

# A Protestant Reformed World and Life View

Rev. H. Hanko

In the last issue we were discussing the fact that the world and life view of those who maintain the theory of common grace is in a very real danger of falling into the error of post-millennialism. This view of the coming of Christ we discussed at some length. It remains for us now to show how this is indeed the case.

## COMMON GRACE AND POST-MILLENNIALISM

The reason why I think that common grace tends toward this view are the following. In the first place, when the wicked and the believers can get along so well together in the pursuit of their common aims and goals, then they are inevitably seeking the same thing. And this common denominator which unites them can only be such a worldly kingdom which the world seeks, but which is called by believers the kingdom of Christ. In the second place, it is a matter of record as well as a logical conclusion of common grace that the duty of the Christian is to make this world a better place to live. He has one calling in this life, and that is to cause his influence to be felt in every phase of history and every sphere of culture so that this world becomes better and better. This is exactly the goal of the post-millennialist. In the third place, by lowering or destroying altogether the barriers erected between the church and the world, the error is that the rule of Christ is not only made universal, but is also made exactly the same over the church and the world. There is no longer and differentiation made between the sovereign rule of Christ over His people and His rule equally sovereign over the wicked. All effects of His rule are precisely the same. The rule of Christ over the elect is identified with the rule of Christ over the wicked without any significant difference. The result of this is that the whole world is the kingdom of Christ, and all men citizens in it. This follows with indubitable logic. But when the world becomes the kingdom of Christ, then that kingdom will be formed here upon earth through the evolution of society, as well as through the ecumenical movements of church groups and back to God crusades.

And, as a matter of fact, this is also what is happening in those churches where this theory lays hold on the theological thinking of the people. It is a matter of fact that there is little concern any more for the coming of Christ at the end of the ages. There is far more concern for the cares and troubles of the world accompanied with an earnest regard for the welfare of mankind. There are all kinds of crusades against bad literature, bad children, crime, racial and class unrest and hatred, as well as crusades for peace on earth, religion in politics and all that goes with it. But the welfare of the church and the spiritual safety of the people of God is all but forgotten. And this is inevitably the case when men lose sight of the return of our Lord in judgment upon the world and with salvation for the faithful.

I do not say that those who maintain common grace have officially incorporated this post-millennialism into their creeds; nor yet that they would even admit to its position. I say only that common grace seems to bear the fruit of post-millennialism and those who maintain this theory become in practice at least post-millennialists.

## ITS BASIC ERROR

But this view is very wrong and very dangerous. It is not necessary to show how this view conflicts with Scripture in every detail and how it goes astray as a result from fundamental

doctrines of Scripture. But I would like to emphasize the basic issue at stake. The rule of Christ over the whole world is indeed a fact. He rules sovereignly over all the works of God. He holds in His hand not only men, but also angels and devils. All creatures perform His will without question and do His bidding so that all things serve the purpose of His Father. Nevertheless, there is a vast and essential difference between the rule of Christ over the world of wicked men and the rule of Christ over the world of the elect. Christ rules over His church by His grace and Spirit and Word. He comes to dwell in their hearts to establish his throne within them. And by doing so, He makes His own people willing subjects of His who love to do His bidding and who serve Him and worship Him as willing subjects and citizens of His kingdom. But this is far from the case with the wicked and with devils. Although the elect in their service of God are as the angels in heaven, the wicked and the devils stand bitterly opposed to all that Christ does. They hate Him and His kingdom. They despise all that is holy and good. They seek, in their hatred, to destroy Christ and the church, for the church represents the cause of Christ in the world. Bitterly opposed to this kingdom, and hateful of all that is of it, they set themselves in opposition to God and to Christ as they seek to establish their own kingdom of sin and unrighteousness. But nevertheless Christ rules over them. Only, while He rules over His people by making them the willing subjects of His kingdom, He rules over wicked men and devils against their will and in spite of them. He rules over them, and He sovereignly controls all their actions, but He does so in spite of their own wills which are set against Him. They hate Him; but He uses their hatred to serve His purpose. They war against Him and against His church; but even this bitter fury He uses to establish His own kingdom and realize the glory of the Father. They set themselves, and their rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed, saying, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us." But He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. God's King is set upon the holy hill of Zion and the heathen are given to Christ for his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. He breaks them with a rod of iron and dashes them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Psalm 2.

This fundamental difference between the rule of Christ over His people and Christ's rule over the world must never be destroyed or lost sight of. It is exactly here that we have the fundamental principle of a Protestant Reformed world and life view.

#### A PRACTICAL DANGER

However, there is also a very practical danger involved in this view of post-millennialism and in the view of common grace. This danger is that the kingdom of the Antichrist is identified with the kingdom of Christ. It is true that at the very end of the ages, a kingdom of peace and prosperity, of plenty and happiness, utopia far exceeding man's fondest dreams shall come upon the earth. But this kingdom is not the kingdom of Christ and of His people, but the kingdom of Antichrist and the wicked. It is precisely this kingdom which shall war against the church in the bitterest persecution this world has ever seen. It is this kingdom that shall expel the people of God, for there is no room in this kingdom for those who hold steadfast to the truth. But post-millennialism faces the very real danger of identifying this kingdom with the kingdom of Jesus Christ; and those who hold to common grace would do well to examine their position to see once whether or not they are laboring for the kingdom of Antichrist rather than the kingdom of Christ.

And no doubt if only these men would even seriously evaluate the world about them with sober thoughts and with their Bibles under their arms they would find something quite different

than they propose about the world. As things get progressively worse and the wicked seem bent on filling the cup of iniquity, the whole theory of common grace becomes a mockery.

There is no world and life view in these theories which meets the standard of Scripture. Standing upon these human mountains we cannot take our view of the world and of life and determine the course of our action. These principles are found in the Word of God and can and will indeed serve as the beacon lights to guide us in our view of life and the world and in the path we ought to walk as citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

Originally Published in:

Vol. 19 No. 7 October-November 1959