

Chalcedon

Chalcedon, long led by Rev. Rousas John Rushdoony, has taken a leading role in the intellectual future of the Christian church in America with a balanced but forthright vision for taking seriously the Word of God and applying it, what Abraham Kuyper called the Calvinistic life-system¹. The benefits of this work when its aims have succeeded are God's glory, the prepared eternal character of the individuals who comprise the Kingdom of God, the institutional foundations of the Gospel work for the future, and successful evangelism itself. Why should it surprise Christians that Jesus took Himself seriously when he prayed, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven" and "for Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever." Did the Son petition the Father declaring His Lordship, in vain? Obviously not.

Martin Selbrede, a man closely attached to Rush personally and who continues to love Chalcedon and its work, first introduced me to these, Doctor Rushdoony's ideas, in 1982. Though my first church was a hippy, Jesus Movement church, this church held the Scriptures in high regard, and my pastor taught through them verse by verse. Moreover, I read the Bible. By God's grace, I believed the Word which said that God chose me, and not I Him. God prepared works beforehand for me to walk in. The Scriptures made God Sovereign, or He must be something less than King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Of course, God is God. I was ready for Chalcedon's ministry.

However, my early experience inclined heavily toward dispensational eschatology. I met a young Jewish man who had studied with Hal Lindsey at UCLA. He had given his life to Christ, and his father disowned him. To me, this was extraordinary, something compelling. I wanted to know more. He gave me Hal Lindsey's book the *Late Great Planet Earth*. (Please don't laugh. Oh, go ahead, why not!)

The Difficulty of Change

What is the point? For years, I remained a dispensationalist. Even with the regular influence of Chalcedon, my friend Martin, and the constant study of the Reformation and early America, I remained skeptical of the Post Millennial view. Such recalcitrance should not surprise Biblical Christians, for we are not to be tossed about by every wind of doctrine. God made men hardheaded on purpose, so that we might go to battle in this world without doubting, with conviction and courage. Thus, it ought to be clear that change ought not to come to quickly or easily among men. And it does not.

Revolution, as Dr. Rushdoony teaches², is not a Biblical solution to godly change. Revolution is merely external and inherently destructive. God told the children of Israel that He would not give them the Promised Land all at once, as they would not be prepared to support it (Deuteronomy 7:22). He promised He would rule in the middle of His enemies (Psalm 110). He said he would reap His harvest and destroy the weeds in due season (Matthew 13). Rather than revolution, The Scriptures require obedience to Christ by faith. The farmer husbands his crop by faith. In due season God brings the increase. Thus it was the American Pilgrims' adopted practice to live according to God's Word in all their endeavors for the purpose of seeing God's kingdom established among them, though they be "stepping stones" to others³. Revolution is an unholy, humanistic expedience, the result of the want of faith, however understandable in the light of human nature. Christians must shun change by revolution.

Whence Comes True Evangelism?

What means are then left for an effective evangelism? With the glory of God, a character fit for eternity, and the effectiveness of the Gospel in mind, Reformed Christians realize that deep abiding change must take place. The old man must be reckoned dead. The Christian expects adversity in his assignment to make disciples of all nations. This is so because his destination is the heart and mind of man. God reserves violence solely to the defensive war, protecting territory which God has already granted (Judges 11:12-27).

Thus, godly influence through friendship, leadership, self-restraint and sacrificial service, largely replace affected haughty superiority, authoritarianism and revolution, which only result in resentment or mere outward compliance.

Circumstances and the Holy Spirit exert influence for change, the soil preparation of men's hearts. Like John the Baptist, we may make straight the path of the Lord to the heart of man. Therefore, no area of human endeavor is neutral, as all things manifest influence for good or evil. Indeed, rebellion is so deep seated that every action is a potential and necessary means of godly influence. Christians must then take *every* thought and action captive to the obedience of Christ. These things are obvious to the historic Calvinist and contemporary Reconstructionist.

Preparation

However, what may not be so obvious is that great change in *ourselves* must be the antecedent of expected change in others. We must not expect others to change if we ourselves are not willing. It is no wonder Paul taught the Ephesians to put on the whole armor of God. Recognizing the futility of external revolution to effect godly change, the Christian relies upon an effort made in faith to conform to the image of Christ internally and in practice. Paul says walk in a manner worthy. Put off the old ways and put on the new. The Gospel is like a seed going into good soil, with the crop Providentially revealed in the fullness of the season. Christian change comes by effort and by God's power. To effectively practice the work of the Great Commission means patiently to devote oneself to the utmost preparation.

Indeed, I have found in my observation of human nature, including my own, that few of us change in fundamental ways without marvelous intervention. Consider the Matthew 18 injunction to confront an offender privately at first, then with a witness or two, and then before the whole church. Practicing Jesus' way here tends to keep interpersonal differences private for more ready repentance and reconciliation. If the matter is one of gross sin which must be pursued, an intermediate expansion to judgment by a third or fourth party helps to avoid prejudice. It is interesting to note that with gossip, prejudice is the rule. One party makes a public claim against another to a third party. Though the claim may be unjust or though the parties may reconcile, it is likely the gossip hearer will never know, and thus gossip may perpetually taint the relationship. How often I have heard pastors and elders defend such gossip as necessary to leadership, rather than simply to do what the Bible requires.

I have made this Matthew 18 principle of fundamental importance to my own walk. Yet I find what my heart knows and desires to do, I do not, but rather practice the thing I hate. How difficult it is to walk righteously!

Here is but one small illustration of the moral dilemma of the believer. True Christian life is a moral walk, based upon the changed nature of our being in Christ. Nevertheless, it acquires greater fulfillment through experience as well. Thus we are at once holy and becoming holy, transformed from glory to

Education as a Way of Life

An Article for Chalcedon Website

Ronald Kirk
Created October 19, 2001
Modified February 29, 2012

glory into the image of Christ. Furthermore, we must realize the requirements of the mature Christian are humanly speaking impossible, seemingly contradictory. We must be ready and bold, yet humble and meek. We are to submit to authority, yet assume leadership. We are to be mighty men of valor, yet gentle. We are to fight the good fight, yet love our enemies.

Education

Here we have identified the centrality of true Christian education. Far beyond mere intellectual capacity or skills for materially financing life, Christian education is central to the moral fiber of the Christian church. Far beyond mere child schooling, education ought to be a life-long passion for every Christian. Every aspect of relationship (upon the Biblical principles of Christian love and liberty) and stewardship (upon the principles of Christian dominion) belong to Christ. Because of the difficulty of acquiring the attributes of mature godliness, it ought to be clear that every Christian must assume the disposition of a humble learner, a disciple, a practitioner of Christ's ways.

How important it is to reach the man while he is young and predisposed to godly change. How holy is the undertaking to help form the child's manners and habits and skills and wisdom. If friendship, leadership, and a disposition for self-restraint are fundamental to life and the Gospel, how can we spare effort to teach and learn these things?

The Christian walk, then, consists essentially of fulfilling my personal responsibility to cooperate with God to effect the changes in me which will make me ready for eternity and make my contribution to the Kingdom now. Rather than forcing change on others, the Christian life consists in the influence that the investment in personal education brings to others as I express it in my ordinary and extraordinary occupations of life. Personal repentance brings personal growth. Personal growth brings new habits of life. New habits of life bring influence on those in my sphere. The Holy Spirit brings to reality that influence inspired by faith. Such influence becomes institution with lasting effect. When we must fight to protect the ground God has already granted, we do so. When we allow God to work our souls and we put to work our unique gifts, we change history. "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" becomes a reality.

¹ Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1931), pp. 9-40.

² E.g. R.J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Phillipsburg, NJ: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1973), p. 113.

³ William Bradford, *Of Plimouth Plantation* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1899), p. 32.