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GODLINESS AND CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

QUESTIONS like those as to the propriety of a Christian's use of tobacco or of wine have often been raised by Christians in America, and, as only a little knowledge of church history shows, the answers have been far from unanimous. Notably in the tradition of Methodism the answers have been in the negative while Presbyterians have generally recognized that such practices are permissible. Among Presbyterians, even where there has been a strong inclination, for one reason or another, to the practice of total abstinence, commonly there has been a free recognition of the rights of other Christians to follow the dictates of their own consciences in matters where the Bible has not pronounced judgment.

In recent months our attention has been attracted to a number of utterances, both public and private, which, appealing for "the separated life," seem to advocate the historic position of Methodism rather than that of Presbyterianism. One may recognize in these statements, and be enthusiastically thankful for, a zeal for holiness and godly living. If there is one matter on which we ought to be agreed, it is that there shall be an earnest concern for purity of life as well as of doctrine. No one can exaggerate the importance of adorning our confession of Christ with a life which shall not dishonor Him. Moreover, there is cause for rejoicing in the evidence of a recognition of the fact that the Scriptures are a rule of life as well as of faith, and that, consequently, no one may profess to love the Word who does not love its precepts and warnings as well as its promises and manifestations of grace. Nevertheless, it is our conviction that in some very important particulars the plea for a "separated life" errs seriously in its understanding and application of the Word of God. The purpose of this editorial is not to

discuss or criticize any one of the utterances which have been referred to, nor to review them as a whole, but only to set forth some of the principles of the Bible which, in our opinion, seem to be widely neglected or misunderstood.

OUR STANDARD OF APPEAL

The only standard of our judgment in these matters must be the Holy Scriptures. Not by way of appeal to tradition, whether to Pietism or Methodism, nor to the particular characteristics of any temporary situation, but only by appeal to the unchanging truth of God's Word can one hope to arrive at the correct view. As Protestants we have gloried in the liberty from the doctrines and commandments of men which is grounded in recognition of and obedience to the unique authority of the Bible. At the very heart of the Reformation of the sixteenth century, as of every true reformation, there has been the recognition of the supreme authority of the Bible:

The Supreme Judge, by whom all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture (*Confession of Faith, I: 10*).

On some matters the Bible is very plain. No one can have any doubts as to the terrible implications of the following characteristic statement of the Bible:

Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. 6: 9f.).

Other judgments, or positive calls to duty, while not expressed in a "Thus saith the Lord," may be deduced "by good and necessary consequence" from the Scriptures, and we insist that such principles of conduct are

Dr. Buswell's Premillennialism

A Review by JOHN MURRAY

UNFULFILLED PROPHECIES by J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., D.D., President, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Ill., Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan. 95 pages.



Mr. Murray

THIS is the last of a series of five volumes on the general theme, "The Lamb of God." As the title suggests, the theme of this volume in the series is eschatology. Dr. Buswell's thesis is, however, largely devoted to the establishment of the premillennial advent of our Lord, in other words, the millennial reign of Christ over this earth after His second advent. The volume is therefore to a large extent polemic, and being polemic is to a very considerable extent taken up with the refutation, as Dr. Buswell conceives it, of both the postmillennial and amillennial views of our Lord's return. In a volume of this size, accordingly, he could not fairly be blamed for the omission of certain topics on which issues might not, at least directly, be joined.

As a polemic in favor of the premillennial view there are some things that are to be said by way of commendation. Many of the fantasies frequently associated with presentations of premillennialism are conspicuous by their absence. Furthermore, to Dr. Buswell belongs the credit of recognizing that belief in and the hope of the personal visible return of our Lord is not the peculiar property of premillennialists. Too often premillennialist writers give the impression that belief in the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ is to be identified with the premillennialist construction of the blessed hope. They have sometimes in their statistics included in their lists of premillennialist advocates those who were not premillennialist at all but who, nevertheless, in truly Christian fashion thrust the hope of our Lord's coming into the foreground of their teaching. Dr. Buswell is too well-informed to fall into such misrepresentation.

Again on some details of particular exegesis it is gratifying to find him

much more careful and less dogmatic than many others who believe in the millennial reign. For example, in his interpretation of the parable of the leaven, though he himself rather strenuously argues that the evidence warrants us in regarding leaven here as the symbol of evil, nevertheless he is at least willing to "admit that we are on debatable ground" (p. 25). In his interpretation of the scope of the reference in the phrase "all in Christ shall be made alive" in I Cor. 15:22, he feels the force of the argument for the restricted usage, that is to say that the resurrection referred to here is that of the righteous. We are also gratified to find that he takes Rev. 21 as a vision in symbolic terms of the consummate state—the new heavens and the new earth. Several other details might be mentioned. But these few will serve to illustrate.

After all that we might sincerely say by way of commendation the distressing fact remains that our review will very largely have to be adversely critical. In general Dr. Buswell's polemic is for premillennialism; ours must be against it. But our criticism in this particular case is forced to take on a peculiar form. We have in mind some of the methods by which Dr. Buswell tries to advance and establish his thesis.

Misrepresentations of Opponents

Dr. Buswell says in his preface that "when one attempts to disagree with such distinguished scholars as Warfield and Vos, one must realize that he is on dangerous ground." To Dr. Buswell must be conceded the right to criticize any other man but we wish that in using this right he had followed his own warning. The first virtue of a controversialist is to be fair to his opponent. Dr. Buswell grossly misrepresents both Dr. Warfield and Dr. Vos but particularly the latter.

On pp. 52f. he quotes from Dr. Vos' *Pauline Eschatology*, which reads: "Of Jesus Himself it is said that He was 'raised' ('waked') implying the same relationship of activity on God's part. The creative aspect of the act standing in the foreground, this is

what we should naturally expect. Nowhere is it said of Jesus that He contributed towards His own resurrection." And then in answer to Dr. Vos, Dr. Buswell proceeds to say, "And yet our Lord said, '... I have power to lay [my life] down, and I have power to take it again.'"

Now this represents Dr. Vos as saying something directly in conflict with a word of our Lord, and that would surely be calculated drastically to prejudice Dr. Vos' reputation as a Bible believer and therefore by direct implication his reputation as an exponent of Biblical eschatology.

But what has Dr. Buswell done? He has wrenched part of Dr. Vos' footnote on pages 146ff. out of its context and makes Dr. Vos appear to say something he never said at all. What Dr. Vos is doing in that footnote is to make "a few linguistic remarks on the Pauline usage of speech concerning the resurrection" (*italics* ours). In other words, he is discussing *Paul's usage* with respect to the two Greek words *anistanai* and *egeirein* as applied to the resurrection of Christ. Dr. Vos no more than the Apostle Paul even suggests any denial of the other truth expressed by our Lord (John 10:17, 18) and quoted by Dr. Buswell.

Then Dr. Buswell proceeds to attribute to Dr. Vos sentiment that is almost Arian in its flavor. "Sentiment which is almost Arian in its flavor is also found in this same work on pages 73, 74, 79, and 237" (p. 53). This may appear a very effective way of showing the unreliability of his opponent. But let us see what the facts are.

As we turn to page 237 in the work of Dr. Vos cited we find that the whole of this page is devoted to an exposition of the premillennial construction of I Cor. 15:23, 24. If this page then contains sentiment that is almost Arian in its flavor, it is the view that Dr. Buswell himself espouses that must be Arian in its flavor. We wish we had space in which to quote the whole page in order to show the complete falsity of the allegation.

The only part of page 79 to which Dr. Buswell can possibly be referring is that which occurs at the bottom of the page with reference to "the day of

the Lord" in the Pauline Epistles. It is a rendering, Dr. Vos observes, of the Old Testament phrase, "the day of Jehovah." He concludes that there is doubt in some passages whether "the Lord" in the phrase be meant as the Greek translation of Jehovah or signifies the Lord Jesus. Of course, where the name "Jesus" stands in apposition or the pronoun "our" is appended doubt is eliminated. When Dr. Vos says there is doubt in connection with some passages he is not in the least suggesting that the attributes of Deity are not to be predicated of our Lord. It is simply a question of personal designation.

It is common knowledge to every student of Paul that the name "God" is sometimes used absolutely to designate the Godhead, sometimes it is used as the personal name of the Father in distinction from the Son and the Holy Spirit, and the title "Lord" is often used as the personal name of Jesus the second person. This usage of Paul in no way detracts from the essential Deity of the second person of the Trinity.

It is just a very similar observation that Dr. Vos is making here in connection with the title "Lord." It is a question whether in the phrase, "the day of the Lord," the title "Lord" is a personal designation of the person Jesus or whether the title "Lord" is used more absolutely to designate what we call "the Godhead." Arian flavor is simply out of the question.

We come finally to pages 73 and 74 on which sentiment "almost Arian in its flavor" is again alleged to be found. In this very passage Dr. Vos alludes to "the attribution of the Kyrios-title to Jesus," and anyone aware of Dr. Vos' masterly contributions to Christology, especially his *opus magnum*, *The Self-Disclosure of Jesus*, knows what significance, for Dr. Vos as for all orthodox interpreters, this attribution bears. What Dr. Vos (on pp. 73f.) is doing is to show that the whole complex of ideas associated with the coming of Jehovah-God in the Old Testament is in the teaching of Jesus and particularly of Paul predicated of the coming of Jesus. Dr. Vos indeed is not dealing here directly with the establishment of the Deity of Jesus, but he is nevertheless in thoroughly characteristic fashion drawing to our attention one of the most momentous pieces of evidence that to the mind of Paul, saturated as it was with the Old Testa-

ment concept of the coming of Jehovah, all the prerogatives and attributes of Jehovah are recognized as present in Jesus. We think that a little careful reading of Dr. Vos at this point and some appreciation of the principle of progressive revelation that underlies his treatment of Biblical Theology as well as of the momentous facts with which he is dealing will show that, so far from the sentiment being almost Arian, the whole drive of the argument just as of the evidence is in the totally opposite direction.

So we see what becomes of Dr. Buswell's allegation that "Vos' amillenarianism appears confused because of his failure to recognize that our Lord Jesus Christ as the Messiah is 'God in the flesh' and may be addressed in terms of deity" (p. 51). Dr. Buswell is guilty of pitiable distortion and misrepresentation of a scholar who has done more than perhaps any other now living in the defense of the essential Deity of our Lord, and that upon the basis of the most exact and penetrating exegesis and apologetic. We do not accuse Dr. Buswell of deliberate distortion. He has, however, shown himself seriously incompetent to deal carefully and fairly with his opponent.

On page 52 Dr. Buswell quotes from Dr. Vos' *Pauline Eschatology* (p. 230) with the purpose of showing that Dr. Vos suggests that the idea of a millennial kingdom is the result of "a compromise between two heterogeneous eschatological ideas." Here Dr. Vos is again wrested from his context. What he (Dr. Vos) says is that "it has been suggested by recent writers" that the conception of a provisional Messianic Kingdom "should be looked upon as a compromise between two heterogeneous eschatological ideals." And besides Dr. Vos in the context is dealing with apocryphal literature, not with the Old Testament or with the New. However much of heterogeneous eschatological ideal might be found in apocryphal literature Dr. Vos does not argue that there is inconsistency or contradiction in canonical prophetism. There is indeed diversity, but that diversity is in reality, especially when the light of New Testament event and interpretation shines upon it, a marvellous harmony. The quotation given by Dr. Buswell on pages 51f. from *Pauline Eschatology* (p. 232) is part of an argument by Dr. Vos in defense of premillennialism against the

allegation of Bousset that Chiliasm is derived from pagan sources.

The Final State and Sequence

Under the caption "The Final State not Timeless" (p. 48-51) he accuses Dr. Vos of inconsistency and avers that "it is only when arguing against the doctrine of the millennium that Vos is inconsistent with his view of 'vistas of realization within the final state.'" We are at a loss to know what Dr. Buswell includes within the "Final State," whether it includes for him the millennium or whether it begins with the final judgment and consummation. But in any case he accuses the amillenarianist of being likely to hold the view that the final state must be timeless without sequence. What amillenarianist, we ask, holds that the final state will be without sequence? Dr. Vos, in the very quotations he (Dr. Buswell) has given, makes it abundantly clear that "Paul clearly . . . projects the idea of perceptible duration into the life beyond,"* and that the word hope "becomes suggestive of still ulterior vistas of realization within the final state" (cf. p. 49). There is no incompatibility between this and Dr. Vos' insistence, on the other hand, on the basis of exact exegesis of Paul that the *parousia* of Christ is coincident with the end and with the realization of what, in terms of I Cor. 15: 50, is the eschatological Kingdom of God. What Dr. Vos is denying is the possibility of intruding a temporal millennium provisional and preparatory to the final state subsequent to the second coming of Christ. He does not make this denial at all on the basis that there is to be no succession or that there are to be no vistas of realization subsequent to the Lord's advent, but on the basis that the second coming and the complex of events which accompanies it introduce us to the consummate state, a state the terms of which a provisional Kingdom cannot satisfy. What Dr. Vos is emphasizing is the properly eschatological character of the advent-complex of events. There will be no later eschatological finale, an eschatological finale such as the premillennarian must, in the

*Dr. Vos is, however, very careful to remind us at this point of the distinction that would have to be drawn between time in the terrestrial form, inseparably connected as it is with the great astral movements, and the perceptible duration that may be projected into the life beyond (cf. pp. 290f.).

nature of the case, introduce after the millennium. Dr. Buswell appears to have failed to get the point of the amillenarian (and for that matter of the postmillenarian) in this debate. May we repeat that no amillenarian we know nor Dr. Vos in particular suspends an attack upon the premillenarian on the ground that the final state must be a state of abstraction without sequence. What the amillenarian in common with the postmillenarian affirms is that it is impossible to interject into "the age to come" any eschatological crisis such as the premillenarian postulates after the millennium. This the amillenarian affirms on the basis of the consummatory character of the second advent and of the complex of events bound up and concomitant with it, as well as on the basis of the finality and consummateness of "the age to come."

Under this same caption Dr. Buswell tries very summarily to dismiss Dr. Warfield's cogent argument (*Biblical Doctrines*, pp. 621ff.) that the term "the end" is a perfectly definite one with a set and distinct meaning . . . the standing designation of the 'end of the ages' or the 'end of the world.'" Dr. Buswell says in reply that "a simple concordance study of the words 'the end' in their eschatological use in the New Testament would show the fallacy of this assumption. See for example Heb. 1:2; 9:26; I Cor. 10:11." (p. 50, footnote.)

Now what Dr. Warfield is dealing with is not the *words* that may be translated by our English word "the end" in our English version, but with the term "the end" (Greek *to telos*) in its eschatological use. Apparently Dr. Buswell was using his English concordance and so fell into the unscholarly error of thinking that a citation of passages in which the word "end" or "ends" occurs in English constitutes a refutation of Dr. Warfield's contention. The fact is that none of the passages cited by Dr. Buswell is relevant to the question. No! Dr. Warfield is dealing simply with the eschatological use of the Greek word *to telos*—singular in number and absolute in construction—not at all with the expressions used in the passages cited by Dr. Buswell. In none of these passages cited by him does the phrase in question (Greek *to telos*) occur. We still think Dr. Warfield has argued with "the stringency of a syllogism." Dr. Buswell has not answered the argu-

ment. He has simply created the impression on the minds of the uninformed that he has very summarily demolished Warfield's contention. The impression is, however, entirely contrary to fact.

Dr. Buswell appears to be seriously mistaken as to what supernaturalistic postmillenarians believe as to the nature of the second coming of Christ. On page 43 he very distinctly creates the impression that only the premillenarians and amillenarians believe in the "cataclysmic catastrophic nature" of our Lord's return. This is not fair to the postmillenarian. What he quotes with approval from Dr. Machen's book, "What is Faith," Dr. Warfield and all supernaturalistic postmillenarians would wholeheartedly endorse. Every such postmillenarian as well as amillenarian believes that at Christ's return II Pet. 3:10-12, for example, will be fulfilled, and surely that is cataclysmic and catastrophic.

Dr. Buswell's Exegesis

We have space left for only one example of the exegesis by which Dr. Buswell supports his chiliastic scheme. It is his treatment of I Cor. 15:23, 24. As mentioned already he feels the force of the argument that the "all in Christ" of verse 22 can refer only to believers. He himself indeed feels that Paul here referred to the total resurrection of all who have died. Nevertheless he concludes by saying: "Whichever interpretation of I Cor. 15:22 the reader may feel led to adopt, the fact is very plain that Paul is referring to the future resurrection of some or of all who have died because of Adam's sin" (p. 67). But he proceeds with his discussion on the basis of three orders of resurrection. We wonder how he can do this if uncertainty remains as to the scope of the phrase, "all in Christ shall be made alive." The third order of the resurrection must surely on his own scheme be the resurrection of the wicked after the millennium. How can he have this third order of resurrection unless he is sure that those affected by that resurrection are included in the "all" mentioned in the second part of verse 22? The premillenarian who insists that the "all in Christ" is all-embracing is, we think, much more consistent here than is Dr. Buswell.

He does not appear to have grasped the force of the arguments of both Dr. Warfield and Dr. Vos in his treatment

of the whole passage in I Cor. 15. Their central argument in the refutation of the chiliastic exegesis is that in I Cor. 15:23-28 the subjugation of the last enemy death is coincident with or immediately prior to "the end," when Christ shall deliver over the Kingdom to God. Then again in I Cor. 15:50-58 this same victory over death, when the saying that is written "Death is swallowed up in victory" shall have been fulfilled, is coincident with the resurrection of the just. If, therefore, in the one passage the subjugation of the last enemy, death, is coincident with "the end" and in the other coincident with the resurrection of the just, "the end" and the resurrection of the just must also be coincident. This surely follows on the principle that two things coincident with the same thing must be coincident with one another. In this way "the coming of the Lord" and "the end" are brought into the closest conjunction with one another, and it becomes impossible to intrude a millennium between "the coming of the Lord" and "the end." The reign of Christ spoken of then in I Cor. 15:24-26 must cover the period prior to the second advent, and must therefore be conceived of as having begun with the resurrection and exaltation of Christ. Dr. Vos appeals to passages like Col. 2:15; Rom. 8:38, 39; Phil. 2:9-11 as demonstrating that Christ is now as a result of His resurrection and exaltation invested with the Lordship and dominion that thoroughly satisfies the terms of the reign spoken of in I Cor. 15:24-26.

Dr. Buswell's answer to the last mentioned interpretation of Dr. Vos is quite inconsequential. He says that the victories spoken of in Colossians and Romans are victories already accomplished, whereas the victories spoken of in I Cor. 15:25, 26 are still in the future. They cannot therefore, he says, be the same. But the assumption that the victories spoken of in I Cor. 15:25, 26 are *all* in the future is purely gratuitous. Some of them, of course, are. One at least is—the victory over death. But that Paul has only future subjugations in view in that passage is not so certain. What he says is that Christ must reign till he hath put *all* enemies under His feet; till He will have put down *all* rule and *all* authority and power. And again can we be certain that in Rom. 8:38, 39 there is no reference to victories that Christ is even yet to secure for His people, the

guarantee and pledge of which is enclosed in the victory already secured in His resurrection?

But suppose we allow that the victories in Colossians and Romans are victories already accomplished and also that the victories of I Cor. 15:25, 26 are still in the future, this in no way interferes with the main point of Dr. Vos' argument. He appeals to these passages in Colossians, Romans and Philipians (he might, we think, have cited others also) to show that Christ is represented as reigning now, and the reign that he exercises now in virtue of victories already secured, a reign to be consummated in the subjugation of all rule and authority and power at his *parousia* (advent), satisfies all the requirements of the reign of Christ spoken of in the Corinthians passage. Yea, more! In view of the close conjunction and concatenation of the victory over death and the *parousia* it is the only reign that can satisfy. In Dr. Vos' words, "The last enemy that is brought to nought is death. The conquering of the other enemies, and consequently the reign of Christ consisting in this, precedes the conquest of death. Now Paul makes the conquest of death coincide with the *parousia* and the resurrection of believers. According to vss. 50-58, when the dead are raised incorruptible, and the living are changed (*i.e.*, according to vs. 23 at the *parousia*), Death is swallowed up in victory. And still further, apart from this specific argument, a more general argument can be built on vss. 50-58, because it is there implied that the resurrection of the righteous and the very last 'end' fall together. The apostle here speaks throughout in terms of absolute consummation" (Vos, *Pauline Eschatology*, p. 245).

Dr. Buswell's eschatological position is much saner and therefore more defensible than that of many premillennarians. We are sorry to say, however, that the little book by which he has set it forth is exceedingly disappointing. It is characterized by gross unfairness and misrepresentation, and his exegetical argumentation is frequently very inconsequential. Looseness and carelessness are, we fear, the rule rather than the exception.

We should have hoped that we might be able to recommend this booklet as a fair and reasonably scholarly presentation of the premillennial view. We do not have the happiness to be able to do so.

Hitherto the Lord Hath Helped

A Meditation on the Ninth Psalm

By the REV. DAVID FREEMAN



Mr. Freeman

GOD'S goodness and deliverance in the past furnishes occasion for praising Him. With what assurance do they come to the throne of grace, who rejoice in what He has done for them!

And what child of God is there who cannot say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped me"? They are indeed as dead who do not praise God.

There are many for whom God has worked bountifully. They are ashamed not to acknowledge God, but it is not long before they are singing their own praise and personal triumph. Yea, they may be seeming to praise God, since His name is upon their lips, but if they rob God of a portion of it, they are only pretending to give it to Him. How easy it is to extol our own policies and ways with the name of the Lord Most High! Do men not know that with their sacrilegious arrogance they are defacing God's glory?

Sincere praise looks for its all in God's grace. It will rejoice only in what God does. It knows that there is no such thing as *chance* with the Lord. All things are before His presence, and because He is pleased to intervene in our behalf we are victorious.

God a Defender

The Lord is a mighty Vindicator of those who love His cause and ways. His judgments are not partial, but He has pledged Himself to execute judgment upon all those who oppose the righteous. God, without waiting, takes the side of those who hold steadfastly to His Word. Let this be a warning to all who are given to misrepresentation and falsehood. God is set against all such. If they take God to be their ally, they should know that He helps only those who fight under His standard. A good cause only will He defend.

His Arm Not Short

When all is black before us and only destruction seems to be ahead, then are the faithful to look up to the throne of grace. But suppose the Lord does not let us see His hand in our distress. Then are the godly to take hold, with

the hand of faith, of God's revealed will and purpose as it concerns them. He will not be lacking regarding His promises to them. God rules in righteousness and cannot deny Himself.

Are you tempted to forsake God, when Heaven is silent? Be assured that God is only waiting His own time to show Himself strong in your behalf. With God a thousand years is as one day. He is never behind in helping His children, but only permits us to know grief that we may the more readily acknowledge His help. God often purposely puts us into the position of making our crying unto Him seem vain. But in the end it will be His delight to show how precious the righteous are to Him by a mighty deliverance. Only let us not measure God's help by our own understanding, for then are we hopeless and miserable creatures.

What more can a believer desire than God's fatherly favor? Of this he is amply assured in His Word. Can it be grievous for a child of so gracious a Father to be counted as poor and needy in the eyes of the world? Has he not, by his profession of God, renounced the world and its hidden things of darkness, and taken God for his sole portion?

"Only Trust Him Now"

Yea, God is not far off from those who call upon Him. He is the more ready to help when affliction is at its height. And He does help, as all of God's children witness in every age. Having come through our distresses with patience, He has taught us the more to trust His grace. Who are the humble in God's sight, but those who, through many trials and afflictions, bear patiently the cross laid upon them? These know nought of presumption.

All men should thus trust God and adore their Maker who has revealed Himself in His beloved Son. But they do not choose to retain Him in their knowledge. Because they do not know Him as their Saviour, they do not confide in Him.

Men may forsake Him; He never will forsake those who love their Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.