer, how he or she is to view these developments in the light of Holy Scripture, and a call to Reformed Christians to respond rightly to them.

Such an examination of prominent, powerful developments in the world is proper, indeed necessary, for believers and their

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children. The Christian must know, not only the history of the church, but also the basic aspects of the history of the world that impinge on the church and her members. Reformed believers must be familiar, not only with the truths of Scripture, but also with the principles, or fundamental thinking, policies, and practices, of the ungodly world, with which the Reformed Christian must contend on behalf of the faith.

The believer must test the great developments of his day. All have a spiritual dimension, and the believer must “try [i.e., test] the spirits” (1 John 4:1).

In addition, the striking developments of our day that this book examines are foretold and explained in the Bible, as signs of the end of the world and of the coming of Jesus Christ. To refer only to what I call the sexual revolution, Jesus prophesied the abounding of lawlessness, as is the literal translation of Matthew 24:12. This abounding lawlessness includes the astounding approval and promotion of sodomy and lesbianism in Western society in the past few years.

The book calls attention to important aspects of the rapid development of the kingdom of the devil in our time. No small part of the development is the open, raging opposition to the kingdom of Christ. In light of this development, the book calls Reformed believers and their children to contend for the faith and to pursue the life of godliness in the midst of, and against, the development of godlessness and unholiness.

What we are seeing today is the all-out war between two great spiritual powers in the world. Augustine called these powers the city of God and the city of the devil, or the heavenly city and the earthly city, or the city of Christ and the city of men.

The city, or kingdom, of the devil has been in the world since the fall of the human race in Adam, as recorded in Genesis 3. Today, this kingdom develops into its full, final manifestation. The city, or kingdom, of Christ has been in the world since God

Himself proclaimed the promise of Christ's coming—and victory—in Genesis 3:15: "I will put enmity between thee [i.e., Satan] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

The kingdom of the devil has always opposed the kingdom of Christ. The opposition intensified at Jesus' ascension into heaven, when Satan, cast out of heaven, knew that his time was short (Rev. 12:12). Satan then launched his last, most furious assault on the kingdom of Jesus Christ, "to blaspheme [God's] name ... and ... to make war with the saints" (Rev. 13:6-7). Today, the thousand years of Revelation 20 are expiring. Satan is "loosed out of his prison ... to battle ... the camp of the saints ... and the beloved city" (vv. 7-9).

The theme of this book, therefore, is eschatological, that is, having to do with the things that take place shortly before the second, bodily coming of Christ.

In order to judge contemporary developments in Western society rightly, in order to withstand the godless thinking and rebellious practices of the societies in which we live, and in order to live wise, holy, and obedient lives, we do well to learn, or remind ourselves, as the case may be, of the Christian and Reformed worldview, or as it is sometimes called world-and-life-view.

What the Reformed Worldview Is

Although the word "worldview" is not found in the Bible and can seem philosophical and, therefore, intimidating to believers, the reality expressed by the word is biblical. It is also important to every Christian.

One's worldview is exactly what the word plainly indicates: his overall view of the world—the origin of the world, the history of peoples and nations, the meaning and purpose of the world,

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and his own place in the world. Worldview is the big picture within which each of us locates his own small place and according to which we determine what is a wise, right, and worthwhile life.

It is immediately evident how important worldview is for our life and behaviour. Suppose the worldview of a young person is that of atheistic, naturalistic, evolutionary scientism, that is, the worldview inculcated upon millions of young people throughout the world by the state schools and by the popular media. There is no God. Everything came into existence by blind chance. Man is the accidental product of biological development of primates who happened to be fitter than other animals. The end of every human is death, decay, and everlasting oblivion. The future of the universe will be either a stupendous explosion (or implosion), or its gradual cooling down, but destruction, in any case. The life of the young person, like that of every human, therefore, is meaningless, and utterly without hope.

With such a worldview, some young people will choose a life of irresponsibility and pleasure-madness—drunkenness, drugs, sexual indulgence, random violence. If they think at all, their mentality is, “Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.”

Others, whose thinking is not essentially different, although their lives will be more respectable, will devote themselves to living earthly life to the fullest and to sucking out of life the last drop of pleasure and comfort. Jesus foretold this way of life in His description of the days that precede His coming: “eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage” (Matt. 24:38). An old beer commercial expressed the worldview that produces this carnality, this stupefaction with the natural and temporal: “You only go around once.”

Others, seemingly more noble, but in reality as self-centred as their fleshly fellows, will pursue fame, so that their name many

outlive them. “To their lands they give their name / In the hope of lasting fame,” as a versification of Psalm 49 expresses the conduct that rises from the naturalistic worldview.

Other young people will kill themselves, as many are doing.

If, on the other hand, the worldview of a young person is that the God and Father of Jesus Christ made all and governs all; that he himself has been created by God and redeemed by Jesus Christ; that his life has purpose—the glory of God by seeking His kingdom; and that his end will be everlasting life, body and soul, in a new creation—the worldview of the Christian young person—well, then, he will fear God and keep His commandments all the days of his earthly life, as Ecclesiastes 12:13 describes the life produced by the godly worldview.

Biblical

The Bible may not use the term “worldview,” but it certainly constructs a worldview. It forms its worldview in every believing mind. My parents never used the word. Had I used the word in talking with them during my college days, they likely would have been suspicious, supposing it to express another notion of a college or university abandoning its Reformed moorings. But they had a worldview, even though they never took a college course, indeed, in the case of my father, could not attend high school. Theirs was the worldview of the Bible. They passed it on to all their children, and are still passing it on to their grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

In a booklet titled, “The Reformed Worldview on Behalf of a Godly Culture,” I define and describe worldview this way:

... a comprehensive, unified view of all creation and history in light either of the knowledge of the triune, one, true, and living God revealed in Jesus Christ, or in light of the unbelieving rejection of this God. This view of all things determines how one lives the whole of his or her

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earthly life in the world. The power of worldview is that it frames one's entire life.¹

The Reformed, Christian worldview, which is as rich as creation and as mysterious and full of wonder as history and one's own life, is simply the view of creation as made by the triune God for the purpose of His own glory in Jesus Christ. This purpose God realizes by governing history—His providence—unto the goal of the bodily coming of Christ at the end of the age, to raise the dead, conduct the final judgment, and dwell with His elect church in blessed covenant communion in a renewed creation, from which sin, death, and sorrow will have been banished.

What I have just described is the worldview of the Bible. The Christian worldview is authoritatively—and clearly—made known to all believers in inspired Scripture. The worldview of the Christian is God's own view of the world, of history, and of the place of each of us in the “big picture.” We may not invent our own worldview. If we do, our worldview is false. The consequences of a false worldview will be disastrous for ourselves and for all whom we mislead.

The worldview of the Bible begins, necessarily, with the origin of the world. The Bible refers to the created order sometimes as “world” (John 3:16) and sometimes as “all things” (Col. 1:16-18, 20). The origin of the world, or all things, is creation by God in six days (Gen. 1-2; Heb. 11:3).

The purpose of God in creating the universe—the next fundamental aspect of a right worldview—was His own glory through Jesus Christ. Specifically, the purpose of God was Jesus' redemption of an elect church and the reconciling of all things to Christ at Christ's second coming. “All things were created ... for him,” that is, for God's “dear Son: in whom we have redemption

¹ David J. Engelsma, “The Reformed Worldview on Behalf of a Godly Culture” (Grandville, MI: Faith and Grandville Protestant Reformed Evangelism Committees, 2005), p. 7.

through his blood” (Col. 1:13-14, 16). Ultimately, the pleasure of the Father in creating was that “all fulness dwell” in Jesus Christ (v. 19).

By His providential care and power, the triune God accomplishes His purpose in the history of the world. Every creature and every movement of every creature, whether the great event of a world war or such a small happening as the falling of a hair from our head, serves God’s grand purpose with all things. Cyrus the Persian and his empire—a great figure and power in history—were raised up by Jehovah God “for Jacob my servant’s sake, and Israel mine elect” (Isa. 45:1-6). But little sparrows are also included among the “all things” that God created for Christ and His church. Therefore, such an insignificant occurrence as the falling of a sparrow does not take place “without your Father” (Matt. 10:29).

The purpose of God with the world included the decree of the fall of the human race in Adam. This is implied in Colossians 1:16, which declares that God made all things, not for Adam, but for Jesus Christ, in whom we have the forgiveness of sins.

Basic to the purpose of God regarding all things, and at the heart of this eternal purpose, was the death of Christ.

The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done (Acts 4:26-28).

Ephesians 1:11, which is closely related to Colossians 1:13-20, teaches that God accomplishes His one, great purpose of gathering together all things in Christ by governing all things in history, strictly according to this purpose: “the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

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On the Christian worldview, creation and history have meaning and purpose. On the Christian worldview, the life of every Christian, no matter how insignificant according to the standard of men, has worth and value.

God is the meaning and purpose of the world!

The worth and value of every Christian's life are his or her glorifying of God by confessing and serving Him.

Worldview is *God*-view!

And the God in view is not some god or other, not any god whatever, not a higher power, not a supreme being, not an idol—whether Baal, or Nature, or Allah.

But the God of the Christian—and only right—worldview is the triune, one, true, and living God revealed in holy Scripture, as Scripture is understood and explained in the Reformed creeds. He is the God and Father of His incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, and the God and Father of all elect believers for Jesus' sake.

Worldview of Man

Against the Christian worldview, that begins and ends with God, is pitted today another worldview: the worldview of Man.

This worldview too is a comprehensive view of the world—a “big picture.” This worldview too speaks of a purpose, or goal, of the universe and history. This worldview too urges a certain kind of life for humans in light of itself.

But this worldview sees Man—Man apart from God—as the goal of all things, as the sovereign governor of all things, as the meaning of all things.

The dramatic development of this worldview has had a definite history in modern times in the West. The Renaissance of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries exalted Man. The Enlighten-

ment of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries declared the autonomy of Man. Modern philosophy has convinced the West that the only knowledge that is possible is that which humans themselves form in their minds on the basis of their experience of the material world by their senses (and philosophy is no longer sure of this knowledge, as we will see later in this book). And the worldview of Man derives from the contemporary crowning of Science as the absolute authority over all thinking and conduct.

The result of this development of worldview in the West is, as Nietzsche famously stated, that “God is dead.”

Especially two powerful factors contribute to, and buttress, the worldview of Man at the beginning of the twenty-first century. One is modern theology’s criticism of an inspired, authoritative Scripture. An inspired Scripture calls into question the autonomy of Man’s reason, the truth of Man’s scientific judgments, and the goodness of Man’s ethical decisions. With its criticism of God’s Word goes modern theology’s criticism of the God revealed in Scripture, particularly His sovereignty and His justice. His sovereignty is the lethal threat to the supremacy of Man. God’s justice, manifested in an atoning cross, exposes proud Man as a guilty, shameful sinner.

The second factor powerfully at work in forming and supporting the worldview of Man today is Darwinian evolutionary theory. This theory, which is of the greatest usefulness to the worldview of Man, and, therefore, is promoted vigorously and defended tenaciously, indeed, with the all-consuming passion once reserved for the true religion, renders the Creator-God null and void and makes Man the supreme being—lord over all. Especially does Darwinian evolution constitute Man his own lawgiver, determining for himself right and wrong, good and evil.

Because the State is the highest and most powerful instrument of Man, indeed, the embodiment of Man—Man writ as large

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as possible—the State increasingly dominates the worldview of Man. The State is Man *as saviour*—the welfare State. The State is Man *decreeing right and wrong, good and evil*. Hence, in the United States, the Supreme Court of the State decides that the murder of unborn babies, by the millions, is right and good. The State is Man *in the fullness of his glory*. Therefore, in the United States, in recent years, the president presents himself, or is presented by his handlers, with the connivance of the people, as virtually divine. The State is Man *as sovereign over all of human life*. It grasps, and is given, power over all of the life of the citizenry, not only order and defence, but also business and labour, education, welfare, media, and morals.

In the worldview of Man, Man is god, and the State with its personal head is the fullest manifestation of deity.

The worldview of Man does not only minimize the true God and leave Him out of the big picture. It is hostile to God. Increasingly, this worldview opposes God, denies God, and blasphemes God. Recently, the acclaimed British scientist Richard Dawkins has given expression to the hatred of God and, therefore, of Christianity on the part of the modern worldview of Man. Dawkins has done this in his wildly popular book, *The God Delusion*. The thrust of the book is that God does not exist; that despite His non-existence He is the worst evil plaguing the human race; and that, therefore, He must be destroyed, particularly in the hearts, minds, and lives of all humans. In a chapter titled, “The God Hypothesis,” Dawkins blasphemes God:

The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sado-masochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.²

² Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Black Swan, 2007), p. 51.

Jesus is “Yahweh[’s]... insipidly opposite Christian face.”³

Thomas Nagel, atheist professor of law and philosophy at New York University and co-belligerent with Dawkins in the war against God and the worldview that acknowledges Him, openly avows his hostility to God and his determination to exclude God from his worldview (and the worldview of all those whom he—Nagel—teaches):

It isn’t just that I don’t believe in God and, naturally, hope that I’m right in my belief. It’s that I hope there is no God! I don’t want there to be a God; I don’t want the universe to be like that.⁴

It is a striking feature of the quondam “Christian” West that it now turns on Christianity and Christianity’s God with derision and hatred. The agents of the West’s assault on Christianity are the men and women who shape the culture, form the thinking, and influence the decisions of the people—the teachers, television anchors and reporters, newspaper columnists, novelists, and judges.

Peter Hitchens announces, and demonstrates, the West’s enraged assault on God: “The rage against God is loose and is preparing to strip the remaining altars when it is strong enough.”⁵ Hitchens explains this aspect of the war of the worldviews.

God is the leftists’ chief rival ... If God is not dethroned and his laws not revoked, he represents an important rival to the despot’s authority, living in millions of hearts. If he cannot be driven out of hearts, total control by the state is impossible.⁶

³ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁴ Quoted in Peter Hitchens, *The Rage Against God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), p. 150.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 134, 211.

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The hatred of God by the worldview of Man ought not surprise the Christian. Man is fallen, depraved, and rebellious. Man is enslaved to the devil. The worldview of Man is, in fact, the conception of the devil.

Prophesied by Scripture

Scripture foretold the worldview of Man and its dominance in the last days. Prophesying what must precede the day of Christ, Paul warned that the man of sin will be revealed, “who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (II Thess. 2:4).

This is the prophecy of the personal Antichrist, who will establish and govern a world-kingdom of all nations before Christ returns. Antichrist will oppose God, to be sure, but he will oppose God by opposing “all that is called God, or that is worshipped.” He and his world-power will be radically anti-supernatural. The explanation is that Antichrist and the whole of the Antichristian world-power will acknowledge no god above Man. The man of sin will be a pure materialist and humanist. He will recognize only Man as god. He himself will be the apotheosis of Man: “shewing himself that he is God.”

In II Thessalonians 2:3-4, the apostle has his eye on Daniel 11:36-39. The passage in Daniel prophesies Antichrist as a king (not a clergyman!), who will “magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods” (v. 36).

The book of Revelation likewise reveals the developing world-power of Antichrist as expressing and serving the worldview of Man. The number of the beast, who blasphemes God and makes war with the saints, is “Six hundred threescore and six” (Rev. 13:18). The number does not identify Napoleon Bonaparte, or Woodrow Wilson, or Ronald Reagan, or Caesar Nero, or any past personage, as though 666 is the product of the value of

the letters of a particular name. The “wisdom” that counts the number of the beast is not some esoteric skill at playing silly games with names and numbers, the outcome of which are as many individuals as those playing the games.

In the Bible, 666 is a symbolic number. Six is the number of man, his life, and his world—*on his own, without God*. Literally, Revelation 13:18 reads: “It is the number of man.” It is not the number identifying a particular male, but the number that is symbolic of humanity apart from God.⁷

The beast of Revelation is Man in the fullness of his powers, *without God*. It is Man exerting himself to the fullest extent of his considerable powers, enhanced by extraordinary abilities bestowed on him by Satan, to establish a world-kingdom approximating the kingdom of God. It is Man striving to become God to the utmost of his power.

The number 666 comes as close to seven as possible. Seven is the number of man *with God*, in the fellowship of the covenant of grace. Seven is the number of Jesus Christ and, therefore, of the kingdom of God. Close as it comes to the number of Jesus Christ and His kingdom, 666 falls short, decisively and fatally short. Antichrist will be a mere man. His kingdom will be merely human. He will fall; it will fail.

These biblical prophecies of the full, final development of the worldview of Man and of the kingdom of Man that the worldview envisions, seeks, plots, and realizes are now being fulfilled, especially in the nations of the West. These are the nations that, according to Daniel’s visions, are the successors of the old Roman empire, that put Christ to death and persecuted the apostles, the ten horns on the head of the dreadful, fourth beast (Dan. 7:7, 23-24).

⁷ The Greek is *arithmos ... anthroopou esti*. There is no definite article with *anthroopou* (man), and the word for man is generic—man, or humanity—not the word referring to a specific male, for instance, Nero.

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This worldview of Man, now dominating the entire societal and cultural landscape in the West, manifests the essence of sinful human nature from the beginning. The fall of the race in Adam was our yielding to the temptation, “Ye shall be as God, knowing [in the sense of determining for yourselves] good and evil” (Gen. 3:5).⁸ Then, in a godlike manner, we declared our autonomy: “As God, we decide that eating the forbidden fruit is good, and right,” regardless of what God has commanded.

Today, similarly, in a godlike manner, a majority of black-robed Supreme Court Justices of the United States of America, representing the nation and expressing the wisdom of the great universities, the divinity of the prominent churches and theologians, the thinking of powerful politicians, and the will of the people, decree, “As God, we judge that the murder of millions of unborn humans is good, and right, regardless of what God has prohibited by His law, both in Scripture and in nature.”

Cruel

I note in passing that the worldview of Man is murderous—cruelly murderous. When Richard Dawkins defends the worldview of Man by condemning God, particularly in His revelation in the Old Testament, as bloodthirsty, infanticidal, and malevolent, he plays the hypocrite. The God of Scripture, both Old Testament and New, is just. In His justice, He is awful to guilty sinners, but He is never bloodthirsty and cruel, whether to infants or adults. He does not take delight in the death of the wicked, but in the turning and living of the wicked (Eze. 33:11). As the God of mercy, in the Old Testament as well as in the New, He has opened up a way of salvation for every sinner who turns to Him

⁸ “As God” is the correct translation of the Hebrew, not “as gods,” as is the translation of the Authorized Version. Our original sin was not merely the desire for a piece of forbidden fruit, but the will to be God. The act of disobedience that carried out this will was revolution aiming at the dethroning of God and the enthroning of Man.

for pardon and life. Such is His mercy that this way of salvation is His own incarnate, crucified Son.

Bloodthirsty and cruel is the worldview of Man, of which Richard Dawkins is a zealous advocate. Without a qualm, the worldview of Man coolly sanctions the murder of babies in their mothers' wombs, and even the greeting of them at birth with the cold steel of the instruments of death, though the babies are innocent before the law of the land. It was the worldview of Man that callously tortured and murdered millions of men, women, and children in Hitler's "Third Reich," in Lenin's and Stalin's Communist state, and in Mao's regime.

Soon, the worldview of Man will shed the innocent blood of those who "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17). If Richard Dawkins has not by that time already fallen into the hands of the God whom he knows and hates, he will be an enthusiastic cheerleader of the persecution. Look closely at the gleeful mob of Revelation 11:10, and you will spot the grinning face of Richard Dawkins.

Worldview of Common Grace

Before I mention, and briefly describe, some of the main features of the biblical, Christian and Reformed worldview, I should take note of a theory of Christian worldview that has seduced many. This is the worldview of a common grace of God. It differs sharply from the worldview I have sketched.

The worldview of common grace sees the church and the world of the ungodly—believers and unbelievers—cooperating to bring about a good, godly, even Christian, society and culture. It has a vision of a "Christianized" society. This worldview so possesses its devotees that they devote themselves to building first a Christian society, then a Christian nation, and finally a Christian world, always in cooperation with the ungodly. According to the worldview of common grace, the Christianizing

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of culture is one of God's two purposes with creation and history, the other being the salvation of a church. To achieve His purpose of Christianizing culture, God gives a Christianizing grace to both reprobate unbelievers and elect believers. Hence, "common" grace, in distinction from "particular," saving grace, which God gives only to the elect.

This theory of Christian worldview was formulated and spread by the Dutch theologian and politician, Abraham Kuyper.⁹ The Christian Reformed Church in North America adopted this worldview, and made it binding on all its members, by synodical decision in 1924.¹⁰ Such was the commitment of the Christian Reformed Church to its worldview of common grace that it disciplined ministers and consistories that rejected that worldview. Many evangelicals approve the worldview of common grace and aggressively pursue its agenda.¹¹

The worldview of common grace must be mentioned in any discussion of Reformed worldview, because it is, without a doubt,

⁹ See Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1953), which is the publication of his lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1898. The full exposition of his common grace worldview is Kuyper's three-volume *De Gemeene Gratie* [ET: *Common Grace*] (Amsterdam: Hoveker & Wormser, 1902-1904). This work has not yet been translated into English.

¹⁰ For the three points of common grace adopted by the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 and the Reformed, biblical, and creedal criticism of them, see Herman Hoeksema and Herman Hanko, *Ready to Give an Answer* (Grandville, MI: RFPA, 1997), pp. 35-159.

¹¹ Among the prominent evangelicals who hold and promote the worldview of common grace are Charles Colson and Richard J. Mouw. In *Christianity Today*, Colson wrote, "Christians are agents of God's *saving* grace—bringing others to Christ ... but we are also agents of his *common* grace: sustaining and renewing his creation, defending the created institutions of family and society, critiquing false worldviews" ("Reclaiming Occupied Territory," *Christianity Today* [August, 2004], p. 64). Mouw has recently renewed the proclamation of the common grace worldview of Kuyper and the Christian Reformed Church in his book, *He Shines in All That's Fair: Culture and Common Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001). For the Protestant Reformed response to Mouw, see David J. Engelsma, *Common Grace Revisited: A Response to Richard J. Mouw's He Shines in All That's Fair* (Grandville, MI: RFPA, 2003).

the prevailing theory of worldview in the Reformed churches and Christian schools. Its influence extends widely in evangelical circles as well.

I need not devote much space to criticizing the worldview of common grace as thoroughly unbiblical, as devoid of any basis in the Reformed creeds, and as destructive of the spiritual separation and warfare between church and ungodly world and between believer and unbeliever. For God is now exposing this worldview. The judgment of the worldview of common grace is the history of this worldview.

The worldview of common grace has been a colossal failure. It has not Christianized Abraham Kuyper's Amsterdam, much less the Netherlands. On the contrary, it has ruined Kuyper's Free University and helped to plunge the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN)—churches largely formed by Kuyper—into the abyss of the false church.

Neither has the worldview of common grace Christianized Grand Rapids, Michigan, the centre of the Christian Reformed Church. On the contrary, the mind of the common grace worldview is relentlessly destroying the Christian Reformed Church and its college. Having opened itself to the ungodly world—sharing the grace of God and working together on God's grand project of Christianizing the world—the Christian Reformed Church is conformed to the world (Rom. 12:2).¹²

As for the deleterious effect of the common grace worldview upon evangelicals, on the basis of this worldview and in the interests of this worldview, leading evangelicals are now uniting with Roman Catholics and, thus, at the very least minimizing the necessity of separation from the Roman Catholic Church. One

¹² In evidence of this melancholy observation, see Engelsma, "The Reformed Worldview," pp. 31-32.

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in the common grace of God, evangelicals and Roman Catholics will together fight the culture wars to make America Christian.¹³

The main reason why Reformed believers may safely ignore the worldview of common grace at the beginning of the twenty-first century is that it is now a pathetic irrelevancy. The juggernaut that is the worldview of Man rolls over the common grace worldview as Hitler's panzers rolled over the French in World War II. In its wake, it leaves Reformed churches criticizing Scripture; proclaiming universal, resistible saving grace, or sheer universalism; and placing women in ecclesiastical office. The juggernaut leaves Reformed Christian schools teaching evolutionary science (at the expense of the historicity of Genesis 1-11 and the inspiration of the Bible) and discovering the "goodness" of sodomy and lesbianism.

One worldview, and one only, can stand against the worldview of Man: the worldview of the sovereign God of Scripture, as He is revealed in Jesus Christ in an infallibly inspired Bible. The kingdom of Christ withstands and defeats the kingdom of Man. And it does so by the irresistible, invincible grace of the Spirit of Christ in the hearts and lives of elect believers through the gospel.

Main Features of the Reformed Worldview

I have already asserted that the Christian worldview is biblical, that is, made known in the Bible. It is not the product of the speculative thinking of some theologian or philosopher. As the biblical worldview, I have contended, it is God-centred. The Christian worldview is *of* the triune God, *through* the triune God, *about* the triune God, and *unto* the triune God (Rom. 11:36). The

¹³ The defence of and plea for the uniting of evangelicals and Roman Catholics are found in *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission*, ed. Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus (Dallas, TX: Word, 1995). Colson appeals to Abraham Kuyper's alliance with Roman Catholics in order to "bring moral and social reform to the Netherlands" (p. 39).

Christian worldview is not mainly, much less exclusively, about man and his happiness. It is about God and His glory.

Lordship of Jesus

In addition, the Christian worldview honours Jesus Christ as Lord. According to Colossians 1, God's one purpose with the creation and history—"all things"—is Jesus Christ: "all things were created ... for [Jesus Christ]" (v. 16). "[Jesus Christ] is before all things," in the counsel of God (v. 17). God's purpose is that Jesus Christ "have the preeminence [in all things]" (v. 18). "It pleased the Father that in [Jesus Christ] should all fulness dwell" (v. 19).

This is grand worldview!

This is the explanation of the existence of the universe!

This is the philosophy of history!

This is the meaning of life for all of us!

Jesus Christ is the purpose, the reason, the meaning of all inasmuch as He is the beginning of all: "All things were created by him" (Col. 1:16). Jesus Himself declares, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending" (Rev. 1:8; 22:13).

Therefore, the calling of every one who holds this worldview is to confess, obey, serve, and honour Jesus Christ with every breath, in every word and deed, and in every sphere of earthly life. The Christian worldview—the *Christian* worldview—finds a vague worldview of "Judeo-Christian principles" utterly unacceptable. The Jews of the "Judeo" principles deny that Jesus is the Messiah. The Christian worldview condemns the worldview of common grace, which, by its own admission, leaves Jesus Christ out of the picture—out of the *big* picture.

The kingdom of Man, arising out of the worldview of Man, hates and opposes Jesus Christ. The beast of Revelation 13—Anti-

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christ in its full reality: person, world-kingdom, and ecclesiastical component—is the creature of the dragon of Revelation 12. The dragon is Satan. His purpose is the destruction of the man child, Jesus Christ (vv. 1-5). After the exaltation of Jesus Christ and the casting of Satan out of heaven into the earth, Satan concentrates his attack upon Jesus Christ as He is present in His church and its members. They have the “testimony of Jesus Christ” (vv. 6-17).

According to Revelation 19:19, toward the end of history the beast gathers his forces “to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army,” that is, against Jesus Christ in His kingdom on earth.

In the worldview of Man, Man is lord. The autonomy, the lordship, the absolute sovereignty, of Man himself is fundamental to the modern worldview.

Antithetical Worldview

Clearly, the book of Revelation defines the Christian worldview as antithetical. An important feature of the Christian worldview is that it is antithetical. The Christian worldview sees history as spiritual struggle and warfare between two divided peoples, the seed of the woman, who are elect believers and their chosen, spiritual children, in Jesus Christ, among all nations, on the one hand, and the seed of the serpent, who are reprobate, ungodly unbelievers, willing slaves of their subtle master, on the other hand.

Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck expressed the Christian worldview’s understanding of history this way: “The essence of history has been laid in a mighty conflict between darkness and light, sin and grace, heaven and hell.”¹⁴

¹⁴ Herman Bavinck, *Wijsbegeerte der Openbaring* [ET: *Philosophy of Revelation*] (Kampen: Kok, 1908), p. 119. The translation of the Dutch is mine. Bavinck contributed to the fatal compromise of this view of history by his advocacy

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The division of the human race is due to the regenerating grace of God in the seed of the woman, according to His eternal counsel of predestination. This division necessarily occasions mutual hatred and warfare. The issue is God. At the very dawn of the history of the sinful human race, God's Word of gracious promise not only spoke of, but also caused, the division of the race: "I will put enmity between thee [i.e., Satan] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it [better: He] shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15).

The warfare between Satan's human minions and the saints is on the foreground in Revelation, which sketches the history of the present age in terms of the persecution of the early New Testament church by the Roman empire. This warfare will culminate shortly before the second coming of Jesus in the last, great battle of Satan and his kingdom, which arises out of the worldview of Man, against the true church and her members: "Satan shall ... gather ... together [the nations] to battle ... the camp of the saints ... and the beloved city" (Rev. 20:7-9).

We believers are at war! We are under attack from the citizens of the kingdom of Man. We on our part resist them, and counter-attack, with the spiritual armour and weaponry of the Word of God (Eph. 6:10-18; II Cor. 10:3-6).

In contrast to the antithetical nature of the Christian worldview, the worldview of Man strives for the overcoming of all divisions among humans, so that there may be oneness under the proud banner of Man.

The false Christian worldview of common grace sins against the antithetical, Christian worldview of Scripture. It nullifies the spiritual separation and warfare between the two seeds. It

of the worldview of common grace. See his *Algemeene Genade* [ET: *Common Grace*] (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans-Sevensma, n.d.). Common grace reduces the "mighty conflict between darkness and light" to an ignoble truce in which everything becomes grey.

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unites them in a commonality that is nothing less than a “grace” of God. It assigns them a task that is nothing less than making society and the world “Christian.”

Life as Pilgrimage

The Reformed worldview instructs the Christian that he is a pilgrim on the earth. The Christian outlook on life is that of pilgrimage.

The Christian is to be active in the world, in all institutions and ordinances—marriage and family, business and labour, church and civil government, education. He may use and enjoy every creature, as I Timothy 4:4 teaches: “Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused.”

Because he is active in the world as a servant of the Lord Christ, he must be diligent in his activity—hard-working, honest, faithful, reliable, and as able as lies in his powers. What the apostle enjoins upon Christian working men applies to all the Christian’s conduct and relations:

[Work] with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men (Eph. 6:5-7).

The Reformed worldview is not “world flight.” This was the serious error of the ascetics in the early history of the post-apostolic church, as more recently of the Anabaptists of the Reformation period.

The ascetics and Anabaptists taught that the material world is inherently evil, so that the Christian life consists of fleeing earthly life as much as possible: “forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats” (I Tim. 4:3). The apostle condemns these teachings as “doctrines of devils” (v. 1). Created by

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God in the beginning, the material world and its ordinances are “good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving” (v. 4). Indeed, the earthly creation, all its creatures, and all its ordinances were made by God *for believers*: “which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of *them which believe and know the truth*” (v. 3). To try to live earthly life by running out of the world is not only impossible, but also a slap in the face of the Creator.

Jesus’ prayer for His disciples was “not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (John 17:15).

At the same time, the Reformed Christian is a pilgrim on the earth. His citizenship is dual. He is a citizen of Great Britain, Ireland, France, Portugal, the United States, or some other earthly nation. Of this nation, he is a good, upright, loyal, tax-paying, non-revolutionary citizen, for Christ’s sake.

He is also a citizen of the heavenly kingdom of Jesus Christ. This citizenship is primary and lasting. All his life, the believer is consciously on the way toward this heavenly country, his eternal homeland. His earthly nation has his allegiance. His heavenly country has his heart.

Although its life is already in the believer’s heart by the Holy Spirit and although it already takes form in the instituted church (which is why the worldview of Man detests and attacks the church, and why the believer loves the church, regardless of its imperfections), the kingdom of Christ in its perfected reality is above, where Jesus Christ is, at the right hand of God in heaven. The Christian pilgrim reaches his fatherland only through the swelling Jordan of death—first in the soul at the moment of death and then, fully, at the resurrection of the body in the day of Christ.

That the Christian is a stranger and a pilgrim does not only mean that he is estranged from the wickedness of the ungodly

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and moving in the opposite spiritual direction from those guided by the worldview of Man.

The Christian is not only a stranger and pilgrim with regard to the wicked world. He is also a stranger and a pilgrim with regard to this earth, his earthly nation, and earthly life itself. Hebrews 11:13 attributes to faith the confession that believers are “strangers and pilgrims *on the earth*.” The country they desire, and “seek,” is not Canaan in the Old Testament, or the United States in the New Testament, but a country “better” than any earthly country, that is, “an heavenly” (vv. 14-16).

As a pilgrim, the Christian is never absorbed in earthly life. He never sets his heart on earthly relations, including marriage and family, though they are dear; on earthly pleasures, no matter how legitimate and sweet; on earthly treasures, regardless how vast and valuable; on earthly achievements, be they never so impressive. He has a wife as though he had none. He weeps over earthly calamities as though he did not weep. He rejoices over earthly pleasures and successes as though he did not rejoice. He buys and owns possessions and properties as though he did not possess them. He uses this physical world while sitting loose to it (I Cor. 7:29-31).

Earthly life is not all there is. Earthly life is not the main thing. Earthly life is brief. Earthly life is not the goal. A *successful* earthly life is not the goal for the believer. Indeed, a successful earthly life is a temptation to lose sight of the goal. Therefore, God mercifully plagues our earthly life with sorrows, sicknesses, and struggles, so that we keep our eye of faith on the goal: the heavenly country, the “city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10), “an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (II Cor. 5:1).

Earthly life is only the way to the goal.

Pilgrimage is basic to the Christian worldview. When Jesus described the evil of the human race at His second coming, on

account of which multitudes will perish, He said that the majority will simply be at home on the earth, wrapped up in earthly pursuits and pleasures: “For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage” (Matt. 24:38). Against this temptation—the giving up of pilgrimage—the disciples of Christ must “watch” (v. 42).

According to the correct translation of Philippians 3:20, our citizenship is in heaven. The sense of this citizenship so grips us that we are always looking for the coming of the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ.

For the worldview of Man, in contrast, earthly life is all there is. The worldview of Man is materialism. Death ends human existence (declare the advocates of the worldview of Man, although they know better, and tremble at the prospect of judgment to follow). Therefore, the worldview of Man is both meaningless and hopeless, no matter how its proponents—Richard Dawkins, and Bertrand Russell before him—try to put a good face on it: “One can lead a happy and fulfilled life without supernatural religion.”¹⁵

Upon the worldview of Man, and the vain life lived in its shadow, Ecclesiastes passed judgment long ago—judgment that expresses the conviction and feeling of every human heart: “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.”

The truth of pilgrimage also exposes the worldview of common grace. Although the worldview of common grace pays lip-service to heaven, pilgrimage is foreign to it. Usually, even perfunctory service by the lip is lacking. In the typical expositions of the worldview of common grace, there is no mention of pilgrimage. One can hardly be seeking the heavenly city when he is engaged in the work of building a good, godly, and even Christianized city on earth. At home in a Christianized earthly nation, one with all the other inhabitants by the (common) grace of God,

¹⁵ Dawkins, *God Delusion*, p. 395.

only with difficulty can one perform, or even think, the role of stranger and pilgrim.

“Not Many Noble”

Yet one other fundamental feature of the Christian worldview is its presentation of the Christian life and work as generally ordinary. The life envisioned by the worldview of the Bible is that of the lowly, insignificant, unnoticed believer.

There is place in the Christian worldview for the occasional Christian genius and for the rare Christian accomplishment that captures the attention of the world—an Augustine and a Luther; the music of a J. S. Bach; the godly rule of that rare bird, a Christian prince.

But the worldview of the Bible does not emphasize such people and deeds. Rather, the biblical worldview puts a premium on the very ordinary, unsung, but holy life of believers who are for the most part the lowly and insignificant of this world. Their confession of Jesus Christ; their pure worship of the triune, one, true God at church on Sunday; their faithful marriages; their godly, orderly family life; their responsible behaviour at work and play; their deeds of help to the needy in the name of Christ—these are the characteristics of the life that the Christian worldview produces, praises, and exhorts.

The worldview of Man, in contrast, extols the famous, the glamorous, the powerful, the successful. On the one hand, it recognizes only the glorious achievements of the specially gifted—the political victory, the musical hit, the athletic accomplishment, the scientific breakthrough. On the other hand, it is permissive of every lawless and vile deed on the part of the masses, especially sexual lawlessness and perversity.

Also the worldview of common grace, in its obsession with “culture,” tends to extol only the learned, the artists, the wealthy, the doctors, the lawyers, the authors.

Colleges in the thrall of the worldview of common grace never give an award to the factory worker for raising twelve children in the fear of God, faithfully serving the church and the Christian school, and shining as light in a world of darkness.

God will give the ordinary believer an award. Scripture calls it the “reward.”

Giving a cup of cold water in the name of Jesus Christ is a worthy deed in God’s estimation and, therefore, in the estimation of the Christian worldview (Matt. 10:42).

... not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence (I Cor. 1:26-29).

Application to the Life of the Christian

Church Membership

Application of the truth of the Christian worldview must begin with the calling of every Reformed believer and child of Reformed believer to be a lively member of a true, instituted church of Jesus Christ. It is nothing less than astounding that much discussion of the topic of worldview by professing Christians completely ignores the duty of church membership.

The Christian worldview demands that God be glorified as the chief end of man. Man glorifies God, above all, in the public worship of the true church.

The Christian worldview honours Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, the beginning and end of all God’s ways in creation and

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history. Jesus Christ is honoured, above all, by the preaching of the pure doctrine of the gospel by the true, instituted church.

In addition, the Spirit of Christ works through the preaching of the gospel by the true church to impress the worldview of God on our believing mind and through the sacraments to *fix* the Christian worldview more deeply on our mind. By the preaching and sacraments, the Spirit empowers us to live the Christian worldview as a life of obedience to God's law. Worldview is not only theory; worldview is life.

The power of the Christian worldview is grace—the one, mighty grace of God in Jesus Christ. God gives this grace to elect believers and their children by the *means* of grace, in the instituted church. This grace is the strength of believers and their children to withstand the considerable force of the worldview of Man, as it is the wisdom to penetrate the subtlety of the worldview of Man.

Unto this catholic visible Church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world (*Westminster Confession* 25:3).

From Generation to Generation

Second, Christian parents must pass on their worldview and its life to their children and grandchildren. The church helps with this instruction, because the children of believers are also members of the church, by the covenant goodness of God. In obedience to the charge of Christ, she feeds and nourishes Christ's "lambs" (John 21:15).

But parents must inculcate the Christian worldview in their own children, by instruction, discipline, and example, from their earliest years: the truth of God in Christ; the origin of all things; the coming end of all things in the day of Christ; Christian values; the wise and right way of life; the spiritual warfare in our

day between the two worldviews and kingdoms. “Ye fathers ... bring [your children] up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).

God wills that His truth be passed on from father to child.

For the rearing that passes the Christian worldview on from generation to generation, sound marriages and peaceful homes are necessary.

Where they are possible, good, Christian schools are a demand of the covenant. They are of inestimable value for the teaching of the Christian worldview as it applies to all branches of knowledge and to all the ordinances of earthly life. With a concern for the transmission of the Christian worldview to the children of believers (even though it did not use, or likely even know, the term), the Reformed church order that was adopted at Dordt in the early seventeenth century included the requirement of Article 21:

The consistories shall everywhere see to it that there are good school teachers, who not only teach the children to read, to write, to speak, and the liberal arts, but also instruct them in godliness and in the [Heidelberg] Catechism.¹⁶

Satan is the real enemy of the Christian worldview. He is also the power behind the scenes promoting the worldview of Man. Knowing the importance of the godly rearing of children for the maintenance and perpetuation of the Christian worldview, Satan exerts himself to destroy marriage and the family and to use the state schools, which are mighty engines of the worldview of Man, to educate the children of the nations of the West in the worldview of Man.

¹⁶ Church Order of Dordt 21, in Joh. Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkenordening* [ET: *Brief Explanation of the Church Order*] (Kampen: Kok, 1923), p. 87. The translation of the Dutch is mine.

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Indicating his rage against the Christian worldview, and what the advocates of the worldview of Man have in store for Christians, Satan now threatens to rip the children of believers out of their homes and out of Christian schools. Richard Dawkins quotes with approval his colleague, the psychologist, Nicholas Humphrey.

Parents [read: *Christian* parents] ... have no God-given licence to enculturate their children in whatever ways they personally choose: no right to limit the horizons of their children's knowledge, to bring them up in an atmosphere of dogma and superstition, or to insist they follow the straight and narrow paths of their own faith. In short, children have a right not to have their minds addled by nonsense, and we as a society have a duty to protect them from it. So we should no more allow parents to teach their children to believe, for example, in the literal truth of the Bible ... than we should allow parents to knock their children's teeth out or lock them in a dungeon.¹⁷

Reason for Living

Third, although we are called to fight the worldview and kingdom of Man, our main calling is positive. Rightly understood, the book of Ecclesiastes is about worldviews—two of them. One is the worldview of Man—the worldview of Man apart from God. Upon it and the whole of human life lived by it, Ecclesiastes passes the verdict, “Vanity of vanities.” There is no reason for living. Life makes no sense. Life has no purpose. Life is futile.

The other is the worldview of God—the worldview of God as the end of men and women. Privileged with this worldview, one has a calling. The calling is positive: “Fear God, and keep his commandments” (Ecc. 12:13). This calling, carried out, not apart from earthly life and its ordinances, but in earthly life and

¹⁷ Dawkins, *God Delusion*, pp. 366-367.

its ordinances, gives life meaning, purpose, and value. Every believer has a reason for living.

Hope

Finally, the application of the truth of worldview to the Christian life is hope. Worldviews promise future victory to their adherents. This is their appeal and power. All worldviews except the Reformed worldview lie when they promise victory to their adherents. The worldview of Nazi Germany and its “Third Reich,” that was to last for a thousand years, lay shattered in the rubble of Berlin and in the broken, burning body of the suicide, Adolf Hitler. The worldview-dreams of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin were dashed in the collapse of Russian Communism. The worldview of common grace is already exposed as a dismal failure.

Likewise, the worldview of Man in its fullest development will go down in the end to inglorious defeat. God will destroy the Babylon that the worldview of Man rears up toward the end of history. Nothing of its splendour will remain (Rev. 18). The little stone that is the kingdom of Jesus Christ will grind the kingdom of Man to powder, and the wind of the wrath of God will blow the powder away (Dan. 2:34-35).

The worldview of the Christian gospel will endure and conquer. The kingdom of this worldview is everlasting (Dan. 7:13-14, 27). Its foundation is the righteousness of God in the cross of Jesus Christ. Its king is the risen Jesus Christ, to whom God has given all authority and in whom God has worked all power (Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:19-21). Its power is sovereign, invincible (saving, kingdom-building) grace, that is, the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ (Eph. 6:10-20).

Every man, woman, and child who holds and lives the Christian worldview, by faith in the promise of the gospel, will share in the victory of the worldview: the resurrection of the body and living and reigning with Christ in the new creation (Phil. 3:21; Rev. 3:21).

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In the hope of this victory, they live, work, endure, suffer, and die.

This hope, God does not put to shame.

PART 1: Chapter 2

The Organic Development of Sin



Herman Hanko

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned (Rom. 5:12).

Introduction

A crucially important Word of God for our generation is this judgment of Scripture: sin is all-pervasive and is getting worse all the time.

This judgment flatly contradicts the opinion of unregenerate man who proudly lists his own accomplishments, but it also contradicts what much of the church world today concludes as it makes its own evaluation of history.

Evolutionism is an optimistic heresy, which assures us that the path of evolutionary development is ever upward towards a better life. Life may have its occasional setbacks, but a gloomy prediction for the future, they say, is a denial of principles of their theory. To this chorus of optimism many in the church join their voices. Those who hold to the theory of common grace are confident that God graciously restrains sin in the unregenerate so that they are able to perform good in the sight of God. This good of which they are capable enables the saints to join with unbelievers in making this world a better place to live. Much of the discussion in our home while our children were

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going to college concerned the legitimacy of believers joining with unbelievers in making this world a better place by fighting its evils and labouring to discover and apply solutions to social problems. According to the common grace advocates, by engaging in this vast enterprise one was truly a Calvinist, and by his labours the kingdom of God would be realized here in the world.

Postmillennialism has much the same dream. By the dedicated work of Calvinists, we are told, gradually the principles of Scripture, if not the Reformed faith, will permeate every sphere of society with the leaven of Scripture and gradually realize heaven here on earth as the world is brought under the rule of Christ. To dispute this position is to be a pessimist, a “kamikaze Christian”—as one man called me—and to be so heavenly-minded that one is of no earthly use.

Against all these views is the biblical teaching that the world is not getting better and better, but is, as a matter of fact, getting worse and worse. Nor will there be any change in this rapid deterioration of the morality of the world; on the contrary, as sin grows worse, history will finally culminate in the one man of sin, Antichrist. The Word of God to this generation is not therefore: “Get out and work to solve the social problems of this life.” It is rather that Word of God in Revelation 18, a chapter which depicts graphically the gospel of Babylon’s fall:

Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities (vv. 4-5).

If the church has one word to speak to the world today, it is the word of the ancient preacher, Enoch, whose preaching, Scripture tells us, was this:

Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly

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deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him (Jude 14-15).

The truth of Scripture is not that sin decreases, but that sin becomes worse. This is vital in our Reformed worldview.

The Wrong Reasons for Optimism

There is a great deal of optimism in our times about the future of our planet. If one points out the problems that face our generation, the solutions are quick in coming. In a world torn by war, the United Nations is a powerful agency for peace and has had remarkable success in preventing the devastation of another world war. Life is made increasingly pleasant through advances in technology that have reduced the burden of physical labour with many machines that do the work for us. Technology has not only provided us with many leisure hours, but has also produced countless devices and methods to occupy our leisure time with entertainment and with more lengthy vacations in more exotic places. Medicine has steadily advanced and more and more diseases are being conquered by the miracles of diagnostic equipment and treatments once undreamed of. Modern communications shrink the world to manageable size. Space exploration opens new frontiers for science to conquer. Social problems seem gradually to be solved as the churches, schools and governments take upon themselves the task of healing racism and redistributing wealth so that poverty disappears and crime is curbed.

These, we are told, are worthy goals. The true Christian is interested in these things and is called by Scripture to join with the non-Christian world in pursuit of these goals. The theological ground for working with the world for common goals is laid in the doctrines of common grace and postmillennialism. There is room for cooperation with the wicked. There is the possibility that true Calvinists can join with unregenerate people, for there

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is much good out there and to ignore it is foolish. After all, what can possibly be wrong with working with such an organization as Right to Life to remove the evil of abortion? What can possibly be wrong with working together with anti-pornography groups to rid the world of this foul plague? Is it not contrary to all that is Christian to refuse to join an organization whose goal is to clean up a neighbourhood where drugs, crime and prostitution are rampant?

If one interjects into these optimistic portraits of the future a reminder of global warming, shrinking glaciers, polluted environment, the response is quick to come: But with your diligent cooperation with scientific advances, we can overcome these problems and avoid disaster.

Now, it ought to be apparent that there are really two questions involved in all of this: Are the stunningly successful accomplishments of science and technology evidences that the world itself is getting better? Are the men who are responsible for these mighty deeds truly doing good, that is, good in the sight of God, good of which God approves? Are their goals identical with the goals of God and His plans for this creation?

Both questions can be answered if we understand the biblical doctrine of the development of sin.

The Truths Underlying the Development of Sin

The whole concept of the development of sin must be understood in the context of the truths of total depravity and of the sovereignty of God.

We must look at this matter of total depravity first.

The Scriptures teach the doctrine of total depravity. That is, the Scriptures teach that the natural man, apart from grace, is as wicked as he can be. He has no redeeming qualities from a moral and ethical point of view. There is no way in which he can be

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morally worse than he is. No efforts of man to modify that doctrine can alter the clear and unmistakable language of Scripture.

Total depravity means two things. On the one hand, the natural man is incapable of doing anything pleasing and approved in the sight of God. Every thought, word and deed; every activity, within and without, is disgusting and damnable to God. On the other hand, man can and does only war against God, corrupt His truth, seek to overthrow His rule and defy His every commandment.

Total depravity also means that all man does is wicked because his entire nature (body and soul) is corrupted and depraved. From a moral and ethical point of view, it is impossible to find anything good in man. The development of sin does not mean that in earlier times man was not as bad as he is now, but that, with the passing of the years, his moral character deteriorates. Since his fall into sin in Paradise, man has been totally depraved and will continue to be such to the end of time.

The second point that needs to be made is that God is absolutely sovereign over all that takes place in this creation, including the sin of man. That is, He controls the development of sin by His providence and directs sin to His own end and purpose.

That sovereign control over sin means that God restrains sin in the lives of the wicked. Scripture surely teaches a restraint of sin. Scripture does *not* teach a restraint of sin that is due to God's favourable attitude towards the reprobate, nor does Scripture teach a bestowal of grace by an operation of the Spirit in the heart of the reprobate by which sin is restrained. But in His providence, God does restrain sin. He does this in several ways. He restrains the sin of individuals by determining the time in the history of the world in which they are born, as well as the circumstances of their birth. He restrains the poor from committing the sins of the rich. He restrains the citizen from committing the sins of magistrates. He restrains those born before

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Christ from committing the sins of our modern age. Noah could not sin with a TV set, a radio, or an automobile; and Constantine the Great could not sin with missiles and atomic bombs.

Further, God restrains sin by an individual's personal characteristics. A brilliant scientist can sin with tools that a grocery clerk knows nothing about. A strong man can sin in ways in which a sickly man cannot. And a parent can sin and does sin differently from a child.

Further, nations are also controlled in their expression of sin by the providence of God. Hitler and Germany sinned in ways in which the British Isles did not sin. China sins in ways quite different from Australia. In the one, sin is restrained more than in the other. And God is sovereign over it all.

Thus, when we speak of the development of sin, we are not speaking about degrees of depravity, nor are we speaking about differences in the circumstances of life that enable one to sin more than another. But we are speaking of the *expression* of a sinful nature in the lives of people, of nations, of races, of the human race. Sin itself develops.

The *Organic* Development of Sin

The title of this chapter is, "The *Organic* Development of Sin." What is meant by the term "organic" in this connection?

The meaning of this term is that all the manifestations of sin throughout the human race develop from one root sin. That root sin is, obviously, the first sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

There are different ways of describing that sin, depending on the viewpoint from which that sin is considered. It was, for example, the sin of obeying the devil rather than obeying God. It was the sin of pride in which Adam considered himself to be wiser than God when it came to choosing from which tree to

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eat. It was man's lust to be able to determine for himself what is right and what is wrong. In that respect, obeying the lie of Satan, he aspired to be like God. It was the sin of covetousness, which made the forbidden fruit eminently desirable. (1 John 2:16 describes sin as "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.")

But most fundamentally sin in Adam was a conscious and deliberate choice no longer to represent God and the glory of God's name in God's creation, but to represent Satan and the cause of Satan in this world. It was Satan's purpose in tempting Adam to make the creation Satan's own kingdom in which he would rule as sovereign. Adam, knowing this, determined to join the ranks of the hosts of hell to assist them in accomplishing their purpose.

All sin that manifests itself in the human race develops from or, better, is a development of, that one root sin of Adam. We must be conscious of this. If we believe in total depravity, then we believe too that every deed of man, no matter how magnificent it may appear to us and no matter how much it may benefit the human race, is intended to further the cause of Satan and make of this present creation the devil's kingdom. Man will assist Satan in banishing God from His own world and bringing God's creation into the service of sin.

How Sin Develops

It is an important part of the development of sin in the history of the world that this development is always in connection with the "cultural mandate." The so-called cultural mandate is found in Genesis 1:28:

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

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In general, that cultural mandate meant that Adam and Eve were to populate the earth and rule over it. But they were to do this in such a way that all the treasures and powers that God had put into the creation were to be used for man's enjoyment and the glory of God. Or, to put it a little differently, they were to be used by man to give all glory and praise to God and, in doing so, to enjoy the wonders of God's world.

The fall of man had a drastic effect on the carrying out of the cultural mandate. The calling remained the same as it was when given to Adam and Eve, but the carrying out of the command of God in a sin-cursed creation was much more difficult; and man twisted the cultural mandate so as to use God's creation with all its powers and treasures in the service of Satan and sin.

Over the course of the world's history, man has laboured diligently to discover the treasures of this creation and the powers God has put in it. Treasures of iron, aluminium, rubies, diamonds, silver, gold and a multitude of others have been mined from the earth. The powers of wind and water, of heat and cold, of electricity and the atom have all been discovered and put to use so that all these are now subservient to man.

But no longer does sinful man consider the creation to be God's world, given to man to use to glorify Him. Man now claims it as his own and conspires to develop the theory of evolution to prove that the creation is his possession. And so he uses all that he has discovered and developed for himself and for the service of sin. Fundamentally, though not always consciously, man is working for the establishment of Satan's kingdom. His goal is to establish here in the world a kingdom over which Satan rules supreme and man can do as he pleases without having to face the consequences of his sin. Each discovery of another power in the creation and each development in science and industry comes under man's dominance to be used as man sees fit.

The desire to make the creation his own is also the explanation of man's efforts to build hospitals, orphanages, homes for the

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aged, shelters for the homeless; and this is the reason why man tries desperately to solve the social ills that afflict mankind and the diseases which drag man off to the grave. He wants a kingdom in which all the effects of the curse are erased, all the evils of the world dispelled, and a kingdom in which he can sin to his heart's desire but still enjoy life to the full.

As new powers in the creation are discovered and new applications of these powers are invented, man finds new ways to express the depravity of his heart. While the fear of pregnancy, for example, was formerly a deterrent to fornication, now the ready and legal availability of “safe” abortion and birth control methods permits man to indulge in all the lusts of his sinful flesh without, he thinks, the need to suffer the consequences. Yes, there are sexually transmitted diseases, but modern medicine has also found the cures for these or ways to avoid them. And so immorality becomes so all-pervasive that marriages are destroyed, homes are left a wreckage, and children are harmed beyond description. But even these things can be taken care of: free access to divorce and remarriage, provisions for children, state care of abandoned children, welfare for the needy—all these tools are thought to provide avenues for unbridled sin.

While in former days, the outward expression of sin was curbed because modern inventions were not available to man, now television, radio, the internet, cell phones and all forms of rapid and world-wide communication have opened the doors to sins unthought of even in my childhood.

Is the world getting better? Is crime decreasing? Is the problem of war solved? Is family life stabilized? Are social ills being brought to successful ends? Do men love their fellow men more now than one hundred years ago? Countless dreams of labourers for a kingdom of Christ here in the world go up as a wisp of smoke before the realities of life. It takes a man walking through life with his eyes closed to pass graveyards, hospitals, homes for the demented, ruined families, and corruption in every level

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of society, and yet say, “Every day we are getting better and better and utopia is just around the corner.” The cultural mandate is being carried out, but with each passing advance in carrying it out we come another step closer to moral chaos.

It is my judgment that the kingdom of Antichrist will succeed in putting such a veneer on the world’s ills and sins that Satan can claim, with some plausibility, that he has succeeded (where Christ has supposedly failed) to bring about a heaven here on earth. In that kingdom all the powers in God’s world will have been discovered and put to use, all the implementation of those powers will have been fully realized, and there will be no more for science to do. The world will have attained. But the cup of iniquity will then have been filled and the world will be ripe for judgment.

The final sin of the wicked world is the persecution of believers. Throughout history the wicked have persecuted the church, but have been somewhat restrained by their preoccupation with inventions and with the cure of social problems. But when the kingdom of Antichrist is realized, and the wicked are convinced they have attained their ultimate goal, they can turn their full attention to the church. If they are to make this world Satan’s kingdom, they must obliterate the witness to the kingdom of Christ proclaimed by believers. And so they must destroy the church so that the witness of the church is silenced.

But that is the ultimate sin, the one sin than which there is no greater. The church is the bride of Christ, His beloved, those for whom He shed His blood, the salvation of whom is the one goal of His sovereign rule over all history. When the wicked abuse, mutilate and batter His bride, do you think He will stand by unmoved? His fury against the wicked will burst out in the dreadful judgments He has reserved for those who fill the cup of iniquity. The wicked have given expression to their depraved natures in every way possible, and there is nothing left to do but to destroy them.

Other Ways the Cup of Iniquity Is Filled

But there are other ways in which this cup of iniquity is filled. God is sovereign and even the development of sin is under His control.

We must remember that throughout all of history the gospel is being preached. And, although it is corrupted by the false church, the true church proclaims loudly and clearly that the wicked world is not in charge of this creation, but that the creation is God's, that it must be used for God's glory, and that Christ will come to rescue God's creation from the grasp of the wicked and do this by destroying them and their wicked plans.

But the wicked scorn that gospel and reject it in their pride. Yet the gospel is a power to harden as well as to save. And as the hardening power of the gospel does its work, the wickedness of man is increased. His hatred of the gospel and of all that belongs to Christ becomes more and more evident. You know how the witness of the truth to a man who rejects the truth increases his rejection in proportion to your continual witness, until his fury knows no bounds. That hardening too is a development of sin.

Further, it is clear from Romans 1:18-32 that God punishes sin with more sin. The sin of idolatry is, according to Romans 1, a sin that God punishes with homosexuality. God gives them over to the filthiness of this vile sin as a punishment for their disobedience. Drug use, overuse of alcohol, repeated fornication—all these and more lead to yet greater sins as God gives the sinner over to his sin.

In connection with the erection of the tower of Babel, we read:

And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will

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be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do (Gen. 11:5-6).

The confusion of tongues was God's restraint of sin. His purpose was to prevent the Antichristian kingdom from being prematurely established, for in it "nothing will be restrained from" men. But when the kingdom is finally established, nothing is indeed restrained from wicked men any longer. Sin pours out of a corrupt source as sewage from a toilet. Sin reaches its awful climax.

God's Purpose in the Development of Sin

As I have been at great pains to emphasize, God is sovereign and does all His good pleasure. He sovereignly determines this development of sin. What is God's purpose in this?

As sin progresses in horror and intensity, the full evil of man's sinful heart is revealed. Man may put on a cloak of piety and claim to be religious, especially within the false church. The world becomes very religious, and as proof of their religion they show their concern for the weak, the down-trodden, the poor and the afflicted. They show their compassion for the suffering and their understanding of the sorrowing. But all this is only intended to achieve their own wicked goals and to establish the appearance of a genuine brotherhood of man in the world.

But God rips away their mask of hypocritical piety and demonstrates how evil man's depraved nature really is. As sin develops, man is given over to yet greater sin, until in his defiance of God and all that belongs to the kingdom of Christ, man cannot express his sin in any more ways. He has shown how wicked he really is.

God insists that this be done so that when judgment comes and the wicked with all their works are destroyed, He is vindicated. The judgment at the end of time is the theodicy—the justifica-

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tion of God in all He does. Hell is a horrible place: everlasting banishment from God, everlasting suffering. But no one will ever be able to say that the punishment is too great, out of proportion to the crime, and that God is unjust in His destruction of the wicked. Even the wicked themselves will confess that they deserve what they receive and every knee shall bow and confess that Jesus Christ is the righteous Lord (Phil. 2:10-11).

But Zion is redeemed through judgment (Isa. 1:27). By means of these judgments upon the wicked, those faithful to God's covenant are delivered from all the wickedness of a corrupt world. They themselves, marvelling at the wonder of the cross of Christ that has saved them from this horror of judgment, will see the greatness of the grace of almighty God shown to them. They will rejoice in their Christ and praise their God who graciously gives them the new creation in which the glory of God shall cover the earth from sea to sea (Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14).

What then is God's Word to this generation?

To the wicked, this is God's Word:

Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him (Jude 14-15).

But to those who believe in Christ, God's Word is, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4).

PART 1: Chapter 3

The Abolition of Truth



David J. Engelsma

Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? (John 18:38).

Introduction

During the judgment of Jesus by Pontius Pilate, there was a significant exchange between God’s Messiah and the representative of the Roman world-power. The exchange concerned truth. In answer to Pilate’s question whether He was a king, Jesus declared that the purpose of His coming into the world was to witness to “the truth,” and that every one who is “of the truth” hears Jesus’ voice. Pilate responded, “What is truth?” (John 18:37-38).

John Calvin thought that Pilate’s question was “an expression of disdain ... [and] mockery.”¹

Pilate certainly was not sincerely seeking after the truth. His question was cynical. It expressed the conviction of learned, sophisticated Roman and Greek civilization that there *is* no such thing as truth. At the same time, and for this very reason, Pilate’s question was despairing. Doubt of truth inflicts despair—despair not only of knowing truth, but also of life.

Therefore, the claim of Jesus to know the truth and the devo-

¹ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, vol. 2, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949), pp. 212-213.

tion of His life and labour—and now His death—to the truth are, to Pilate, ridiculous.

Pilate's cynicism concerning the existence of truth and the possibility of knowing truth immediately manifested itself in wicked behaviour. Knowing Jesus to be innocent, Pilate nevertheless condemned Him to death. If truth does not exist, if there is no such thing as truth, there is no objective standard of justice and injustice, of right and wrong, that a judge is bound to observe in his judicial decision. If this seems to be good for society—Jewish life under Roman rule and, ultimately, the empire—or if this seems good for Pilate's own position, a judge may condemn an innocent man to die.

Justice in a court of law depends upon truth.

That exchange between Jesus and Pilate illustrates the conflict between the true church and ungodly, Western nations and societies at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The true church confesses the truth. Truth exists, as an objective reality. The church knows the truth. The church's one, grand purpose is to bear witness to the truth. Bearing witness to the truth implies exposing and condemning all that opposes the truth as falsehood and lie. It also implies judging all those who reject her witness as being of the lie.

Western nations; their politicians, educators, writers, jurists, moviemakers, television producers, and newsmen; and society at large echo Pilate's cynical question about truth. Western society, however, is bold to put Pilate's question in the form of its implied positive statement: Truth does not exist. Western nations in the twenty-first century do not only reject the truth. They abolish truth.

It is one thing—an evil—defiantly to oppose God, whom one acknowledges. It is another thing—a development of evil—to

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declare that God does not exist and that the very idea of deity was a foolish, or malignant, invention of priests and clergymen.

It is one thing—an evil—rebelliously to disobey the law. It is another thing—a development of evil—to declare that there is no law for humans, and then to live so.

The abolition of truth is a definite, powerful, pervasive movement in the West. The movement has prominent, influential proponents in all areas of society, including the churches. The movement is known as “postmodernism.”

No examination of contemporary developments, especially in the West, in light of the Word of God, may ignore postmodernism. Some may not have heard of postmodernism. All have observed its effects. Indeed, all are feeling its effects. Its influence pervades the churches, and not only the emergent churches, which, by their creation of their own theology and worship according to what feels good to them, show themselves the ecclesiastical progeny of postmodernism. Wherever ministers, theologians, and church members plead for tolerance of and respect for errors, whether of doctrine or of behaviour, the spirit of postmodernism, rather than the Spirit of Christ, reigns.

Reformed Christians who suppose that a treatment of postmodernism is philosophical, over their heads, and far removed from the everyday life of themselves and their children are mistaken. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how the development of wickedness known as postmodernism fulfils biblical prophecy of the intensifying of the spiritual war of Satan against Jesus Christ and His church in the last days. Resistance to postmodernism is an important aspect of the struggle of the church and her members against the kingdom of the lie at the end of the ages.

In order to resist postmodernism, Christians must know what the evil is.

I urge readers of this book to take my description of postmodernism seriously. I will attribute to postmodernism notions that will strike many as sheer absurdity, as contrary, not only to the Bible, but also to common sense.

The teachings of postmodernism are absurd. They come down to this, that there is no reality, no truth. Postmodernism is the abolition of truth. These teachings are the necessary implication of the teaching that God does not exist—the height of absurdity. The fool has said in his heart, and in his writings, “There is no Truth.”

Nevertheless, the postmodernists are in dead earnest with these teachings. Satan has blinded them to believe these things, to live according to them, and to witness to them aggressively, so that the entire human race will believe them and live according to them. This is their goal. They will achieve it. The whole world will be committed to the abolition of truth. Increasingly, this is the case already. The exception will be the relatively few who know God, and are known by Him.

About “twenty-first-century America,” a mild critic of postmodernism has recently written that it “is rapidly becoming a post-modern place.”²

What Postmodernism Is

Postmodernism is a worldview. It is a way of viewing the universe, all of history, and one’s own life. It is another “big picture,” a comprehensive view of everything, like Christianity. It intends to convert everyone to this all-encompassing view, so that everyone believes it and behaves accordingly.

Postmodernism is a recent worldview. It dates from about the 1970s.

² Heath White, *Postmodernism 101: A First Course for the Curious Christian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), p. 17.

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Nevertheless, it rises out of, and is a development of, the modernism that came to dominate the nations of the West from about AD 1700 to AD 1900.

Modernism

Modernism taught that God does not exist, or, if He does exist, has nothing to do with the world, history, and human life (Deism). There is no need to take God into account in all man's thinking. Basic to this denial of God was unbelieving criticism of the Bible as merely a human book.

Modernism taught that the material world is the only reality, and that man can know the world by his reason. By his reason—his properly functioning mind—man can discover the secrets of nature, including himself, and create science. Science would be the saviour of the race. All will be healthy and happy.

Fundamental to modernism were freedom and individuality. Modernism would make every individual autonomously free—free from ignorance; free from all earthly authority, priests and pastors, but also kings and nobles; and, especially, free from the God of Christianity.

Modernism came to vivid expression in the French Revolution of 1789. The motto of the revolution was “liberty, equality, fraternity.” What drove the revolution, however, was the war-cry, “No God, no master.” The revolutionaries enthroned the goddess Reason in Notre Dame Cathedral, and, not insignificantly, fornicated on the pews.

Although not so radical (though Thomas Jefferson freely allowed that the tree of liberty must repeatedly be irrigated by human blood—lots of human blood), the American Revolution also was modernistic. It was devoted to the life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness of every individual, by *unaided reason*. The god of the Declaration of Independence was not the living God

of the Christian religion, but the remote and irrelevant deity of Deism.

Charles Darwin's theory of evolution was a huge advance for modernism, inasmuch as it accounted for man apart from creation by God; made man the goal and crown of evolution and, therefore, of the universe; and explained the existence and history of the world apart from the Creator. Knowledge of the world, including man himself, is by the mind of man. Revelation is unnecessary.

Beyond Modernism

Postmodernism develops the basic ideas of modernism to their inevitable conclusion, but in such a way as to differ significantly from modernism. Thus, postmodernism becomes a distinct worldview.

Postmodernism is the worldview that is *after* modernism, but also *beyond* modernism. A secular critic of postmodernism has expressed the relation between modernism and postmodernism this way:

The beasts of modernism have mutated into the beasts of postmodernism—relativism into nihilism, amorality into immorality, irrationality into insanity, sexual deviancy into polymorphous perversity [i.e., sexual perversity of many kinds].³

The man who introduced the word, “postmodern,” into the philosophical and literary discussion, the Frenchman, Jean-François Lyotard, defined postmodernism as follows: “I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward meta-narratives.”⁴ That word,

³ Gertrude Himmelfarb, *On Looking into the Abyss* (New York: Knopf, 1994), p. 6.

⁴ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984 [originally published in French, *La Condition Postmoderne*, in 1979]), p. xxiv.

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“meta-narrative,” although scholarly jargon, and off-putting to the average reader, is nevertheless worth learning. A narrative is a story. “Meta” means “above” or “over.” A meta-narrative, therefore, is a story that claims to be over everything in the sense that it gives meaning to, and explains, everything.

What such “story” comes at once to mind? The *Christian* story! The *Bible’s* story, explaining absolutely everything: the universe, its beginning and its ending; the human race and its history; the rise and fall of nations, as well as the fall of a sparrow; the life and behaviour of every human—all being dependent on the triune, one, true God, and all having its purpose in the glory of God in Jesus Christ and His elect, redeemed church.

There have been other stories that claimed to explain everything. Marxist communism was one; modernism was another.

According to postmodernism, all such “meta” stories are nothing but stories—man-made, fictitious stories. The postmodernist is incredulous of all of them. None of them is true. *This implies that there is no meaning of everything, or of anything, including one’s own life.*

A sound critic has described postmodernism this way:

Postmodernists believe that truth is created, not discovered. They think things like reason, rationality, and confidence in science are cultural biases. They contend that those who trust reason—and things based on reason, like science, Western education, and government structures—unknowingly act out their European cultural conditioning. This conditioning seeks to keep power in the hands of the social elite.⁵

I describe postmodernism as follows: the doctrine that there is no absolute truth, or reality, because God—the God of the

⁵ Jim Leffel, “Our Old Challenge: Modernism,” in *The Death of Truth: Responding to Multiculturalism, the Rejection of Reason, and the New Postmodern Diversity*, ed. Dennis McCallum (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1996), p. 20.

Christian faith—does not exist, and that Man (spell man with a capital M), therefore, is supremely honoured to create reality and truth for Himself/Herself/Itself.

Concerning this description, first, I urge the reader to take it seriously, particularly the part about man's creating reality. Do not dismiss it as a joke, or as lunacy. The heralds of this anti-gospel are serious. They are actively and aggressively creating a movement that is going to crush the Christian church (physically) and drive Christians out of God's world.

Second, postmodernism, like every form of the lie of Satan, is contradictory and, therefore, self-refuting. Postmodernism insists on its denial that there is any absolute truth *as the absolute truth*.

Third, when one cuts through the cant, the message of postmodernism is this: man is God! For whoever creates truth and reality is, and must be, God. And what a daring, dazzling deifying of man postmodernism is! Man creates truth; man creates reality!

Fundamental Aspects

Let us take postmodernism apart, and see what makes it tick. The first fundamental assertion of postmodernism is that the Christian God does not exist. He is not reality. The entire message of salvation in Jesus Christ, revealed in the Bible, is a fantastic, fictitious story—a false, deceiving, and dangerous meta-narrative. God and the gospel are the product of ambitious men—prophets, apostles, and theologians—who desired to gain power over others.

Not only does the Christian God not exist, but also *no* god exists, whether Baal, or Allah, or the supposedly supernatural spirits of whom the pagans are afraid. All allegedly revelatory, holy writings and, indeed, all writings of any kind that pretend to find

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meaning in history are meta-narratives, about which one must be incredulous. They cannot be, and must not be, believed.

Richard Dawkins is a good postmodernist when he writes,

I am not attacking any particular version of God or gods. I am attacking God, all gods, anything and everything supernatural, wherever and whenever they have been or will be invented.⁶

What postmodernism does not yet openly state is that it vacates the throne of Deity in order to seat man thereupon.

A second fundamental assertion of postmodernism is that there is no objective truth, or reality, “out there,” anywhere, at all, whatsoever. By this breathtaking negation, postmodernism means three things.

That there is no truth, or reality, means, first, that we cannot know the truth about anything. We cannot know the truth about the universe and its workings; about history; about social life, for example, marriage and family; about a right way to live as a human; about our own self. There is no foundation for any certain knowledge of anything. Hence, postmodernism is sometimes called “anti-foundationalism.”

This, I note in passing, is the glorious result of the rejection of the inspiration of Holy Scripture: total ignorance. (I say, “glorious,” because postmodern man glories in this ignorance as though it were some great achievement.)

One aspect of postmodernism’s denial of objective truth is its pessimistic analysis of language. All knowledge and explanation of things use language. But language is incapable of describing anything truly. Indeed, all language is deceptive. All language about everything is only an attempt by the speaker or writer to get power over others. Here, postmodernism differs from mod-

⁶ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Black Swan, 2007), p. 57.

ernism, which had faith in reason and strong faith in scientific language, to explain the world, including man.

I note in passing that postmodernism's despair of human words is God's judgment on thinkers who have despised His Word, Holy Scripture.

We should not overlook that, on the basis of postmodernism's own fundamental affirmation, we are justified in disregarding all the words of postmodernists as incapable of describing reality. Indeed, we must view their words as deceptive, as nothing but an attempt to bring us into bondage to the postmodernists. In this case, the linguistic theory of postmodernism is correct.

That there is no truth, or reality, means, second, that postmodernism denies that anything has meaning. The existence of the universe is meaningless. World War II and the victory of the Allies were meaningless. The birth of Jesus was meaningless. The life of each one of us is devoid of any meaning whatever.

This is man and his world without God: senseless! According to man's own profound and decisive judgment!

But postmodernism intends more with its abolition of truth and reality than only that we can know nothing as true and that nothing has meaning. Absurd as it sounds, not only to the Christian but also to every human who is not lunatic, the third implication of postmodernism's denial of truth and reality is that there *is* no world "out there" for us to discover, know, and describe. There *is* no history of nations and individuals. There *is* not even a personal, individual, human self.

We suppose that the world we perceive around us is real. But, in fact, it does not exist, as a reality, apart from our thinking, speaking, and feeling.

Man the Creator

Man himself creates truth for himself. Man himself decides what

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the truth is about everything. If man decides that the horror of murdering babies of eight and a half months old is the great good of honouring the free choice of the pregnant female, this is the truth about late-term abortion.

If historian-man in most state universities decides to view the American Revolution as wrong, because white, European males, for example, George Washington, intended to oppress women and blacks, this is the truth about the American Revolution. And if this same degreed dunce decides that the American Revolution was good, because black, lesbian females were the real agents of the Revolution, working for the liberty of all, this is the meaning of the American Revolution.

And still there are professing Christians who criticize, or fail to support, good, Christian schools!

Man himself creates reality. Man himself brings the universe into existence, according to postmodernism. His mind, the culmination of evolution, conceives the universe, and thus produces it. Similarly, man creates his own self, which does not exist until and unless he thinks it into existence.

Man creates truth and reality *by his language*. Postmodernism emphasizes the importance of language, of words. As we have seen, postmodernism contends that all language is deceptive, because all language is, at bottom, the attempt by the speaker or writer to get, or keep, power over his or her audience. This is true, primarily, of the Bible. Males described marriage, family, church, and God Himself in such a way as to empower males and to enslave females. The Bible is through and through “patriarchal.”

But the same is true of books of history, which have been written mostly by white, Western scholars. These histories empower white, European males.

Therefore, postmodernists tear these writings, including the Bible, to shreds, exposing the hidden, evil agendas of the au-

thors. This is called “deconstruction” of the texts—a full-time, well-paid (by the taxpayers, or by church members) occupation of many professors in state universities and in Christian seminaries.

Nevertheless, for all its suspicion of language, postmodernism recognizes the power of language. Language creates truth; language creates meaning; language creates the world. Language is power.

The important question is, who will control language? Whoever controls the language of a country will rule that nation. Whoever controls the language of the human race will rule the race. Shades of George Orwell’s *1984*!⁷

The man or woman who thinks and judges out of the Christian worldview will discern that, whereas the Bible teaches that God creates truth and reality—originally, the universe, and, now, salvation—by His Word, Jesus Christ, postmodernism attributes this divine prerogative to man’s word.

The great question then is, who will govern language?

The answer of postmodernism is the State. Postmodernists teach that society determines how each individual thinks and speaks. Increasingly, postmodernists look to the State, and call upon the State—the powerful government of a nation—to

⁷ In the totalitarian state of *1984*, the “Party” imposes its will on every aspect of the life of the citizens as much by its control of language as by terror. The language is “Newspeak.” Words mean what “Big Brother”—the head of state—says they mean, regardless that they now convey the exact opposite of their intrinsic meaning. The three slogans of the state illustrate this use of language: “War is peace; freedom is slavery; ignorance is strength.” For in the thinking of the rulers of “Oceania”—the fictitious world-power of Orwell’s novel—truth and reality do not exist. “Reality is not external. Reality exists in the human mind and nowhere else ... whatever the Party holds to be truth is truth.” Language creates reality, and in the process annihilates objective reality. Orwell’s novel, based on Stalin’s Soviet Union, indicates that postmodernism *in fact*, if not in name and theory, was earlier than the 1970s.

make all the citizens think and speak the truth as seems good and right to postmodernists. This is the importance of the State (“public”) schools, as also of contemporary television, movies, music, and all other mass media, that are forming the thinking (such as it is) of a postmodern generation. In this respect, postmodernism differs from modernism: modernism was individualistic; postmodernism is collectivist and statist.

Practical Effects of Postmodernism

If all of this exposition of postmodernism still seems somewhat abstruse, so that one is yet inclined to minimize its threat, the effects of postmodernism on the lives of all of us in nations of the West will speedily disabuse him of his erroneous notion.

A Barna poll some years back (1991) revealed that 53% of professing evangelical Christians did not think that there is absolute truth.

The Supreme Court of the United States has decided that the murder of the unborn is not only permissible but also *right*—the right of the choosing mother. Notice how language creates truth. What is, in fact, violation of the law of God in both Scripture and nature—“murder”—has become “justice”—by the word of nine men and women representing the State.

So important are the words of these nine justices that it has become extremely important in the politics of the United States to pack the high court with justices who will not be bound to interpret and apply the words of the Constitution (to say nothing of the law of God), but will rather *decree* laws in their own words. At best, their words will reflect the thinking and practices of society—itself a grim prospect for the godly. At worst, their judicial words will force the agenda of those for whom man’s will is justice, that is, the postmodernists.

Clearly indicating the effect of postmodernism on life in the West, by a concerted campaign of propaganda—the clever use

of language—the postmodernists have convinced many in North America that homosexual behaviour is a good thing, as good as heterosexual activity in marriage. Indeed, the postmodernists have convinced many that homosexual “marriage” is good and right, as good and right as the marriage of a male and a female.

How important words have been in this successful campaign! “Gay” replaces “sodomite.” “Gay marriage” is used for “sodomite copulation.” And the day is not far off when the postmodernist manipulation of language will accomplish the punishment of one who uses the word “sodomite,” especially with the redundancy, “abomination.” Fortright condemnation of perversity will be re-named “hate crime.”

The postmodernists are re-writing the history books in the United States. Histories are made to minimize the positive contribution of white males, and to extol the role of blacks, especially black females. That this is contrary to fact is of no concern to the government officials overseeing the writing of the history books, or to the authors. History has no meaning. Those in power give it meaning. Indeed, history does not exist. Those in power create history.

Postmodernism is the cause of the controversies over textbooks.

The effects of postmodernism are also felt in the drive for so-called euthanasia. Language paves the way. Suicide or self-murder is “mercy killing.” Who dares to oppose acts of mercy? Soon, thoroughly worldly people will *view* assisted suicide as an act of mercy. Those who oppose it are unfeeling, unmerciful brutes.

The direct product of postmodernism in the sphere of Christianity is the “emergent church.” An “emergent church” is an unorganized, chaotic coming together of religious people in order to worship something or other, according to no set of rules whatever. Drawing the crowd and holding it together is a

heretical, but charismatic, preacher, who speaks warmly to the feelings of his audience. Not knowing whom they worship, or how, or why, the people are tolerant of all gods, of all forms of worship, of all doctrines, and of all kinds of behaviour.

The “emergent church” is wildly popular. In reputedly conservative Grand Rapids, Michigan, thousands of erstwhile Reformed men, women, young people, and children, formerly members of creedal Reformed churches, assemble for what passes for worship at a gathering aptly named Mars Hill.

In this case too, language forms reality. In this instance, language does not call the reality into existence out of nothing, but out of reality’s opposite. The postmodernist theologian utters the words, and, lo, an apostate crowd becomes thereby the “emergent church.”

Realization of Biblical Prophecy

No one who knows Scripture is the least surprised by postmodernism. Postmodernism is the fulfilment of biblical prophecy concerning the last days.

Lawlessness

Postmodernism fulfils the prophecy of lawlessness in the last days. Christ foretold this lawlessness in Matthew 24:12: “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.” Literally, “iniquity” is lawlessness. In the last days, shortly before Christ’s coming, lawlessness will abound.

In II Thessalonians 2:8, the Antichrist, who will head the world-kingdom that opposes Christ, is called, “that Wicked.” Again, “Wicked” is, literally, “Lawless [one].” The power of Antichrist over his kingdom determines that lawlessness will characterize the entire kingdom.

Lawlessness is not disorder and chaos. It is not even a criminal’s

disobedience to certain laws that obtain in society, which even he recognizes, but chooses to violate.

The lawlessness of the last days is the abolition of any and all divine law, and the creation by man of rules for behaviour that deliberately and grossly contradict, and trample on, the laws of God.

Lawlessness is the demand: Worship man!

Lawlessness is the precept: Kill babies in the womb!

Lawlessness is the decree: Honour the sexual connection of two males, or of two females, as the holy and good institution of marriage!

Deifying Man

Postmodernism fulfils the biblical prophecy that at the very end of history man will deify man, that is, exalt and revere man as God. II Thessalonians 2:3-4 predicts the future, personal Antichrist—the “man of sin ... the son of perdition”—as one who “opposeth and exalteth himself,” not only above the true God, but also above “all that is called God, or that is worshipped.” In the place of God, and of all gods, he will show “himself that he is God.”

Antichrist will deny that there is any supernatural being, who is the proper object of the worship and service of the human race. Rather, he will affirm, and prove in various ways, that man is the supreme being—“God”—and that he, Antichrist, is the apotheosis of man, who is God.

In keeping with the teaching of II Thessalonians that the coming Antichrist will deify man, and thus himself, is the prophecy of Revelation 13. This chapter prophesies the coming beast (Antichrist) as a world-kingdom in opposition to the world-kingdom of Christ. The beast “opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name” (v. 6). Verse eight adds that “all

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that dwell upon the earth shall worship him [i.e., the beast], whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

Here, we recall that postmodernism promotes the notion, and advances the cause, that man is God, *in the form of the State*. Whereas modernism was individualistic, postmodernism is statist. Power is the name of the game for postmodernists, and power finally resides in the State. The State has the authority and might to determine truth and reality. The State must give meaning to all of life. The State is saviour of the human race. The individual has existence and importance only as a member of the State. In the language of postmodernism, the individual is merely a “node” in the body that is the State.

Scripture prophesies the (world-) State that postmodernism is creating: lawless, God-denying, man-exalting.

This coming kingdom of deified man, aggressively promoted by postmodernism, will be the kingdom of the dragon, according to Revelation 12 and 13, that is, the kingdom of Satan. “The dragon gave him [i.e., Antichrist] his power, and his seat, and great authority” (v. 2). By lawless man, Satan rules the world. By blaspheming man, Satan blasphemes God and His name, Jesus the Christ. In deified man, Satan is worshipped.

Postmodernism is the contemporary, advanced development of man’s original sin—our *fundamental* sin—as the kingdom of Antichrist will be the complete development of that sin.

The issue from the beginning is this: Who is God? Who determines truth and reality? Who alone creates reality? Who gives meaning to everything? Who decides right and wrong, good and evil?

In the disobedience of Adam, man answered, “Man!” Man decides that eating the fruit of the forbidden tree is good and right for man.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good ...
and that it was pleasant ... and a tree to be desired ...
she took of the fruit ... and gave also unto her husband
with her; and he did eat (Gen. 3:6).

The decision of the Supreme Court of the United States about abortion, the approval in North America of sodomy, and the coming worship of the Antichristian State and its Führer, or prime minister, or president, or emperor, or chairman, are simply the working out of Adam's (and our) decision to eat the fruit that God prohibited.

This is the developed wickedness of our time and world, and regarding it the Reformed church and believer have a calling.

The Calling of Church and Believer

Reformed believers ought to thank God that He has delivered them and their children from the folly, hopelessness, and blasphemous wickedness of postmodernism, that is, from the rebellion of the abolition of truth.

A critic of postmodernism, who is not a Christian, has written this about postmodernism:

Post-modernism is arguably the most depressing philosophy ever to spring from the western mind. It is difficult to talk about post-modernism because nobody really understands it. It's allusive to the point of being impossible to articulate. But what this philosophy basically says is that we've reached an endpoint in human history. That the modernist tradition of progress and ceaseless extension of the frontiers of innovation are now dead. Originality is dead. The avant-garde artistic tradition is dead. All religions and utopian visions are dead and resistance to the status quo is impossible because revolution too is now dead. Like it or not, we

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humans are stuck in a permanent crisis of meaning, a dark room from which we can never escape.⁸

Many postmodernists are out-and-out nihilists. “Nihilism” is a philosophical word for the dreadful experience expressed in the book of Ecclesiastes by the lament, “Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!” And this experience of the meaninglessness and hopelessness of life by postmodernists is God’s judgment upon them. “To live apart from God is death.”

The calling of church and Christian in the face of postmodernism is also that they prepare for persecution. This is the calling of the church in North America, as in the other Western countries, once upon a time regarded, and regarding themselves, as Christian nations.

Postmodernism advocates tolerance. This is the supreme virtue for postmodernism, if not the only virtue—tolerance of diversity.

But tolerance is not a Christian virtue. Tolerance is the virtue of those who believe nothing. The Christian believes something, with all his heart and soul. He believes in Jesus Christ as Lord of lords and the only Saviour. He believes everything that God has revealed for truth in His Word, Holy Scripture. The Christian, therefore, is intolerant. He is intolerant of false doctrine, of lawless conduct, and, especially, of the worship of any other god than the God and Father of Jesus Christ.

He is intolerant of postmodernism.

Toward those who will not tolerate its blasphemies and perversities, postmodernism is notoriously intolerant. Expressions of this intolerance, it brands as “hate crimes.” Crimes must be punished, and postmodernism is girding up its loins, and gathering the authority, to execute punishment. The charges will be,

⁸ Kalle Lasn, “Postmodernist Philosophy,” in Wikipedia.

“Enemies of the divine State!” “Haters of divine Humanity!” And what is even worse, “Bigots!”

When the postmodern State destroys the true, instituted church and imprisons and kills the saints, it will think that it does God a service (John 16:2).

It is the urgent calling of the church and the believer that they guard against the influence of postmodernism on themselves. This is no idle warning. Postmodernism is in the air in the nations of the West. And believers have a corrupt, postmodern nature.

Evidence of postmodernist thinking and speaking are the advocacy of tolerance of false doctrines and wicked ways of life; the call for respect of doctrinal and ethical errors, as merely differing opinions; the disparagement of “propositional truth;” the minimizing of the importance of “head knowledge,” in favour of “heart knowledge;” the emphasizing of ritual over doctrinal instruction; stress on feeling, experience, and mysticism; and the determination of church membership, not by the objective marks of the true church, but by the subjective criterion of what feels good for the church member.

Church and believer must resolve to know, maintain, and defend the Christian faith, on the basis of the inspired, authoritative, knowable Scripture.

The gospel of Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Bible and summarized in the ecumenical and Reformed creeds, is, I will not say, the one and only meta-narrative, because then I would be allowing postmodernism to create the truth concerning the Bible and the gospel, but the one and only true, authoritative, and saving revelation of God concerning all things.

The gospel declares God to be *the* truth and *the* reality.

As the Word of God, the gospel gives meaning to the universe, to all of history, and to the life of every human—*ultimate* mean-

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ing to the life of every human, either as a rebel against God, who will perish everlastingly, or as a friend of God, who will live with Him forever.

And this gospel, revealed in Scripture, has graciously, powerfully delivered us from the lawlessness, folly, rebellion, meaninglessness, and hopelessness—and *guilt*—of our natural condition, because it is the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“What is truth?” asked Pilate, cynically and despairingly.

Pilate asked this of Him, who said, and said truly, “I am ... the truth,” and who is, therefore, also “the way” and “the life” (John 14:6)!

PART 1: Chapter 4

The Reformed Believer and Money



Herman Hanko

And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (I Tim. 6:8-10).

Introduction

Events in the world tend to reveal how completely people are dominated by money. When terrorists hijacked two American Airlines planes and flew them into the Twin Towers in New York City, one commentator, with obvious grief, remarked, “Destroyed are the symbols of all America stands for.” He was more honest than one would expect. When the stock market plunged disastrously some years ago, another analyst made this statement: “Two emotions drive the stock market: when fear of monetary loss dominates, the market goes down; when greed dominates, the market goes up.”

Scripture points us in the same direction with its incisive comment: “The love of money is the root of all evil” (I Tim. 6:10). And Jesus filled the heart of the rich young ruler with sadness when He pointed out to the covetous young man: “Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have

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treasure in heaven” (Mark 10:17-22). The rich young ruler was in dead earnest with his question: “What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” And he was not lying when Jesus pointed him to the law and he responded: “All these have I observed from my youth.” But he had observed all these commandments only in his outward conduct, and therefore Jesus points him to the one great sin he committed: the sin of covetousness. For covetousness is a violation of the tenth commandment which demands the inner perfection of the heart.

When I speak of the Reformed believer and money, I refer, of course, to one’s earthly possessions, however few or many he may have. They include the things of this earth of which we all have an abundance. They are the things Paul warns us not to seek: the “things on the earth,” in distinction from the “things ... above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1-2).

What Scripture says about money is a Word of God we need to hear in our affluent times; but it is a Word of God to which we seldom pay attention; and, when we do pay attention, it is with the greatest reluctance; indeed, one which we find innumerable excuses to avoid. As time moves on and we near the end of the ages, God will, I think, wrench us away from our own carnal preoccupation with earthly goods by taking them away from us. And so the question becomes very serious: When that time comes, will we be willing to part with them? It will then be a very clear-cut choice: your possessions or Christ; one or the other; never both!

Our Status in the World as Believers

The Word of God to us in our present days comes to us as believers; and when that Word of God addresses our relationship to earthly possessions, it presupposes a certain status that we have in the world, or what we may call a certain position in the history of this creation. Scripture most clearly describes that

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relation by telling us that we are pilgrims and strangers in this world, a designation that is the main viewpoint of Peter's first canonical epistle. In that epistle, he addresses himself to the question of how believers are to live as pilgrims and strangers in all life's relationships: in government, in society, in persecution and in life's trials.

Peter does this by explaining that because we are pilgrims and strangers in the earth, we live out of the principle of hope. That is, in our pilgrimage as strangers in a foreign land, the one Christian virtue that dominates in our life is our eager desire to go home. That hope that characterizes a spiritual pilgrim and stranger is not just a fleeting emotion; it is an entire way of life. It is, itself, a world-and-life view because it determines our relationships to everything in the world, including money.

We were once a part of this world (1 Pet. 4:3-4), for we were born in sin and could not escape the corruption of our first parents that pervaded all of life. But life is under the control and direction of Satan, for his temptation of Adam and Eve in Paradise was intended to enlist Adam and the whole human race to be kings in creation, not under God's rule, but under his rule. In this plan it was his purpose to steal God's creation from God and make it all his own kingdom of darkness and sin.

But God's purpose is higher and more wonderful than that of attaining His glory in the first Paradise. His purpose was to glorify Himself through the second Adam as the Lord and King of all God's creation. And so God reached down into this wretched and wicked kingdom of Satan and, by the work of regeneration and efficacious calling, radically and fundamentally changed His own elect people so that they were pulled out of the foul stream of history and made participants in the development of the kingdom of Christ.

But they are left in the world throughout its entire history so that there may always be people on this earth who represent,

not the kingdom of Satan as once they did, but the kingdom of Christ. They are called to shout as loudly as they can: “Not Satan rules, but Christ. Satan’s kingdom is not victorious, but Christ’s kingdom endures forever. This creation is not Satan’s domain, but God’s creation, for He created it. He upholds it by His providence; He will glorify it.”

This wonder of regeneration makes those who have the new life of Christ pilgrims and strangers in the earth. We must think of it in this way. We are of another country where are our home and our citizenship papers. We are members of the family of God and our elder Brother is in heaven. We are, therefore, on a journey here in this world. We have no home here, for our home is in heaven. We are on a journey down a pathway on which we have been set when we were called out of darkness into light. That journey has as its destination what John Bunyan in *Pilgrim’s Progress* called the “Celestial City.” The old poet had it right: “This world is not my home, I’m only passing through.” Hence, our real interest is not in the things of this world, but in the things of our home. We stay in a tent. We must be careful that we do not drive the stakes of our tent too firmly into the ground, for we must resume our journey on the morrow. Nor do we know when our journey will be brought to its end; but we are not frightened nor dismayed. For we then go home.

We are, as pilgrims, also strangers. It is as if we stay with people in their house, which never becomes our house. Sometimes the word “pilgrim” is translated “boarder.” The Dutch uses the word *bijwoner*, one who lives with some people but does not actually belong to the family. The house in which he lives for a time (and this is what makes life in this house so dangerous) actually belongs to his Lord and King. And the worst of it is that the pilgrim is under solemn obligation to tell the family that lives there, that this house does not really belong to them, but it belongs rather to the King whose country the pilgrim represents; and that, therefore, he has a perfect right to live there.

But the people living there will not admit that the house does not belong to them and they become very angry when constantly told that. But the Christian pilgrim's way of life is so totally different from the people that live there that he is truly a stranger in a house that is rightfully his. The people who live there speak a strange language, eat strange and distasteful foods, enjoy things and experiences utterly abhorrent to God's pilgrim, have a set of values that are the direct opposite of this poor stranger, and live for different reasons incomprehensible to God's pilgrim.

On the other hand, because this creation is, after all, the kingdom of the Lord Christ, whom they serve, they are called to use it insofar as they are able for the benefit of their King. This is where Scripture interjects the concept of stewardship. A steward is ruler of his master's possessions, but these possessions are never his; they always remain the possession of his Master. The steward is, however, to rule over them for the benefit of the Master, and not for his own benefit and pleasure. That puts him in a very awkward position in the world and it consumes a large part of the pilgrim's life figuring out how to use that part of God's world that he calls his possessions for the benefit of his Lord.

Some in the history of the church have said the best way to solve this problem is by forsaking everything in the world and taking on vows of poverty and chastity. This is not only condemned by Scripture, but Scripture says that this doctrine of devils is taught by seducing spirits and those who depart from the truth (I Tim. 4:1).

Others, equally perverse, claim that prosperity is guaranteed if only we make Christ our King. They proclaim a "prosperity gospel." It is disturbing that such evil thoughts are found among Reformed believers. How quickly we equate earthly possessions with God's blessing, and the absence of these possessions as

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indicative of God's disfavour. How wrong we can be in our selfishness.

And so, in summary, we must make the following points. The Lord has purposed in Christ to make our spiritual home in heaven, not on this earth. In that home, we will see Christ face to face, live in covenant fellowship with God through Christ, live forever free from sin in full communion with the family of God, and enjoy a full and complete blessedness which is the opposite of our life in the world.

By the wonder of regeneration, we are made citizens of that heavenly kingdom while we are here in the world. We are, therefore, not of the world, though we are in the world. We have here no abiding city, but we seek one above.

Yet we are in the world to represent God's cause in our witness, but also in our lives. We are to testify of the fact that this entire creation belongs to God, that the thieves and robbers who claim that it is their world will be judged by Christ Himself, that the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ, and that the elect shall inherit the earth.

Finally, we should learn, if we have not already, that though we are citizens of the kingdom of heaven and pilgrims and strangers in the earth, we are such only in principle. We contend daily with our natures which love this world, which cling to it with might and main, which revel in its pleasures, and which entice us with the glittering sins in the world. And so this world is for the believer a battlefield on which rages the battle of the ages relentlessly. Our hope is in the cross.

Our Calling With Respect to Earthly Treasures

It is spiritually dangerous to live in this world. We are by nature a very covetous people. And so the Scriptures, when defining our calling with respect to earthly possessions, warn us especially about covetousness.

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Covetousness is simply the desire to have more of these earthly possessions, including money, than the Lord has been pleased to give us. We are at great pains to accumulate as many possessions as we are able. And, though we already have many possessions, we always think we would like to improve on their quality and quantity. We like a large bank account. We like to save for our future. We eagerly look forward to retirement when we can enjoy the material fruits of our labours.

Covetousness is wider in its scope than the lust for material possessions. We may, for example, lust for fame and honour. We may lust after our neighbour's wife. We may lust for recognition by others, including those of the world. We may lust for physical skills that enable us to excel in sports. But Scripture is sufficiently aware that the object of our covetous natures is money to warn us against it.

We have a striking illustration of this in the parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:13-21). Jesus was preaching in Perea when He was interrupted by a covetous man who wanted Jesus to force his brother to divide an inheritance with him. Jesus, turning from the subject with which He was busy, warned against covetousness, and put a sharp exclamation point behind the warning with the parable of the rich fool.

The rich fool had such abundant harvests that he had sufficient on which to retire. He boasted of that and anticipated with relish a life of luxury and ease. But he died that night because his soul was required of him.

The parable makes clear various serious spiritual errors inherent in covetousness. For one thing, the rich fool thought that his farms, his barns and his harvests were his. A covetous man always makes that mistake. He forgets that everything he has is given him from God, that all of it remains God's possession and he is only a steward.

Secondly, he was of the opinion that his soul could eat earthly food and drink earthly drinks. He addresses his soul: "Soul,

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thou hast much goods laid up for many years ... eat, drink, and be merry” (Luke 12:19). That is, he thought that pleasure and happiness are to be found in earthly possessions. This is the mistake Jesus points to in the parable of the four kinds of soil when he speaks of the “deceitfulness of riches” that choke out the word (Matt. 13:22). We are prone to the same error, for we frequently think to ourselves that just a bit more of the things of this earth will bring happiness. What fools we are!

Thirdly, the Lord points out a fundamental spiritual truth over against the error of the rich fool: the fool thought that life consists in the things a man possesses. Jesus emphatically denies that: “A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15).

The fact is that wealth constitutes grave spiritual danger—as Jesus told the rich young ruler and as Paul points out to Timothy in I Timothy 6:6-10. We cannot serve God and mammon. It is one or the other. If riches rule our lives, we cannot serve God and be servants of Christ. We are servants of earthly things.

Covetousness is forbidden in the tenth commandment. But the tenth commandment is added because it describes what is the heart of the entire law. To covet is to break all God’s commandments; to escape covetousness is to keep God’s law. Covetousness is a matter of the heart, not of our outward activity. It points to the inner demands of the law: to love God and our neighbour. Paul understood this very well when he warned, “The love of money is the root of all evil” (I Tim. 6:10).

Negatively, the Word of God also tells us that worrying is wrong. Covetousness and worrying are closely related to each other. If we are covetous and desire more than the Lord has promised to give us, and we are dissatisfied with the amount of our earthly possessions, then we worry over these earthly things. We have the precise command of the Lord in His Sermon on the Mount. It is obvious that the Lord puts great emphasis on this aspect

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of the life of a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, because he devotes no less than two-thirds of chapter six to this subject. At the heart of this section is the admonition: “Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on” (Matt 6:25).

Certainly this implies that we are not anxious about the future either, for “sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matt. 6:34). To worry about these things involves us in several serious sins. When we worry we do so because we are distrustful of our heavenly Father’s promise that He will supply every need we have. We fail to believe that all we have comes to us from our heavenly Father and that we have nothing that we have acquired by our own prowess. We cannot even add one cubit to our stature (v. 27), much less acquire for ourselves anything which the Lord Himself is not pleased to give us.

To be concerned for earthly possessions is to worry about the future. The Lord tells us not to do this, for we know nothing about the future, nor is it in any respect in our hands. But the future is determined by the God who loves us.

To worry about what we shall eat and drink and wear is an obsession with earthly things that does not become a Christian, nor is it conducive to spiritual growth. We crowd out concern for our spiritual well-being by preoccupation with our physical well-being.

But our calling in Scripture is also a positive one. We are to be stewards in God’s house. This is emphatically illustrated by the parable of the unfaithful steward in Luke 16:1-13. The steward in this parable was unfaithful and was about to be sacked by his lord. He was however concerned about what work he would do when he was without a job. And so he made friends with others by making them indebted to him. In this way he made provision for the future.

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The teaching of the Lord is not, however, the opposite of what he teaches in His Sermon on the Mount. The steward was shrewd when he made provision for the future, but only in an earthly sense. The Lord instructs us too, His people, citizens of the kingdom of heaven, to be shrewd in preparing for the future. He does not, however, perhaps to our surprise, refer to savings accounts, retirement funds, profitable investments and the like. He describes our calling by telling us to make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness. That is, we must make friends with the money the Lord gives us. But, and here is the point, we must do this to prepare ourselves for the future that lies, not in this world, but beyond the grave in heaven.

Let me make it very clear at this point. There is nothing wrong with money and earthly possessions in themselves. In fact, it is a grievous sin to scorn them, for they are part of God's creation, which He loves and which He is pleased to give to us. We Reformed Christians are not like Rome who considers vows of poverty to be works of supererogation.

But we are called to use what God is pleased to give us for the advance of His kingdom and to work towards the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I can best describe our attitude towards earthly possession as "sitting loose" to them. We have them; we receive them with thanksgiving; we sanctify them with God's Word and prayer. We even enjoy them, for they are good gifts and come to us from our heavenly Father as gracious gifts of His love. To be unappreciative of them would be like the sin of a wife who receives a diamond necklace from her husband with a sneer and terrible indifference.

But what God gives we are to use for the glory of His name. And we seek the glory of His name by seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness. All our possessions are to be used in the service of Christ. They are to be used for the welfare of

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His church, the cause of the gospel, Christian education for our children, support of the poor, and our witness in a world of sin and darkness. We are to be sure, by our words and by our life, that all who see us know that earthly things are transient and doomed to be burned with fire. Heavenly things are the things of importance to us.

To seek first the kingdom of heaven and God's righteousness does not mean simply to tithe. Those who tithe consider themselves to be generous people and tend to make of tithing a good work that will surely be approved of God. Shall we be satisfied with giving to the causes of God's kingdom only 10 percent of our income and possessions? And then boast of our generosity?

A sad consequence of that kind of giving is that we really say, 10 percent belongs to God; 90 percent belongs to me. We call it discretionary income; that is, income that we may use as we please for our own personal pleasure. But, "All that I am I owe to thee ..." Everything must be used in the service of Christ.

When the Lord admonishes us to seek "first" the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 6:33), He does not mean "first" in a long list of other things that we seek. He means "first" as a principle of our lives, governing our entire relationship to earthly things.

We must, finally, be content with such things as we have. Contentment is the opposite of covetousness. Paul claims such contentment. He writes to the Philippians, "I have learned, in whatever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11). To be sure we understand this, for Paul was in prison when he wrote it, he adds, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need" (v. 12).

Contentment is rooted in a certain knowledge that our Father cares for us. He will do so to the end. He will do so even when we must flee during Antichrist's reign. He sent ravens to feed

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Elijah by the brook Cherith. He gave Israel manna in the wilderness. He can feed us by miracles if necessary. But if the time comes when we starve to death, then that is God's way of taking us to His own everlasting kingdom where we shall receive riches unparalleled in this life.

We are not very faithful in this calling. I think none of us can rise to claim perfection in the use of our earthly goods. We live in an affluent age, and we share in the affluence. Remember, after all, that if we have more than our daily bread, we are rich. I am personally convinced that the only way God is going to cure us of our covetousness is to take everything away from us. Presently, He will do this when the choice is sharp and focused: our earthly goods with one knee bowed to Antichrist, or Christ and poverty and perhaps death!

PART 1: Chapter 5

The Sexual Revolution



David J. Engelsma

*Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm:
for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the
coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement
flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the
floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his
house for love, it would utterly be contemned (Song 8:6-7).*

Introduction

In the nations of the West, we are witnessing a sexual revolution.

Marriage is being destroyed. The ease, frequency, and acceptance of divorce; the prevalence of men and women living together sexually outside of marriage; the promotion of sheer, indiscriminate promiscuity—“hooking up;” and the advocacy of sodomy and lesbianism—each of these evils by itself and all of them in concert are a calculated, and effective, assault on the divine institution of marriage.

These sexual developments are a revolution. They are not only the development of sin, with particular reference to unchastity, to the end that the world of reprobate, ungodly men and women fill the cup of iniquity, although they are this.

But what we are witnessing is a sexual revolution. We are witnessing the overthrow of the old order, in which even the

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ungodly world (with the exception of Hollywood and certain decadent circles in London and Paris) regarded marriage as right and necessary, frowned on divorce, condemned sexual relations outside of marriage, and were embarrassed to mention the word “homosexuality.” In the place of the old order is now created a new order, in which marriage is mocked, promiscuity is promoted and homosexuality is sanctioned by the highest courts of the lands, including the church courts.

Revolutions bring about radical changes. We who are sixty or seventy have lived through these changes in the matter of sex. Forty years ago, in a sermon on the seventh commandment, in a small, rural congregation in the western United States, I spoke of “sexual intercourse.” After the sermon, an older member of the congregation (who was not critical) told me that, at hearing this phrase in a sermon, “I almost fell off the pew.” In those days, ministers did not use such blunt words. Today, it is different.

Revolutions are planned. They are carefully orchestrated. They do not just happen. Revolutionaries launch them. The revolutionaries have a purpose.

Ultimately, the great sexual revolutionary is Satan, although he himself, as a spirit, is asexual. His purpose with the revolution is to destroy the kingdom of Jesus Christ—the true, instituted church—and, thus, the witness to Jesus Christ in the world.

Satan’s human agents are highly-placed, powerful men and women: politicians, judges, educators, scientists, lords and ladies of all the media—newspapers, magazines, radio, television, videos, movies, and books—and ministers and theologians in many churches.

There is a conspiracy of revolution. What Crane Brinton said of the great political revolutions in history applies to the sexual

revolution: “all were achieved by small, disciplined, principled, fanatical bodies.”¹

Some ten or fifteen years ago, a conservative, Christian radio host in Virginia, who moves in high evangelical and fundamentalist circles, told me of a special, secret meeting in Washington, D.C., of the most prominent, influential evangelical leaders in North America. Included were members of Congress. They met to discuss plans that have been made by powerful liberals—plans of which the conservatives and evangelicals were aware—for the future of societal life in the United States and, therefore, for the future of the United States. These plans included the sexual revolution. The meeting left the evangelicals shaken.

Of the secret plans for sexual revolution, I have no inside information. It is the execution of the plans, whether the plans have been hatched in hell, or in the clandestine gatherings of the Democratic Party in the United States, or, for that matter, the secret conferences of the left wing of the Republican Party, that I expose and condemn in this chapter.

Clarifying the Issue

I make clear at the outset what I am not doing in this chapter. I am not pointing the finger of blame concerning sexual sin away from us Reformed Christians, including myself, toward the wicked world out there. According to our Lord’s teaching that unclean thoughts and desire are adultery, all of us are guilty of violating the seventh commandment. All of us have the shamefully depraved nature that consists, in part, of unchastity, or sexual filthiness. “I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt. 5:28).

¹ Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 155.

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It is grace that saves us from the guilt and shame of sexual sin—*our* guilt and *our* shame of sexual sin. But this grace works repentance for sexual transgression and sexual corruption of nature. This grace bestows forgiveness. And this grace cleanses, so that the Reformed Christian acknowledges the seventh commandment of the law of God as good and right, resists temptation, and certainly does not go on practising sexual immorality.

Neither do I refer, by sexual revolution, to the mere fact that many commit acts of gross, public violation of the seventh commandment of the law of God, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” Some Christians fall into such sexual sins, whether fornication as unmarried, or adultery as married, or even sodomy and lesbianism. The Old Testament saint, David, the man after God’s own heart, committed adultery with another man’s wife (II Samuel 11-12).

A regenerated New Testament believer lived sexually for a while with his father’s wife—so outrageous a transgression of sexual morality that it was not even spoken of among the heathen (at least, at that time), who had only the law of nature. “It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife” (I Cor. 5:1). We know that the sinner was a believer, because the discipline of the Corinthian church—they excommunicated him—worked his repentance and restoration (II Cor. 2:1-11).

By a sexual revolution, I do not refer even to the obvious increase of permissiveness regarding sexual sin on the part of ungodly society, both secular and ecclesiastical.

But I refer exactly to sexual *revolution*: the definite program and calculated practice of the reprobate ungodly, especially in the West, on the one hand to glorify sex as divine—the be-all and end-all of human existence, the goddess—and on the other hand to debase and degrade sex as merely an ordinary physical act like eating, at best, or as a filthy, ignoble act, at worst.

By the sexual revolution, I refer to a lawlessness that not only turns the natural into that which is “against nature,” as Paul describes homosexuality in Romans 1:26, but also turns a good creation of God, that is intended to honour Him, into a powerful weapon against Him.

Using the jargon of the project of postmodernism, we may describe the sexual revolution as the demonic, “deconstruction” of sex.

The Significance of Sex

To understand the sexual revolution, indeed, to recognize the revolution, we must understand the significance of sex. I speak of its significance advisedly—the meaning and, therefore, the purpose of sex. Postmodernism, that is, the lawlessness of the last days, which drives the sexual revolution, denies that *anything*, including the sexual nature of the male and the female, has any inherent meaning and purpose, by virtue of God’s will. Man himself, especially an entire society, gives meaning to sex.

If humans are the natural, accidental product of Darwinian evolution, sex is merely the natural drive to reproduce. The old, Christian rules about sex were, in fact, nothing more than the attempt of persons, especially male persons, to protect the family for the sake of their offspring (which is not, in fact, foolish thinking).

If advanced society in the twenty-first century judges that sex may and should be viewed merely as a pleasurable act and that it, therefore, be liberated from the old, repressive, Christian restrictions, so as to enhance sheer, unrestrained, sexual freedom, this becomes the truth about sex.

Some thirty years ago, under pressure, organized psychology decided that homosexuality is not an abnormality (as had always been the official judgment of psychology and psychiatry),

but perfectly normal. Presto, homosexuality became as normal as heterosexuality.

Western society has recently decided that chastity is repressive for teenagers. By virtue of this profound verdict, abandoned, abounding fornication by the young people has become an accepted aspect of healthy, youthful life in the United States. Indeed, fornication by the youth is promoted, by national health organizations, by the state schools, by the media, and by parents. “Pass out the condoms!” And, “murder the consequences!”

All of this arrogant folly opposes the significance of sex as determined by the Creator—the triune, one, true, and living God. God has determined the meaning and purpose of sex—its truth. He determined the truth of sex by creating the human race as He did. He reveals the truth about sex both in nature and in Scripture. Against this God-given significance of sex, the world of the ungodly is in revolt today.

The Intimacy of Marriage

Sex is an aspect of marriage. It belongs exclusively to the marriage relation. It is the expression and enjoyment of the intimacy of the unique relationship of love that is marriage. God made this the truth—the inherent, objective, absolute truth—about sex by His creation of the human race as male and female (Gen. 1-2). Immediately, God united the male and the female in marriage (Gen. 2:18-25). On that occasion, He blessed them with the usual fruitfulness of the sexual relation in the marriage bond: “God blessed them ... Be fruitful, and multiply” (Gen. 1:28).

The truth that sex is an honourable aspect of marriage is implied in the words that conclude the account of the divine institution of marriage on the sixth day of the creation-week: “And they [i.e., the now-married male and female] were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Gen. 2:25).

Jesus Christ confirmed that sex as an aspect of the marriage of a man and a woman is prescriptive for the human race: “He which made them at the beginning made them male and female ... they twain shall be one flesh ... they are no more twain, but one flesh” (Matt. 19:4-6).

This is the truth about sex, since the opening chapters of Genesis are *historical*. To relegate these chapters to the realm of the mythical, or figurative, or otherwise un-historical, is to lose the truth about sex, as indeed the truth also about marriage and the family. Having already succumbed to the lawlessness of our time by regarding Genesis 1-11 as mythical, many churches are now powerless to withstand the sexual revolution.

The Song of Solomon sings the truth of sex as an honourable aspect of delightful marriage. Claiming to be the best song ever sung (such is the superlative force of the description, “song of songs,” in the first verse of the book), the Song of Solomon celebrates the marital love of King Solomon for one woman, his wife, the Shulamite. This love very prominently includes sex.

The sexual aspect of the marriage is not the only theme of the Song of Solomon. It is not even the main theme. But it is a theme, an important theme. All of the obvious, perfectly honourable, sexual statements and connotations belong to, indeed enhance, and, in fact, contribute to the (human) marital love extolled in the memorable words of the Song 8:6-7:

Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

Solomon’s insistence, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that sex belongs to a man’s marriage with one wife (as well as the

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woman's marriage with one man), is all the more noteworthy in view of the fact that Solomon himself grossly transgressed the truth of sex by his harem.

Throughout the Old Testament, when men were corrupting the truth of sex by polygamy, the word of God constantly affirmed that the rule remained inviolate: one man sexually related with one woman in marriage. Psalm 128:3 tells the God-fearing man, "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine," not, "thy wives shall be as fruitful vines." Malachi 2:14 recognizes only "the wife of thy youth," who is a man's "companion, and the wife of thy covenant."

In a number of places, the Bible teaches that sex is an aspect of marriage by express statements and explicit warnings. I call attention to three such passages. The first is I Corinthians 7:1-5:

It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for time, that ye many give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

The passage opens one of the most important chapters on marriage in the Bible. It teaches that sex before and apart from marriage is "fornication." To avoid fornication, Christian men and women ought usually to marry. Sex is strictly limited to marriage. Within marriage, sex is not only right, but also a mutual duty: "Defraud ye not one the other."

The second passage is Hebrews 13:4: "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." "The bed," in the Greek original, is *koitee*,

that is, sexual intercourse with all that attends it. God's Word pronounces it pure and good for the Christian husband and wife *within their marriage*. In this aspect too, marriage is "honourable," and not in the least shameful, or base, or dirty.

But the sexual activity and relationship are undefiled *only within the institution of marriage*. Only the marriage bed is undefiled.

Outside the marriage bond, sex is a filthy, shameful, dishonourable business. For the unmarried, it is "whoremongering," that is, fornication. For the married, it is adultery, whether the sexual uncleanness takes the form of an illicit "affair," or the form of a legal remarriage after divorce. And God will judge both fornicators and adulterers with condemnation and damnation.

The third passage is I Corinthians 6:18: "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body." Here the context makes plain that "fornication" is not the sexual sin only of the unmarried, but also of the married. In Corinth, the cesspool of sexual filthiness in the apostle's day, as a city like San Francisco is in our day, married men visited the prostitutes as a matter of course. So much is sex an aspect of marriage, so absolutely is sex outside of marriage sin—"fornication"—and so grave a sin is sex outside of marriage—and so alluring—that the apostle warns Christians to flee the sin.²

Because God has made sex an aspect of marriage, every teaching, every law, every advertisement, every song, and every picture that permit or promote sex outside of marriage is, not only a lie about sex, but also an assault on marriage.

Fundamental to the Family

A second absolute truth about sex, determined by God and re-

² For a thorough explanation of I Corinthians 6 and 7, see David J. Engelsma, *Better to Marry: Sex and Marriage in I Corinthians 6 & 7* (Grand Rapids, MI: RFP, 1993).

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vealed both in nature and in the Bible, is that, since it is an important aspect of marriage, it is fundamental to the family. I mean by this, not only that the sexual relation of the husband and wife ordinarily is fruitful in children, whom the husband and wife then protect, provide for, and rear, but also that sexual faithfulness to each other on the part of the parents safeguards the family. If marriage is the foundation of the family, the sexual faithfulness of the husband and wife is the cement that keeps the foundation firm, keeps it from crumbling.

The fundamental importance of the sexual aspect of marriage for the family is plain in the biblical account of the institution of marriage in Genesis 1:28. God's blessing of the married couple, Adam and Eve, with the sexual relationship had in view children and family.

God structured human life, not individualistically, but by family. Family consists of one husband, one wife, and, ordinarily, children.

This is how God structures societies and nations—*worldly* societies and *godless* nations—by His providence, working through the ties of blood and the yearnings of natural love.

This is how God structures His holy nation, the New Testament church, just as He structured the life of Old Testament Israel: the covenant family. There is, of course, the honourable exception of the unmarried saint, as Paul notes, and even praises, in I Corinthians 7:7-9, which includes the apostle himself. But the rule in the New Testament church, as in Old Testament Israel, is the family.

The redeeming grace of God in Jesus Christ does not ignore, or reject, the creation-ordinance of family, in order to save the church in a purely individualistic manner—this individual, that individual, and the other individual. By no means! God the redeemer is the God of creation. In redemption, God honours His work of creation. In creating, God was preparing for His work of

redemption. Redemption sanctifies family, and takes it up into the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

God brings forth His elect church in the covenant, kingdom children of a believing father and mother, or, as Paul allows in I Corinthians 7:14, occasionally the children of one believing parent. Then, He uses the solid family life (solid in no small part because of the sexual faithfulness of the husband and wife) both to enrich the parents spiritually (often overlooked in our defence of the covenant family) and to protect and nurture the children (to say nothing of the benefits that flow down to grandchildren and great-grandchildren in the generations of those who fear God and keep His commandments).

The family structure of the church in the old covenant, a structure cemented by the sexual faithfulness of husband and wife, is the message of Psalm 128:3: “Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table.”

The structure of Christian life in the New Testament church is the same, as Ephesians 5:22–6:4 makes plain. The church consists, for the most part, of husbands, who love their wife; wives, who are submissive to their husband; parents, who rear their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord Jesus; and children, who, by the covenant grace of God, obey their parents in the Lord Jesus.

Oh, so simple! Oh, so obvious! Oh, so true to experience! Oh, so blessed by God!

And this absolute truth about sex implies that the abuse of sex, that is, the use of it contrary to the will of God, results in the destruction of the family.

Children are born without a father in their life, without any solid family structure.

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Or, the sexual infidelity of the parents breaks up the marriage, and thus destroys the family.

The result, as we see in all the nations of the West, is chaos in society and the misery, indeed the ruin, of children.

Old Testament history, which was written for our admonition, warns of the destructive consequences of sexual sin upon families *in the church*. How did David, man after God's own heart, bring division, misery, and damnation into his family by his adultery with another man's wife (II Sam. 11-13)!

Symbolic of Spiritual Intimacy

There is yet a third absolute truth about sex—its significance as determined by God. As the expression of the intimacy of marriage, sex points to, and symbolizes, the spiritual intimacy of Jesus Christ and His church. As the expression, and enjoyment, of the unique, one-flesh union of marriage, the love-relation of godly husband and godly wife—the sexual relation—is a pale, earthly reflection of the thoroughly spiritual desire of the church for Christ and of Christ for the church, and of the fulfillment of the desire, in the communion of the covenant of grace.

This is the main theme, and gospel, of Solomon's Song. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine" (Song 6:3). Yes, and, "I am my beloved's, *and his desire is toward me*" (Song 7:10).

This is the truth at the heart of the comparison of our marriages to Christ's in Ephesians 5:31-32:

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

But even this does not do justice to the absolute truth of sex. As a fundamental aspect of marriage, picturing the real marriage—the marriage of Christ and the elect church—the sexual

relation has as its profound meaning and lofty purpose that it intimate to believers something of the wonderful fellowship—the covenant life—of the persons of the Trinity in the Godhead.

There is nothing sexual, because there is nothing physical, in the being of God. Indeed, the angels are not sexual. Neither will there be sex in heaven on the part of the redeemed, even though they will have bodies. In the resurrection, the bodies of the redeemed will have become spiritual. “For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven” (Matt. 22:30).

But there is fellowship in love between the Father and the Son in the Holy Ghost. This fellowship is not that the Father is *with* the Son, or *near* the Son, at least not only, or even mainly, this. But the fellowship is that the Father is “*in*” the Son, and that the Son is “*in*” the Father. This is the mysterious Trinitarian reality that theology calls “perichoresis.” “As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee” (John 17:21). This close, deep, spiritual fellowship of the triune Spirit, who is God, like that of Christ and His church, is exuberant, joyous, delightful, and satisfying.

This also—exuberant, delightful, satisfying fellowship in love—sex in marriage expresses and realizes, as is abundantly evident in the Song of Solomon. It is not only the necessary means for the producing of (covenant) children.

In light of this third truth about sex, all perversion of the God-given significance of sex, and corresponding disobedient practice, are necessarily harmful to the truth of the covenant of grace and to the truth of the Godhead.

Against this three-fold significance of sex, the West is now in open revolt.

The Revolution

That what we are witnessing in the West is a deliberate, all-

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out, radical overthrow of the old, Christian order concerning sex, aiming at the creation of a new, secular, demonic order, is manifest.

At the height of the French Revolution, which was a historical event that played an important role in bringing Western civilization to its present state (all revolutions have their roots in past history), men and women engaged in an orgy of fornication in the sanctuary and on the pews of the great cathedral in Paris. That was more than debauched behaviour. It was a declaration, a manifesto, *in the deed*, of freedom from God's law, of independence with regard to all divine restraint, of revolution, not only against the king, the priest, and the ancient regime, but also, and especially, against the Creator.

Also, when one of the leading avowed enemies of the God of Christianity, the British biologist, Richard Dawkins, gives his "own amended Ten Commandments," in his book, *The God Delusion*, this is the very first commandment: "Enjoy your own sex life (so long as it damages nobody else), and leave others to enjoy theirs in private whatever their inclination, which are none of your business."³ Making this the first of what are deliberately called Dawkins' "Ten Commandments" serves notice that the precept of sexual licence abolishes, not only the seventh of God's commandments, but also the first.

Of course, the assumption that sexual licentiousness harms no one is merest nonsense, exposed as nonsense by the hard facts of human experience. Does the production of fatherless children harm no one? Do the resulting gangs in all the big cities, and increasingly also in the smaller towns, never harm anyone? Does the male use of any number of females never harm the females? Does the spread of the HIV virus and the other incurable sexual diseases never damage anybody? Does the imposition of higher taxes on the citizenry of a country in order to obtain

³ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Black Swan, 2007), p. 300.

the vast amounts of money that are needed to find a cure for AIDS and to pay for the health care of the sexually licentious not harm the tax-paying citizens and the country itself?

A liar in the big matter of the existence of God, Dawkins is a liar also in the lesser matter of sexual ethics.

But Dawkins mans the barricades of a sexual revolution.

That the intelligentsia of the West, including the entire educational systems of the states, purpose a sexual revolution is evident, in addition, by the adoption and promotion of Darwinian evolutionary theory. There is good reason to believe that a main purpose of Darwin with his theory of evolution was exactly to liberate men and women from the seventh commandment, and that this was also a main reason for the immediate, widespread acceptance of evolution. Regardless whether this was the purpose of Darwin and his allies, the result of the theory is the same. If man is nothing but an evolved primate, he may gratify his sexual desire as he (or she) pleases. If a Creator-God is safely abolished, and the foundation of the Christian religion—creation by a sovereign God—relegated to the status of myth, men and women may fornicate like the beasts, or supreme beings (who are a law unto themselves), that evolution teaches they are.

The Revolutionary Programme

The sexual revolution proceeds apace in the following four, interrelated and coordinated programmes.

First, Western societies and nations are destroying marriage, both the institution itself and millions of existing marriages. With marriage, the West destroys the family. Marriage and the family are the main object of the revolution. Marriage and the family represent the last bastion of structure, solidity, and stability in society, as well as the bulwark of the true church. The

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lawlessness of the last days is determined to destabilize all of society in the interests of the Antichristian state.

The laws of the land grant divorce easily, for any reason. The media make adultery glamorous, exciting, and fulfilling. The churches, including the reputedly conservative churches, vehemently deny that marriage is a one-flesh union for life, and approve remarriage after divorce. Most approve remarriage for those divorced on grounds other than the adultery of their mate, and, indeed, the remarriage of the guilty party, that is, the one who himself or herself was adulterous.

Huge numbers of marriages break up in divorce, with the consequent dissolution of the family.

Twenty-five years ago, the non-Christian, University of Chicago professor, Allan Bloom, wrote that divorce

... is surely America's most urgent social problem. But nobody even tries to do anything about it. The tide seems to be irresistible. Among the many items on the agenda of those promoting America's moral regeneration, I never find marriage and divorce.⁴

What Bloom for all his insight did not see is that this evil is the purpose of the lawless in the land, including the lawless University of Chicago.

Second, Western nations and societies not only do not discourage but also actively promote sex before and apart from marriage. The advertising, the television programmes in prime time, the movies, the popular music, and the education in the state schools approve and incite the gratifying of the powerful sexual desire by the children and young people.

The examples of the lives of the famous—the idols of movies,

⁴ Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), p. 119.

music, sports, and other entertainments—held up as glamorous by the media, encourage promiscuity.

The sex-education courses in the state schools give instruction in fornication, including the fornication of sodomy and lesbianism.

As for professing Christians and the nominally Christian churches, parents allow their children to watch the programs, attend the movies, listen to the music, and attend the state schools that teach and incite: “fornicate! fornicate! fornicate!”

The churches play their sorry role in the sexual revolution. Evidently convinced that sexual satisfaction outweighs the law of God, that is, that sex is god, they turn a blind eye toward their young people openly living together before and outside of marriage; approve the remarriage of their divorced members (“Surely, God does not expect anyone to deny himself or herself sexually”); and fall silent—in the midst of the sexual revolution—regarding the gospel’s call to chastity, except, perhaps, on occasion to bemoan in safe generalities the “breakdown of marriage in our society,” thus salving their consciences.

Third, Western nations and societies sanction, indeed, wallow in, pornography. Pornography, literally, writing that has to do with the prostitute (*pornee* is the Greek word for whore in I Corinthians 6), is sexual filth that is produced for the pleasure of the one who reads, hears, or looks on the filth.

The lawless flood the United States with pornography: magazines, videos, movies, television, adult entertainment cesspools, and especially the internet. In preparation for this chapter, I forced myself to read a recent, widely acknowledged, scholarly, scientific study of pornography, Pamela Paul’s *Pornified: How Pornography is Transforming Our Lives*. I content myself with saying that the nature and extent of sexual filth, readily available to all and being enjoyed by many, evidently by a majority of men, are appalling. The United States is now old, decadent Rome,

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Corinth, and Sodom and Gomorrah, all rolled into one, and developed to a pitch of sexual vileness, as, pray God, true Christians do never imagine.⁵

The acids of pornography are dissolving the relationships, souls, and lives of all the multitudes who indulge in the indecency.

Fourth, Western nations and societies approve and promote homosexuality: sodomy and lesbianism. Canada has already legalized homosexual “marriage” (in quotation marks, because no homosexual connection is, may be, or can be a marriage, regardless of any decree of state or [false] church; God has determined what marriage is: the union of a male and a female). The United States lags a little behind, but is working toward such a law. Depending on the outcome of the national elections in 2012, there may well be a national law recognizing homosexual “marriage,” with appropriate penalties for those who commit the “hate crime” of publicly condemning these perverse unions, within the next four years.

Again, the media beat the drums for the legitimacy, indeed the goodness, of homosexuality.

Even the supposedly conservative politicians and right-wing news commentators express approval of it, although some hesitate to sanction homosexual “marriage.” Thus, of course, they approve fornication, which is sex outside of and apart from marriage.

The liberal churches and churchmen are the most ardent advocates of homosexuality. Some reputedly conservative churches pronounce the homosexual “tendency,” or “disposition,” that is, the lust, pure and holy, although for the time being they proscribe the deed—a doctrinally erroneous and a practically impossible position.

⁵ Pamela Paul, *Pornified: How Pornography is Transforming Our Lives* (New York: Times Books/Henry Holt, 2005).

A society's brazen approval and open practice of homosexuality represent a culmination of the development of rebellion against God by fallen man, as also the nadir of depraved man's apostasy from God, as Paul teaches in Romans 1:18-32. Lawlessness advances to such a degree that it rages against *natural* law—the law of male and female impressed upon, and revealed by, nature itself in the very bodies of the two fundamental, physical divisions of humanity.

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet (vv. 26-27).

As the history of Sodom and Gomorrah warns, the end of a homosexual society is impending in the holy wrath of God (Gen. 19).

In all this sexual revolution, we observe a strange, contradictory thing. On the one hand, rebellious society makes a god of sex. As the apostle condemned some in his day—"enemies of the cross of Christ"—"whose God is their belly," so today we condemn many whose god is their sexual organ. And whether men and women worship their belly or their sexual organ, their "glory is in their shame" (Phil. 3:18-19).

The fundamental idolatry in the twenty-first century is the worship of Man, and always idolatry is attended and promoted by sexual immorality. Baal and Asherah were obscene gods, allowing and encouraging sexual licence.

On the other hand, rebellious society makes of sex an ordinary thing, no different from eating and drinking. That was the notion in Corinth when the gospel arrived. Paul denied the notion:

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“Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats ... Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord” (I Cor. 6:13).

Sex is not God, but neither is it an ordinary bodily function, like eating and drinking. It is special, belonging to the mystery of marriage. This is its meaning, and this meaning determines its use and enjoyment.

So, the true church is called to teach, and, so, believers and their children are to live, in the midst of, and in opposition to, the sexual revolution.

The Calling of the Church

The true church is called to confess the truth about sex.

She must teach the significance of sex according to the Word of God.

She must teach that young, unmarried Christians and all single believers are to live chastely, that is, abstaining from sexual relations, and that they are able to do so. “Hear me now therefore, O ye children ... Remove thy way far from her [i.e., the strange woman]” (Prov. 5:7-8). “Let not the wife depart from her husband: but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband” (I Cor. 7:10-11).

She must teach the young people to marry, not postponing marriage too long, in order that they not commit fornication. “Rejoice with the wife of thy youth” (Prov. 5:18). “To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband” (I Cor. 7:2).

She must teach that marriage is for life, as the apostle makes clear beyond any shadow of doubt, in I Corinthians 7:39, although (because of the hardness of people’s hearts, or the darkness of their understanding) not beyond all contradiction: “The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her

husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.”

She must teach that married persons are to be sexually faithful to each other, which is the positive implication of the seventh commandment.

She must teach that divorce is permitted—not commanded—only on the ground of the sexual infidelity of a mate. “Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery” (Matt. 5:32).

She must teach that all remarriage after divorce, while an original mate still lives, is forbidden, since the remarriage is adultery. “Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery” (Luke 16:18).

She must teach that homosexual activity and relations are an abomination to God and His church, so that no one who practises sodomy or lesbianism may be a member of the church, or will enter into the kingdom of God in the day of Christ.

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived ... effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind ... shall inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:9-10).

She must also teach that homosexual desire is sin, just as sexual desire by the heterosexual for another woman or man than one’s marriage companion is sin. “God gave them up unto *vile affections* ... men ... *burned in their lust* one toward another ... God gave them over to a *reprobate mind*” (Rom. 1:26-28).

A Christian may be afflicted with homosexual desire, or “tendencies,” just as other Christians are afflicted with illicit sexual desire for persons who are not of the same sex. It makes no difference whether the homosexual desire is due to the corrup-

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tion of the nature with which one was born, or to experiences in childhood, that is, it makes no difference whether the desire is innate or learned. A child of God may even have practised the perversity in the past. But as a believing, sanctified child of God, he or she is called by God to deny and crucify the wicked desire, or “tendency,” refusing to yield to it.

For this, the grace of God is sufficient. In I Corinthians 6, the apostle continues,

And such were some of you [i.e., effeminate and abusers of themselves with mankind—the two roles in homosexuality]: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God (v. 11).

When Paul, in Romans 6:13, admonishes all Christians not to yield their members as instruments of unrighteousness, he includes their sexual members.

The church must teach that every member, old and young, married and unmarried, is called to avoid and crucify sexually impure thoughts and desires and to abstain from everything that arouses such thoughts and desires, whether in oneself or in others. This includes immodesty of dress.

Does God in this [seventh] commandment forbid nothing more than adultery, and such like gross sins?

Since our body and soul are both temples of the Holy Ghost, it is his will that we keep both pure and holy; for which reason he forbids all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires, and whatever may entice thereto (*Heidelberg Catechism*, Q. & A. 109).

The calling of the true church to oppose the sexual revolution by confessing the truth about sex includes that she requires her own members to walk in the truth, that she disciplines those of her members who teach or walk in unchastity, and that she

boldly condemns the lies of the sexual revolution. Her confession may not only be sweetly positive, but must also be sharply negative.

In her conflict with the sexual revolution, the church must be on her guard not to fall for the clever language-games that the revolutionaries play, which are such an important part of the revolution. The church must call sexual evils by their rightful names. Men and women do not have (exciting) “affairs;” they commit (sordid) adultery. A promiscuous male is not a “womanizer” (every married Christian man is and ought to be a “womanizer,” the woman being his wife), but a fornicator. (Practising) homosexuals are not “gay;” they are sodomites, or lesbians. The state-sanctioned, legal relationships between homosexuals, that are either already a reality in the nations of the West, or that are inevitable, are not “gay marriages,” but sodomite or lesbian connections.

The Witness of Suffering

Confessing God’s truth about sex, the church must expect persecution. Revolutionaries crush and kill those who resist the revolution. All revolutions exercise their “reign of terror.” The hatred of those promoting homosexuality in the United States toward those who oppose them is murderous.

The sexual revolution takes dead aim at the true church. All other institutions either enthusiastically cooperate with the revolution, or cravenly surrender to it—media, political parties, governments, and apostate churches. One institution, and one only, resists, without compromise and without fear: the kingdom of Jesus Christ on earth, that is, the true, visible, instituted, holy church of Jesus Christ.

She must suffer for her witness to the holiness of God. The two witnesses will lie dead “in the street of the great city, which

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spiritually is called Sodom”—*Sodom* (Rev. 11:8)! The church’s suffering is an aspect of her witness.

By her confession and teaching, however, she saves the elect people of God in her own membership, particularly, the children and youth of the covenant.

By the truth, adorned with the church’s purity, faithfulness, and courage, she gathers others, both from the apostatizing churches and from the ungodly world, as many as God has ordained unto eternal life.

And she glorifies her holy God in an unholy world.

Thus, the church waits for the coming of the Lord Jesus.

The sexual revolution signifies that the Lord’s return is near. Christ made the abounding of this lawlessness (AV: “iniquity”) a sign of His return (Matt. 24:12). When the great city of this ungodly world shows itself as Sodom—as *Sodom*—fire is about to fall, the earth is about to quake, and the faithful witnesses are about to ascend into heaven in the sight of all (Rev. 11).

The Lord Jesus returns to crush the sexual revolution, and punish every revolutionary. The revolution will fail. The revolutionaries will be devoured, not by the revolution, but by the God against whom they raged. “The abominable ... and whoremongers ... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8).

Christ will reward the sexually pure, washed of all their own sexual filth by the blood of the Lamb. The reward will be that we live with Christ forever in the intimacy and delights of the real marriage.

Come, Lord Jesus!

PART 1: Chapter 6

Towards a One-World Government



Herman Hanko

And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations (Rev. 13:3-7).

Introduction

Anyone with any awareness of what is happening in the history of the world today is also aware of the fact that significant developments have taken place that have moved the nations closer to a one-world government. The dream has been in the minds of men since Babel. Two colossal world wars have given it impetus. After World War I, the League of Nations was established for the purpose of uniting all nations under one government. And after World War II, the United Nations was yet another attempt to achieve this goal. At present hesitant steps are being taken toward that goal: the European Union is probably the most striking.

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The development of modern technology makes a one-world government more possible. Today's thinkers speak of a world-wide community in a shrinking world, and of everyone being our neighbour. Instant communications have played their role; swiftness of travel has enhanced the possibility, and both have contributed towards bringing the world together economically. Economic unions usually mean political unions. So it is with the European Economic Community, which has evolved into the European Union with its headquarters in Brussels.

The believer has a great interest in these developments. These movements affect his life as a citizen of a particular nation, but also come to bear on his citizenship in the kingdom of heaven. He wonders what the Bible has to say about this strange fact that he lives a life with a dual citizenship.

Soon he will discover, if he searches his Bible, that interestingly enough, a one-world government is one of the signs by which Scripture announces the nearness of the coming of the kingdom of heaven. Why a one-world government here in the world is a sign of the establishment of the kingdom of Christ is an idea that we will discuss in the course of this chapter.

Its Historical Development

I must, at the outset, establish firmly the point that the kingdom of Christ is the only true and lasting one-world government. Indeed, it is even broader than this world. Christ's kingdom not only embraces all the elect from the human race, but also the angelic world. It includes in it the whole redeemed and glorified earthly creation, but also the heavenly creation. It is the only kingdom that, when established, shall endure forever.

We therefore, repudiate all forms of postmillennialism and premillennialism, both of which envision the kingdom of Christ established here on earth prior to the eternal state, the new heavens and the new earth. Whether it is said that the king-

dom of Christ develops gradually over a long period of time in the world, or whether that kingdom comes in the form of some Jewish state in what is now Palestine makes no essential difference: both views are contrary to Scripture and the Reformed confessions, for both deny that the kingdom of Christ is a spiritual kingdom that is heavenly in character (John 18:36). The kingdom of Christ, the foundation of which was laid in the blood of Calvary, is incompatible with any earthly kingdom. A one-world kingdom or government is necessarily of this world.

The first time we read of a one-world government in Scripture is in the post-diluvian world when efforts were made to establish such a kingdom at Babel. Being of one language and one speech, the inhabitants of the earth decided to build a tower to make themselves a name and to prevent the people from being “scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Gen. 11:4). The head of this kingdom was apparently Nimrod, and the attempt was made to keep all people together in one common goal of opposition to God. God’s intervention guaranteed that the one-world kingdom then envisioned would be impossible to establish, though men would try for nearly four millennia to attain this goal. He stopped these efforts by confounding the language of the people “that they may not understand one another’s speech” (v. 7). This was a nearly fatal blow. It is graphically depicted in Revelation 13 where the beast of Antichrist is said to have received a wound in its head (v. 3). The confusion of speech worked by God among the people resulted in the division of all men into races and nations, which division followed the lines of Noah’s blessing of Shem and Japheth and His curse of Ham’s descendants.

Language differences and racism and nationalism make a one-world government impossible for much of history. That God prevented this atrocious act was necessary, I note in passing, for if the one-world government plotted by Nimrod had been successful, the church could not have been gathered. The church just before the flood numbered eight souls out of a population

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of millions because of persecution; so the post-diluvian world, if a Nimrod had been successful, would have made the gathering of a church impossible. Let us also note in passing that Babel served the positive purpose of the gathering of a church truly catholic.

Scripture informs us, however, that history is told in terms of efforts to establish this one-world government in spite of Babel. Mankind never gives up his dream. His efforts continue unabated. The reasons are, I think, obvious. On the one hand, a one-world government is seen to be the solution to many of the troubles that afflict the human race. If all wars were made impossible and if a great economic levelling-off could be attained, most, if not all of the world's problems would be resolved. A one-world government would attain that goal. On the other hand, Satan himself, determined to be the sole ruler of this government, needs all the world to be united under the rule of one man, if he is to be supreme. He works to establish a kingdom of wealth and prosperity, of pleasure and peace, in which he rules, his principles of opposition to God are adopted, and he attains his goal to banish God from His creation.

Scripture gives us graphic pictures of this development. The list is long and impressive: Babel in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Syria, Assyria before Judah's captivity. Then Babylon and the nations that followed. These are described in Nebuchadnezzar's dream interpreted by Daniel. The image reached toward heaven. Its head was of gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of brass, its legs of iron, and its feet of iron mixed with clay. That dream of Nebuchadnezzar, given to a heathen king but recorded for all time for the church, explained the development of a one-world government to the end of time (Dan. 2).

Babylon was the head of gold, the Medo-Persian kingdom the chest and arms of silver, the Grecian kingdom of Alexander the Great the thighs of brass, and Rome the legs of iron. From the fall of Rome to the final manifestation of this one-world gov-

ernment, all efforts to establish it fail. This is the period of the gathering of the church from the nations. The only manifestation of a one-world government in this period of slightly less than two millennia is the Roman Catholic Church, whose popes attempted to gain secular control of the nations as well as ecclesiastical rule. The Roman Empire, the legs of iron in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, came the closest of all attempts to form such a one-world government. It was worldwide, only as far as the known world of that day existed. It was a kingdom of great power and wealth. It engaged in the persecution of the church. And it fell, because of internal moral rot. It is quite possible that God raised the Roman Catholic Church to its position of prominence in Europe to remind the church of Christ that the final manifestation of the one-world government would be both a secular and an ecclesiastical power.

The feet of Nebuchadnezzar's image were a mixture of iron and clay. That part of the image was a mixture because it indicated the final manifestation of the one-world government in the Antichristian kingdom. Its mixture indicates its weakness. Its weakness is that it is a union of apostate Christianity in Western civilization and Gog and Magog, the nations on the four corners of the earth. Its position at the feet of the image indicates that it is the final manifestation of all the developments that went before it from Babylon to the end of time. It is the real purpose of Satan, only partially expressed in the other parts of the image, but which, as the feet, supports and gives its true character to all these other parts. It does this by virtue of its being a part of the one image.

The weakness of the final manifestation of a one-world goal is that God's intervention at Babel cannot be overcome by human effort. The diversity of nations and races are too fundamental to be repaired in a sinful world. The divisions of the human race, rooted in sin, are overcome for the church by the great work of reconciliation in the cross of Christ and the establishment of the kingdom of heaven. The final one-world government,

the culmination of all man's efforts, remains a divided government, chiefly because the Western powers and the forces of Gog and Magog cannot be united into one kingdom. Their union is a shot-gun marriage. In all the history of the world, Gog and Magog on the one hand, and Western civilization on the other hand, have hated each other. It is Japheth, dwelling in the tents of Shem, still at war with Ham. It is Ishmael and Isaac still fighting in the Middle East. The one-world government forces, by its superior strength, all into an alliance that nearly brings about the kingdom for which Satan strives; but not quite. It is the stone cut out without hands that rolls down the mountain side and crushes the entire image, pulverizing it; it grows until it fills the whole earth; it depicts the power of Christ's kingdom to destroy Antichrist and to establish an everlasting kingdom in heaven (Dan. 2:34-35, 44-45).

Its Final Manifestation

The final manifestation of a one-world government is the kingdom of the Antichrist. Concerning that kingdom, the following must be noted.

It is the final culmination of Satan's dream and his efforts in all history. In the Antichristian kingdom is achieved everything for which the world strove throughout 6,000 years of history. It unites all nations into one kingdom, ruled by one powerful figure. It is openly claimed to be the attainment of all men's dreams.

It will, therefore, be a kingdom of earthly peace, prosperity and the universal brotherhood of man. In it, all who are a part of it will rejoice and acknowledge that their ruler has brought to them everything they desired in their lives. There will be no denying that man's fondest wishes have been satisfied.

God will permit such a kingdom to be realized, for He remains sovereign, and no power, including that of Satan and the world's

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mightiest men, could bring about such a kingdom without God's will. If you should ask, why does God will that Satan have his way and that the world attain its goals, the answer is that only in such a kingdom do wicked men fill the cup of iniquity, so that God's judgments upon them may be shown to be just.

While the kingdom is surely one in which men attain their goals, it is ruled by one called Antichrist. The word "Antichrist" has a double meaning. The preposition "anti" means both "to stand in the place of" and "to be opposed to." Antichrist sets himself up as God. He claims to be God and to have accomplished on this earth God's own purpose. He will point to the Scriptures to prove what he says. He will show that all the promises of Scripture that speak of God's purposes attained in a kingdom of peace and prosperity are fulfilled in his kingdom. He will, according to Revelation 13:14, perform miracles to substantiate his claim. His deception will be so convincing that the whole world will be deceived. In fact, Jesus warns us that, if it were possible, he would deceive the very elect (Matt. 24:24).

Antichrist is opposed to God. He who claims to be God and to attain God's purpose is, in fact, totally opposed to God in all that he does. He is the embodiment of the lie of Satan spoken in Paradise, "Ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5). His opposition to God will be manifested particularly in the fact that he preaches a gospel that proclaims man's right to determine for himself all morality, that is, what is morally right and what is morally wrong. The only wrong in the kingdom of the Antichrist deserving punishment will be a refusal to worship him. Scripture gives us a powerful description of Antichrist in II Thessalonians 2:4: "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." All that the word Antichrist means is summed up in that verse.

The religious aspect of the Antichrist as he rules over his universal government is therefore a conscious imitation of the king-

dom of Christ. He will claim to be the Messiah prophesied in the Scriptures, for he will open to the people of the earth a kingdom of peace, unparalleled prosperity, and readily available pleasure. He will support his claim to be God in Christ by the miracles he will perform and he will demonstrate that nothing in the promises of Christ concerning his kingdom is omitted from the kingdom this beast establishes.

But there will be one stipulation. The glory of his kingdom will be open only to those who bow before him and worship him. The Lord our Saviour already pointed to this in his warning that Antichrist would be the fulfilment of the prophecy of Daniel, which spoke of the abomination of desolation set up in the holy place (Matt. 24:15). Revelation 11 also speaks of this as the silencing of the two witnesses, because the church as institute will no longer be permitted to preach the gospel or worship God. All shall have to worship the beast and his image.

Those who will not worship the beast nor carry the sign identifying a person as loyal to him will be killed. A chilling justification for this can be found in Malachi Martin's book, *The Keys of This Blood*.¹ In a book where this Jesuit author argues that the pope of Rome is most fitted to be the ruler of the new world order, he makes the remark that in that kingdom all will acknowledge the pope as the supreme religious and political ruler, but there will then be a few who refuse. They, says Martin, shall have to be put to death for their own good because it will avert total judgment in hell and make their final ordeal in purgatory less than it would be were they allowed to live. It reminds us of the words of our Lord that they who kill us will say that they do God a service (John 16:2).

The one-world kingdom of Antichrist will be a union of church and state. This union of church and state is described in Revelation 17 in a powerful figure of the false church. She is described

¹ Malachi Martin, *The Keys of This Blood* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990).

as a whore who rides a scarlet-coloured beast full of blasphemies. She herself

... was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: and upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus (vv. 4-6).

In that kingdom, the cup of iniquity will be filled. The cup of iniquity will be filled, first of all, because every institution of society will be thoroughly corrupted and put to the use of Satan. Even government, set up by God to punish evil-doers and praise them that do well, will now praise evil-doers and punish them that do well. Marriage, that most sacred institution, will be corrupted by divorce and remarriage, homosexual unions and fornication. Every power of God's creation will be forced into sinful uses and the mad pursuit of pleasure. Pleasure will be found in everything that is contrary to the will of God.

Above all, the cup of iniquity will be filled by the persecution of the church. The church is God's beloved bride, whom He loves with an everlasting love. He loves her so dearly that He gave His own Son to redeem her. He will do anything and everything to save her and bring her to Himself. That bride is now battered and bruised and her body lies in the streets of the city. She has been murdered in cold blood for no other reason than that she was faithful to her God. That is the greatest of all crimes and sins, and for it the whore shall be thrown into the lake of everlasting fire.

Its Significance for the Church

What then is the Word of God to the church of today?

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First of all, watch and pray. To watch means on the one hand to recognize the development of this one-world kingdom in the events taking place around us. It is to keep a wary eye on the partially successful efforts of men as a one-world government develops in various ways. To watch means also that we assess properly the development of the false church. Today's watchword in the church world is "tolerance" and we are urged to be tolerant of all heresies and all departures from the faith, for doctrinal differences are of little or no importance. The false church is tolerant of every departure from the faith, but exceedingly intolerant of the truth and of those who hold to it. That is surely evident in our world today. How the truth is maligned; how even those who profess to be Reformed and Calvinistic despise the truth of the absolute sovereignty of God.

Protestantism, including evangelicalism, has sold out to Arminianism and Roman Catholicism. The stream flowing back into the river of Rome is steady and increasingly wide. Less and less room is allowed to those who hold fast to the great truths of sovereign grace. Soon enough it will become evident that an alliance between the false church and a one-world government is truly an alliance of Antichrist. Antichrist's kingdom, being an imitation of Christ's kingdom, wants the church, needs the church, courts the church and will do everything it can to persuade the church to join it in a great alliance of universal brotherhood. The day will come when the false church, so evident everywhere today, will present the saints with the choice: join me or suffer death. Some reading this may face that choice. It is the measure of your faithfulness to Christ.

The calling is to pray. There are so many things to pray for, it is hard to remember them all. It surely means to pray for grace to stand fast for the truth. It means to ask the Lord to prepare us for the very difficult times ahead. It means to ask for strength to resist the siren calls of our contemporaries. And it means to pray, "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly."

But God's Word to us today is still more immediately pressing. It is that word found as the book of Revelation begins the gruesome description of Babylon's fall:

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double (Rev. 18:4-6).

The Word of God to our generation is this as well. God is sovereign. Nothing comes to pass without His will. In all the rages of the heathen and in the seeming success of their efforts, the Lord Almighty sits serene and untroubled by what transpires here in our world. All comes to pass by His eternal decree. He is Lord of all (Ps. 2:1-6).

God's Word is also for the comfort of the hard-pressed remnant of the elect. God's purpose in all He does, including the monstrously wicked regime of Antichrist's one-world government, is the salvation of Christ's church. Nor are all these events arbitrary decrees of Almighty God; they are events necessary for the salvation of the church. Zion is redeemed with judgment (Isa. 1:27). When, therefore, these events take place our calling is to lift up our heads for our redemption draws nigh (Luke 21:28).

Does this great empire fill you with fear, because it means persecution and suffering, the loss of all this world's goods, and flight into the mountains? The Lord pronounces his special blessing on those who suffer for His sake and calls us to rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer with Him (Matt. 5:10-12; Acts 5:41; I Pet. 4:14; Rev. 20:4). "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

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We are of the kingdom of Christ. That is the one kingdom that is an everlasting kingdom in which we shall rule with Christ, world without end!

PART 2: Chapter 7

The Unbreakable Scripture



David J. Engelsma

Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? (John 10:34-36).

Introduction

In this book, we have examined powerful movements and developments in the world today. These are movements that determine what people believe and how people behave.

The movements control, and are spread by, the popular culture—radio, television, movies, the internet, newspapers, music, books, and more.

The state schools promote these movements, brainwashing almost the entire population of nations.

Governments actively and high-handedly empower the movements. Recently, a federal judge in California in the United States nullified the vote of a majority of Californians declaring homosexual “marriage” illegal and unlawful. Thus, the court threw its weight behind one of the most perverse movements of our time.

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Many churches proclaim the movements to be Christian, thus manifesting themselves as false, or apostatizing, churches. For the developments and movements that we examine are attacks on the confession and life of the true church and her members.

All of the movements and developments have in common that they reject the authority of Holy Scripture—the Word of God—and affirm the authority of the mind, will, feelings, discoveries, and purposes of man—the word of man. Particularly in the West, the movements are rebellion—*deliberate* rebellion—against the authority of Scripture.

In this book, we have not had the time or space to demonstrate in every case that the movement under consideration is rebellion against the Word of God, but the truth of this can be demonstrated.

The powerful movement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries known as rationalism or modernism was a conscious, all-out attack on the Bible, as its higher criticism of Scripture plainly showed. Higher criticism was (and still is) the view of Scripture as merely a historical, human, fallible book, resulting in disbelief of its doctrines, disobedience to its commandments, and disdain for its history.

The great movement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries exalting science, culminating in Darwin's theory of evolution, was motivated by the determination to destroy the authority of Scripture, particularly, Genesis 1-11, with regard to the origin of all things, especially the origin of the human race.

The raging, contemporary, sexual revolution is determined to cast off, once and for all, Scripture's restraints on sexual conduct and, thus, to annihilate the biblical doctrine of marriage and the family.

In our examination of these movements, our authority is Holy Scripture, which we receive by faith as the inspired, infallible (or inerrant), clear Word of God.

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We must have an authoritative standard by which to examine the contemporary movements and developments that assail and tempt the church and the believer. This authority must be divine revelation of the truth regarding doctrine and life. Not only does this authority expose and condemn the wicked movements, but it also establishes the church and the believer in right belief and practice.

The theme of our 2012 BRF conference and the subtitle of this book is “The Word of God for Our Generation.” The idea certainly is that the Word of God criticizes contemporary movements for the protection of the people of God. But the idea is also that there be a positive word to our generation concerning their faith and life. The positive word is that Jesus Christ, as risen from the dead, is the only Saviour and the sovereign Lord. He is the centre of our Reformed worldview. Such is the lordship of Jesus for us, His believing people, that we receive Scripture as the authoritative Word of God *because Jesus witnesses to it as the Word of God*. Jesus Christ witnesses to Scripture in Scripture itself. His Spirit convinces us of the truth of Jesus’ witness.

One instance of the witness of Jesus to Scripture as the Word of God is John 10:34-36: “The Unbreakable Scripture.”

Scripture’s Divine Authority

Jesus teaches us something about the Bible: “*Scripture* cannot be broken.” He refers to the writing, or the book, that we call the Bible. Since the New Testament books were not yet written when Jesus spoke these words, the Lord was referring specifically to the Old Testament writings—the thirty-nine books that in our Authorized Version begin with Genesis and conclude with Malachi. About this Old Testament Scripture, He said, “[It] cannot be broken.”

It is important to notice that Jesus said this about the Old Testament, for the contemporary critics of Scripture invariably con-

centrate their opening salvo against the authority of Scripture upon the Old Testament, usually the opening chapters of the Old Testament, Genesis 1-11. In a short while, they expand their attack to all of the Old Testament and then to the New Testament, but they begin with the Old Testament. The critics understand full well that the relation between the two testaments is so intimate that, if they break the Old Testament, they will be able to break the New as well. They also are well aware that foolish churches and office-bearers are more willing to tolerate the criticism of the Old Testament, as though the authority of Scripture were not as much at stake in attacks on the Old Testament as in attacks on the New (and as though criticism of the Old Testament will not promptly be followed by criticism of the New).

About the *Old Testament*, in its entirety, including Genesis 1-11, Jesus said, “[It] cannot be broken.”

By implication, what He said about the Old Testament holds as well for the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, including John 10:34-36 (which is His New Testament commendation of the Old Testament).

Specifically, Jesus referred to Psalm 82:6: “I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.” Jesus quoted from the text in an argument He was having with the Jews. Having quoted part of the text, Jesus said, not only about that particular passage of the Old Testament, but also about the entire Scripture, that it cannot be broken.

That Scripture cannot be broken means that it cannot in any way be stripped of its force. It cannot be ignored, for example, by refusing to take the biblical doctrine of creation into account, and so denying that the biblical doctrine is decisive in its teaching on origins. It cannot be contradicted, for example, by denying that God made everything in the beginning by distinct creative acts in six days, each of which consisted of one evening and one morning. It cannot be emptied of its author-

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ity by imposing on a passage a meaning that the passage obviously does not have, for example, by making Genesis 2 teach that humans evolved from primates. It cannot be criticized, for example, by attributing its account of the origin of the human race in Genesis 1 and 2 to naïve, pre-scientific, and unscientific notions of some mistaken Israelite or other. To do any of these things to any passage of Scripture would be to attempt to break it, or annul it.

Implied is that Scripture contains no errors, for, certainly, if there are errors, Scripture not only *can* be broken, but also *ought* to be broken, that is, with regard to its errors. God Himself, who is truth, calls us to disregard, contradict, and criticize error.

Denying that Scripture can be broken, Jesus taught the authority of Scripture. Scripture cannot be broken in the sense that the authority of the civil ruler or the authority of the father in the home cannot be broken.

What Scripture relates as history must be received as having really happened in time and space, just as Scripture describes the event as having occurred. Once, “the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day” (Josh. 10:13).

What Scripture teaches as doctrine must be believed and confessed. The salvation of sinners depends, not upon the will or works of sinners, but upon the eternal, sovereign electing will of God: “So then it [i.e., salvation] is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth [i.e., performs works], but of God that showeth mercy” (Rom. 9:16).

What Scripture commands must be obeyed. Husbands must “love [their] wives, even as Christ also loved the church” (Eph. 5:25).

Scripture is the standard of the church’s faith and life. It is the judge of all controversy. It is the end of all debate. This author-

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ity of Scripture explains Jesus' use of the word "law" in the text: "Is it not written in your *law*?" In fact, He was referring to a *psalm*, not the ten commandments, or the first five books of Moses. But the Psalms, like all the rest of the Old Testament, are *law* in that they are authoritative.

Jesus' ascription of unbreakable authority to Scripture implies that Scripture is the *sole* authority for the covenant people of God. One can break Scripture, in the sense of the text, not only by open criticism of it, but also by affirming an authority *alongside* Scripture, of equal weight with Scripture, and by positing an authority *over* Scripture. Scripture is then broken by its rival, or superior.

This is the rebellion against Scripture of the Roman Catholic Church. The unwritten "tradition" of the Roman Catholic Church has the same authority as Scripture. The Church itself, that is, the pope, is authoritative over Scripture. Thus, Rome rages as violently against the authority of the Bible, and sins as grievously against the word of Jesus Christ in John 10, as any Protestant higher-critic. For Rome, in the final analysis, it is not Scripture that cannot be broken, but the Roman Catholic Church that cannot be broken.

Not so for Jesus Christ. For Him, Scripture was the *sole* authority. He found Himself under attack by the Jews because of His claim to be God: "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). The Jews charged Him with "blasphemy ... because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (v. 33). In defence of Himself, Jesus appealed to Psalm 82:6, where God calls the rulers in Israel "gods."

God called the human rulers of Israel "gods" because He had put those men in their office among His holy nation and vested the rulers with His own divine authority, to rule His people on His behalf. The Word of God came to those rulers in the sense that God called them to their office by His Word.

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The argument of Jesus was that, if such men—*mere* men—could be called “gods” without blasphemy, He—Jesus—certainly could call Himself “God,” since He is the one whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world. As the Messiah, Jesus is the great office-bearer and ruler in the church, vested with divine authority. In addition, as is necessary for the work of the Messiah on God’s behalf, Jesus is personally God Himself—the second person of the blessed Trinity—the eternal “Son of God,” as was Jesus’ claim when He said, “I and my Father are one.”

Jesus’ argument, with the appeal to Psalm 82, was the powerful argument “from the lesser to the greater.” If the lesser—the Old Testament rulers in Israel—were rightly called gods, all the stronger is the claim of the greater—Jesus—to be God.

But it is not now Jesus’ argument that concerns us. Rather, it is the fact that in His defence and as judge of the controversy Jesus appealed to Scripture.

As God’s Messiah, He might have responded to His accusers, “I have authority from God over all God’s house, and My word rules here.”

As the eternal Son of God in human flesh, He might have replied to those who challenged Him, and even be expected to have replied to those specks of depraved dust, “I say, and this is the end of the matter.”

But Jesus appealed to Scripture.

For Jesus, the authority in and over the church is Scripture.

The authority of Scripture, according to Jesus Christ, is that of one, unified body of writing. Although written by many different men, although written over the span of many hundreds of years, and although consisting of widely varying kinds of writing—history, poetry, prophecy, wisdom literature—there is a single book—“the scripture”—having unbreakable authority. The whole is “law.”

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According to Jesus, the authority of the whole extends emphatically to every part. The specific teaching in the Old Testament to which He referred in John 10:34 is, by our standards, a minor matter. It is not a major doctrine, like creation, or the fall, or redemption. Even a diligent reader of Scripture might overlook the text, had Jesus not made it an issue. About this seemingly incidental teaching in the Old Testament, Jesus declared that it is authoritative.

Evidently, for Jesus the authority of Scripture extends to the very *words* themselves. Jesus' appeal to Psalm 82:6 hinged on the word "gods."

Possessing this awesome authority, Scripture is unique. No other book, no human, no institution is unbreakable. Only of the Old Testament of Israel in the days of His earthly ministry and of the Christian church today (and, by implication, of the New Testament) did Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God, God's Messiah, say that it "cannot be broken."

What accounts for this unique book and its unique authority?

The Reason

The explanation is, and can only be, that Scripture is the Word of God—the *written* Word of God. Only the Word of God is unbreakable. Only the Word of God cannot be criticized. Only the Word of God is infallible. Only the Word of God has absolute, final, supreme, sole authority over the church and her members. Only the Word of God is the unchallengeable standard of faith and life. Only the Word of God is the judge of all controversy. Only the Word of God is the end of all debate. Only to the Word of God will God's Messiah subject His own teaching for confirmation.

And Scripture is the Word of God because Scripture was "given by inspiration of God," as the Authorized Version reads in II

Timothy 3:16, or “God-breathed,” as is the literal translation of the original Greek. The men who wrote the Scripture, including particularly the man who wrote Psalm 82:6, were moved to write and controlled as they wrote by the Spirit of Christ so that what they wrote was not the words of men but the holy Word of God.

II Peter 1:21 reveals as much about the wonder of the inspiration of Scripture as God is pleased to make known to His church and as much as the church needs to know. “The prophecy [of Scripture] came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake [and wrote] as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

The origin of the Bible was inspiration—inspiration of the totality of the Bible; inspiration of every part of the Bible, including Psalm 82:6; inspiration of the very words of the Bible, for instance the word “gods” in Psalm 82:6.

This was the “high view” of Scripture that Jesus held, as He made known in John 10:35: “Scripture cannot be broken.”

This is the believing confession concerning Scripture, therefore, by Jesus’ church and by Jesus’ disciples. In the words of Articles 3-7 of the Reformed creed, the *Belgic Confession*, they confess that God “commanded his servants, the Prophets and Apostles, to commit his revealed Word to writing” so that the sixty-six canonical books of the Bible are “holy and divine Scriptures.” They believe “without any doubt, all things contained in them.” They believe that the “divine Scriptures” are “above all,” so that they “reject with all [their] hearts whatsoever doth not agree with this infallible rule.” They believe and confess that the Scripture is the “Word of God” and the “truth of God.”

Criticism of Scripture

The true church of Christ rejects all teachings that would break Scripture, nullifying or compromising its authority. Failure to

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reject these teachings would itself be connivance at the breaking of Scripture.

The church that is faithful to the Christ of John 10:34-36 rejects the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church that its unwritten traditions are an equal authority with Scripture and that the authority of that Church, that is, the authority of the pope, is over Scripture. These doctrines “break” Scripture. The result is Rome’s trampling on the Bible’s teachings that God alone is to be worshipped; that Christ Jesus is the only mediator between God and humans; that justification is by faith alone; that all communicants at the Lord’s Supper must partake of both bread and wine; that all bishops may, and most bishops should, marry; and many more.

The true church rejects the teaching of theological modernism, that the Bible is a human book—words of men, full of errors of all kinds, and, therefore, subject to the criticism of the scholars, indeed, of everyone. According to modernism, the history of the Bible, from the account of creation to the account of the conception and birth of Jesus, is myth; the doctrines of the Bible are false theology; and the commandments of the Bible are mistaken or outdated. Against Jesus’ “scripture cannot be broken,” modernism arrogantly and defiantly asserts its “Scripture cannot be maintained.”

The true church also rejects the teaching that the Bible is partly the Word of God, but partly also the word of man. This teaching is widespread in reputedly conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches and in circles that call themselves evangelical. Viewing Scripture as partly the word of man (doing justice to the “human element” in the Bible, as this teaching expresses it) enables the theologians to make a distinction between the infallibility of the Bible and the inerrancy of the Bible. “Infallibility,” which these theologians profess to believe, now means that the Bible does not fail to teach certain important truths (for the identification of which we are dependent upon these theologians). “Inerrancy” means that the Bible is without error.

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The implication of their viewing Scripture as partly a human word is that the theologians and churches reject inerrancy. A human word errs. The account of creation, the fall, the flood, and the division of nations in Genesis 1-11, purporting to be history, is a human word, that errs. Nothing recorded in these chapters actually happened, as Genesis 1-11 says it happened. The apostolic prohibition against women in ecclesiastical office in I Timothy 2 and 3 is a human word, that errs. Women have a perfect right to be ministers, elders, deacons, and professors of theology in the seminaries. In fact, it is those church members who object to women office-bearers who sin against the will of God. The Bible's teaching, everywhere, that sex is permitted only in marriage, that marriage is for life, and that marriage is exclusively the union—sexual and otherwise—of male and female is a human word, that errs. Sex is permitted outside of marriage, divorce and remarriage are rampant in these churches, and there is now clamour by those who insist that the Bible is partly also a word of man on behalf of homosexual unions.

These reputedly conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches and these evangelicals oppose and nullify the authority of Scripture as much as do Rome and the modernists. In the language of John 10:35, these churches and theologians contend that Scripture can be broken *in part*, indeed, *in large part*. But Scripture is a unified book. If it is erroneous and unauthoritative in part, it is simply an erroneous and unauthoritative book in its totality. Either the book—the book *as a whole*—cannot be broken, as Jesus said; or, it—*in its entirety*—can be broken, as these reputedly Reformed and evangelical churches and theologians say.

Translations

For the same reason that they reject all teachings that subtly compromise or outrightly deny the authority of Scripture, the true church and the genuine disciple of Jesus Christ reject bad translations of the Bible.

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By no means does Scripture lose its authority by translation into the common languages of the peoples of the world. Jesus and His disciples sometimes used the popular Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament in their ministry. Having inspired Old Testament Scripture in Hebrew and, later, New Testament Scripture in Greek, by a wonderful providence God preserved authentic copies of the originals. It is inconceivable that God would allow His inspired Word to be lost, or corrupted.

By the same wonderful providence, God has overseen and provided the faithful translation of these authentic copies of His inspired Word, so that in good translations His people have His authoritative Word in their own languages.

Such a translation in English is the Authorized Version. Basic to it, as to every good translation in any language, is the fidelity of the translators to the *words* of the original Hebrew and Greek. The Authorized Version has many other qualities, but this one is fundamental. By virtue of the faithfulness of the Authorized Version to the authentic copies of the original text, as can be verified by comparing the translation to the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts that have come down to the church, the church and the believer have, in the Authorized Version, the inspired Word of God.

But there are also bad translations of the Bible. Bad translations corrupt Scripture and, thus, undermine its authority. Bad translations, too, “break” Scripture.

Some modern translations are the deliberate effort of false teachers to oppose sound doctrine and to introduce heresy into the churches. Such a translation is the Living Bible. It changes the words of Scripture in order to replace the truth of salvation by sovereign grace with the lie of salvation by the will of the sinner. The author of the Living Bible (who is not God, but the human translator) rendered Acts 13:48 this way: “As many as wanted eternal life, believed.”

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Some modern translations sin against the inspiration of Scripture and, therefore, do damage to Scripture's authority by departing freely and widely from the words that God breathed originally. Such a translation is the version of the Bible that is popular with many Reformed and evangelical Christians, the New International Version. The translators adopted the method of translating that they call "dynamic equivalence." This means that the translators took the liberty to express what they understood to be the thought of a passage in the equivalent thought of the language into which the passage was translated, as they decided upon this equivalent thought. They did not bind themselves to the very words of the original (which is not the same as the demand for a wooden word-for-word translation).

The main objection, therefore, against the New International Version is not that it inexcusably mistranslates "only begotten Son" in the gospel and epistles of John as, "one and only Son" (which is not even true—God has many sons and daughters), and that it similarly inexcusably translates I Timothy 3:16 as, "He appeared in a body," rather than as, "God was manifest in the flesh," thus compromising, if not losing altogether, cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith.

Nor is the main objection that the New International Version inflicts a fatal wound upon the biblical doctrine of marriage by inexcusably translating I Corinthians 7:15, "A believing man or woman is not *bound* in such circumstances." As though the leaving of a believer by an unbelieving mate dissolves the marriage bond! As though the apostle never wrote, in verse 39 of this very chapter, that only death dissolves the marriage bond! Thus, this modern version foolishly and rebelliously attempts what the Lord forbids in Matthew 19:6: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." (The right translation is that of the Authorized Version: "A brother or a sister is not *under bondage* in such cases." The deserted believer, though still bound, is not under bondage.)

But the main objection to the New International Version is that, as the result of the “dynamic equivalence” theory of translating, one who uses the New International Version cannot be certain *at any point* that he is reading or hearing God’s Word. It is likely the quite different word—the idea—of the translators. And if one cannot be sure that he has God’s Word in his hand, or eye, or ear, or mind, he has no reason to regard the Word as authoritative.

Indeed, insofar as the New International Version departs from the inspired words of Scripture it sacrifices the authority of Scripture on the altar of dynamic equivalence.

Only *God’s* word cannot be broken.

The seriousness of all criticism of Scripture, as of the undermining of its authority in any way, is that it constitutes the contradiction of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the setting aside of His authority.

The Testimony of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ taught the unbreakable nature of Scripture.

He taught the unique, absolute authority of Scripture as the inspired Word of God throughout His ministry, time and time again.

At the outset of His ministry, He withstood the temptation of Satan by appeal to Scripture. Three times, decisively, He responded to the devil’s powerful, plausible urging to turn aside from the course toward the cross that God had set for Him, “It is written” (Matt. 4:1-11).

Again and again, He affirmed that it was necessary for Him to suffer in order to fulfil Scripture (Matt. 26:24, 31, 54, 56).

When the rich man of the parable desires Lazarus to testify to the rich man’s brothers, with the supposedly convincing tes-

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timony of a man returned from the dead, Jesus had Abraham respond,

They have Moses and the prophets [i.e., the Old Testament Scriptures] ... If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead (Luke 16:29, 31).

Our belief in the authority of Scripture as the inspired Word of God honours Jesus as the Lord. He taught us how to view Scripture. Bowing to Scripture's authority, we bow to Him. We credit the Bible, because we credit Christ.

To the jeer that we make ourselves guilty of "bibliolatry," we respond: "The Lord instructed us to regard Scripture as unbreakable. Your ridicule falls on Him."

Criticism of Scripture, especially by those who claim to be Christians, is revolution against the lordship of Jesus Christ.

At bottom, criticism of Scripture is denial that Jesus is the eternal Son of God. Jesus called Scripture unbreakable. If He was mistaken, whether because of ignorance or deceit, He cannot be the Son of God.

This was the issue, remember, when Jesus spoke the words of John 10:34-36. Unbelieving enemies had challenged His claim that He is one in essence with the Father (v. 30). Those enemies understood very well that by that claim "thou ... makest thyself God" (v. 33).

This is the issue in the controversy over the authority and nature of Scripture. To dishonour Scripture is to dishonour Jesus Christ, who said about Scripture, "[It] cannot be broken." To discredit Scripture is to discredit Jesus Christ, who said about Scripture, "[It] cannot be broken." To trample underfoot the authority of Scripture, as though it were a fallible collection of human words, is to repudiate the authority of Jesus Christ, who said about Scripture, "[It] cannot be broken."

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For a church to criticize Scripture, whether by official decision or by allowing its theologians to do so, is, in principle, to become a false church. According to Article 29 of the *Belgic Confession*, the “true Church” manages all things “according to the pure Word of God,” thus acknowledging “Jesus Christ ... as the only Head of the Church.”

The “false Church,” in contrast, “ascribes more power and authority to herself and her ordinances than to the Word of God.” Thus, she refuses to “submit herself to the yoke of Christ.”

How foolish of a church! How foolish of a theologian! How foolish of a member of such a church, or of a disciple of such a theologian!

For the Scripture *cannot* be broken. Jesus did not say that it *may* not be broken, that breaking Scripture is *immissible*, although this is certainly true. But He said that it *cannot* be broken, that breaking it is *impossible*. No one, including its fiercest critics, is *able* to break it. They try. The Jewish enemies of Jesus tried to break it. The ancient heretic, Marcion, tried to break it, in its Old Testament part. Contemporary critics are beside themselves in their efforts to break it. But they cannot. Scripture retains, and exercises, its invincible authority as the Word of God by rebounding upon them with judgment—awful judgment—both in time and eternity. The divine anvil of Scripture breaks every human hammer.

Especially does Scripture demonstrate that it cannot be broken, in the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, by causing the true church and her elect members to submit to its authority.

The Submission of Church and Believer

Scripture itself irresistibly constrains the true church to receive Scripture as the Word of God. As she confesses in Article 5 of the *Belgic Confession*, the church receives and approves the books of the Bible as the Word of God “because the Holy Ghost

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witnesseth in our hearts that they are from God, *whereof they carry the evidence in themselves.*”

By their hearing of the preaching of Scripture and, in dependence on the preaching, by their own reading and study of Scripture, elect believers and their children come to know Scripture. They learn it thoroughly, so that they can use it for the growth of their faith and for their holy life. How thoroughly the Son of God knew Scripture. Ready to hand for Him in His controversy with the Jews over His Godhead was Psalm 82 and the obscure sixth verse about calling rulers in the church “gods.” If Scripture is holy and divine, as is implied by its being unbreakable, the people of God must be men, women, young people, and children of the book. But believers and their children read and study Scripture with a spirit of reverence and love, not with a critical spirit.

Reverence for Scripture produces acceptance of all its doctrines and obedience to all its precepts. “The doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects” (*Belgic Confession* 7). For the heavenly wisdom concerning worship and walk, “to the law and to the testimony!” Thus, believers and their children “seek unto their God.” Regarding all churches, preachers, and theologians that “speak not according to this word [i.e., Scripture],” regardless of their name, popularity, and degrees, the judgment of the people of God is that of Scripture itself: “There is no light in them” (Isa. 8:19-20).

In the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, Scripture manifests that it is unbreakable by causing all the elect children of God to obey it with regard to its great, central teaching. “Search the scriptures,” Jesus exhorted in John 5:39, for “they are they which testify of me.” Scripture teaches Jesus the Christ as the eternal Son of God, come in the flesh so that all who believe on Him might have eternal life.

In John 10, the claim of Jesus to be the Son of God is closely related to His proclamation of Himself as the “good shepherd,”

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who knows His sheep, and who “lay[s] down [His] life for the sheep” (vv. 14-15).

Jesus Himself made the authority of Scripture, which He declared in John 10:35, serve the truth that He is the Saviour. He quoted the authoritative declaration of Psalm 82:6 on behalf of His announcement of Himself as the one “whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world” (John 10:36). As sent into the world—*sent*, as one who eternally lives in the other world, heaven—He is the Son of God, as He had claimed, capable of the great, divine work of redemption from sin and death and deliverance into eternal life. As sanctified, He is the man whom God has appointed and qualified for the work of salvation. And God sent Him into the world, not on a fool’s errand, but to accomplish the one thing necessary: satisfaction of the justice of God in the stead of guilty sinners by the accursed death of the cross, and, on the basis of that death, resurrection into a new, heavenly, immortal, eternal life, body and soul.

Scripture is unbreakable especially with regard to the proclamation of Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

This, then, is the call that comes to us from Jesus’ defence of the authority of Scripture: Bow to the authority of Scripture! Bow especially by believing on Jesus Christ, the Son of God, crucified for our sins and raised for our justification!

Thus, our faith concerning Scripture is confirmed, and we enjoy eternal life. Amen.

PART 2: Chapter 8

The Call to Spiritual Cleansing



Herman Hanko

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (II Cor. 7:1).

Introduction

This first verse of the seventh chapter of II Corinthians belongs to chapter six. The text makes reference to “these promises.” The promises in view are those mentioned in verses 16-18 of chapter six. After the apostle’s call to spiritual separation, God’s promises are described:

I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people ... and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

The meaning of II Corinthians 7:1 is clear: “Because you possess these promises, walk in holiness before God.” It is clear that the apostle is directing the admonition to God’s covenant people who possess these promises. This emphasis on God’s covenant people is further enforced by the name Paul gives those to whom he writes: “dearly beloved.” They are dearly beloved of Paul because the saints are together sons and daughters of God.

God’s covenant people are here called to walk as covenant people in the world.

The General Character of the Calling

When we consider the text as a whole, it is clear that the calling is a calling to sanctify ourselves. To sanctify means to make spiritually clean, to make holy. Both parts of the admonition emphasize this idea: To cleanse ourselves from all filthiness is surely to make ourselves spiritually clean or holy, and to perfect holiness is a reference to nothing else but sanctification.

Sanctification is a wonderful work of God. We are born dead in trespasses and sins. When Scripture describes us from the viewpoint of our natural birth and life, there are no words spared to describe the awful depravity of our natures and the foul deeds of which we are capable. "There is none that doeth good," declares Psalm 14:3. "All our righteousnesses [i.e., our very best works] are as filthy [i.e., menstruous] rags," says Isaiah 64:6. Every deed we perform is a work of hatred of God and a denial of His infinite holiness. From a spiritual point of view, we are dead and never show any signs of life (Eph. 2:1).

But we are God's covenant people. To be God's covenant people means to live in close fellowship with God. This fellowship is one in which God claims us as His own and we claim God as our possession. It is described as a relationship of father and children: intimate, loving, blessed. This requires a holiness like that of God Himself. Peter summons God's people to be holy as God Himself is holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16).

The great work that makes us holy enough to live in fellowship with the living God is called sanctification. The word itself means "to make holy." It is a part of the work of salvation that God performs in His grace towards His elect people. He gives them new life by regenerating them. He imputes to them the righteousness of Christ when He justifies them. He gives them the gift of faith by which they are united to Christ. He preserves them in the world as His people. He glorifies them at death and at the resurrection of the body. He also makes them holy as He is holy: this is sanctification.

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This sanctification (as all the other blessings of salvation) is the work of God. We cannot and do not sanctify ourselves. Every blessing we receive is given by grace, and grace is unmerited favour. God sovereignly takes us into His covenant and makes us His covenant people.

Yet, we are called to sanctify ourselves. That is clearly the admonition.

How can both be true?

The Arminian answers that sanctification is a cooperative work in which both God and man each do his own part. In fact, the Arminian goes so far as to say that the initiative lies with man, so that God is dependent upon man's desire for salvation before He can act. All this is common theology, but is totally contrary to Scripture and the confessions. Scripture affirms the opposite in Philippians 2:12-13: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

There is no question about it that this is a work which God performs, but in which He takes us up into the work. The way He does this is mysterious. When the *Canons of Dordt* speak of this work under a discussion of regeneration and conversion, the creed speaks of it as "mysterious, and ineffable" (*Canons III/IV: 12*). Ineffable means that it cannot be expressed in words: it is unspeakable. Yet, God works in this way because by taking us up in His work He causes us to experience the blessedness of His work in greater measure.

The Calling to Cleanse Ourselves

The text presents two sides to our calling to a holy life: the one is this calling to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; the other side is the calling to perfect holiness. The first is the negative side; the second is the positive side.

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Presupposed in the text is the fact that while we are made holy by God's work of sanctification, a work already principally accomplished in our regeneration, this work is incomplete and will remain incomplete as long as we are still in the world. Our hearts are regenerated; our natures remain totally depraved. Or, as Scripture sometimes speaks of it, regeneration creates a new man in Christ, although the old man remains a powerful part of us. The great life and death struggle between the new man and the old man in us is dramatically described by Paul in Romans 7:14-25. We are spiritual schizophrenics.

When the text speaks of the need to cleanse our flesh and spirit, it does not by any means exclude certain parts of our nature. Surely we are not called to cleanse only part of our sinful natures, while leaving the rest for some possible attention in the future. No, the terms adequately refer to our entire nature.

Scripture uses the word "flesh" in different ways. In this passage, as well as elsewhere, the term refers to our entire nature of body and soul, but from the viewpoint of its depravity and corruption. The word "spirit" is a reference to our relation to God. God created man body and soul. The soul in man is composed of the two faculties of mind and will. All is depraved in fallen man. When God created man out of the dust of the earth, just as He created the animals (Gen. 1:24-25), He framed man both body and soul. When God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, God gave him a spirit (Gen. 2:7).

The soul and spirit are basically one part of man as a rational and moral creature. But while the word "soul" refers to man's mind and will, the word "spirit" refers to the fact that his soul is so created that he stands in a relation to God. As holy, he knows God, loves Him, and enjoys fellowship with Him. As a sinner, he hates God, does everything that is contrary to God's will, and yet cannot escape accountability for what he does.

The two, flesh and spirit, are related in their activities. If the flesh is polluted and filthy, the relation in which we stand to

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God is one of enmity and hatred. The cleansing of the flesh will mean also a cleansing of our relation to God: a relationship of covenant blessedness.

The admonition is forceful and crucial. Our flesh and spirit remain sinful and morally filthy. We are to cleanse both: cleanse the one in order to cleanse the other. The command is serious and intense. It is the only way of entering into covenant fellowship with God, for there is no room for filthy people in God's dwelling place.

Two implications are imbedded in this admonition. The first is implied in the word "cleanse." Scripture's use of this word is frequently a reference to the cleansing power of the blood of Christ. Indeed, the power of cleansing is only to be found in the blood of Christ. Christ's blood was shed on the cross as the perfect payment of the debt we owe to God, which debt can only be paid by an eternity in hell. There on Calvary, Christ, the eternal Son of God in our flesh, suffered in our place and paid our debt. Hence, we cleanse the filthiness of our flesh and spirit by going to Calvary and laying hold of the perfect sacrifice of Christ as our own by faith in Him.

Second, we cleanse ourselves by walking in the power of the cross in our daily calling. Christ died not only to pay for our sins, but to earn for us the spiritual power to do God's will. When we by faith rely on the cross alone and lay hold on what Christ earned for us by His suffering and death, we fight against the filth that remains with us and we daily humble ourselves before God in true repentance.

The Calling to Perfect Holiness

To perfect holiness in the fear of God is the positive part of our calling.

The word "perfecting" comes from a Greek word that means "end" in the sense of goal attained. The end of a war is the

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attainment of the goal of the defeat of the enemy. The end of a marathon race is the attainment of the goal of finishing the race. To perfect holiness means to attain complete and perfect holiness.

We shall not attain that goal here on earth, but a perfect holiness will surely be ours when we die and our souls go to heaven, and when Christ returns to raise our bodies to make them like His own body in glory.

Nevertheless, we must strive for that goal. We can never be satisfied with a partial cleansing from moral and spiritual filthiness. A partial holiness is, after all, impossible. A body that is only partially washed under a shower is not clean. Some dirt is washed off, but the individual is still dirty. So also with holiness. A partial holiness is an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms. God does complete the work which He began in our regeneration. And thus we are called to strive for complete and perfect holiness.

In our practical life and calling, this means that we continue without wearying in the battle against the sin that remains in us; that when we fall, we pick ourselves up to continue to pursue that goal that is reached at the end of our life. In addition to all this, it means that we learn to pray fervently, "Come, Lord Jesus; yea, come quickly," for when Christ comes, we attain perfect holiness.

It is striking that the text adds to our calling to perfect holiness the words "in the fear of God."

The fear of God is a virtue given a place of great importance in the list of Christian virtues found in Scripture. Briefly, fear consists of two activities. One is that we are so conscious of the infinite glory, perfection and holiness of God that we are filled with awe before Him. We are like Isaiah when he, after seeing the holiness of God, cried: "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips" (Isa. 6:5).

Secondly, the fear of God is that overwhelming awareness of God's great love and mercy toward us, poor sinners, which inspires us to be afraid of doing anything that would displease our gracious Father, offend Him, and bring slander to His holy name.

It is not difficult to see why fear is of crucial importance in fulfilling our calling. The wonder of our salvation is so overwhelmingly great that we can scarcely take it in. But it is true; we know it is true; we believe it is true.

The Possibility of Obeying This Calling

Listening once again to this admonition that comes to us from our Christ, and knowing ourselves, we might be very inclined to think that it is an admonition summoning us to do the impossible. In despair over being called to do the impossible, we might simply push the whole matter out of our minds and forget all about it.

We may not do this. In fact, we may not even say, We cannot do it; what is the use of trying?

While in this admonition, as in all the admonitions of Scripture, there is implied an urgent "must"—you must obey—in the life of the child of God the "must" that binds these admonitions on us becomes, by grace, a "can," a "will" and a "do." Not only must I keep God's commandments, but I can obey Him, I will obey Him, I do obey Him!

Very emphatically, the text insists we have these promises. It does not say that we will gain them for our own if only we obey the admonition. The promises of God are not conditional and dependent on us for their fulfilment. They are our possession even in this life. God is our God. We are His people. He is our Father. We are His sons and daughters. That is, we are taken by God graciously into His everlasting covenant, which He has established with us and which He preserves and maintains.

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Thus the admonition of the text is not only addressed to those who are already His covenant people, but are addressed to those who have the ability to fulfil the admonitions that He places before us. The keeping of the admonition is part of the life of gratitude we live in humble recognition of the riches of God's sovereign grace of which we are the recipients.

But at the same time, the reality of God's promises fulfilled in us is the power by which we do keep His commandments and obey His admonitions. "I must ... because I am a son of my heavenly Father." "I can ... because as my Father, He gives me spiritual strength to obey Him." "I will ... because He makes me willing and able to love Him."

The spiritual ability comes from God to us through the cross of Jesus Christ, in whose blood we are washed. "I must ... because I am washed in the blood of my Saviour." "I can ... because He died for me." "I will ... because He loved me so much He gave Himself for me, a poor and lost sinner"

I must and can and will work out my own salvation because it is God that worketh in me to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:12-13). Thus obedience to God's commands is not an onerous task, a heavy obligation, a cruel requirement. It is a privilege given us of grace to walk as His covenant people in the world.

We must await the full perfection of this in heaven. But even now, when we sin, we have forgiveness and pardon. When we are weak, the Lord Jesus is mighty to save. When our burden becomes heavy, we have strength that flows from Calvary. When we are discouraged, we have the hope of glory. We have the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

APPENDIX

About the British Reformed Fellowship



The British Reformed Fellowship (BRF) was founded in 1990 by a group of Reformed Christians set for the defence of the historic Reformed faith in the British Isles. Its doctrinal basis is “the inspired, infallible, inerrant Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as summarized and systematized in the Reformed confessions, specifically the *Three Forms of Unity* and the *Westminster Standards*.”

The BRF produces a biblical and theological journal, the *British Reformed Journal (BRJ)*, four times a year or as frequently as possible. Subscription rates, as of 2012, are £10 (UK, Europe & elsewhere) or \$20US (N. America) for four issues of the *BRJ*. Membership in the BRF, which includes receiving four issues of the *BRJ*, costs the same as subscription to the *BRJ* and is available to Reformed Christians in the British Isles and Europe who agree with its doctrinal basis. New subscribers and members are welcome.

The BRF holds biennial family conferences at various locations in the British Isles for a week in the summer, usually in the beginning of August. Previous conference themes include Marriage and the Family, The Covenant of Grace, Sovereign Grace, The Church, The Last Things, The Kingdom of God, Assurance, Keeping God’s Covenant, The Five Points of Calvinism, The Work of the Holy Spirit, and (of course) The Word of God for Our Generation. Why not consider joining us for a relaxing week’s fellowship around God’s Word?

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The BRF website (www.britishreformedfellowship.org.uk) contains articles from the *BRJ*, as well as information on BRF conferences, free audios, contact details and other materials. So look us up on the web!