



# √ First the Jew but also the Greek

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## **INTRODUCTION**

When in the first century AD the Gospel of God's Kingdom was

preached to the nations of Western Europe, it met with opposition on all sides. This is no reason for amazement; the message of salvation is not according to the flesh. Rather we are surprised that God's Word, in spite of the rejection which it received everywhere, yet gained so many adherents and confessors that the Word prospered. However we will not understand this increase of the Word correctly, and perhaps confuse the growth of the church with all kinds of worldly success, if we do not take due note of the nature of this rejection, this opposition which resisted the Gospel when it came, and attempted to surpass it, when it had come.

It is the purpose of this essay to draw attention especially to the nature of this opposition. Therefore it is meant to be a contribution to the knowledge of the different contra-gospels or antevangelia, which were proclaimed during the first century of the history of the church.

Originally the Gospel was placed on a par with these antevangelia. In general it was not understood immediately that the apostles as ambassadors of Christ were conscious of the authority of their message; they do not come with a proposition or with a more or less acceptable way of thinking, but with the truth of God, and demand for that truth due reverence and recognition. They proclaim the law of faith in Christ's name, and require obedience to one law. They bring the Word of God, and through it silence every word of man. In other words the Christian missionaries point out the antithesis.

There was once a time when everyone in the Netherlands understood this word immediately. That time belongs to the past. Today it is necessary, even in a Reformed church, to explain this "foreign word." No wonder therefore, that this word is not at all understood outside the circle of active Christians. Those who have made a special study of national history will tell you that Abraham Kuyper liked to use this word in his political speeches, but that today this "political slogan" has lost its meaning. For nowadays we are all good patriots, and we may not speak anymore of an antithesis, of an opposition between these good patriots.

This, however, cannot obscure the fact that the antithesis is there nevertheless. And not only in politics. It is present also in politics, and there because it pervades all of life. Not only is there an antithesis today; it was also present at the time of the early church, and it will remain until the enemies of Christ will not be able to play a role anymore in history because they have been cast out by Him.

In order to be able to understand the antithesis in our time we do well to trace its course in the past. A very important period in the history of the antithesis, in the history of the battle

between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent where the Word of God places itself over against the Word of man, is the age in which Jesus lived and worked on earth, and founded His church.

The entire New Testament bears witness to this war, which Christ waged against a human faith, a gospel of the flesh. We see the conflict when John the Baptist, even before Christ's public ministry, warns his hearers: "Begin not to say within yourselves, 'we have Abraham as our father'." For this warning means a rejection of the faith-conviction of the Jews, a faith-conviction that was hostile to the Gospel of the Kingdom. It is on the basis of that faith that Christ was driven to death by the Jews. Here God's Word stood over against the word of man; here the law of faith struck against a humanism. This Jewish humanism, or Judaism, served as a norm for an apostate faith. This same apostate faith was operative in the opposition of the Pharisees and scribes, priests and elders, also in the attitude of the Sadducees and Herodians. It was this same apostate faith which was at work when, after the first Pentecost, the Jewish authorities placed themselves over against the young church. And later outside of Palestine the evangelising apostles met it again everywhere in the Roman empire in the bitter hostility of the Jews, who partly attempted to destroy the church at its birth, and partly tried to introduce the Jewish humanism into the church after it had come into existence. Therefore, we find broad expositions attacking these Judaistic errors in the apostolic epistles, errors which threatened to deform and falsify the young church.

But it is not only Jewish humanism against which Christ and his apostles have to battle. In the New Testament, already in the Gospels, we meet with another enemy. Herod tried to kill the newborn King of the Jews. In this too we see an apostate faith at work. This, however, is not a Jewish but a Greek humanism. Herod was not of Jewish stock, nor had he accepted the Jewish faith. With all that was in his power he had tried to make the Jews into a Greek people and hellenise them. His attempts found little acceptance, except for a relatively small group called the Herodians. For the rest his hellenising efforts met with strong opposition. Here we find a new antithesis; but this time a false one. For the antithesis between Jewish and Greek humanism is of another character than the antithesis between God's Word and the word of man. This becomes evident as soon as it concerns the Christ: then Pharisees, real Judaists, and Herodians form an alliance. We see it in connection with the question of whether it is permitted to pay tribute to the emperor (Matt. 12:15 ff.): "The Pharisees sent to Jesus their disciples together with the Herodians."

This is not the only Greek antevangelium which we find in the New

Testament. Others are of even greater importance. So we find in Luke 22:25 the term "benefactors." This simple word contains a whole world and life view which was opposed to the Gospel of Christ. Even the Jews were offended by the Greek gospel. This offence, however, was not evidence of a readiness to accept the word of truth. Simon Peter knew this offence, but it did not strengthen him in the hour of temptation which came upon him. The Jews, who wanted to make Jesus King by force, also lived out of an offence to this antevangel. But Jesus admonished, "Do not labour for the food that perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life."

Closely related to this theme of benefactors is that of the emperor. Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, Jesus commands. This, however, does not mean at all that Caesar is a friend of Christ. Luke sensed this antithesis between Caesar and Christ very keenly, when he wrote "Now it came to pass in those days, that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled." At the conclusion of the first epistle of Peter we read, "She that is in Babylon, elect together with you, salutes you." Peter then lived at Rome. With these few words we are reminded of a trend of thought, concerning which we find more in the book of the Revelation to John; we are reminded of the conviction of faith concerning an earthly king who desires to rule the whole world, and to make all other kingdoms subject to him. This was the goal of Nebuchadnezzar, and accepted as their inheritance by Persia, Greece and Rome. This idea of an earthly king who wants to establish an earthly kingdom is very much present in the background of the entire New Testament. He is the historical root of the antichrist who is to come. "I am to cast fire upon the earth, and what do I desire if it is already kindled?" we read in Luke 12:49. Christ has come to destroy the kingdoms of this world. His kingdom will not be left to another people; it will grind all these kingdoms to pieces, and consume them, but will itself remain forever (Dan 2:44). The complaint, "what do I desire if it is already kindled?" concerns the hostility against the kingdoms of the world, found among the Jews, but which in no way signified obedience to the Son.

For it is the hatred of Judaism against the carnal gospel of the earthly king. And Christ knows that this same hatred will also consume Him: but I must be baptised with a baptism, and now I am pressed until it be finished. In connection with this we find in the epistles, time and again, admonitions to obey the emperor, as in Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2. For under no circumstances may the church itself handle the sword against the kingdoms of this world. Peter did not understand this when he struck off the ear of Malchus, but he did understand it when he wrote his epistle. Neither did the Roman church understand it when it degenerated into a political force, so that Christ again could say: "What do I desire if it is already kindled?"

We find still other contra-gospels in the New Testament, typically in the second epistle of Peter where he speaks of cunningly devised fables (for which we should perhaps read "myths") which were presented in connection with mystic doctrines. These and similar mystic teachings were proclaimed throughout the length and breadth of the Roman Empire. They were not the least obstinate opponents of the Gospel of the Kingdom, because they also did not concern themselves with the politics of the time. The Book of Revelation, which proclaims a renewed world, in which righteousness dwells, battles not merely against emperor mysticism but also against teachings about a new and wholly different world, which were presented as revelations or apocalypses in similar books, and had a harmful effect and influence in the young Christian churches. For the Revelation to John continues the lines drawn in the book of Daniel, and in the latter it is clearly revealed that the Kingdom of Christ does not signify an entirely different world, but that his Kingdom will consume the empires of the world in order that it may exist forever: in the days of these kings, i.e. in the days of Caesar Augustus, the God of heaven will raise up a kingdom that shall exist eternally. The Kingdom of Christ is just as concrete and historic as the Kingdom of Augustus. If God wanted to create a whole new world, the world of Christ would have been superfluous.

In the book of Acts we hear of still another antevangelion, notably when the apostles turn to the heathen. We read about it in Acts 14, where the experience of Paul and Barnabas at Lystra is related; in Acts 16, where we find Paul and Silas in Philippi; and Acts 17, when Paul is in Athens addressing the men at the Areopagus.

The peculiar thing in it all is that we notice two lines common to all these contra-gospels. In the first place they are all apostate, hostile to God, and therefore directed against Christ. No matter how much they may differ among each other, in their hostility towards Christ they are One, whether they are of Judaistic origin or represent some other Hellenistic humanism. Secondly they all reveal a characteristic which shows that all these movements are related to that undefinable and yet so real something which we call the spirit of the age (Zeitgeist). All these contra-gospels are weapons of a spirit which is pictured in the book of Daniel as a mighty person, and is called the "Prince of Greece" (Daniel 10:20). Veldkamp writes in his paraphrase of the book of Daniel about this text: "The so-called Hellenism. This demon which is called the "Prince of Greece" in the Staten Vertaling, will act in a much more refined manner than the "Prince of Persia," not with brute force, but with cunning, by causing the religion of the fathers to be exchanged for the current world-spirit." Judaism is also a Hellenistic movement. Not only that little group of Herodians, but also the mighty

movement of the Pharisees is part of the general cultural movement which we call Hellenism. Even this trait of opposition against Western influences is typically Hellenistic.

However it does not follow that Hellenism as such is apostate. On the contrary, as a factor in history which is led by God, and in which Christ has been given all power, this period also represents a piece of creational glory, of which Christ says : This is mine. And this is true also, and particularly so of that phase of history which we call Hellenism. This adds peculiar difficulties to the treatment of our subject. For now there is no profit in a division which treats Judaism first, followed by the ant-evangelia of the Greeks. For Judaism is also Hellenistic, and if we want to understand it, we must first have some idea about the meaning of the word Hellenism. But in order to do that, we must have some conception about the general task to which man is called. For Hellenism is a period of culture. And culture means: cultivation of what has been created, development and maintenance of the creation. Therefore we must first consider the meaning of man's cultural task. That will give us the framework in which we can see Hellenism. We will understand this better by acquainting ourselves with some movements within this period. Because these movements can only be understood properly when related to the task of humanity, we again will have to return to a more general consideration of the evaluation of history in the light of the Scripture, in so far as it is of significance for our subject. Sometimes, however, a further division will prove impossible because we allow ourselves to be guided by some typical data from the New Testament which makes it possible to treat our subject in a small series of Bible studies.

## **I. CALLING, TASK AND CULTURE**

In order to be able to understand Hellenism as a cultural period, it is necessary that we have some idea of the meaning of man's culture. We can only do justice to our subject when we see both the Kingdom Gospel and the contra-gospels of men in their respective historic appearances as a result of the human activity to which mankind is called. Therefore we begin with a very concise discussion of calling.

Mankind has been called to a task. When man was created and therewith had entered the scene of history, he found himself with a task. He was given a mandate which he had to fulfill. We could call this task a cultural task, because his duty was to cultivate, to exploit, to develop the creation, and by this cultivation to unfold it. This development concerns the entire creation, not only the creation outside man, but also and first of all man himself. For a man grows with his task, and in the fulfillment of it he proceeds from one stage to the next, until he has reached complete human development.

However, so far we have considered but one aspect of the human task. For apart from cultivation and the development of that which was present as a bud in the human and non-human creation, there is also the task of preservation. Man is not only cultivator, but also keeper and preserver of creation.

It is easy to come to misconceptions concerning this cultivation on the one hand, and this preservation on the other. It is true that there is much we cannot know about this relation, because man's task has only partly been fulfilled, and therefore cannot be looked on as a historical given. However, it is also true that the taking up of this task in itself presupposes a certain consciousness of task; it means that every man who is busy working, exploiting and keeping this creation, has from the very beginning, some overall view of the import of his task. Without such an awareness of his task it is impossible to undertake it, and man would have no adequate idea of what he was doing. Therefore God did not only call him to his task, but together with the call also gave him an insight into his task, so that, along with the consciousness of his task, he also possesses a knowledge about the whole of his task. This consciousness of his task also grows, is deepened and enriched by every step man makes on the road of his calling. But it is an essential awareness, i.e., it enables man to make a prognosis of his work. From the very beginning this prognosis is true and therefore was meaningful even to the first man in his earliest historical stage.

Only because the fall brought a rupture in human life did the situation change. And consequently, among other things, man needed in the first period of history, in antiquity, a special support to be able to accomplish his task. This, however, does not concern our subject at present, and will be discussed elsewhere in so far as it is necessary.

As to the relation of the two aspects of the task, cultivation and preservation, we may note here that this relation does not run parallel with the breach brought about by the final judgment. It is thus not that before the final judgement cultivation will take place, and after it preservation. Neither does the difference between cultivation and preservation run parallel with the distinction between perfect and imperfect. For we have no reason to suppose that in the state of perfection cultivation will cease and preservation will begin. On the contrary, preservation belongs to the human task from the very beginning, and there is nothing that gives us reason to think that cultivation will cease after the final judgement. With certainty we know only this, that then the number of individual human beings will no longer increase. But we may not draw the hasty conclusion that there shall then be no becoming in creation. No doubt the

task to grow from two individual persons into a humanity of many millions belongs to man's task of cultivation. But preservation is also part of it. Since the fall generations die and the progress of history through the generations contains a preserving element, as also tradition next to the progress of the generations contains a preserving element.

Man is called to task and to blessedness. By blessedness not only eternal blessedness can be meant, for it is an accompanying phenomenon with the fulfillment of the task. Blessedness is not the same as perfection and it is not dependent on perfection. A woman is blessed in the fulfillment of her typically feminine task in motherhood, but this task is only possible in the period of imperfection. If we know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them. This holds not merely, and not even in the first place for the period of perfection, but primarily for the period in which Christ spoke these words, and furthermore for the period from His resurrection to His second coming. Eternal bliss is not only found on the other side of the grave, but it is much more a quality of the eternal life which enters man as soon as he believes in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Task and blessedness by nature belong together. They cannot be separated. We may not give the impression that blessedness is the wages for the fulfillment of the task, wages which would only be paid afterward. On the contrary, the fulfillment of man's task in itself brings with it the wages of blessedness. Therefore, blessedness is present also there where it is experienced only partly or even not at all. This occurs often in the time prior to perfection, in the time in which we all live. The mother who performs her task usually experiences no blessedness, but rather unrest and pain and anxiety. But still she is blessed, because she is there, where she must be according to the creation order. And the Christian who performs his task usually goes his way in tears and bitterness. And yet he is blessed, because he keeps Christ's words and His commandments. And even though he experiences no bliss, and rarely experiences great happiness, still he knows of his blessedness. Not only does he live in a state of bliss, but he knows it. And he can witness to that knowledge. To be sure, according to the Scriptures he is blessed in hope, but that does not mean that bliss is something that comes by itself, and that it is not something that accompanies the performing of the task, something that can be strived for. Therefore it can be put in no better words than these: man is called to task and to blessedness, and these are two sides of one calling. For the calling is a unity, as humanity and creation are also a unity. It is true that sin has also succeeded in causing a break here, but this can still not destroy the original unity; on the contrary, the break itself witnesses to that unity.

That one task is performed in a history that comprises many



centuries; it is performed by many persons, by many nations, throughout many ages. To understand this multiformity into which this one task opens up, it is necessary that we refer back to that unity again and again. There is but one task for the entire human race and there is but one calling wherewith God has called that human race. All tasks of individuals and nations, in different times and countries together form the one task to which mankind is called in one calling. No single individual or nation in the entire universe and in all of history stands outside of this calling. Even when man does not understand his calling any longer, he still stands within that calling. An exception must be made only for those who are cast out. They abused their calling. They are slaves who will not remain in the house forever. For them God has no task anymore, and perhaps that is the core of their misery. Just as task and blessedness belong together, so there is an internal relationship between misery and the lack of a task. Even on this side of the grave it is a calamity for a man to be unemployed. And this is true in a much greater measure of the ultimate unemployment, that is the state of being lost in outer darkness.

Because the calling is one, we cannot make a separation between the calling to faith and the calling to culture. For the calling does not merely concern faith, but all of life. It touches man in the fulness of his humanity, and the call to faith is but a small part of the entire calling. The understanding of the calling is closely related to one's faith-life, for the calling is understood in faith and misunderstood in unbelief. On the other hand the calling to faith also has its place in the calling to culture. For the calling to faith includes among other things, the cultivation, unfolding and development of one's faith, thus undergoing a process of growth, moving through a history. This holds for individuals as well as for humanity. It is not correct to hold that the Scriptures make us wise unto salvation only as to the meaning of faith. This is maintained by those who like to speak of a separation between faith and the rest of life. Such a separation is totally unreal. Only when a man knows his task in faith is he able to begin that task, and already has begun to perform it. For it is also part of our task to understand what that task is. We must distinguish, for instance, between the calling to faith and a profession, the calling to an ecclesiastical office and the calling to Christ, the calling to be an artist and the historical calling of the nations.

Nevertheless these distinctions may never become separations. Therefore no one can ever say that a certain man is first of all called to give himself to his profession and in the second place to answer his call as father, and thirdly to follow the call to an ecclesiastical office. This is unnatural. Also in the personal life of the individual the calling repeatedly demonstrates its unity. Unscriptural conceptions concerning the differences

between church and world, nature and grace, personal life and public life, have included many ruptures, contrasts and breaches in the calling, which in reality do not exist. Only when the unity of the calling is seen is there an opportunity for personal, ecclesiastical, economic, social and political life, in short for the whole of life, to become healthy again. Human nature has many functions, and the human life knows many areas, but a man is a unity, and mankind is a unity, and this unity is presupposed and warranted in the calling of God.

There is a difference between the calling to Christ, and the calling to an ecclesiastical office. Yet there is in the concrete situation a very close connection between the two. Both proceed from Christ. When someone is called to an ecclesiastical office, while his task elsewhere demands all his time for work that cannot be done by someone else, he is obliged to decline the ecclesiastical calling. Then Christ demands that he say "No" to the congregation that calls him. A view according to which this "no" would stand condemned is in danger of churchism. For it seems to hold that Christ reveals Himself more decisively in an ecclesiastical calling than elsewhere, while Scripture teaches that all things are given Him by the Father. In the Christian era every true calling comes from Christ. Therefore no one may maintain at any time that non-Christians have a certain calling from God which would be outside the calling from Christ. Thus opportunity would be given for the entrance of false conceptions into Christian thinking, connected with misunderstanding and abuse of the calling. It is impossible that a calling to art could be separated from the way of Christ. Such a conception makes a breach in the calling and thus presupposes a breach in Him who calls.

The place of performance where this one task of mankind unfolds itself into many tasks with many aspects, nevertheless keeping her unity, is history. History began at the dawn of creation and continues into life eternal. That man's task is an eternal one must be foremost in our thinking. Only with this in mind can we understand the relation between task and history.

When we see history as the place where man performs his task, it strikes us that, seen in the light of Scripture, there is a typical two-fold division. This division expresses itself in two clearly distinct periods of history and two clearly distinct phases of the task. In Scripture these two periods and phases are called by different names. The first phase is that of the flesh. Christ himself speaks of these two phases in His conversation with Nicodemus. Nicodemus wondered about the baptism of John; he did not understand its meaning. John baptised; already in that baptism something was expressed about the passing through death into new life.

Moreover, John spoke of a baptism with the Holy Spirit, with which Christ would baptise. According to Matthew 3:11 he even speaks of baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire. We hope to go into this more carefully at a later time, but now it will suffice to give a brief survey of it. John expected the renewal of creation as a result of Christ's work. Thus it happens that presently he no longer understands what is happening when Christ opens the eyes of the blind, heals the sick and proclaims the Gospel. John has clearly seen the period of the Spirit, but at first it escaped him that Spirit and fire are separated in history, even though they belong together, by an intermediate period, in which, as it were God's long-suffering purposely keeps Spirit and fire separate.

In order to understand the meaning of the two phases, we must remember that they were interposed by the fall. In so far as this is possible we must temporarily eliminate the fall from our thinking in order to understand the creaturely meaning of both phases. As far as possible, for we can learn about these creaturely elements only from a history into which the fall has come, and from which it cannot be banished. Yet the idea that death in a sense was not something entirely new in history is not unknown; even without the fall there would have been a way to eternal life, which in some way would have been similar to what we call death, and which was indeed the vehicle of the death with which the creature was threatened in the state of righteousness. Even without the fall the state of righteousness is separated from the state of perfection and glory by a pathway; it is this pathway deepened by the curse of sin which we call death.

The two phases were characterised by Christ in his conversation with Nicodemus as flesh and spirit (John 3:6), when explaining what John meant by baptism and preaching. John announced the new period, the second phase of history, the period of the Spirit. Nicodemus did not understand this and Jesus pointed out to him that a teacher in Israel ought to know this (vs. 10). The kingdom announced by John is the second phase, the phase of glory and perfection, which must be introduced by a judgement that cleanses and puts an end to all imperfection. In this John was mistaken; for also after Christ's coming into history, flesh is born of flesh, and continues for centuries, proving that the state of glory has not yet come. This in-between period of God's long-suffering, about which Peter speaks in his second epistle (Chapter 3), means the second phase does not enter immediately and fully. For the time being, there is a mixed situation, a period which is characterised as the age of the Spirit, due to the outpouring of the Spirit without measure as the fruit upon Christ's work, but in which man, even regardless of sin, does not attain perfection. The essence of the second phase is already present in Christ. Since his resurrection, he abides in a state of glory. But those who are his do not obtain this as yet, not

even after their death. In the intermediate state, sin has been removed, but glory has not yet been obtained; the saints are waiting and until the final judgement this waiting characterises heaven.

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul mentions two phases: the natural and the spiritual. The spiritual does not precede the natural. In view of this, we may not say that Adam possessed immortality in the state of righteousness. Not until having entered upon eternal life would he put on immortality. Even Christ was not immortal before his death. Not until he rose from the dead did he put on immortality. Therefore Scripture emphatically teaches that Christ died in the flesh: "being put to death in the flesh, but being quickened by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18). "For as much then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh" (1 Peter 4:1). In Hebrews 10:20 we read that the veil between the two phases is the flesh of Christ, and in the preceding verse the new time, brought to light by Christ, is called the sanctuary. It is the period of the new and eternal testament, which Scripture sometimes also designates as "the life," "eternal life" and "the imperishable."

The fall has complicated things. The first man, the head of the covenant, had fallen from his office, and was declared deposed. The fall, however, did not eliminate the calling. On the contrary, the first thing that took place after the fall was a renewal of the calling. The Lord God called Adam and said: "Where art thou?" At that moment the covenant of grace as a covenant of forfeited favour had not yet been revealed. The mother promise had not yet been intimated. Yet Adam was called purposely. In that calling Adam was first of all informed that he was deposed from his office, perhaps indicated already by the fact that the Lord God did not call him by his name. More clearly do we find the declaration of deposition indicated in the words: "Where art thou?" This question implies that the Lord did not find Adam in the place where he expected to find him, that is, in his office. At the same time, the fact that the Lord calls Adam indicates that the broken covenant is already restored. For only on the basis of Christ's acceptance of his task as Head of the Covenant, could there be a calling spoken of. Adam's calling immediately after the fall is therefore a calling through Christ. The unity of the calling remains in spite of the fall. And this calling, witnessing of renewal and restoration, is understood by man.

Yet it becomes evident that the entire situation has changed. The not-yet-perfect which characterises the state of rectitude had degenerated into imperfection by the fall, because sin had entered. Imperfection, consisting of unbelief, immorality, injustice, unhistorical activity, has become characteristic of human life. The extent of it is evident from Cain's apostasy.

However gloomy the history of Cain's downfall may be, it contains

one element which is of extraordinary importance for our insight into calling, task and culture. Cain's apostasy is closely connected with his calling. Cain is called by God very emphatically, both before and after his deed. This leads us to establish this one thing: that we can never eliminate the element of divine calling from Cain's downfall, nor from the tradition introduced by him. Since this is one calling, which came to Cain after the establishment of the covenant of grace and on that basis, it was a calling coming from Christ.

This means that--and this is of decisive significance for our view about culture and history--the historical importance of Cain's apostasy is derived wholly from the fact that he abused his calling. In this way developed what again and again appeared to be the greatest difficulty in every attempt to come to a Scriptural view of history and evaluation of culture.

Cain's apostasy makes possible the establishment of an apostate culture. This apostate culture takes its prescribed place in history since the days of Cain until the reign of the antichrist. Its importance can hardly be overestimated. While it is true that since the days of the apostasy of the Sethites this culture is not as apostate as it first was, a large part of Sethite culture is mixed with it. After the flood this influence is yet strengthened from the circle of the covenant, and since the beginning of the Christian church almost every apostate culture is also modified by Christian influences. But all these apostate cultures remain apostate in the full sense of the word. And the culture which will be used by the antichrist will reveal the worst apostasy imaginable and possible in history. Therefore it is so very important to note that from the beginning the apostate culture is dependent on the calling from God in Christ. The Cainite culture, which soon produced the much more powerful Lamechite culture, was possible only because God called Cain. Because Cain refused to understand this calling, he abused it. With the explicit permission of God he used all materials of the covenant and calling in his attempt to establish an apostate culture, hostile to God. Without a calling, with which Cain was called, which was made possible only by the establishment of the covenant of grace with Christ as Head, no apostate culture would ever have been possible. No matter how hostile to the Spirit of Christ this culture is in all its forms and branches throughout history, it is always dependent entirely upon Christ.

This is all the more convincing, since with the fall the period of the flesh has become the era of the proud, apostate and sinful flesh. Though Christ succeeded Adam as Head of the covenant, he had not yet entered history as a historical figure. Hence Satan is head of the world from the fall until Christ's resurrection. For Christ's work in this period was but anticipatory of his future work. He is in this period the One Who has not yet come.

Only when he entered into history did this change. For this reason he once said during his life on earth, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." Nevertheless Satan really had some right to offer the kingdoms of the earth to Christ. At that time he was a power greater than the most powerful nation on earth. Since the morning of the resurrection his power is at an end. Since that moment Satan can do nothing more than try everything in his power to take on the appearance that he still is the head of the world. But even the least in the Kingdom of heaven can now smile at his show.

Only on the basis of these considerations is it possible to gain an insight into the history of culture and its periods. Through Adam's calling after the fall the unity of the calling was restored. And through Cain's calling both before and after his fall out of the restored covenant the unity of calling was maintained with respect to all apostate cultures in history. For this reason the element of apostate culture, which takes up such a broad and deep-rooted place in the history of man, cannot restrain us from recognising the unity of man's calling and history.

When in the book of Daniel we read about the prince of Greece as a mighty spirit, we see in this on the one hand an indication of an attempt on Satan's side to assert himself as head of the world. On the other hand it is also true that in his attempt Satan can make use only of a situation that has been brought about by Christ. This prevents us from typifying the apostate culture or any one period as demonic. A demonic element is certainly at work in it, and when in the Old Period the Spirit was given only in measure, it worked less restricted than in modern times. But apostate culture cannot be characterised as demonic in the Old Period, nor in the New Period. For it is too much the work of apostate covenant members, who abused their calling. In other words it is yet too human. This is even true with respect to the purely apostate culture which was formed in the earliest period of history under the leadership of Cain and Lamech. Never was a cultural movement as consistently apostate as the Cainite-Lamechite culture. Even the rule of giants, shortly before the flood, was less consistent in its apostasy, and therefore shows, in spite of itself, something of the governmental state of order.

The demonic element, however, is at work in the apostate culture and more so in the Old Period than after the resurrection of Christ. The early christians clearly saw this demonic element, and in this respect we can perhaps learn more from them than we usually have done. The apostles knew that that which is earthly and natural must also be called diabolical. Yet they had an open eye for the human element in apostate culture. This possibly is what caused Peter to admonish us emphatically to be subject to

all human institutions. These institutions were organic members of an apostate body, but they were not demonic without qualification.

Concerning the emperor we meet with a two-fold evaluation, both sides of which must be rejected. On the one hand there is the view that the emperor, as he is called in the New Testament, is the representative of lawful authority and the bearer of the blessing found in the governmental order. The rebellion of the Jews would then be opposition to the lawful authorities and an attempt to destroy the governmental order. In connection with this, Romans 13 is read as if Paul was speaking of the lawful authorities. Then they run into difficulty when coming to New Testament pronouncements concerning the emperor-cult. The problem is then solved by stating that the emperor-cult is merely a degeneration of lawful authority, or perhaps an addition. In this case the person of the emperor is usually tied in with a certain conception about common grace.

On the other hand there is the conception of the emperor as a demonic figure. The demonic element is found in the state as such, which is supposed to be the result not of the creating but of the judging Word of God. This conception is found with those who think along Anabaptistic lines, and suffer more or less from a contempt for the world.

Both conceptions must be rejected. Of course, the emperor is not lawful in the Scriptural sense. This is even evident from his origin; he is the bearer of an ancient imperialistic idea and heir of Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus and Alexander. Babylon in the New Testament is the designation for the realm of the antichrist. Rome is also referred to as Babylon (1 Peter 5:13). This links up with the Old Testament data concerning the New Babylonian empire, concerning which Isaiah 14 says that the sceptre of the rulers is at the same time the staff of the wicked. We hope to go more fully into the data of Isaiah 14 and the book of Daniel in a broader discussion of ancient imperialism as an apostate antevangelium. Here it will suffice to remark that in spite of the condemnation of Babel as a power hostile to Christ, which will be destroyed by him, Daniel's attitude towards the king is one of recognition and reverence.

This is sufficient reason to reject as unbiblical the conception which views the world empire as demonic without qualification. Daniel's attitude towards the king and his place at the court of Babel and Persia is rather in agreement with the recognition of apostate authority as demanded by Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2. The same recognition is found in the words of Christ: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." An apostate government is therefore not demonic. It belongs to the realm of apostate culture, concerning which we already noticed that its existence

is due to an abuse of the calling of Jesus Christ. Those who abuse their calling still receive full opportunity to fulfill their task. Cain was not allowed to be killed; Lamech's sword became a permanent element in the history of the state. Daniel recognises Nebuchadnezzar, "Thou O King art a king of kings, for the God of heaven has given thee a kingdom, power and strength and honour." To Caesar must be rendered the things that are Caesar's; that is to say, Daniel's attitude towards Nebuchadnezzar also befits the believer's attitude towards Caesar. In Isaiah 44:28 and the beginning of 45, Cyrus is called God's shepherd and His anointed: "I will give you, though you have not known me." In the book of Daniel we read of the prince of Persia as a demonic power, which is operative in Persian imperialism, but the Persian empire itself cannot be considered demonic for this reason.

From this we may conclude that Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander and Augustus have a divine calling. We may not conclude that this calling has anything to do with the actual recognition of Christ's kingship. On the contrary, the ruler who does not know God constantly misunderstands his calling. It is a calling from the God of the covenant, "that thou mayest know it is I, Jehovah, who call thee by thy name, even the God of Israel." (Isa. 45:3)

*K.J. Popma (born 1903) was trained as a classicist at the University of Leiden. From 1948 until his retirement in 1974 he taught Calvinistic philosophy at the universities of Utrecht and Groningen. His publications cover an amazing number of themes in classical thought, modern philosophy, literature, theology and biblical studies.*

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## Some recent publications

**Human Rights Theories in Christian Perspective**, by Paul Marshall. (24 pages \$2.00) The contents of this booklet are an adaptation of Dr. Marshall's Inaugural Address at the Institute for Christian Studies. It includes a survey of contemporary liberal and Christian theories of rights, the history of human rights theories, Biblical considerations, and a proposed Christian framework for human rights.

**Thine is the Kingdom**, by Paul Marshall. (160 pages, \$6.95) This new book by Paul Marshall, published in England, is subtitled: A Biblical perspective on the nature of government and politics



today. It deals with some of the pressing political issues of modern life, such as the nature of justice, economics and the welfare state, and international relations and nuclear arms. This book is a good statement of a Christian direction for both analysis and action. While this edition is oriented to British politics, this will not be a hindrance to North American readers.

**The Structure of Herman Dooyeweerd's Thought**, by Peter J. Steen (332 pages, \$10.00) This book is a published version of Steen's Th.D. thesis for Westminster Theological Seminary. It offers an exposition and critique of Dooyeweerd's idea of religious transcendence, with specific attention to issues of time and eternity.

**Idols of our Time**, by Bob Goudzwaard. (translated from the Dutch by Mark Vander Vennen, 115 pages, \$6.55) This prophetic book warns that the four major idols of today, revolutionism, nationalism, material prosperity and guaranteed security, are precisely the equivalents of the destructive horses of the apocalypse of Revelation 6. Our appropriate response is to forsake these idols and turn to God in repentance and trust.

#### **MASTERS DEGREE THESES FROM THE INSTITUTE**

**A Critical Exploration of Jane Austen's PERSUASION**, by Carroll Goon. (173 pages, \$8.50, directed by Calvin G. Seerveld). This thesis gives a tightly knit analysis of *Persuasion* from many points of view including philosophical, literary, historical and broadly artistic. It is a piece of literary criticism using Calvin Seerveld's aesthetical and historical categories.

**Beliefs and the Scientific Enterprise: A Framework Model based on Kuhn's Paradigms, Polanyi's Commitment Framework, and Radnitzky's Internal Steering Fields**, by Clarence W. Joldersma (174 pages, \$8.50, directed by Hendrik Hart). A brief discussion of the nature of positivism as evident in scientific explanation is followed by lucid presentations of the non-positivistic views of three thinkers. The final section gives a model for scientific interpretation which is a composite of the three.

**Commitment and Meaning in Biology: Michael Polanyi's Critique of Reductionism**, by Tim DeJager-Seerveld (124 pages, \$6.50, directed by Hendrik Hart). The first chapter gives a summary of Polanyi's epistemology and the second chapter presents Polanyi's critique of reductionistic biology. After a brief chapter on "Biology and ontology," the writer--who shares Polanyi's anti-reductionism--offers points of critique on Polanyi's thinking.

**Dooyeweerd's Theory of Public Justice: A Critical Exposition**, by

Jonathan P. Chaplin (221 pages, \$8.50, directed by Bernard Zylstra). Chaplin examines the key aspects of Dooyeweerd's political thought, especially the nature of the state and the power of the sword. He works through some of the problematic areas in Dooyeweerd's thought, offering constructive critique and initial suggestions for alternatives. He offers some comparison of Dooyeweerd to contemporary political thinkers. This thesis is the most comprehensive introduction to date in English of Dooyeweerd's political philosophy.

**Trudeau's Political Philosophy: Its Implications for Liberty and Progress**, by John L. Hiemstra (107 pages, \$6.00, directed by Bernard Zylstra). The recently retired Prime Minister of Canada has been especially articulate in stating the liberal philosophy which he has followed in some thirteen years of vigorous national leadership. The fundamental political question Trudeau seems to work with is: how can the rational individual, in a political order based on freedom and equality, best actualize himself, have his values compete for ascendancy, and thereby remake the world in a general movement towards progress in history? His solution, in the assessment of Hiemstra, seems to give an unsatisfactory response to four basic problems: the expression of religious conviction in the public order, the communal expression of cultural affinities, the place of voluntary communal associations, and the expression of geographic diversity in a large land.

**The Spirituality of Labour: Simone Weil's Quest for Transcendence**, by Johanna Selles-Roney (233 pages, \$11.00, directed by Bernard Zylstra). Weil's life was an intense quest for meaning in labour, driven by the feeling that life has a spiritual core. She became disillusioned with the immanentistic philosophies of the right and the left and eventually arrived at a confession of Christian faith. The thesis focuses on Weil's thinking about the spiritual view of labour as a tool to clarify the tensions of immanent and transcendent realities.

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