



F.A.C.S. REPORT

"A Monthly Newsletter on the Relevance of the Christian Faith"

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This is my fourth trip to Australia.¹ I believe it is important to be concerned about this country. I maybe totally wrong, but I do believe that Australia is the country of the future. A hundred years from now it could be the most important country in the world. Of course, your government is doing everything to prove that I am wrong. But although the political centre of the world is still the Atlantic basin, the economic centre now is emphatically the Pacific. And in terms of resources and opportunities, Australia is the most strategic country and with the greatest potential.

I feel therefore your work is all-important. Because it could be the future of the world that is at stake in the foundations you establish in bringing this continent-country under the dominion of Christ.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 6:2 "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" Now as pastors and theological students and teachers you know of course that the word translated there as 'judge' is a Greek word that can be better rendered 'rule.' Know ye now that the saints shall *rule* the world. This is your calling.

Now the commentaries are derelict in that they explain the meaning of the text here word for word but don't tell us what happened. Namely, that the churches began to take Paul seriously. They set up courts of settlement in every community. These courts became so influential, that in no time at all the pagans were coming to the Christian courts. Their reputation was so great that when Constantine became emperor he ordered every bishop to wear the garb of a Roman magistrate when he was in public, which is your bishop's garb to this day.²

What did they do to rule the world? Why they took over health, education, welfare. There were schools. They es-

The Pastor in the Modern World

by R.J. Rushdoony

established homes for the elderly and homeless. For children who were homeless, they nursed and cared for them. They ransomed captives. One bishop in the early church could state that in his lifetime he had ransomed 15,000 captives. Now you recognise the source of that. The Messianic prophecy concerning Christ, what He should do. And the church took it seriously and applied it.

Six centuries after the fall of Rome the only courts of Europe were the Christian courts. Now that is why the church called itself catholic. It was universal. It was the government in every sphere of life and thought. It governed, because it believed that Jesus Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The Roman state attacked the church as an empire within the empire. It resented the fact that there was another government, another rule. When Paul said that he, and others like him, were 'ambassadors for Christ', he was using that word in a legal sense. He was the representative of a foreign power, a power that was determined to take over the world. They had it in writing in the great commission, and Rome knew about it.

The word for a church and its congregation was parish, a word that Rome used in a technical sense and Paul took it and adopted it for the embassy of a foreign power which had extra-territorial rights. The embassy of the United States here, or wherever it's located in Australia, has extraterritorial rights. It is beyond the power of the Australian government to enter into that property or to tax it or anything else, and the same is true in the United States of the Australian em-

bassy. This is why the church fought for and gained exception from taxation and control. It was a parish. It was an embassy of the Lord Jesus Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Thus, the church called itself catholic—universal—representing the King of all Kings, the Lord of all Lords.

Today, neither Protestant or Roman churches are catholic. They have lost that. Increasingly among those who call themselves good Bible-believing Christians we have a limitation of the faith to pietistic inner concerns, as though the only area of Christ's dominion is the soul of man. As a result, the twentieth century church is losing its effectiveness. From 1969 to 1981 the church in the United States saw a dramatic increase in membership among the Bible-believing churches, from 40 million to 91 million. But in that same time, there was a marked decline in the effectiveness of the churches. In that time span, we saw the legalisation of abortion and homosexuality. We saw the stripping of Christianity from public life with measures against the Bible, prayer, references to Jesus Christ, and much more in the public arena.

There was a revolution, and it was not wrought by us, but by the enemy. But at the same time, there was a strong element of hope and resistance developing. It came out of the work of Dr. Cornelius Van Til. Apart from him, the church pursued a course of irrelevance. Popular preaching declined in context and content. It became pious pap, which avoided confrontations with reality.

1. An address given to pastors and students September 28, 1992.

2. The only bishops who know that fact are those whom I have told this to.

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The implications of the Word of God for every area of life and thought were forgotten. In fact, neglected. The meaning of Chalcedon—the great counsel of the early church in 451 A.D.—was so forgotten that most in the pastorate did not even know what the name referred to. Calvin had called attention to the havoc worked by anti-Chalcedonian thinking and how the ignorance of it had done damage in some areas of the Reformation.

Another Gospel?

IN OUR CENTURY, the churches are geared to the lowest common denominator. They are intellectually barren. The place for those who think is in the seminary, but now, of course, the seminary is just something to go through before you get ordained because tradition requires it. Consequently, the intellectual content of preaching is very weak.

Since WWII especially more and more attention—in the United States, at least—is given to counselling. Counselling has replaced the proclamation of the Word of God. And counselling is governed by humanistic and pacifistic concerns. For example, in an instance where a man is adulterous, or the wife promiscuous, the marital partner is routinely counselled against divorce. Peace at any price. In fact, a special holiness is said by such pastors to accompany a no-divorce stand. Jesus Christ, the pastor says, suffered even unto death on the cross. You will join Him in His sufferings if you go back to your spouse. And you

will gain great blessings and effect a holy work. Thank God one woman spoke back to such a pastor recently when confronted with this. She denied the statement that we partake in His sufferings. Because, she said, Jesus Christ is God incarnate, was making atonement for our sins by His suffering and death, and we are not God. There is no merit acquired for ourselves or for the church by our sufferings. No atonement is effected. Only a submission to evil that is in itself evil.

I was greatly encouraged that a young woman in her mid-30s would make such a stand. But the pastor could not understand her. The church, he said, after all, is the Body of Christ, engaged in a redemptive work on earth. He could not see that all our sufferings in Christ's name cannot add to the redemption of anyone. But that's not all.

We have another serious problem. Many pastors—including one whom I know in our area—are expecting the Rapture any day now. And so they counsel at the same time a pragmatic submission to evil, because "don't worry about your problem. Whatever it might be, Jesus is coming soon, and you have only a short time to put up with your husband or your wife or with this or that problem or with your children or your in-laws or anyone else. Well such counsel not only opposes efforts to do good, but also insists on submission to evil. At the heart of all counselling is the belief that some kind of adaptation is the solution. Not a confrontation with evil, with sin. It fails to see sin as the problem. And this is eroding the pulpit that claims to be Bible-believing, because the human problem is man's sin, his rebellion against God, the fact that he is a part of a world revolution against the Almighty and against His Word. Given that fact, the impotence of the church should not surprise us. The doctrine of salvation is eroded when the doctrine of sin is eroded. And given the prevailing Arminianism of our society, is it any wonder that the doctrine of sin is eroded.

Popular Christianity

THERE IS STILL ANOTHER aspect in the church's decline. The prevalence of committees and commissions to settle matters that God has already settled. A few years ago, when an elder told my wife that his denomination had appointed a committee of General Assembly to study the question of homosexuality, my wife Dorothy, being a tough-minded Scottish woman, an-

Even Noah Had Red Tape

And the Lord Saith unto Noah, "Where is the ark which I commanded thee to build?"

And Noah replied, "Behold, when I journeyed to the Jordan County Planning and Zoning office for a permit, verily they railed against me and said, "Thy property is not zoned for an ark thirty cubits high. Thou wouldst require a 1040 review, environmental impact studies and a public hearing for a variance..."

"And behold, when I toldst them it would be a temporary usage, they asked where I was going with a three-storied ark? I explained to them about the flood, the waters from the great deep and the flood-gates from the sky. And behold, they wentest berserk and ranted about water rights and minimum stream flow regulations and flood plain studies. I barely escaped with my life.

"And another thing, oh Lord, my lot is zoned for a single family dwelling, and Thou has planned ark condos for even my three sons and their wives. That wouldst be a multifamily development.

"That reminded me, oh Lord, last week at the homeowners' meeting, I mentioned the animals. They reminded me of the covenants. Feeling a little defensive, I gave them your requisition list... lions, elephants, rhinos, alligators, chickens, monkeys, two by two, and fowls of the air, seven by seven. Behold, Lord, they completely lost their sense of humor and sought to smite me. But I will work on it. Couldst Thou please assign a bodyguard?"

And the Lord Saith, "Noah, faithful servant, doest thy best...I'll take care of you. But I need the ark completed in two fortnights. Do not faileth!"

Noah answered and said, "It will be so".

But it was not so. And the Lord saith, "Noah, where is the ark?"

And Noah saith, "Lord, behold, the building department hath been giving me fits. Thou didst specify gopherwood beams on one cubit centers on the second level. Code requires that gopherwood beams be placed on half cubit centers on that level to give adequate bearing strength for the elephants, hippos and rhinos. When I left, they were calling Planning and Zon-

swered that they had already made a wrong decision in deciding to study something where God had already spoken. He was baffled by her answer.

One elder told me recently in some bewilderment that he had opposed the formation of a new committee on the grounds that where God had spoken, man had one true response: to obey. A general assembly committee was then appointed to study the matter of committees, and he was appointed, to his bafflement, as its chairman.

Committees produce written reports. They do not act in terms of the grim problems of the world. Popular Christianity has replaced Biblical Christianity with paper. And written reports have replaced the Bible and the Great Commission. The true church has a world to conquer for Christ. A commission to disciple all nations and to bring every area of thought and life into captivity to Jesus Christ. It cannot wage that war unless its life and its theology are faithfully Biblical. Moreover, any and all theologies are humanistic, and implicitly anti-Christian if they are not fully and consistently Reformed.

Van Til said of Greek philosophies, "The god of the Greeks should be taken as evidence of the fact that the noblest product of fallen man's thought is idolatry. In their gods, the Greeks worshipped themselves."

Our enemies are out to capture the world and history in defiance of God. Is it any wonder that the European community at one time had a poster with a picture of the tower of Babel saying, "this time we will make it work." They are honest at least. The dream of the builders of Babel, of a new world order, is still the dream of God's enemies and our State Department, and our U.S. President. Such people work in open defiance very often to Him and His Law-Word. As against this Van Til held, "The self-attesting Christ will gain the victory. But He will gain it when theologians, philosophers, and scientists, and all that have cultural responsibility, reassume afresh the mandate given to Adam to subdue the world to the praise of its Maker and Redeemer."

This means that churches having failed to support the theological aspects of the faith, have committed themselves to mediocrity at best. For as the non-Christian world extensively subsidises its own kind of thinking, the church is indifferent to this sphere of activity. How many of its scholars and professors are given time to do some serious writing? One of Europe's truly great minds, now

part of our staff there, about twenty years ago obtained a grant from an American church of quite a few thousand members to enable him to cut back on his university teaching as a professor of philosophy to propagate the Reformed faith. His efforts led to important ministries to students, to Protestant pastors, teaching ministry weekly in theology to 1,100 Catholic monks. He was also writing the weekly evening messages of that great city's cathedral preacher. The American church cut off his support when they found out what he was doing, because, they said, he should have been on the streets passing out tracts and knocking on doors.

The anti-intellectualism of the churches in all their branches is leading to their bankruptcy. 'Simple faith' is what they claim they are propagating, which too often means 'simple idiocy.' And it is urged upon people as a virtue. They are taught that you don't need much of a mind to understand the faith, which is true. I once encountered a remarkable young woman, mentally retarded, who could make university students weep with her eloquent testimony. But as Augustine said, "The Word of God is like a stream. Shallow enough for a child to wade across, and deep enough to drown an elephant."

Father of the Future

THE EARLY CHURCH SAW itself as an empire within the Roman empire. Called by God to replace man's rule with Christ's rule in every sphere, because in Isaiah's words, "For unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end. Upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment or justice. And with justice even forever, the zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this."

Calvin in his commentary on this text said with respect to the phrase "the Everlasting Father" that this could be correctly translated not only as referring to the eternal reign by Christ, God the Son, but as Father of the Future. Jesus Christ is the present ruler, upon whose shoulders is the government of all things. He is the Blessed and Only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and He is also, in Calvin's happy phrase "the Fa-

ing, asking about zoning for a zoo or circus.

Lord, I thinketh that we are in trouble with the animals.

"And Lord, the plan checker wenth into a fit and gnashed his teeth when he saw that the plans called for only one door on the whole building. He declareth that a structure of this size requireth two exits on each level."

And the Lord saith, "Noah, my schedule called for the ark to be completed before Christmas. Worketh thou very hard!"

And Noah Answered, "Christmas? What is Christmas?"

"In by Christmastime! It's just an expression used in the building trade. It doesn't mean a thing."

And Noah answered, "Verily, it shall be done."

But behold, it was not done. And the Lord saith, "Noah, the ark is not ready."

And Noah answered, "Verily, I have had three carpenters off ill and last Monday was a holiday. And the fowls of the air Thou ordered by sevens are now sold only in half-dozen lots."

Noah wrung his hands and wept, saying "Oh Lord, I am undone."

And the Lord replieth with compassion, "Take heart, Noah. Now thou understandeth why I have called for a flood to descend upon the earth."

Amen.

* * * *

FACS on the World Wide Web

Our Web page has been up and running since the beginning of the year. The Internet is providing us with the opportunity to make available, worldwide, our newsletters. At this stage, we are building an historical library of past issues. Each week, we add to the list of past essays that we have published.

The response we are receiving has been encouraging. One US reader wrote, "I like the layout of your site, and since our focus is toward University and College students and professors, I especially like the academia focus."

Another foreign web surfer wrote (e-mail) and said: "My wife and I have

ther of the Future" because He is the Lord.

The church has limited the jurisdiction of Jesus Christ to itself. To the inner life, and a few other areas. But because he is the Creator, and all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. His Lordship is total. Nothing is outside His government. And He cannot be boxed to a limited realm. We have too much box theology in the church today which boxes Christ into a limited sphere—the church and the inner life of man. And that is to fall into polytheism, because it leaves the rest of the world to other gods.

The church must therefore assert once again that which was the battle cry of the Puritans: The crown rights of Christ the King over every realm of life and thought. There can be no sphere in independence of him. Psalm 24 declares that the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. The world and they that dwell therein. The Psalm goes on to hail the Lord as the unconquerable King of Glory. In this pilgrim song, Psalm 24, the singers joyfully cry out to the sanctuary and to the heavens themselves to open all doors everywhere to the King of Glory.

This is what the church of our time needs to do. It must know the living Christ. He is indeed our Redeemer. But he is also the great Prophet, Priest, and

King. We must do justice to the fulness of His Person and Word. The source of Law in any system of thought is the god of that system. If law for us is made by the church or by the state, we hold other gods before Him, Who declares to us, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me"? We have forgotten that the Sovereign power is the source of law. And if God is our Lord, our Sovereign, then this is His Law-Word, and it must govern every sphere of life and thought.

We are commanded in the Great Commission to teach or disciple all nations under Christ's dominion and in terms of His teaching and commandments. Our Lord prefaces this Great Commission — which is an abbreviation of the commission to Joshua — with the words that all power and authority in Heaven and Earth has been given to Him. There are no restrictions or limitations to this grant. As a result, we have no right to limit Christ's jurisdiction and sovereignty. To reduce Christ to the level of a personal helper and friend is to deny his Lordship. He is that but so much more. Such a limitation reduces the church to the role of a red cross: on the sidelines of the battle, ready to give aid and comfort to the battered, but never a part of the battle; never the victorious army.

If we are not in Christ's war for action and victory we are part of the problem.

been skimming your web page articles. Very impressive."

Your prayer and financial support enables our work to continue. We pray that God might use our efforts for the extension of His kingdom.

FACS has the ability to provide Internet resources to those who might want to operate their own Web Page. Any funds raised this way can support our ongoing work. So, if you hear of individuals, Christian businesses or organisations that want to get on the Web, ask them to call us (07 3851 1265) to see how we might be of assistance.