

Theocracy and Christocracy

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In our study of biblical law and civil government, we need to consider the issue of theocracy as the ultimate goal of divine revelation. A major reason why this is necessary is that most professing Christians do not understand what a Christian theocracy would entail and, due to misunderstanding, ignorance and the bad theology, have a very negative concept of the idea. In most Christian circles today, if one mentions theocracy in a positive sense and argues that it is the goal of divine revelation through the work of Christ, one will be considered a dangerous teacher and a perilous subversive. This term (to many) brings to mind the torture chambers of Iran, or the oppressive regime of the Taliban that reigned in Afghanistan. Most Americans think that such foolishness was overcome with the age of enlightenment when nations such as the United States had the wisdom and foresight to abolish national religious test oaths and allow complete freedom of religion. Why, people think, would anyone want to return to the dark ages of persecution and religious oppression?

This kind of thinking is also widespread in modern Reformed circles. Even the excellent Reformed theologian R. C. Sproul has been influenced by the American zeitgeist (i.e. the spirit or thinking of our time). He writes,

Should we try to make the United States a theocracy? The confession says that we should not. The judicial laws were set forth in Israel for the purpose of their redemption and are no longer applicable since that theocratic state has expired. However, it is conceivable that there could be another theocracy today, molded according to the legislation of the Old Testament. It could be made a capital offense to profane the name of God publicly. Such a penalty would not be inherently unjust, for that would mean that God was unjust to impose such a sanction in the Old Testament community.

Since the Old Testament came from God, who is holy and righteous, we should not be offended by any laws that we read there. If we are offended by them, it is because our thinking has been distorted by a secular perspective on law, righteousness, and ethics. God's standards, revealed to his people in the Old Testament, are as foreign to us today as they were to the ancient worshipers of Baal. We must go to the pages of Scripture and ask ourselves if it is really the law of God. If it is, it teaches us what is pleasing to God and what is odious to him.¹

Sproul says that the judicial laws were redemptive (which is incorrect, only the ceremonial or typical laws pointed to Christ); that they have been abrogated with the coming of Christ; and, that this is the position of the Westminster Confession. The Confession actually teaches that whatever is moral in content within the judicial law (e.g., the many moral case laws) does *continue*. Sproul then says that a nation could become a theocracy if it wants to and could even implement some of the laws within the judicial code (including the penalties) because Jehovah wrote them and therefore *we cannot say they are unjust*. Here we have Sproul (a man noted for his brilliant analytical and reasoning capabilities) saying that we should not seek a theocracy in America and that the whole judicial law has been abrogated; but, apparently, if a nation decides that it wants to form a theocracy and adopt the moral case laws and the accompanying judicial

¹ R. C. Sproul, *Truths We Confess: A Layman's Guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith*, 2:267.

penalties, that would be all right because God wrote the laws and therefore we cannot say they are unjust. It seems that Sproul believes that that which is righteous, just and good can be abrogated, yet can still be followed because it is just. He implies that the moral case laws are both abrogated yet permissible at the same time. Sproul follows a typical *modern Reformed misinterpretation* of the Confession, but his knowledge of Scripture and use of logic contradicts the modern conception. He understands how foolish and irreverent it is to think of God's laws as defective or unjust. Yet, while he admits this, he acts as though the law of God (i.e. the moral case laws within the judicial code) is optional (i.e. autonomous man is *free to decide* whether to adopt them are not to adopt them and if he does not adopt them, that is permissible because they were abrogated with the death of Christ).

Apparently, Sproul's commitment to pluralism and the PCUSA's perversion of the original Westminster Standards have come into a serious conflict with his use of biblical exegesis and logic. His statement does not make any sense. His commentary does not recognize the fact that, when it comes to whether a nation bows to Jesus as Lord and submits to His authority by formally covenanting and adopting His law, *there can be no neutrality*. At other times Sproul understands this for he writes, "Civil government in the United States has now declared its independence from God and his law, and has become godless, pagan and barbarian."² Given his statements, I would like to ask Dr. Sproul: Are the just laws written by God within the judicial code optional? If they are optional, can men come up with better or more just laws? What would be the source of those laws: the Bible or natural law? If natural law, given the fact that the ethical standard of special and general revelation come from the *same God and teach the same thing*, why not use the much more perspicuous and (given man's fallen nature) reliable written revelation? Moreover, if these laws are just because they were written by God as you acknowledge, how can laws which are righteous be optional? Should not every nation adopt these laws immediately, if they want to please God and better serve mankind?

If we are going to understand that the term "theocracy" (biblically defined) is not something negative, or a concept to be loathed or feared, we need to become familiar with the scriptural concept of the word. The term "theocracy" is not found in the Bible even though what the word represents is one of the Scripture's most pervasive and unifying themes. The word "theocracy" (Greek, *theokratia*; *theos* – God, *krateō* – to rule) simply refers to a civil government in which God is the ruler. (The term was coined by the Jewish historian Josephus to describe the Hebrew government set up by Jehovah under Moses: "Our legislator...ordained to be what, by a strained expression, may be termed a theocracy, by ascribing the authority and the power to God" [*Against Apion*, II, 165]). A theocracy can be distinguished from: a democracy where the ultimate authority resides in the majority of the people; a dictatorship where the political ruler is the final authority; an aristocracy where the state is ruled by a group of men; and an ecclesiocracy where religious priests or churchmen are the final appeal. Many people today confuse a theocracy with the rule of the state by the church or a body of religious leaders (this is the practice in certain Muslim states). Such a view is incorrect. In a biblical theocracy, there is a separation of church and state with both covenantal spheres directly under God's authority. One must also not confuse a theocracy with rule by a false god (e.g., the unitarian, demonic god of Islam) or false gods (e.g., the ancient pagan states where the ruler was a representative of the gods or was purported to be a god himself).

When we discuss the biblical concept of a theocracy, we need to keep a few important things in mind. First, when we speak of a theocracy, we are discussing the spiritual and moral

² Ibid. 2:251.

rule of God in distinction from His sovereign providential rule. God's sovereign rule describes whatever comes to pass and God's ever present power over all that is. A theocracy refers to God's moral authority over a nation. It describes who is in charge or to whom the men of that nation are accountable. A proper theocratic nation is one that has formally covenanted with Jehovah and has publicly and corporately agreed to obey His law-word.

Second, one needs to make a distinction between Israel's theocracy before and after the allowance for kings in Israel. At the time of the giving of the law at Sinai and the adoption of the covenant that bound Israel to God as a special nation (a peculiar people), God ruled over the covenant nation directly without an earthly king. Moses was indeed a great prophet and judge and communicated God's will to the people; but, he was not a king or a traditional political leader. During the period between Moses and King Saul, the theocracy functioned under judges and prophets without one distinctive kingly figure. In fact, when the men of Israel begged Gideon to rule over them and establish a hereditary dynasty, he refused saying, "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you" (Jdg. 8:23).

This example is illuminating in that the men of Israel wanted Gideon to be king and establish a dynasty because of the great victories that occurred under his judgeship. They did not focus on the fact that Jehovah, not Gideon, is the one who destroyed their enemies. They were placing their faith in state power instead of God's power. This revealed they held to a humanistic concept of politics and were turning from a biblical theocracy toward humanistic statism. Gideon had the good sense to reject their offer. This passage (in its context), by way of application, teaches us that the biblical concept of theocracy unites Jehovah's role as Savior and as King. The Lord delivers and the Lord rules those He delivers. He expects those whom He delivers to live happily and contently under His rule. Israel was delivered from Egypt in order to receive God's law-word as the rule for personal, family and national behavior. The salvation and rule of God come together in the covenant. Salvation is for the purpose of the establishment of godly rule on planet earth. Just as one cannot separate Christ as Savior from Christ as Lord on a personal level, one cannot separate Jesus as deliverer and as ruler on a national level. To reject theocracy on a national level is to reject both the Lordship of Christ and His redemptive role as well. It is an invitation to national catastrophe and destruction.

Refusing theocracy is also a rejection of God as the creator and sustainer of all things; for all men, whether saved or not, owe their existence to Him and thus are obligated to obey His revealed will. All men are under God's law in some sense. Those who are not believers are under the law as a *covenant of works*. They owe Jehovah who made them an exhaustive obedience. He alone is the sovereign Lord over creation. All Christians owe God obedience as a duty under the covenant of grace, not as a covenant of works or means of earning salvation but out of gratitude, thanksgiving and love for our redemption in Christ. Consequently, in a theocracy there is one law for all men. The moral law which is a reflection of God's nature and character applies equally to Christians and non-Christians. The acceptance of pluralism on the part of evangelicals and modern Reformed churchmen is an implicit acceptance of ethical relativism, where each man and each community can have their own separate law orders as long as they do not publicly conflict with the humanistic state's law order. The goal of the Christian reconstruction of society is that, through the gospel, men would submit to God's law out of love and not simply out of fear of punishment.

The theocracy with a kingship was established under Samuel the prophet and last of the judges. The manner in which Israel received a king was unsavory, yet still achieved God's purpose. In his old age Samuel made his sons judges, but they were neither righteous nor

competent. The people were unhappy with the system of judges. The populace either forgot or simply did not care that God's practice had been to raise up judges as they were needed. The whole nation (at least the leadership) had come to the conclusion that they did not want an ad hoc form of leadership but, rather, wanted to be like the surrounding nations: "Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, 'Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations'" (1 Sam. 8:4-5). Samuel was displeased with this request because he understood "that the theocracy is the divinely appointed constitution for Israel, and that the substitution of another form is treason to God."³ He was so upset by the request that he prayed to Jehovah and, although God agreed with Samuel's assessment, He gave in to their request: "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day—with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also" (1 Sam. 8:7-8).

Jehovah speaks of their request to have a king like the surrounding nations as a manifestation of their idolatry and rebellion. They are not rejecting Samuel but God Himself in that they were not content or satisfied with the rule that God Himself had set up. Their rejection of the theocracy was a result of unbelief and spiritual blindness. Like the men who wanted to make Gideon a king, they wanted an earthly power they could see. They wanted a powerful humanistic state because their faith was in horses, chariots and charismatic leaders instead of the all-powerful God they could not see. They wanted a human fighter, a man that could lead them into battle. Unbelief, irrationality and complete foolishness go hand-in-hand. Could they ever expect to win a battle like the last one which on account of Samuel's prayer and God's terrifying thunder, the Philistines were thrown into disarray and thus were thoroughly routed (1 Sam. 7:10)? A victory so great the Philistines were subdued by God all the days of Samuel (1 Sam. 7:12). We see that a true theocracy requires faith in God by most of the people and their leaders. Had Israel been faithful and not looked to the false gods and the humanistic worldview of their neighbors, the theocracy would have worked most beautifully. Because of their sin and stupidity, Jehovah allowed them to institute a form of government that was very similar to the nations around them with many governmental inconveniences, costs and oppressions. Instead of allowing God to raise up judges as He saw fit, they would suffer under hereditary kings, most of whom were wicked and brought calamity upon the nation. Their first king was an apostate who

³ Henry P. Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, [1898] 1977), 56. William Garden Blaikie's comments on the leadership's request merits our attention. He writes, "It seems to us very strange that they should have done such a thing. Why were they not satisfied with having God for their king? Was not the roll of past achievements under His guidance very glorious? What could have been more wonderful than the deliverance from Egypt, and the triumph over the greatest empire in the world? Had ever such victories been heard of as those over Sihon and Og? Was there ever a more triumphant campaign than that of Joshua, or a more comfortable settlement than that of the tribes? And if Canaanites, and Midianites, and Ammonites, and Philistines had vexed them, were not Barak and Deborah, Gideon and Jephthah, Samson and Samuel, more than a match for the strongest of them all? Then there was the moral glory of the theocracy. What nation had ever received direct from God, such ordinances, such a covenant, such promises? Where else were men to be found that had held such close fellowship with heaven as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses and Aaron, and Joshua? What other people had had such revelations of the fatherly character of God, so that it could be said of them, 'As an eagle stirreth her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.' Instead of wishing to change the theocracy, we might have expected that every Israelite, capable of appreciating solid benefits, would have clung to it as his greatest privilege and his greatest honor" (*The Expositor's Bible* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1943], 2:32-33).

died in battle against the very people subdued under Samuel (1 Sam. 31:1-6). Even Josiah, one of the best kings, also died in battle (2 Chron. 35:23-24). But, in the long history of the judges, not one died in battle.

Although God altered the governmental arrangement due to the people's desire, He did so in a manner that revealed His lovingkindness toward His church. The theocracy continued under a new form and the kingship under David typified the royal Messiah to come. "He was not a king in the usual sense of the term, but in the proper theological context he was the Lord's anointed (Ps. 2:2; 20:6), and the prince of the Lord (1 Sam. 10:1; 2 Sam. 5:2). During the period of the monarchy God is conceived as going before the king (2 Sam. 5:24). The king is seated on God's throne (1 Chron. 29:23; cf. 28:5). The real ruler is God and the authority of the Throne of David is derived from Him. The theocratic nature of the kingship in Israel is indicated sometimes by the prerogative of the prophet to dethrone the king; e.g., the importance of Samuel in the establishment of the kingship (1 Sam. 15:26; 16:1, 2; cf. 1 Kings 11:29-31; 14:10; 16:1, 2; 21:21)."⁴ The kings of Israel, unlike their pagan neighbors, did not have the authority to determine ethics or create fiat laws. They were under the authority of God's law and, in their civil capacity, were guardians of the covenant law. Even under the monarchy, God was a supreme authority in Israel. He ruled through His written revelation, special prophetic utterances and various judgments for disobedience. Therefore, one could say that, although God answered the request of the Jews for a king, He did so on His terms. He gave them a king under law whose role was ministerial. This kingship was radically different from the Canaanite leaders and the emperors of Persia, Babylon and Rome.

Third, we must consider the ultimate goal of the Old Testament theocracy, which was the establishment of the messianic kingdom. Jesus Christ, as a result of His redemptive victory, sits on the throne of David and has a comprehensive authority over the entire earth. The Old Testament theocracy, which culminated in the Davidic throne, supplied a pattern of the coming kingdom of the Messiah. The divine-human mediator fulfilled the typology of the Davidic throne and in His person and work united the offices of prophet, priest and king. In the old administration, the prophetic office would always stand next to the kingly office so that God could directly make known His will to the king and even rebuke the king when necessary. But in the new administration, Jesus is the divine Word (Jn. 1:1), the finality of revelation and the full revelation of the Father (Heb. 1:1-2). In the Old Covenant era, when the king sinned, he had to rely on the Levitical priesthood to make atonement for his sins. But Jesus was a perfect and eternal high priest, "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:26), who offered up Himself once and for all for His people and "has become higher than the heavens" (Heb. 7:26). In fact, it is because of his priestly work that He sits as victorious upon His throne. "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool" (Heb. 10:12-13).

In the Old Testament theocracy we saw that Israel was to be an absolutely *God-directed people*. This was true for individuals, synagogues, businesses, farms and the whole nation. All of this, however, was only preliminary for a church in a state of immaturity because the ultimate goal and fulfillment with a *Christocracy*. What occurred in Israel, in its Old Testament form, was a pattern for the international rule of the glorified Redeemer. The resurrected Savior is not simply the King and Savior of Israel but is "the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19:14; 17:14), "the ruler over the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5). The teaching of Scripture regarding the

⁴ A. C. Schultz, "Theocracy," in Gen. Ed. Merrill Tenney, *The Zondervan and Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975, 76), 5:719.

mediatorial reign of Christ is that, at His resurrection and ascension, the Redeemer was exalted to sit at the right hand of God the Father and was invested with supreme authority over all things in heaven and on earth (see Ps. 2:6-12; 110:1-2; Dan. 7:13-14; Isa. 9:6-7; Ac. 2:33-36; Mt. 28:18ff; Eph. 1:21-22; Phil. 2:9-11; etc.). This means that Jesus is not simply the head of the church; or the ruler over the hearts of its members; or a king over a spiritual realm; or a prince only over a purely future kingdom, but the Lord over all—even in this age. His authority extends over all angelic beings, all men, every nation, and all spheres of life, including civil governments.

Avoiding Common Misunderstandings

People are confused by this teaching and need some corrective direction for a number of reasons. First, many believers do not understand that our Lord's victory at the cross and empty tomb are both definitive and progressive. It is definitive in the sense that the complete, perfect and final victory was already achieved and secured when the Savior uttered, "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30) and rose from the dead—the victor over Satan, sin and death (Mt. 28:6; Mk. 16:6; Lk. 24:6; Rev. 1:18). The work of salvation was fully achieved. The enemies of truth, justice and holiness were defeated. The regeneration of all things was secured. There can be no doubt about the final outcome of the battle between Christ's people and the devil's followers, for Satan's head was crushed at the cross (Gen. 3:15) and now he is a chained beast (Rev. 20:1-3). "The LORD is our king; He will save us" (Isa. 33:22).

Our Lord's definitive victory is the basis for His kingdom's continued progress in time and on earth unto an actual victory in history. This reality lies behind the command of the Great Commission. All the nations are to be discipled and brought under Jesus' rule *because He has been given (aorist tense)* all authority in heaven and on earth. In Psalm 110, Christ is seen sitting at the right hand of the Father in order to rule in the midst of His enemies and judge the nations that do not bow before Him. Paul recognized, in 1 Corinthians 15, that the purpose of Jesus' reign is to progressively subdue His enemies and reign until *all His enemies are subjected to His authority*. All His adversaries are to be reduced progressively until rebellion against His throne comes to an end. All the enemies of the Redeemer and His people are to be subjected to the empire of Christ. Isaiah prophesied, "The nation and kingdom which will not serve you shall perish, and those nations shall be utterly ruined" (60:12). Nations that refuse to serve Christ and rulers that rebel against him are assured of the wrath of the Lamb: "Then He shall speak to them in His wrath.... You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel" (Ps. 2:5, 9). The civil magistrate's only way to avoid destruction is to serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling (Ps. 2:11). Civil governments must render obeisance, homage and obedience to Christ or else suffer the consequences of their rebellion (Ps. 2:12).

In Psalm 67, we learn that Jesus will judge the people of the earth with justice and govern all the nations (v. 4). "And all the nations of the earth shall fear Him" (v. 7). Psalm 72 tells us that the Messiah will rule with righteousness and justice (vs. 1-4); that all the nations from sea to sea will serve Him (vs. 7-11); and all nations will call Him blessed (v. 17). How the mediatorial King will bring justice to the nations and establish righteous civil governments is revealed in Isaiah 42:1-4, where we are told that the Savior will bring justice to the Gentiles and that even the coastlands (i.e. a designation for lands very far away) wait for *His law*. The Messiah brings justice to the earth through the gospel and *the law*. This point is set forth explicitly in the prophecy of Micah (which we must remember is couched in Old Testament terminology): "It

shall come to pass in the latter days [i.e. that New Covenant era].... Many nations shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths.' For *out of Zion the law shall go forth*, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem [i.e. the church]" (4:1, 2). Symington writes,

It is the duty of nations, as the subjects of Christ, to take his law as their rule. They are apt to think it enough that they take as their standard of legislation and administration, human reason, natural conscience, public opinion, or political expediency. None of these, however, nor indeed all of them together, can supply a sufficient guide in affairs of state. Of course, heathen nations, who are not in possession of the revealed will of God, must be regulated by the law of nature: but this is no good reason why those who have a revelation of the divine will should be restricted to the use of a more imperfect rule. It is absurd to contend that, because civil society is founded in nature, men are to be guided, in directing its affairs and consulting its interests, solely by the light of nature. Might not the same be said with as much propriety of many other relations of human life, such as parents and children, husbands and wives, masters and servants, the duties of which we never think of exempting from the control of a preternatural revelation? Nay, might it not with equal propriety be maintained, as was formerly hinted, that as certain religious duties, such as prayer and praise, are founded in nature, we are in the performance of them to have no respect either to the authority or directions of the Holy Scriptures? The truth is, that revelation is given to man to supply the imperfections of the law of nature; and to restrict ourselves to the latter, and renounce the former, in any case in which it is competent to guide us, is at once to condemn God's gift and to defeat the end for which it was given.

We contend, then, that the Bible is to be our rule, not only in matters of a purely religious nature, in matters connected with conscience and the worship of God, but in matters of a civil or political nature. To say that in such matters we have nothing to do with the Bible, is to maintain what is manifestly untenable. To require nations who possess the sacred volume, to confine themselves, in their political affairs, to the dim light of nature, is not more absurd than it would be to require men, when the sun is in the heavens, to shut out its full blaze and go about their ordinary duties by the feeble rays of a taper. Indeed, if nations are moral subjects, they are bound to regulate their conduct by whatever laws their moral Governor has been pleased to give them; and as they are the subjects of the Mediator, they must be under the law of the Mediator as contained in the Scriptures. He has not placed his moral subjects in ignorance of his will, nor left them to search for it amid the obscurities and imperfections of a law which sin has effaced and well nigh obliterated. In the Holy Scriptures of truth, he has given them a fairer and more complete exhibition of the principles of immutable and eternal justice, than that which is to be found in the law of nature.⁵

That the intent, goal and accomplishment of the Great Commission is a world of nations that have adopted a Christocracy is made clear by other prophecies. Daniel teaches that a kingdom will be established at the ascension of Jesus, that will smash the feet, representing the fourth great world empire Rome (Dan. 2:43-44; Daniel 7:13 tells us explicitly that this Messianic kingdom is established when the Son of Man [Jesus Christ] ascends and comes up to the Ancient of Days [God the Father] in the heavenly throne room. This verse describes an ascent *not* a descent.). "[I]t shall break in pieces and consume all these nations, and it shall stand forever" (Dan. 2:44). In A.D. 312 Constantine converted to Christianity and in A.D. 380 the Christian faith became the official religion of the Roman Empire. The stone that smote the world empires

⁵ William Symington, *Messiah the Prince or The Mediatorial Dominion of Jesus Christ* (Pittsburgh, PA: The Christian Statesmen Press, [1884] 1999), 153-154.

existing under the fourth imperial rule will become a great mountain and fill the entire earth (Dan. 2:35). This image, which is tied to the first coming of Christ (not the second), reveals continuous progress over time or progressive development. While in history there are many setbacks, for the kingdom grows in the midst of great struggle and resistance, the stone will eventually accomplish a complete victory (see Dan. 7:27).⁶ “The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish Isaiah’s promise from God that the *government* will rest upon the shoulders of the Messiah, and there will be no end to the increase of His government, which shall be characterized by justice, righteousness and peace (Isa. 9:6f.). All things are being put in subjection under the feet of Christ (Heb. 2:8; cf. 1:13; 10:13; 1 Cor. 15:24ff.), even world dominions and thrones; there is no area of God’s creation where Christ is not Lord. His rule is to be authoritative in church *as well as* state. Christ is seated above *every rule and authority*: since He is the Head of all things, all things are subjected under His feet (Eph. 1:21f.; cf. Matt. 28:18).”⁷

Second, the fact that the kingdom is spiritual does not mean that it does not affect things outside of the human heart or the church. A heart that is regenerated, that loves Christ and His Word, will seek to apply that Word to the home, to business, civil governments and all earthly institutions. The idea that since the kingdom of God is spiritual the church must not attempt to apply the Bible outside the prayer closet, home or church is a form of unbiblical pietism. It is a retreat from the dominion mandate and it surrenders society and culture to the church’s enemies. It has paralyzed our Christian responsibility to be a salt and light to culture by preserving what is good and biblical and working to eliminate what is evil and corrupting. It has greatly narrowed the significance of the Christian world and life view for epistemology, ethics, science, economics, the arts and civil rule. It is a surrender of the original Reformed view for an Anabaptist ghetto mentality that believes that the devil and not Christ is king of this world. It is

⁶ It is our contention that *only a postmillennial eschatology* properly explains the teaching of Daniel 2:32-35. The premillennial theory contradicts this chapter in a number of ways. First, their timing is all wrong because they tie Daniel 2 and 7 to the second coming. This blatant error forces them to come up with the absurd and untenable invention of a wholly future revived Roman Empire. They break the organic nature of the meaning of the one statute which emphasizes one empire replacing another chronologically in history with the idea of a 2000 year gap and a 10 nation confederacy based on 10 toes which are not even mentioned in the passage. Not only are the toes never identified as Kings but the stone falls on *the feet of the statue, not the toes* which supposedly represent the future empire. In addition, if Daniel 7 refers not to the ascension but the second coming, then Christ returns to earth to find God the Father living on this planet with His Angels. Second, in the premillennial scheme the rock falls, the millennium begins and Jesus sits in Jerusalem ruling immediately over a full-blown, world-wide, messianic empire. This view, which is exceptionally popular among evangelicals, is obviously unscriptural; for the rock grows *progressively throughout history* from a stone to a mountain. The overthrow of the Gentile world powers is not sudden and total but rather slow, almost imperceptible and progressive. Jesus emphasized this fact in His parables on the wheat and tares (Mt. 13:30), and especially the parables of the mustard seed (Mt. 13:31-32) and the leaven in the meal (Mt. 13:33).

The amillennial view is much better than premillennialism, but it interprets the victorious language of the Old Testament prophecies regarding the nations inadequately. The paradigm of amillennialism is *the church existing in Babylon*. It is a tiny ghetto in a sea of worldliness and unbelief. In the amillennial view, the foot is not really crushed and replaced in actuality until the second coming and final judgment. All the talk of nations embracing the Messiah and His law is spiritualized away to mean simply the planting of churches here and there with no social or civil effects. For them, the Great Commission and Christocracy are an ideal that will never be accomplished in time and on earth until Jesus returns. Amillennialism became popular in Reformed circles after World War I because: (1) premillennialism is so clearly unscriptural; and, (2) it increasingly looks (from a purely human standpoint) as if the world will never be Christianized. In fact, since the Civil War, Darwinism and the rise of modernism, the Western nations have become more and more secularized, pagan and anti-Christian.

⁷ Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1977), 429.

tragic because it gives Christians and churches an excuse for doing little to nothing to disciple whole nations. It is especially lamentable given the fact that, in Europe and America, it has caused a great reversal of the spiritual gains made by the hard work of our more faithful and much more biblical spiritual forefathers. Today in the United States, Calvinistic Bible-believing churches are a tiny minority existing in a wicked, pagan, largely secular nation, not because of the fulfillment of biblical prophecy, but because of bad theology, apostasy and irresponsibility.

Believers need to understand that the death and resurrection of Christ is not simply an intellectual truth or a truth only for believers, but a truth that speaks to all reality. “Christianity is not just a series of truths but Truth—Truth about all of reality. And in holding to that Truth intellectually—and then in...living upon that Truth, the Truth of what is—brings forth not only certain personal results, but also governmental and legal results.”⁸ Christians in America have been taught by the enlightenment concept of pluralism that crucial truths can be compartmentalized. Jesus and salvation are for the church. Prayer and praise are for Sunday. But education, civil government and business are secular realms that are essentially neutral. They are areas to which believers and unbelievers can agree (at least in general), get along and work together for a good, law-abiding society. But such thinking is really a compromise with this evil world system. It, at best, is syncretism (which is sinful and degrading) and, at worst, is complete surrender. All attempts by professing Christians to work or compromise with secular humanists have always failed. In such cases, alleged believers have either simply adopted a pagan world and life view with Christian terminology (redefined according to secular humanistic presuppositions) or they are content with seeking unbiblical and rather meaningless reforms toward theistic truths in general (e.g., prayer in public schools or a time of silence [not prayer to God the Father in Christ’s name] or attempts at placing intelligent design in school textbooks [not six-day creationism by God the Father through the pre-incarnate Christ]). Those who, in essence, have rejected the real Lordship of Christ and biblical law are left to beg for a few crumbs from the humanists. They are like the men of the light brigade who, though fervent, were sent in the wrong direction with the same results.

Many Christians today have adopted an unbiblical form of pietism that has more in common with platonic spirituality than Christian doctrine. They make a sharp division between the spiritual and physical realms and consider the material world as intrinsically evil and worthless. “Let us save a few souls and wait for the rapture, for the antichrist is coming.” Or, “let us only preach salvation sermons and talk a bit about personal holiness; but, all that other stuff about the cultural mandate and Christ over the nations is a waste of time. It’s never going to happen anyway, at least until Jesus returns. Let us apply the Bible to only a small, isolated slice of life and leave the rest to the devil.” The problem with this way of thinking is that it is radically unbiblical. The Bible teaches a comprehensive world and life view. It speaks to every conceivable aspect of reality either directly or by way of implication. “True spirituality covers all reality. There are things the Bible tells us are absolutes which are sinful—which do not conform to the character of God. But aside from these, the Lordship of Christ covers *all* of life and *all* of life equally. It is not only that true spirituality covers all of life, but it covers all parts of the spectrum of life equally. In this sense there is nothing concerning reality that is not spiritual.”⁹

⁸ Francis A. Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1981), 20.

⁹ *Ibid*, 19. Dennis Woods helps us understand unbiblical pietism in America when he says, “Modern America is in much the same condition as Israel before the ascent of Josiah to the throne. The Bible remains the world’s number one bestseller, gracing the coffee tables of many of America’s living rooms. However, it is in many respects a lost

Moreover, while it is indeed true that Jesus came to redeem His sheep, the elect or the invisible church, He also came to reestablish the original purpose of the dominion mandate (Gen. 1:26, 28) and eliminate the effects of the fall upon the whole creation (see Rom. 8:18-23). While we must focus a great deal of attention on personal evangelism and church planting, we must also keep the broad goal of transforming all earthly institutions and discipling the nations in our priorities as well, because they are Christ's priorities (Mt. 28:18ff). The divine-human Mediator came to save and sanctify individuals and whole nations. He shed His blood on the cross and rose from the dead to justify sinners and enable them to know, love and obey His laws.

Third, Christians today need to consider the broad picture regarding Christ's redemption, for it informs us why God did not simply continue to rule as God, but rather turned authority and rule over to the theanthropic (i.e. the divine-*human*) Mediator. A soteriological King leading to a worldwide Christocracy was needed because of the fall of Adam. Before he sinned, Adam was commanded to populate the earth and exercise dominion (cf. Gen. 1:28). If man had not fallen, there would have been a worldwide civilization living in direct fellowship and communication with Jehovah. The whole human race would have constituted a kingdom under the direct loving rule of God. Under God's direct rule and continuous revelation, mankind would have aggressively mastered the environment to God's glory. All of man's endeavors (science, art, architecture, agriculture, technology etc.) would have developed with a love toward God and man. The fall of man in Adam, however, rendered the idea of a God-glorifying culture, kingdom or civilization impossible apart from a salvation provided for a people by God Himself. Because of the fall, the human race is guilty before God and polluted by sin. All men are dead spiritually (Eph. 2:1-5), hate the truth, turn to idols (Rom. 1:18ff), dwell in darkness (Jn. 1:4-5), have a

book. We are clearly a society that has lost its biblical moorings. The blood of billions of aborted babies testifies against us.

In the first place, most non-believers rarely open their Bibles. Sadly, this is true of many Christians as well. In the second place, many of those Christians who do read their Bibles have been taught to read them from a very personal and privatized perspective. The hundreds of commands addressed specifically to civil rulers are either ignored as inapplicable for our day or spiritualized to the personal context.

This tendency to privatize the faith is reinforced by the emphasis of most contemporary Christian literature. A 1993 study of evangelical publishing houses found that 87.8 percent of the titles dealt with the 'self' in one way or another. That included 31percent inspirational or motivational, and another 15 percent dealing with the same themes from a new age perspective.

This overwhelmingly personal emphasis has created an ingrown Christianity. Until very recently, Christianity has by-and-large buried its head in the sand to the death throes of contemporary American culture" (*Discipling the Nations: The Government Upon His Shoulders* [Franklin, TN: Legacy Communications, 1996], 122).

When Woods notes that evangelicals are primarily reading books about self, we must keep in mind that these are not Puritan books about self-examination or sanctification, but, generally speaking, modern *worthless* books rooted in pop-psychology and self-actualization. They are expressions of American narcissism dressed up with some Christian terminology. This practice is one reason that most evangelicals in America do not know doctrine and do not care. As David F. Wells notes, "Evangelicals, no less than the Liberals before them whom they have always berated, have now abandoned doctrine in favor of 'life.' It is true that they view this life as supernatural in a way that might have discomforted the old Liberals, but their discomfort would only have had to be momentary. For evangelicals today, this life is also an 'essence' detached from a cognitive structure, a detachment made necessary by the external modern world in which it no longer has a viable place, and it really does not require a theological view of life. Evangelicals today only have to believe that God can work dramatically within the narrow fissure of internal experience; they have lost interest (or perhaps they can no longer sustain interest) in what the doctrines of creation, common grace, and providence once meant for Christian believers, and even in those doctrine that articulate Christ's death such as justification, redemption, propitiation, and reconciliation. It is enough for them simply to know that Christ somehow died for people" (*No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 131).

heart of stone (Ezek. 11:19), are helpless (Ezek. 16:4-6), cannot repent (Jer. 13:23), cannot see or comprehend divine truth (1 Cor. 2:14) and are slaves of Satan (Ac. 26:17-18). James Orr writes, “The background of the whole picture in the Old Testament is that of a world in revolt, turned aside from God, sunk, and ever sinking deeper, in unrighteousness, abandoned to idolatry and to the lusts and corruptions which are the natural fruit of apostasy from the Creator, i.e., a world in contrariety to the divine holiness, and judged as guilty, and justly exposed to the Divine anger.”¹⁰

The soteriological kingship of Christ can only be truly understood against the background of the pre-fall dominion mandate and the spiritual death, rebellion against God, slavery to sin and subservience to Satan that resulted from the fall. Because of the fall, Satan is called “the god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4). Jesus repeatedly refers to the devil as “the ruler of this world” (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Our Lord says to the unbelieving Jews, “You are of your father the devil” (Jn. 8:44). The apostle John says that “the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one” (1 Jn. 5:19). Satan is called “the ruler of the demons” (Mk. 3:22) and “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2). Satan is said to have a throne (Rev. 2:13) and he exercises such power over the unbelieving world that he (mistakenly) thinks he can offer authority over all the kingdoms of the world to Christ. “Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to him, ‘All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish’” (Lk. 4:5-6). The kingdoms of the world had been given to Satan not by God but by the kings and citizens of these kingdoms who gave their power and honor to the devil. As Paul says, they have “been taken captive by him to do his will” (2 Tim. 2:26).

The coming of Christ and His redemptive-restorative kingdom restores the dominion mandate to its original God-glorifying purpose; counteracts the effects of the fall upon the elect of all the nations; binds the devil so that he can no longer control the nations as he once did (Rev. 20:1-3; Heb. 2:14; Ac. 10:38); subdues the enemies of God (and the covenant people); and ultimately restores the whole created order. Given the purpose and goal of the kingdom, the redemptive King is called the second Adam (Rom. 5:12-21), “the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom. 8:29), “the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20) and “the beginning of the creation of God” (Rev. 3:14). Christ’s restorative-recreative role is set forth by Paul when he parallels the first and second creations: “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence” (Col. 1:15-18). Calvin writes, “He is the beginning, because he is the first-born from the dead; for in the resurrection there is a restoration of all things, and in this manner the commencement of the second and new creation, for the former had fallen to pieces in the ruin of the first man.”¹¹

Jesus is King because He is the Savior. He establishes the kingdom of grace and rides forth on the white horse to conquer the world by His word and Spirit. He came to establish the rule of God in this world. This is accomplished through the gospel and the establishment of His law-word as the foundation of truth, ethics and meaning. The law is now called “the law of Christ” (1 Cor. 9:21) not simply because the old administration of the covenant of grace has been

¹⁰ James Orr, “Kingdom of God,” H. D. B., II, 844-845, as quoted in George Eldon Ladd, *Crucial Questions about the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 81.

¹¹ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 153.

replaced, but because all men and nations are accountable to Christ. The standard of ethics and civil rule is the glorified Redeemer's law and He will judge all mankind in accordance with that law.

Fourth, the expression "the kingdom of God" must not *always* be restricted to the church. Those who do not see any sort of dominion mandate in Scripture, or who view the Great Commission as a call to save a few individuals here and there, cling to a very narrow concept of Christ's kingdom.¹² This is especially true of negative amillennialists who see the church as destined to remain as a tiny remnant in a sea of unbelief until the second coming. This highly pessimistic and unbiblical eschatology results not only in an expectation of failure for the Great Commission, but also the idea that it is wrong to even attempt to Christianize society and culture. Note the pessimism of amillennial author Herman Hoeksema:

They share by faith in the victory which Christ has gained for them. And in the consciousness of that victory, they fight the good fight of faith: not, indeed, in the hope that they can make a kingdom of God out of the present world, but living the kingdom-life in every sphere of life and representing the cause of the Son of God in the midst of a world that lieth in darkness. Therefore, they put on the whole armor of God, considering it grace that, in the cause of Christ, they may not only believe in Him but also suffer with Him. For they know that as citizens of the kingdom of heaven they are still in Babylon. And in Babylon, in this world, they do not expect

¹² For example Ronald Hanko writes, "Any attempt to make the kingdom something broader than the church is wrong" ("Kingdom-Church in Christian Reconstruction" in Robert Decker, ed, *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* (Grandville, MI: Protestant Theological Journal, 1998), 31:1, 31. Those who define the kingdom solely in terms of the visible church have a tendency, due to their presuppositions, to reject any concept of kingdom rule over the state. They tend to misrepresent Christian Reconstruction, and the broad definition of the kingdom, as the church gaining power over the state or an ecclesiocracy. Note, for example, Hanko's completely false representation of theonomic postmillennialism: "Nevertheless, that kingdom is in the world, not for the purpose of improving the world, or for the purpose of bringing *the world under the dominion of the church*" (Ibid, 60-61). Biblical theonomists and Presbyterians have always argued that the covenantal spheres of the state, church and family are *directly under the authority* of Jesus Christ. The Confession of Faith (23) teaches that the church is not under the state (Erastianism) and the state is not under the church (ecclesiocracy). Both must submit to Christ's direct rule within their own respective spheres. In addition, biblical Protestants have always rejected the Roman Catholic understanding of the kingdom as the institutional church in favor of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. One implication of this doctrine is that every Christian calling in the world is important and must be done for the glory of God. Biblical or Confessional Christian Reconstructionists believe that, as the gospel penetrates society by the power of the Holy Spirit, the whole counsel of God is taught and believers are progressively sanctified and learn to apply the Bible to their lives, society and culture will improve. This is what Jesus meant when He said that Christians are to be a salt and light to the world so men would glorify God (Mt. 5:13-16). The idea that Christians are not here to improve the world is ludicrous. If Hanko means Christians are not to attempt to improve the world through a social gospel or pragmatic political programs, then one could understand where he is coming from. But, the preaching of the gospel with the power of the Holy Spirit does and will continue to improve people and communities, as people are transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of grace and light. Gary North offers an excellent corrective to Hanko's false understanding of the kingdom. He writes, "So pietists have sharply separated the kingdom of God (narrowly defined) from the world. Separating the institutional church from the world is necessary, but *separating God's kingdom from this world leads to the surrender of the world to Satan's kingdom*. Thus is it never a question of 'earthly kingdom versus no earthly kingdom;' it is always a question of *whose* earthly kingdom, God's or Satan's? To deny that God's kingdom extends to the earth in history in the here and now is necessary to assert that Satan's kingdom is legitimate, at the least until Jesus comes again. But Satan's kingdom is not legitimate, and Christians should do whatever they can to roll it back. *Rolling back Satan's earthly kingdom means rolling forward Christ's earthly kingdom* (Gary North and Gary DeMar, *Christian Reconstruction: What It Is, What It Isn't*, 29).

an outward victory. They know that in the world, they shall have tribulation: for as that world hated their King, so they will hate them if they are faithful.¹³

While there is much in this statement with which we can agree, given the overall prophetic picture of the church and Gentile nations in the New Covenant era, there is no biblical reason to maintain the persecuted church in Babylon *for all of history* viewpoint. The Protestant Reformed Church may not expect outward victory, but David, the prophets, Christ and Paul did expect it.

Those who want to restrict the New Testament concept of the kingdom of God to only the church or only spiritual matters of the heart have failed to note that the expression is used in a number of different ways in Scripture: (1) It can refer to the visible church on this earth (Mt. 16:18-19). This is the meaning of the phrase in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (25:2) and the *Heidelberg Catechism* (Q+A, 83-85). (2) Often the expression is used as an equivalent to eternal life or salvation (Jn. 3:3, 5; Mt. 5:20; 7:21; 18:3; 19:24; 25:34; Lk. 18:24-25; Mk. 10:23-25; etc.). (3) It can also have the sense of a future salvation, entering heaven or the consummate kingdom at the second coming (1 Cor. 6:6-10; 15:50; Ac. 14:22; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5; 2 Tim. 4:18; Jas. 2:5; Lk. 13:28). (4) Occasionally, it is even used to describe the privileges and honors connected with being part of the kingdom with the visible church (Mt. 21:43). (5) In addition, the expression is used as a synonym for the gospel message. Jesus said, “I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also...” (Lk. 4:43; cf. 9:2; 9:11, 16; 16:16; Mt. 9:35; 13:19; 19:8, 10; 28:23, 31; Ac. 20:25; etc.). For Christ and the apostles, the gospel was not like a modern gospel tract with “four things God wants you to know.” It was a comprehensive message of salvation that included the whole counsel of God; that spoke to every area of life.

While no doubt the cross and empty tomb were central within and thus are emphasized in gospel preaching, the early Christians were trained to know the cross with in its broad theological context so they could not only properly understand it, but also fully live out the implications of their faith. The point here is that, unlike modern evangelicals, Christ and the apostles had a very broad concept of the gospel, equating it *not* with “letting Jesus come and live within my heart,” but rather with being justified before God and then living under the control or influence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit regenerates the soul, opens blind eyes and applies the word of God to the heart, thus enabling the believer to apply the Word to every area of life. This teaches us that social and cultural transformation of an ungodly culture, society or nation is *not* through protests, revolution or political maneuvering, but through gospel preaching and church planting where people are trained in applying the whole Bible to the whole of life. Paul emphasized that Jesus came to deliver us from the kingdom or dominion of darkness in order to transfer or convey us into Christ’s kingdom (Col. 1:13). The old sphere of life and age of sin and death has been destroyed or put away by Jesus in order to usher us into the life of the Spirit. By

¹³ Herman Hoeksema, *In the Sanctuary: Expository Sermons on the Lord’s Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1981 [1941]), 52. When Hoeksema discusses the error of people making a kingdom of God out of the world presumably by their own humanistic efforts, we heartily agree. Such thinking is the backbone of modernism in all its forms. We can also heartily agree that believers must live the kingdom life in every sphere of life. We do not understand, however, given the promises from God of the great victory of the gospel throughout the world, why Hoeksema has such tremendous pessimism. Both premillennialists and amillennialists view the Great Commission as a colossal failure. In fairness to our amillennial brothers, we should point out that the Protestant Reformed Church represents about the most pessimistic form of amillennialism on the Reformed seen today. Note further that not all amillennialists restrict the kingdom of God to the church. Berkhof writes, “*It is closely related to the church, though not altogether identical with it.* The citizenship of the kingdom is coextensive with the membership in the invisible church. Its field of operation, however, is wider than that of the church, since it aims at the control of life in all its manifestations” (L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939], 409).

the life of the Spirit we do not mean mystical leadings of the Spirit or subjective impressions, but rather the illumination of the spirit *to understand God's word, the cleansing of the heart and implantation of love toward Christ and His word* that enables us to obey it (although imperfectly in this present life). As our Redeemer said, "Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth" (Jn. 17:17).

Consequently, a Christocracy can only come into being through massive conversions to Christ. While communists impose their concept of the kingdom upon society through the use of brute force (guns, bombs, murder, violent revolution) and terror (a large and active secret police and military), Christ changes nations by first regenerating hearts and then training Christians with the whole counsel of God. This process is usually very slow (in the Roman Empire it took over 300 years) and is almost imperceptible. The barbarians of northern Europe who worshiped gross idols, who were exceptionally violent and engaged in human sacrifice, were transformed by the gospel into Christian, advanced nations (although due to heresies, syncretism and sinful inconsistencies, they were far from perfect).

By equating the gospel with the kingdom of God, Christ and the apostles were in effect connecting the gospel message with a real radical change in individuals and the spheres within which those saved individuals operate. The gospel is a message of victory and the power of God. If the church reduces the gospel message to private matters, or spiritual concerns, or issues of the heart and *only* things like prayer, reading one's Bible and going to church; it has redefined and even denied the true meaning and application of the gospel. It appears that the modern reduction of the gospel message by churches goes hand-in-hand with their unbiblical eschatological pessimism and irresponsibility. Rushdoony writes, "...the Scripture is not a Manichaeism document. It does not assert that Satan and sin have a power equal or greater than God and His grace. On the contrary, 'God is greater than our hearts' (1 John 3:20), and 'greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world' (1 John 4:4). Great and Almighty is our sovereign and triune God, and we cannot limit His power without sinning, nor can we ascribe the helplessness of the church to the greater power of sin and Satan. Rather, we must ascribe it to the heresy and laziness of believers, who limit God in their unbelief. Related to this acceptance of apostasy, which is an implicit acceptance of the superiority of Satan, is the surrender of this world to Satan and to unbelievers."¹⁴

(6) The kingdom of God can refer to the reign of Christ through His Spirit within the hearts of believers. "Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, 'The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, "See here!" Or "See there!" For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you'" (Lk. 17:21-22). This is an important verse, for it is used as a proof text for those who want to restrict the realm or influence of the kingdom to personal affairs. Our Lord's statement was given as a corrective to the Jewish teachers in His day that held a very carnal concept of the Messiah's reign. They were expecting the Messiah to come and rule as a great military and political leader. They believed the kingdom would be established with physical swords, shields, siege weapons, armies, amazing victories and visible fanfare. They were looking for a religious Napoleonic figure that would use physical means to crush Rome, Persia and Egypt and set up a Jewish political kingdom.

Jesus emphatically rejected this popular conception of the Messianic kingdom and instead taught a *spiritual* kingdom; that is, a kingdom that is established, spreads, grows and prospers due to the Holy Spirit's power and influence. This kingdom and the Holy Spirit's work,

¹⁴ Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Biblical Philosophy of History* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1969), 139.

mission and efficacy are all founded upon the Redeemer's vicarious suffering (cf. Lk. 24:21; 25-27). Although this kingdom was established in embryonic form when the Savior walked this earth (cf. Mt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; 12:28), it did not come with power until Christ's redemptive mission was complete and He rose from the dead victorious over sin, death and the devil (Mt. 28:18; Mk. 9:1; Ac. 1:8; Rom. 1:4). As a result of His redemptive obedience, our Lord was given all authority in heaven and earth (Mt. 28:18ff) and could now pour out His Spirit upon the church, empowering it for spiritual conquest (Ac. 2:1-36). The majority of the Jews in Jesus' day, not only did not understand the spiritual concept of the kingdom, but found it baffling and offensive. They did not want a spiritual kingdom that spread solely with hard work in evangelism, church planting and teaching among the Gentiles. They wanted political power and pay back on their hated enemies.

What Jesus taught was radical. He proclaimed a redemptive, spiritual kingdom that a person entered by being born again; by believing in His person and work; by receiving the Holy Spirit who regenerates and progressively sanctifies His people. "Most assuredly, I say unto you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (Jn. 3:5). This kingdom does not spread by the use of physical weapons and political might, but through a humble service to Christ and one's neighbor; by preaching the gospel and teaching the whole counsel of God; and praying for the Holy Spirit to accompany God's word and apply it to people's hearts. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Mt. 5:5). Paul put it this way, "For though we walk in the flesh [i.e. our physical bodies], we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled" (2 Cor. 10:3-6).

For the apostle, the Christian life is characterized by constant spiritual warfare (cf. Eph. 6:11ff; 1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:3ff, 4:7), a warfare against evil, heresy, false worldviews and the powers of darkness. The only way to win these battles is *not* to adopt the methodology of the world or depend on physical strength, but to use the spiritual weapons that Jesus has given us through His Spirit (e.g., the Bible or sword of the Spirit, prayer and faith in the power of God, etc.). This warfare is aimed not at tanks, the walls of a city or pagan capitals, but to human hearts or minds. It is directed against an unbeliever's "reasonings which are the strongholds whereby the unbelieving mind seeks to fortify itself against the truths of human depravity and divine grace, and at the casting down also of every proud bulwark raised high against the knowledge of God."¹⁵ The goal is to use the truth of the Word to conquer every aspect of a person's opposition to Christ and His kingdom. Every opposing, wicked, autonomous thought is to be taken prisoner

¹⁵ Philip E. Hughes, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 352. Paul also rejected an earthly, carnal conception of the kingdom in Romans 14:17: "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." When Paul exhorts the stronger believers to exercise restraint with eating certain foods in the presence of the weaker Jewish brethren, he appeals to the nature of kingdom. The point apparently is that Jesus did not come to regulate man's diet, so let us not make a big issue out of it. Instead, He came to establish righteousness in the full sense of the term (i.e. forensic [justification], subjective [sanctification], and societal [civil justice]) and peace which is a chief blessing of salvation and joy in the Holy Spirit. This must be our focus. As Hodge notes, "The righteousness, peace and joy intended are those of which the Holy Spirit is the author. Righteousness is that which enables us to stand before God, because it satisfies the demand of the law. It is righteousness of faith, both objective and subjective; peace is the concord between God and the soul, between reason and conscience, between the heart and our fellow-men. And the joy is the joy of salvation; that joy which only those who are in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost can ever experience" (*Romans* [Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth (1835) 1972], 425).

so there is an unconditional surrender to Jesus and His law-word. This is the only real, genuine way that the Christian world and life view will be established in society and flourish. The work of the kingdom involves the Spirit's and Word's conquest of the rebellion in the human heart so that the Redeemer's work of redemption and kingship is sincerely acknowledged. The kingdom of God begins at the intellectual center of man's being. Consequently, believers do not use physical coercion to spread the good news of the kingdom, but scriptural argumentation. Once a person is saved, however, and has turned his life over to Christ, he will apply the teaching of Scripture to every area of life including civil government. As William Symington notes,

But when we speak of the dominion of the mediator as spiritual, it is necessary to guard against supposing that it can have no sort of connection with the world, or with things that are secular. Such an idea is not at all our intention to convey. From not sufficiently attending to certain distinctions proper to be observed on the subject, mistaken and pernicious conclusions have been drawn. Because the dominion of Christ is spiritual in nature, to conclude that everything connected with his kingdom must be spiritual also, and that nothing earthly or secular can have any relation to it, is an inference alike illogical in reasoning, and unsupported by fact.

The subjects of the spiritual kingdom, after being separated by grace from the world lying in wickedness, continue for a length of time in this lower region of human existence before they are prepared for being transferred to that brighter, and higher, and more spiritual sphere in which they are to exist for ever. Although not *of* this world as to their character, they are *in* this world as respects their place of abode. While as *saints* they number among the ranks of Christ's spiritual subjects, as *men* and as *citizens* they occupy their places and act their parts in the offices and institutions of civil society.¹⁶

In fact, to argue that, because the kingdom is spiritual, it can have no effect or influence on cultures or societies is akin to saying that, because the human soul is spiritual, it can have no relation to physical body. Jesus is the King over all nations (Rev. 17:14; 19:16) and "head over all things" (Eph. 1:22). While everything under Christ mediatorial reign is not in and of itself spiritual, nevertheless everything under His authority is to be subservient to His spiritual authority. Every aspect of who we are, what we do, how we live and what we "own" is connected to Jesus's kingdom and must be made subservient to the Savior's glory and honor.

But it may be objected, did not Jesus say to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world.... My kingdom is not from here" (Jn. 18:36)? Indeed He did; but this verse is often misunderstood. Note that our Lord did not say, "My kingdom is not *in* this world," but "My kingdom is not *of* this world." There is a major difference between these two statements. To say that Christ's kingdom is not *of* the world means that it did not come from or originate from this planet. It is not derived from earth because: (1) The Son of God *came from heaven* to this earth to save it (Jn. 3:16; Phil. 2:5-11). (2) The Redeemer rules the earth from the right hand of God the Father (Eph. 1:20; Heb. 7:26; Ac. 2:30, 33). (3) The divine-human Mediator applies the efficacy of His redemptive work to His people by sending His Spirit *from heaven* unto them. "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you see and hear" (Ac. 2:33). The heavenly origin of the Savior's kingship explains its unique spiritual character. This world has produced many earthly kings and political leaders. But because they all came from this planet, they were leaders that ruled and corresponded to their earthly origin. Jesus, however, is unique and holds a kingship

¹⁶ William Symington, *Messiah—the Prince*, 40.

like no other. With all this in mind, it is completely unbiblical to argue that Christ's kingdom has nothing to do with this world or is irrelevant to the nations. The fact that our Lord's kingdom is not of this world is the reason His application of redemption in history and spiritual conquest of the nations *will most certainly occur*. Although He rules from heaven and the power to save and rule originates in heaven, it operates upon and affects this present world. Planet earth is the lump of dough that is being leavened (Mt. 13:33). Consequently, we are commanded to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt. 6:10).

The absurdity of the position that Jesus' kingdom is so otherworldly and spiritual that it must have no connection or influence over this present world or "secular" affairs is driven by home by the fact that our Lord told His disciples, "You are not of this world" (Jn. 17:6). If one applied the terminology consistently, then it would be unbiblical for Christians to own property, or participate in the political process, or engage in secular employment, or work at developing and beautifying land. The most anti-theonomic, anti-establishment principle fundamentalist or negative amillennialist has no objection to these kinds of activities on the part of believers (if they are done lawfully to the glory of God). But, for some reason, when the application of biblical principles is approved of and attempted on an institutional, corporate, social or national level, then we have a dangerous "movement that threatens both our spiritual and civil liberties,"¹⁷ a movement that is "an aberrant theology that is confusing the church."¹⁸

Once again we must point out that such reductionist concepts of the kingdom of God and such negative assessments of theonomy¹⁹ are not based on an historical-grammatical-theological exegesis of Scripture, but on unbiblical concepts of pietism and modern pluralism. Just ask yourself, does Jesus want our nation to be a pluralistic society where all religions are treated exactly the same? If He does, then why did He write, "Thou shalt have no other gods beside Me" (Ex. 20:3; Deut. 5:7) in solid rock with His own finger? Why did He loudly proclaim, "I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but by Me" (Jn. 14:6). He preached the most exclusive, intolerant message in history. Are you saying that the Lord of glory needs to read Rousseau, Locke and Jefferson to straighten out His message to fit into our modern democratic spirit? In addition, answer this question: If it is good, ethical, right and biblical for an individual to embrace Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and do everything he can to obey the ethics of Scripture and live by it every day, then why would it be wrong, immoral or unbiblical for a group of people, a tribe, a community, a state or a nation to embrace Christ and adopt His system of ethics as their own? Are you saying that Christians on a corporate or civil level cannot obey Scripture because it would infringe on the rights of non-Christians to openly practice idolatry? Why? By what standard? Are you saying that there is an authority above the infallible word of God? What authority could that be: natural law, autonomous human reason, the majority of the people, the Supreme Court, the state? It is clear that when anti-theonomic philosophies are carefully examined by Scripture and logic, they collapse under the weight of their own inconsistencies and humanistic presuppositions.

(7) The expression "kingdom of God" is used to describe Christ's work in the whole world. This sense is crucial to the idea that believers are to work to establish an explicitly

¹⁷ Norman L. Geisler, back cover of H. Wayne House/Thomas Ice, *Dominion Theology: Blessing or Curse? An Analysis of Christian Reconstructionism*.

¹⁸ John MacArthur Jr., back cover, *Ibid*.

¹⁹ We distinguish between theonomy, biblically defined, and the modern Christian Reconstruction movement, which is generally speaking antinomian in many respects, pragmatic, ecumenical and doctrinally unreliable (e.g., the Federal Vision, the Charismatic movement, libertarianism, etc.).

Christian nation or a biblical civilization, for it proves that we should not restrict Jesus' kingdom to a believer's heart or the visible church. This broader meaning is found in the parable of the tares among the wheat (see Mt. 13:24-30). In the two following parables (the mustard seed [vs. 31-32] and the leaven in the lump [v. 33]), the emphasis is on the amazing growth and success of the kingdom throughout the whole world over time. This parable explains one of the central ways that Satan will seek to corrupt and thus impede this great progress. The devil will place corrupt, pseudo-Christians among all the institutions and covenantal spheres of life (e.g., churches, families, professing Christian civil governments, businesses, etc.) throughout the world. Whereas true believers are to be a salt and light to the spheres of influence around them by applying the word of God to every area of life, these counterfeit Christians are there to do the exact opposite. They are to cause theological and ethical rot in all institutions and covenantal spheres. Satan has taken our Lord's program for godly dominion and turned it upside down in order to attempt to defeat the progress of the gospel and whole counsel of God in this world. Anyone familiar with church history and history in general knows that this has been the devil's most effective tactic.

This parable was a corrective to the eschatological thinking of Israel in that day. Jesus wanted His disciples to understand a few important things about His kingdom. First, He wanted them to understand that the coming universal or final judgment and consummation of the kingdom would be delayed. Christ cannot return until the harvest is ready. Not one of His sheep or elect will be lost. Second, in the present age, the hard work for godly dominion by Christians and the church in the different covenantal spheres will not achieve a perfect result because of a continuous conflict with Satan in history. Believers, churches and Christian civil governments will have to be on guard because counterfeit Christians will arise and cause all sorts of serious problems in churches, families and societies. The mediatorial King will rule in the midst of oppositions. The church must be aware of Satan's strategy and deal with it biblically.

Since a number of churchmen believe that the term "world" must refer to the church and this parable only refers to conflict within the church, we need to briefly examine this passage to refute such an interpretation. In our Lord's own exposition of the parable, the man who sowed "good seed" is Himself ("the Son of Man" v. 37). The "good seed" are Christians (i.e. "the sons of the kingdom [of God]" v. 38). They belong to the kingdom of heaven and are genuine Christians. The contrast to the good seed is the tares, who are identified as "the sons of the wicked one" (v. 38). They are so contrary to Christ and His cause that covenantally they are identified as Satan's children. This is a Hebraistic way of speaking, where people are so closely connected with the devil's worldview and under his influence, that they can be called his "sons."

The identification of the field is given in verse 38: "The field is the world." The word "world" here is *kosmos* which in this context is *not* used in a negative manner (such as the evil world system or the world of fallen humanity apart from Christ [cf. 1 Jn. 2:15]), but simply as *the realm of Christ's reign*. This demonstrates that the parable anticipates the Redeemer's victory at the cross and exaltation at the resurrection, ascension and enthronement at God's right hand. When our Lord walked on this earth and preached the gospel, His sphere of ministry was essentially restricted to the Jews in Palestine. But, after the resurrection, His mediatorial rule and kingdom work was extended into "all the world" (Mk. 16:15), to "all [the] nations" without exception (Mt. 28:19), "to the end of the earth" (Ac. 1:8). Christ has a universal, comprehensive authority geographically, judicially, ethically and spiritually. Every sphere of life is to be won for the King of kings and Lord over lords. The whole world has been given to the Mediator. But in

this world grow both wheat and foul tares. “It does not matter where man lives on the earth. Wherever he lives he finds himself on property that belongs to Jesus.”²⁰

Contrary to many commentators, our Lord is not just speaking about the church (although the church is included in the terms used). He is speaking of the great conflict that occurs in the field of the world. The common idea that the field represents the visible church likely derives from the fact that the wheat comes under direct attack. But the visible church interpretation must be rejected for the following reasons. First, it is extremely improbable that Jesus’ disciples would have interpreted “the world” as the visible church. If our Lord meant “the church,” then why did He say “the world”? Second, it would be very strange for the Savior to identify the seed as the church (“the sons of the kingdom”) and then a moment later teach that “the field” is the church. This would make the explanation very confusing. Third, the description of the final judgment in verse 41 where the angels “will gather all things out of His kingdom that offend,” supports the view that here the kingdom is broader than the visible church. If the term “world” indicates a purging beyond the church, then “world” in verse 38 should be interpreted in a broad sense as well.

The main objection to the kingdom referring to the world as the realm of Christ’s reign is that it is so obvious that this earth is full of wicked unbelievers as well as Christians, that the parable is uninformative. In addition, if the world is in mind, then why the focus on not uprooting the wicked in history? It is plainly evident that Christians do not have the ability to uproot the weeds of this world. What then is the parable teaching? In answer to these objections, one should note the following observations. First, Jesus is not simply discussing wicked people in general, but those that Satan sows in the field after the gospel has been spread abroad. These weeds look like the wheat but in reality are tares. Thus, the focus is on counterfeit Christians, apostate Christendom and pseudo-churches, not the wicked in general or pagans. Second, the parable is not discussing excommunication or the civil magistrate’s role in suppressing heresy and idolatry, but rather *why the Messianic King Himself does not immediately purge His field*. It tells us of one of Satan’s methods of attacking God’s people; but the main focus is on *a delay of judgment*. The complete victory of the kingdom will not be immediate but delayed until the second coming. We must keep in mind the fact that our Lord was correcting a false view of the kingdom popular among the Jews that was generally accepted by the disciples. Interpreters assume (apparently based on the servants who ask about pulling out the tares) that we have a lesson on church discipline, that we must accept hypocrites in the church. But contrary to this view, it is important to note that the meaning of the servants is left uninterpreted and it is *the angels*, not church officers or civil magistrates, who do the purging when the proper time comes. Moreover, the idea that Jesus wants His church to accept or put up with unrepentant “sons of the devil” until the second coming contradicts the biblical teaching on church discipline.

It is important to understand that the kingdom is much broader than the visible church in order to avoid the errors of Anabaptist pietism and dispensational retreatism. It is a common and recurring error that limits Christ’s reign to the realm of grace or the church. Such a view argues that everything outside of the church belongs to Satan and is not something believers ought to work to change, such as civil government, schools, businesses, the arts or agriculture. But if we understand that Jesus has all authority and He reigns over all, then we will seek to apply God’s word over every area of life. This can only be done through the gospel and the application of God’s law to nations and societies. Christ has been given the nations for His inheritance and thus

²⁰ Simon Kistemaker, *The Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 40-41.

He will inherit them (Ps. 2:8; 82:8; Isa. 53:15; 55:5). For this reason His apostles and all gospel preachers are commanded not merely to disciple individuals but whole nations (Mt. 28:18ff).²¹

When this parable is considered with the parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the leaven (which are placed between this parable [Mt. 13:24-30] and its interpretation [Mt. 13:37-43]), it is evident that the kingdom refers to the whole sphere of Christ's rule not merely the church. Indeed, Satan does plant his hypocrites in the church. However, the battle between "the Son of Man" and "the devil" encompasses the whole field—planet earth. Satan knows that the best plan for impeding the positive expression of Christ's dominion throughout all nations and institutional spheres in the world is the replacement of militant, biblical, life-changing Christianity with a demonic imitation. Some examples of the success of the enemy's tactics in history are: (1) Arianism's penetration of the church and state (A.D. 325-326). (2) The rank papalism of the medieval era. (3) The spread of Arminianism and modernism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. During the last century, Satan's tares have not only captured many pulpits and teaching posts in professing Christian institutions, they have captured virtually all of the robes of society. In our day many tares have even appeared within the ranks of the Christian

²¹ The interpretation which says that the kingdom is broader than the church is common among commentators. Alfred Plummer writes, "The field is the world (38), not the Church, which gives too narrow a meaning to the parable..." (*An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew* [Grand Rapids: Baker: 1982 (1915)], 193. Herman Ridderbos writes, "When we were discussing these parables in a previous context, we already came across the notion that in the parable of the tares and in that of the fishing net the issue was the mingling of the wicked and the good in the church. On the explanation of this part of Jesus' teaching given there, this application must unhesitatingly be rejected. This as a matter of fact, also appears from the explicit pronouncement that the field in which the wicked and the good are growing up together is the world (and therefore not the church, Matt. 13:38)" (*The Coming of the Kingdom*, 345). R. C. H. Lenski writes, "Of supreme importance is the statement that the field is *o kosmos*, 'the world,' and, therefore, not 'the church'.... 'Out of the kingdom' refers to the kingdom as it now exists in the world where it is like gold mixed with dross" (*The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel*, 536, 539). William Hendriksen writes, "The church is the body of professing believers. It consists of people. On the other, as has already been shown (see on 13:33), the kingdom, in its concrete manifestations, refers to that entire complex of people and spheres in which Christ's rule is recognized. In view of this distinction it can be said that the reference in the parable is to the kingdom rather than the church" (*The Gospel of Matthew*, 573). "Not only the minds and hearts of men, without any distinction of race or nationality, must be reached, but every sphere of life must be won for him who is King of kings and Lord of lords...From the statement, 'The field is the world' nothing should be subtracted" (*Ibid.*, 571). Charles Spurgeon writes, "The Field is the world, including the church; but the field is not the church exclusively: for 'the good seed,' or 'the children of the kingdom,' is much the same as the church; and the evil seed are persons who mingle with the people of God, and live together with them in necessary association in the great field of the world. Church fellowship is not particularly aimed at, though it is encompassed by the terms used.... This will be a purging [vs. 41] not of the church, but of the kingdom, which at that time will include the whole field of the world" (*The Gospel of Matthew*, 178-179). Simon Kistemaker writes, "It is interesting to note that field, the world, belongs to the farmer—to Jesus. On that field grow wheat and weeds. It does not matter where man lives on the earth. Wherever he lives he finds himself on property which belongs to Jesus" (*The Parables of Jesus* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980], 40-41). James Morison writes, "VER. 38. And the field is the world: That is,—The kingdom of heaven is located on earth, so far as the initial stage of its development is concerned. The whole world is Christ's field. It belongs to Him; and He holds it as His possession, that he may use it for the establishment of His heavenly kingdom. The expression was, in olden times, much tossed about in the Donatist controversy; the Donatists having the best of the argument, though the worst of the treatment. They insisted that the Saviour did not mean that the field is the church. Augustine insisted that He did (*Ad Donatistos Post Collationem*). Even Luther and Calvin, along with the troops of predecessors and successors, think that the Lord here "calls the church His field," strangely overlooking the fact that it is the good seed that is the church. Melancthon made the same mistake. Both he and Luther were amazed when the Anabaptists, like the Donatists, contended that "the world" was not "the church." (*A Practical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew* [Minneapolis, MN: Klock and Klock, 1981 (1884)], 236-237.

Reconstructionist movement itself, with the acceptance and advocacy of the federal vision heresy by many popular “pro-theonomy” speakers (e.g., Steve Schlissel, Doug Wilson, Steve Wilkins, etc.).

While those (premillennialists and negative amillennialists) who insist that the meaning of the kingdom must be restricted to the church tend to be retreatist, inward-directed and opposed to the church being involved in social, cultural or political affairs, a number of theologians have erred in the opposite direction by greatly downplaying the role of the church and always speaking of the kingdom in the broadest sense of the term. The church according to their view is merely “the nursery of the kingdom.” Such an interpretation is a distortion that must be avoided. Because the church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15) and holds to the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 16:19), it is the primary institution or chief instrument in Christian reconstruction. The Great Commission is directed to an ordained ministry; and, the preaching ministry of the church and the administration of the sacraments are the central means of discipling the nations. If the church does not do its job and uphold the truth of God’s word through teaching and discipline, all other covenant spheres of society will follow it into apostasy and calamity. Thus judgment must begin with the household of God (1 Pet. 4:17).

If people are taught a false gospel or a deficient view of God’s law and sanctification, then church members will not be a salt and light to culture but will be part of the problem. It was the apostasy and great declension of American churches that allowed American society to be captured and controlled by atheists, socialists, secular humanists and anti-Christian statist. When the church is downplayed and its role as the pillar and ground of the truth is placed on the back burner for ecumenical or political purposes, long-term gains are sacrificed on the altar of pragmatism and doctrinal compromise. The tendency of modern Christian Reconstructionists to reject Reformed confessionalism for doctrinal diversity and unity based *only* on the first six ecumenical councils is actually dangerous and will not bring reformation or revival to American society. The modern Reconstructionist movement (generally speaking) has been schizophrenic and antinomian (at least in its application of the first table of the law). A number of its leaders have been vocal critics of the regulative principle of worship and have advocated worship principles that lead straight to Roman Catholicism (e.g., intricate liturgies, sacramentalism, paedocommunion, the use of a church calendar, etc.). A biblical reconstruction of society must involve a return to the Christian Sabbath, the abolishment of popery and prelacy and the honoring of the second commandment. Without these attainments of the Second Reformation, second table accomplishments will not have a solid foundation and will not last.

As we work to disciple the nations, we must remember that the church is not merely a means to an end, but is itself the ultimate end or object of all God’s work throughout history. “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church” (Eph. 1:22). The theanthropic Mediator governs all things in the visible and invisible universe in the interests of the church because He loves it with a profound, boundless and steadfast love. He is so organically united with His church that an attack upon it is an attack upon Him (Ac. 9:4). He uses the efficacy of His death and resurrection to save His people and His infinite power to crush His enemies. While it is true that Christ’s dominion extends to all nations and every earthly institution and that even the non-elect receive indirect benefits from Jesus’ redemptive work on this earth (e.g., laws based on Scripture, an orderly civilized society, etc.), one must not forget that only the church continues to live on earth in the eternal state. All the wicked will be cast into the lake of fire and the existence of other earthly institutions such as the state and even individual families will cease (Mt. 22:30). While it is certainly true that the whole earth will be glorified

(Rom. 8:20ff), it is only glorified to be a fit place for Jesus and His glorified saints. The Confession of Faith says, “As the providence of God doth in general reach to all creatures; so, after a most special manner, it taketh care of His church, and disposeth all things to the good thereof” (5:7). A. A. Hodge writes,

[T]he providential government of God over mankind in general is subordinate as a means to an end to his gracious providence toward his Church, whereby he gathers it out of every people and nation, and makes all things work together for good to those who are called according to his purpose (Rom. viii. 28), and of course for the highest development and glory of the whole body. The history of redemption through all its dispensations, Patriarchal, Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Christian, is the key to the philosophy of human history in general. The race is preserved, continents and islands are settled with inhabitants, nations are elevated to empire, philosophy and the practical arts, civilization and liberty are advanced, that the Church, the Lamb’s bride, may be perfected in all her members and adorned for her Husband.²²

Given all these crucial biblical truths, those who are committed to the Christian reconstruction of society must acknowledge the multifaceted nature of Christ’s kingdom and must have a healthy scriptural view of the importance of the church. As long as churches tolerate heresy, allow a very loose concept of confessionalism (i.e. a form of doctrinal pluralism for the sake of institutional unity) and have a negative or ambivalent view of God’s law, one can expect society to deteriorate ethically and doctrinally. If Reformed and Presbyterian churches want reformation and revival in this land, they must clean house (e.g. discipline pastors and elders who teach errant views of creation and heretical views of justification [the federal vision or Shephardism]; sweep the feminism out and require headcoverings; get rid of unbiblical worship [uninspired hymns, musical instruments, unauthorized holy days, prelatical liturgies, sacramentalism, etc.]; and follow biblical Presbyterianism instead of rule through gossip, bureaucracies, pragmatism and Romanist-style power politics, etc.); repent and obey their own historical covenants; reject pluralism; and preach the crown rights of Jesus Christ over the nations. Churches cannot fight secular humanism with pluralism and unscriptural concepts of natural law.

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²² A. A. Hodge, *The Confession of Faith* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, [1869] 1961), 101.