

## Christianizing the World? (6)

In the preceding article in this series, I contrasted the kingdom-life of doctrinal, ecclesiastical, and spiritual Calvinists in all the spheres with the cultural-Calvinists' dream of Christianizing the world.

What now is the expectation of us citizens of the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ? What is our expectation with regard to the kingdom of which we are citizens, the kingdom we promote, the kingdom whose banner flies over all our life in all the spheres?

### **Antithesis**

In this life, in history, and in fact in the near future, also in North America, we expect hatred, fierce opposition, and outright persecution. We expect this hatred and persecution exactly because of our uncompromising confession concerning the kingdom of God and because of our distinctive kingdom-life.

We expect the very opposite of the appreciation and cooperation on the part of the world of the ungodly that the common grace cultural-Calvinists are looking for. Basic to the project of Christianizing the world is the conviction that the ungodly are favorably inclined to the project, that the ungodly regard the cultural-Calvinists as friends, indeed as indispensable fellow workers in the grand project of creating a good, even godly earthly kingdom of peace and prosperity for all, and that the ungodly will not oppose, but work together with the cultural-Calvinists. And by compromising the kingdom of God at every stage of the building of the kingdom of common grace, the cultural-Calvinists see to it that the ungodly world does in fact approve of them and befriend them.

Radically different is the expectation of genuine Calvinists, and radically different is also our experience. There is antithesis—opposition and hostility—between the kingdom of Jesus Christ and its citizens on the one hand, and the kingdom of Man (with a capital “M”) and its citizens on the other hand. God has placed this enmity between the two kingdoms: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed” (Gen. 3:15).

The two great kingdoms in the world at all times, and especially at the end of time, are at war!

The Heidelberg Catechism recognizes this warfare in its explanation of the theme of this series of articles, the coming of the kingdom of God: “destroy the works of the devil and all violence which would exalt itself against Thee; and also, all wicked counsels devised against Thy holy Word” (Q&A 123).

The project of Christianizing the world, as an important aspect of the coming of the kingdom of God, has no place for this instruction and warning of the Catechism, even though the Catechism is the creed also of the cultural-Calvinists.

Jesus forewarned us that the result of our being *in* the world, but not *of* the world, would be that the world would hate us, rather than look favorably on our kingdom-life and pitch in to help us with it: “The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14).

### **The Vain Hope of a Carnal Victory within History**

We spiritual, doctrinal, and ecclesiastical Calvinists do not expect the carnal triumph of the kingdom of Christ in history. We do not expect the Christianizing of the world. We deny that the Bible holds out this prospect for the project.

The history of the past one hundred years or so of the efforts of the cultural-Calvinists to Christianize their nations and the world has been utter failure. Abraham Kuyper’s Netherlands is not a whit more Christian today than it was in 1898. Neither is the North America of the Christian Reformed Church more Christian than it was in 1924.

The present cultures of the Netherlands and of North America are not promising with regard to the coming of the kingdom of God in any form. Open anti-Christianity is virulent in the cultures. The cultures are decadent, and descending into the abyss of the lawlessness that rages against God’s law in nature, that is, the law of male and female.

The stubborn project of Christianizing the world fights Scripture, history, and present experience.

Even though Reformed believers do not expect the carnal victory of the kingdom of Christ within history, we who now live the kingdom-life of Jesus Christ and who promote the kingdom of Jesus Christ will have the victory. The kingdom that is now

established in our hearts, that is the true church, and that extends in our lives to all the spheres will triumph. The victory of this kingdom is certain.

It will destroy the rival kingdom of the beast. It will punish and cast into hell all the citizens of the kingdom of the beast. It will establish itself perfectly over all the new creation. In it, we will reign with King Jesus over all things forever.

To this the Heidelberg Catechism directs our hope in the conclusion of its explanation of the second petition of the model prayer: “till the full perfection of Thy kingdom take place, wherein Thou [God triune, in Jesus Christ] shalt be all in all” (Q&A 123).

Not within history!

### **The Temporary Victory of the Kingdom of Common Grace**

Within history, as is taking place in our day, Satan’s outwardly grand kingdom of Man, in which Man is all in all, as much as possible, develops itself to the fullest. This grand kingdom of Man is anti-God, anti-Christ, and anti-church. It is lawless. It will persecute the citizens of the kingdom of God for their witness to Jesus, for their confession that God is God, and for their life of obedience to the law of God.

And, now, *mirabile dictu* [wonderful to relate], according to Abraham Kuyper himself, the father of the project of Christianizing the world, this godless, antichristian, lawless kingdom will, in fact, be the final, full development of the common grace project of Christianizing the world.

The closing scene in the drama of common grace can be enacted only through the appearance on stage of the man of sin...[common] grace leads to the most powerful manifestation of sin in history...At the moment of its destruction Babylon [the world-kingdom of Antichrist—DJE]...will exhibit not the image of a barbarous horde nor the image of coarse bestiality but, on the contrary, a picture of the highest development of which human life is capable. It will display the most refined forms, the most magnificent unfolding of wealth and splendor, the fullest brilliance of all that makes life dazzling and glorious. From this we know that

‘common grace’ will continue to function to the end (“Common Grace,” in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt, Eerdmans, 1998, 180, 181).

All those, therefore, presently engaged in erecting and promoting the kingdom of common grace are, in fact, deliberately helping Satan to realize his antichristian kingdom, the kingdom that Revelation 13 calls the kingdom of the beast.

I have bad news for them. The wrath of God abides on their project throughout history! And their kingdom will be demolished in the day of Jesus Christ! The little stone of Daniel 2 will fall upon it and grind it to powder.

The day comes when not only Herman Hoeksema, but also all heaven, the holy apostles, and the prophets will rejoice over the destruction of the project of common grace. “Rejoice over her [Babylon, the kingdom of Antichrist, and, according to Kuyper, the final product of common grace], thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her” (Rev. 18:20).

### **The Goal of History**

The victory and perfection of the kingdom of Jesus Christ will not take place within history, but as the goal of history. The victory of our kingdom will be everlasting.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory... Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Matt. 25:31, 34)

This is certain, as certain as it is that Jesus arose to become lord of all, and as certain as it is that the God and Father of Jesus Christ must be all in all.

This is our hope.

With this hope, we live the kingdom life faithfully; promote the kingdom actively; fly the banner of the kingdom without shame or fear; yes, and patiently endure scorn and suffering for the sake of this kingdom and its king.

The kingdom of Jesus Christ and his (particular) grace *is coming*, not so much by our kingdom-work as in answer to our prayer, “Thy kingdom come.”