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TWENTY-FIVE THESES FOR A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY REFORMATION

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1. The Triune God *alone* is Sovereign (Gen. 1:1-26; John 17:1-24; 15:26f).

2. The Triune God will not share His Sovereignty with *any* creature (Isa. 40:9-26).

3. Before the Triune God, the universe, the Church, the nation, and all Christian leaders pale into *utter* insignificance. All of them are merely "unworthy servants."

4. The doctrine of the Sovereignty of the Triune God is by far the most fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith. All other Christian doctrines are utterly and completely dependent upon the doctrine of the Sovereignty of the Triune God. The important doctrines of the incarnation of Christ and of the salvation of man, for example, are therefore definitely not of the most primary importance.

5. The doctrine of the infallibility of the Bible, and the doctrines of the virgin birth, miracles, blood atonement and resurrection of Christ are all fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. But they are only true because the far more fundamental doctrine of the Sovereignty of God is true.

6. Were God not Sovereign, the Bible would not be infallible — and Christ would not have been born of a

virgin, performed miracles, wrought a blood atonement, nor risen from the dead. The Bible *is* infallible; and Christ was born of a virgin, did perform miracles, did work a blood atonement, and did rise from the dead. But this is only so, because the Sovereign God caused it to be so.

7. Ecumenical Movements are gathering momentum today. This is true of the International Council of Christian Churches, the Reformed Ecumenical Council, the Vatican, the World Council of Churches, and also other bodies. However, the \$64,000 question which all must answer, is this: "Do you believe in the total Sovereignty of God, and do you require all your members to subscribe thereto as the very *first* article of faith?"

8. A "Christian" movement which — either in faith or in practice — permits its members to detract from the absolute Sovereignty of God, is an *apostate* movement — even though it may insist on subscription to some or even all of the other (less) fundamental doctrines.

9. Separation from sin and apostasy is a command of God. However, *total* separation from *all* sin and apostasy is impossible, and Christians should always be anti-revolutionary in the *method* of their separation. Certainly Christians

should *always* separate themselves especially from every explicit and tacit denial of the Sovereignty of God.

10. Because God is Sovereign, everything and everyone else is not. But because God is Sovereign, He reflects something of His Sovereignty, however little, in everything and everyone that He has made. Accordingly, although none of God's creatures are Sovereign over against Him, all of them are (relatively) sovereign over against one another.

11. Because God created the universe, the state and society no less than He created the Church, none of them is Sovereign over against Him, yet each is (relatively) "sovereign" in its own sphere over against the other spheres. Each sphere is also "universal" in its own abilities. God should be recognized in all these spheres, and each sphere should promote the interests of the other spheres, especially where the latter recognize God.

12. When God had made the cosmos, He made man in His image and appointed man to rule over the cosmos for Him. Accordingly, man, as the ruler of the cosmos, is more important than the cosmos which is to be ruled by him. Man was more important than the rest of the cosmos before the fall, and man is more important than the root of the cosmos

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after the fall. So man's salvation is more important than the salvation of the non-human creation.

13. However, man is not God. Although he and he alone is the image of *God*, he is still only the *image* of God. Although man is the *crown* of God's creation, he is still only the crown of *creation*, a part of creation, a *creature*. And man shares his creatureliness with the *rest* of creation. Man's fall from grace as the crown of creation therefore drags down with him the rest of creation too, and his principal redemption from sin also involves the principal redemption of the rest of creation too. So if we ignore the salvation of the whole cosmos we thereby ignore the salvation of the whole *man* as the crown thereof.

14. It is therefore impossible to *separate* man from the rest of creation, even though we may so *distinguish* him therefrom. Man's fall involves creation's fall. Man's redemption involves creation's redemption. Man's consummation involves creation's consummation — on the new earth. For this reason, man's task is always *creative*. His task remains the same after the fall, in spite of sin (Gen. 1:26-28; 9:1-6; Ps. 8). His task remains the same after his redemption from the fall (Matt. 5:5; 6:10; Acts 4:24; Rev. 4:11; 14:13). And his task remains the same on the new earth (Rev. chs 21-22). For redemption does not involve creating something brand new, but in re-deeming — in "*buying back*"

something that was originally good, and making it good *again*. And similarly, *re-creation* does not involve making a totally new creation, but in re-creating the original creation and making it "very good" *again*.

15. For this reason, though possible to distinguish, it is impossible to separate Gen. 1:28 from Matt. 28:18f. One implies the other. Both involve going into all the world; both involve working for the Triune God; both were commanded by the Word of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. If men had not filled the earth in terms of Gen 1:28, they could not be evangelized in terms of Matt. 28:18f. When the Word of God commands the Apostles to teach "*all things, whatsoever* I have commanded you" in Matt. 28:19, He includes whatsoever He the *Word* commanded them in Adam as the federal head of the entire human race when He *said* unto him: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

16. Gen. 1:28 and Matt. 28:18 must *both* be obeyed, but never be obeyed for man's sake, society's sake, the state's sake, humanity's sake, or even the Church's. They may only be obeyed for Christ's sake and to the glory of God, notwithstanding the fact that God also promotes both of them even through the unsaved by means of His common grace, though generally by means of His special grace through sinful Christians.

17. Gen. 1:28 and Matt. 28:18 now stand or fall together. Both of them have total implications. Both imply the keeping of the Ten Commandments in depth in all their religious, social, political and economic *etc.* ramifications (see: *Westminster Larger Catechism*, Questions 91-151).

18. Although on account of sin, no single Christian nor even all men can obey Gen. 1:28 fully, all Christians are still required to attempt this. Exactly the same applies in respect of Matt. 28:18 and in respect of the Ten Commandments.

19. Although God only calls some Christians to subdue specifically the earth and others to subdue specifi-

Wishful Thinking

Ian Hodge, Ph.D.

In the headlong rush into the twenty-first century, it's appropriate to think about some of the wishful thinking that is transpiring in the nation. It is not our purpose here to predict outcomes, though it is possible that putting in the issue way that we do can help us contemplate potential outcomes resulting from events that are transpiring now.

The first of these concerns the economic predictions as a result of the fall of the Asian tigers. The worst of the nations affected has been Indonesia with rioting and attacks against Chinese Christians. In some villages, residents painted the word "Islam" on their homes in order to escape mob violence.

No one is certain what the real outcome for Australians will be. On the one hand we have seen Qantas and Korean Airlines drop a number of flights in the area, while other Asian airlines have stepped in to increase their flight numbers.

In Australia, the tourist industry is complaining about its future prospects, having lost significant Asian customers. Will the expensive \$20a-night or more hotels in Cairns, Port Douglas and elsewhere remain idle, or will hotel operators look for European and American customers to fill their rooms? While they will most probably not lower their rack rates (i.e. the standard room rate), we should expect some real specials to become available for Australian holidaymakers if foreign tourists don't take up the slack created by the Asian economic meltdown.

No one really knows the extent of the problem. How many businesses in Indonesia, Malaysia or Korea will fail? Which banks have supported these debt-ridden companies? Can the banks survive if those it has lent to fail to perform? What will be the flow-on effect in the economies if these banks fail? Government guarantee to the banks is not a solution, since this allows the banks to be bailed out of what has been poor business decisions in the past. Bad business is being subsidized and maintained by government. And where will the governments get the money from to support the failures?

People around the world remain wedded to the notion that wealth, or the lack thereof, is simply a problem of government, rather than economics. They believe that the government can create wealth out of thin air, believing that money is wealth. This is only true when money is not paper currency, since historically paper was a promise to pay in tangible wealth. This promise has been removed by governments that did not want their paper currencies re-

cally the sea, *etc.*, all Christians should support the work of the human subjection of the entire cosmos for Christ's sake. Although God only calls some Christians to be specifically Apostles or Preachers and to go and baptize in His Name, all Christians should support the execution of the Great Commission.

20. Accordingly, all Christians are to support all the work done for the Lord, whether they are directly involved in it or not. A Christian Biologist who will not support and encourage missions, is apostate. A Christian Missionary who will not support and encourage the Christian Biologist, is apostate. A Christian Lawyer who will not testify to his clients of the saving blood of Christ, is apostate. And a Christian Personal Worker who will not testify to his converts of their need to support Christian political action, is also apostate. Each of these are workers in God's Kingdom, and each needs the others. They are *all* in "full-time service" for their Lord, and *each* is (relatively) "sovereign" in his or her own sphere and (relatively) "universal" in his or her own abilities.

21. The work of the Christian Preacher or Christian Missionary is therefore not more important than the work of the Christian Biologist or the Christian Lawyer, nor *vice-versa*. Such attitudes are carnal, and reek of sanctimonious pride, and are in fact merely remnants of Romanism. The Church is not more important than the Christian state, nor *vice-versa* (see Rom. Ch. 13). They are both parts of the Kingdom of God, and need each other. In the Church, the Christian Preacher is not more important than the so-called "Laymen" — nor *vice-versa*. Both are in "full-time service," provided they serve the Lord with all their hearts. Neither are Preachers more important than Elders and Deacons, nor Blacks than Whites, nor *vice-versa*. They all need one another. There is, or rather should be, no such thing as "part-time service" of the Living God, Whose Kingdom is over all (Ps. 103). A "part-time service" of God is a backslidden service. All work of all kinds done to God's glory is thoroughly "sacred" (Rom. 11:33 - 12:1f). But even the work of preaching — when done in a shoddy manner — is thoroughly "secular," (*i.e.* thoroughly conformed to this world or

saeculum). See Rom. 12:2. And all "secularized" Christianity, is thoroughly backslidden.

22. It is utterly sinful for Preachers to neglect "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) — which counsel includes Gen. 1:28, *etc.*! — and to limit themselves to the so-called "saving truths." This constitutes a tacit denial of the greater truth of the universal Sovereignty of God.

23. In Scripture, there is no such thing as "the ministry," but only "ministry." All Christians are ministers of God, and there are also special ministries — such as governmental ministry in politics (Rom. 13), the female diaconal ministry in the Church (Rom. 16:1f), and the ministry of the Word (Luke 1:1-4). It is, of course, correct for Preachers to remind their congregations of the need for more Preachers and Missionaries, *etc.* There *is* such a need, and it is great! But, if this is done in such a way as to raise *any* suggestion that the calling of Preachers and Missionaries is a *higher* calling than that of other Christian careers, we have here a remnant of Romish priestcraft contrary to the priesthood of all believers (I Pet. 2:9). Actually, God tells us to *remain* in our *callings* (such as unmarriedness or slavery) until He calls us elsewhere (I Cor. 7). God can and does call some from the ministry of law (Rom. 13) into the *ministry* of the Word — such as Paul; but also *calls* some *out* of the "priesthood" into politics, too — such as Moses. Doubtless Paul achieved more for God as a Preacher than he did as a Lawyer, but doubtless too David achieved more for the Lord as a King than he would have as a Priest. And it must be remembered that all believers are called to be Prophets, Priests, and Kings.

24. Such Christians as claim that the Lord has called them to be Preachers, should remember that they are to be *servants* of God (I Cor. 4:1-10), and are not to *lord* over the flock of "Laymen" like Protestant "Popes" (I Pet. 5). They should clearly distinguish between evangelism of the unsaved and the edification of the saved. Many Christian laymen are on a starvation diet in their churches. They are sick and tired of being treated by their Pastors as if they were still unsaved.

deemed for real wealth, so now paper currency is worthless in times of crisis. And this *is* a time of economic crisis. It may not be a crisis for you and me. But think about those rioting Indonesians. Why are they rioting now? They did not apparently see the need for this a year or more ago. But now something compels them to take individual and mob action.

More importantly, we need to ask who created this problem for the Indonesian people and others? While we may blame their governments, it is also prudent to ask who taught their governments that political control of the economy, the issuing of paper currency, the use of fractional reserve banking and unlimited debt were the way to wealth.

There are some who claim to know where these things lead: bankruptcy. But where are these people now that the Indonesian citizens need help. Crying "we told you so" is little comfort to distraught parents with hungry children.

Even more importantly, we have first hand indication here that what the conservative economists have been saying for years is actually true: monetary inflation eventually leads to a breakdown in the economy. So what will our economists and politicians do now that they have seen first hand where an immoral monetary system leads to. More importantly, what will our church leaders do now that they have first hand knowledge of what happens when Christianity is left out of economic considerations? How much worse will things have to get before good people do something to fix the problem. And by do something, I mean do more than hold seminars, write tracts and leaflets, and generally talk about solutions to the problems.

If we believe the situation will resolve itself, then we are wishing and hoping that these issues will resolve themselves without us lifting a finger in aid. Perhaps they will, in the Providence of God. But God has His ordinary means of solving problems, and these involve men and women making right decisions about what needs to be done, then getting about doing it.

This wishful thinking is a part of our problem within Christianity. It highlighted itself in another area during this month, the Constitutional Convention. Those who heard the speeches on the final day will recall the words of Rev Dr David Mitchell, Convention delegate for the Monarchists from Tasmania. Dr Mitchell reminded Convention delegates that history, the Australian people and God Almighty would judge them for the decisions they were about to make. He urged them to remember the historic Christian and biblical roots of our political system and that these principles should remain en-

They long for the pure meat of the Word (I Pet. 2) — but all they get is milk, baby-food (Heb. 6). Perhaps this is because their “full-time” pastors do not really believe that the preaching ministry is quite as holy as they claim it is. If they really *did* believe this, surely they would *prepare* their sermons in the *sweat* of their face, and then preach those sermons as if it were the last thing in the world they are doing before going to the judgement throne of Christ. The Church needs Preachers who can wake the dead and make the living tremble! Preachers who are pleasers of men — even of saved men — are an abomination to the Lord! One Luther and one Calvin truly called by God to preach, achieved more than thousands of mealy-mouthed pulpit fools before and after them. Today, we would achieve far more than we do by using only one-tenth of the Preachers we have, by using the *real*

Preachers we have, and sending the other nine-tenths back into the other professions such as economics and politics where they belong, and where the Lord needs them.

25. For a twenty-first century Reformation, we need to get back to the sixteenth century Reformation and its great emphasis on the absolute Sovereignty of God. We need to realize with Calvin that *all* human labour is of *equal* value. After all, *all* (Christians) are *in the Lord's service*, and contribute towards the maintenance of human society (*Opera XXVII*, 14), and that “*all* craftsmen of whatever kind, who serve the needs of man, are *ministers of God*” (*Opera XXXVI*, 83). We need to realize (as did Luther of his wife) that the Christian housewife working to God's glory in the kitchen is just as much a servant of God as is her husband, the Christian Preacher. We

need to realize with Paul that whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, we are to do it all to the glory of God (I Cor. 10:31).

Luther wrote ninety-five theses against the Romish heresy, and nailed them on the door of the church in Wittenberg. And later he declared at the Diet of Worms — as this present writer now also declares:

“Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason — I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other — my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to act against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen!”

Wishful Thinking (Continued)

shrined in our legal system, whatever the outward form might take.

That Dr Mitchell's voice was a lonely voice at the Convention should not surprise us. For decade upon decade our politicians and courts have been overturning the historic Christian roots to our civilisation. Where were the Christian voices raised in protest. Who defended the poor when income tax was imposed on the people earlier this century? Who has defended the ordinary citizens against increased taxation to keep thieves in jail when the biblical mandate is for the thief to pay compensation to his victims?

It was once considered an important principle that a man (or woman) was innocent until proven guilty, a concept derived only in those nations that have been governed by laws originating from the pages of the Old Testament. But these laws had to be abolished in order to make way for random breath testing and speed cameras. All done, mind you, with the purpose of making this country a “better” country, a more “just” nation.

Time and time again at the Convention, delegates were heard to use the phrase, “the sovereignty of the people.” This is the major heresy of our age and the cause of the decline of our

Christian churches. They have abandoned the idea of the sovereignty of God and accepted the proposition that God no longer makes the laws for our nation. We need legislators, they say, who will make new and just laws that are relevant for the twenty-first century. This idea makes most contemporary people who attend Christian churches polytheists at best. They believe in more than one God, more than one lawmaker. In their spiritual lives they want the God of heaven to rule, but in the real world, they want the god of mammon to rule, the god as elected by the people and given the name of Parliament.

While Christians have met for Bible reading, prayer and meditation, those who believe in action rather than talk have taken over the institutions that make or break a civilisation that wants to call itself Christian.

Christians today believe they will recapture the future by holding prayer vigils, Bible studies that never touch the major issues of the day, and calling on God to bail them out of a mess that they, or their forefathers, got them into.

To win the day we needed more people like David Mitchell at the convention. But where were they? Why were they not there to stand with him? In too many cases, others were not there to stand with Dr Mitchell be-

cause there was not enough Christian influence to change the character of the Convention.

While it is right and proper to call on God for help, pray for His guidance and wisdom, we need to ask ourselves where is the place for human action. At what point do we stop praying and like David, select the correct weapon for the battle at hand, so that we may slay those who oppose all those principles which we hold to be right and true because God declares them to be in Holy Scripture?

Ours is truly an age that believes in wishful thinking. It backs up wishful thinking with much prayer and a lot of pious talk. It expects God to come to the rescue when the people themselves are afraid to rescue themselves, trusting that God, who *is* sovereign, will determine the outcome for His purposes and His glory.

When confronted by the enemy, David said: *What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who [is] this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?* (I Sam. 17:26)

Perhaps it is time to stop wishing and get to work.