

Reconstructionist Voices from the Past

By Dr. Greg Bahnsen

It is not uncommon for opponents of Reconstructionist thinking to try and disparage this expression of Reformed theology as recent, radical and novel. "It's too new to be trusted!" The actual testimony of Reformed history always proves an embarrassment to this kind of sentiment, used as a criticism of Reconstructionism. It is simply inaccurate, as the following "voices from the past" testify. {FOOTNOTE: Nobody is claiming that each author quoted here advocated every distinctive detail in the positions of modern reconstructionists; disagreements may exist on some points (an observation so trivial that it really shouldn't need to be repeated here). But on certain central theses of reconstructionist thinking with are "politically incorrect" and controversial in the present day, our Reformed forefathers clearly endorsed the Reconstructionist perspective.}

JOHN MURRAY

[following the Murray quotation, indent and give citation as follows:] "The Christian World Order" (1943) Collected Works, vol. 1, pp. 362, 364-365

CHARLES HODGE

[Systematic Theology, vol. 3, p. 345 - start with paragraph at bottom: "When Protestant Christians came...continue into p. 346 (ignore subheading) and end with first sentence after subhead:"...degree unjust and tyrannical."] Systematic Theology (1871-1873), vol. 3, pp. 345-346

A. A. HODGE

"This law, moreover, demands instant and absolute obedience... in every sphere of human life equally. A Christian... had no right to separate his life into two realms, and acknowledge different moral codes in each respectively.... God reigns over all everywhere. His will is the supreme law in all relations and actions. His inspired Word, loyally read, will inform us of his will in every relation and act of life, secular as well as religious, and the man is a traitor who refuses to walk therein with scrupulous care. The kingdom of God includes all sides of human life....

That the moral law still binds the unregenerate, and must be enforced upon them rigorously, has always been clearly admitted by Christians....

Since the kingdom of God on earth is not confined to the mere ecclesiastical sphere, but aims at absolute universality and extends its supreme reign over every department of human life, it follows that it is the duty of every loyal subject to endeavor to bring all human society, social and political,

as well as ecclesiastical, into obedience to its law of righteousness. It is our duty, as far as lies in our power, immediately to organize human society and all its institutions and organs upon a distinctively Christian basis.... The Bible, the great statute-book of the kingdom, explicitly lays down principles which when candidly applied will regulate the action of every human being in all relations. There can be no compromise."

Popular Lectures on Theological Themes (1887), pp. 324, 325, 327 (more recently published as Evangelical Theology)

S. H. KELLOGG

[begin quote on p. 35: "But Leviticus presents not only a ritual..." continue into p. 36, but skip (middle page) sentence "; and, by placing..." continue with "The severity of many..." to end of paragraph finish with (begin p. 37): "Enough has been said to show..." to the end of paragraph]

The Book of Leviticus (The Expositor's Bible, 1891) reprinted as Studies in Leviticus (1988), pp. 35-36, 37

JOHN CALVIN

"For this cause, therefore, it is said, "Cursed be he who does not confirm the words of this law." He is not here speaking of one or two commandments, or of some part of them, but of the whole law, every part and parcel thereof without exception. And indeed, we ought to think of how St. James says that He who has forbidden to steal, has also forbidden to commit adultery; and that He who has forbidden to murder has also forbidden false witnessing. We must not rend God's justice in pieces. In whatever way we offend, we violate God's law, and despise His majesty. But He will be acknowledged in His law throughout in all points, and not just in part, as I have told you before....Now we see in effect the contents of this sentence, from which we must understand that God has not enjoined in us a chopped up obedience, but He will have us to receive His law to the uttermost in all points without exception. We see likewise that it is not enough for us to say that God has not commanded anything that is not righteous, but that we must also show an accord and consent thereto in our lives, by framing them after all His commandments...."

Sermons on Deuteronomy (1555-1556) at Deut. 27:26 recently published as The Covenant Enforced (Tyler, TX: I.C.E., 1990)

"[God] put the sword into the hands of magistrates to suppress crimes against the first as well as against the second table of the Commandments of God."

French Confession of Faith (1559)

Against those who would "abrogate God's law" which requires the death penalty for proven adultery by appealing to the advent of Christ, Calvin wrote that "their relaxation of the penalty has flowed from gross ignorance." Elsewhere he wrote: "God commands the false prophet to be put to death.... Some scoundrel or other gainsays this, and sets himself against the author of life and death. What insolence is this!" Also: "What is the meaning of this madness, in imposing a law

upon God, that He should not make use of the obedience of magistrates in this respect? And what avails it to question about the necessity of this, since it pleases God?... It is superfluous to contend by argument, when God has once pronounced what is His will, for we must needs abide by His inviolable decree."

Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses (1563) at Deut. 22:22 and Deut. 13:5 English translation (1852), vol. 3, p. 78; vol. 2, pp. 76-77