

Three Brief Introductions to "Reconstructionist" Topics

By Dr. Greg Bahnsen

From time to time readers of *Penpoint* may have looked for brief, non-technical books which could be used to introduce others to the biblical, theological, and ethical emphases set forth through the ministry of the Southern California Center for Christian Studies.

Let us suggest three such monographs which you might find helpful in this respect. Each is less than 100 pages in length (actually two are under 50 pp. long), inexpensive (under \$5.00 when purchased at discount; see below), and readable (i.e., not employing technical jargon or presupposing extensive theological background on the part of the reader).

The first has been around for a while, but is the most comprehensive of the three. It is *The Five Points of Christian Reconstruction from the Lips of Our Lord*, by Mark Duncan (Edmonton, Canada: Still Waters Revival Books, 1990). In this booklet-length introduction, Mr. Duncan argues that "Christian Reconstruction is nothing more than the application of the whole of the Bible to the whole of life" (p. 2, original emphasis).

Mr. Duncan then sets out brief summaries of Calvinistic soteriology (i.e., the "five points" of Calvinism), covenant theology, presuppositional apologetics, post-millennial eschatology, and theonomic ethics. In each category the terms are explained clearly, and the doctrines set forth are supported by quotations from Jesus' teachings in the gospels (hence the title of the booklet).

This little introduction is even footnoted so as to direct readers to sources of further study on each topic. In addition Mr. Duncan concludes his work with a "Further Study Section" which lists newsletters, magazines, books, and cassette libraries from which further information can be obtained. This helpful section is reason enough to purchase and distribute the book.

The second title is hot off the presses. It is Ken Gentry's *God's Law in the Modern World* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1993). According to Dr. Gentry, the purpose of his book "is briefly to introduce the reader in a nontechnical way to the case for the modern use of God's Law in ethics" (p. xi). He then points the reader to more developed discussions of this issue like Dr. Bahnsen's *Theonomy in Christian Ethics and By This Standard*.

Dr. Gentry begins by tracing his own personal theological odyssey from the dispensational convictions of his early years to his present commitment to historic Reformed theology and ethics. The balance of the book discusses the nature and purpose of God's Law; the understanding and use of the Old Testament Law made by Jesus and the writers of the New Testament; and the scope of God's Law together with a suggestion of the benefits which flow from obedience to it. Dr. Gentry also addresses briefly several passages which have been alleged against the view of God's Law set forth here.

Once again footnotes are included which will direct the reader toward sources for further study. There is also a Scripture index to the book, but not a bibliography.

Finally, we would draw your attention to a recent reprint of Ashbel Green's *Obedience to the Laws of God: The Sure and Indispensable Defense of Nations* (Elmwood Park, NJ: Reformed Presbyterian Press, 1993). While this piece is not as comprehensive as the other two, it is a classic piece of 18th century American political philosophy which is paramountly Bible-centered and Christ-honoring.

According to the biographical introduction included with this work, Ashbel Green (1762-1848) became the minister of the Second Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, in 1786, and while there served as chaplain to the United States Congress. The present message dates from 1798, and in it Dr. Green argues that there is a spiritual correlation between national behavior and national blessings from God.

In Green's view the advice of God's prophet to King Asa and the people of Judah and Benjamin, was as relevant to the United States in 1798 (and today) as it was when first given: "The LORD is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you" (1 Chr. 15:2). [Note: there is an unhappy typographical error in the citation of this reference on the title page where it is identified as 1 Chr. 25:2.]

Dr. Green argues from the historic manifestations of God's blessings and cursings upon nations that our nation, or any nation, must put on righteousness in obedience to God's Law if they are to expect the blessings of God's covenant to continue. At the same time, Green is well aware that the overarching plan of the sovereign Lord may include for a time the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous. This fact, however, cannot be allowed to undermine the confidence of believers in God's righteous judgments in history with respect to men and nations.

Most timely reading for American citizens in 1993!

Getting Hold of Them

These books can be purchased in person or through the mail at a discount from Evangelical Bible Book Store, 3812 Grim Ave., San Diego, CA (John Cully, owner). The phone number there is (619) 291-4381. Mr. Cully also stocks many other fine books on Reformed theology and "theonomic/reconstructionist" topics (including those mentioned in the footnotes of the above books). reviewed by Pastor Roger Wagner

The Apocalypse

The book of Revelation is for most Christians a "closed book." Intimidated by the unusual and profuse imagery, as well as by age-old controversy over the book, most believers close the book and ignore it. Is that what you have done?

Well, open it up again. It's worth another effort - especially with the help of the 1993 publication of *The Book of Revelation: A Cartoon Illustrated Commentary* by Vic Lockman (\$8.00 from Box 1916, Ramona, CA 92065).

The 60-page booklet covers the major themes of Revelation with a chapter by chapter summary, including a look at the Olivet Discourse and key interpretive principles (symbols, covenant, heavenly bodies, "now-not yet"). The reading is easy yet substantial (not at all what you might expect with cartoon illustrations).

Lockman takes a preterist approach to Revelation, seeing in the book a prediction of the fall of ancient Jerusalem and then of Rome itself as God's covenantal curses upon the enemies of His Son. Here is a fine introduction to this viewpoint.

The title page says "Dedicated to Dr. Greg Bahnsen, whose detailed lectures have greatly influenced my understanding and appreciation of the book of Revelation. Much of this book reflects his teaching." (Tapes of these lectures, a 4-tape summary and 63-tape exposition, are available from Covenant Tape Ministry, 24198 Ash Ct., Auburn, CA 95602).

How "objective" can I be, then?? I do recommend that you get this booklet. It offers a reliable guide to the reader, getting down to the basics in a convenient format.

GB

Education vs. Idolatry

Here is a book which is rare indeed - one which both (1) understands the true bedrock necessity of Christian education (not simply to avoid drugs and promiscuity in state schools) and (2) understands the presuppositional theory of knowledge (as set forth by Cornelius Van Til). As a teacher (high school through college and seminary), an instructor of teachers, and former dean of a K-12 program, I would say that we have needed this book for years, and I eagerly commend it to Christian parents, teachers, and (especially) school board members.

The book is *The Christian Philosophy of Education Explained* (Whitby, England: Avant Books, 1992: 169 pages with index), and its author is Stephen C. Perks, the editor of the fine periodical *Calvinism Today*. Mr. Perks' book is distributed in this country by Great Christian Books (P. O. Box 8000, Elkton, Maryland 21922).

The author understands that the purpose of education is the transmission and enrichment of our culture to future generations. That culture - the way in which we think and live - must be distinctively Christian if civilization is to be preserved and the creation mandate obeyed. In separate essays Perks discusses the philosophy of education in terms of sola Scriptura, anthropology, covenant and dominion. He argues that under normal circumstances, education is the role of the family rather than the church, but never the state.

The book includes an appendix on the covenantal unity of Scripture, another on worship and dominion, and a useful bibliography.

GB

Gay Militants

If you are tempted to believe the rhetoric of homosexual propagandists - that they simply want to "live and let live" with heterosexual society - then you need to read the story of Chuck and Donna McIlhenny (written with Frank York): *When the Wicked Seize a City* (Lafayette, Louisiana: Huntington House Publishers, 1993; 239 pages with resources appendix).

Jay Adams writes in the Foreword: "If you want to know all about the homosexual movement - even more than you may wish to know - and how you, as a Christian should relate to it, this is the book for you.

"In the chapters that follow, you will read of the struggles of the pastor of a small church and his family, living in the midst of San Francisco, a city captured and controlled by gay activists....

"You might think that after attempts to burn down their church, threats on the lives of their children, lawsuits, and innumerable other attacks, Pastor McIlhenny and his family would exhibit

bitterness or hatred. Nothing like that is found in this book. While at every point abhorring compromise with sin, the book exhibits throughout a remarkable compassion for those enslaved by the sexual movement which falsely promised them freedom."

Dialog Over the Place of the Law

The latest book in which Dr. Bahnsen is a participating author is slated for appearance this summer - and it's going to be a good one!

The evangelical and Reformed community has struggled with the recent theonomic revival of consistent, covenantal ethics (as was once seen in the Puritans), particularly its affirmation of the validity and value of the Old Testament law.

Four professors (Strickland, Kaiser, Moo, VanGemeren) along with Dr. Bahnsen present position papers and interact critically with each other in *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian*, a 256-page book published by Zondervan and available this summer.