

CHRISTUS REX

Spring, 2004

“addicting ourselves to the ministry of the saints”

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Christ the King

Gregory Soderberg

Christ rules the universe. Christ rules our galaxy. Christ rules America. Christ rules Cary. Our title simply states a fact. After God the Father raised his Son from the dead, he “made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come; and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all,” (Eph. 1:20-23).

While most evangelicals would heartily affirm the lordship of Christ, we have forgotten what his lordship looks like. It is not simply a proposition floating about in the heavenlies, but a concrete reality which can be seen here on earth. Christ’s lordship is manifested in the Church. God made his Son head over all things “for the church”.

Is Christ reigning through his church in Cary, NC? Well, which church? And of course we all know Christ only reigns spiritually. Even though we have a remarkably large population of churchgoers, where do we see Christ’s reign manifested in our community?

If there is anyone in our community who has not heard that Christ reigns in Cary, it is because the local church has failed in its mission.

Christ’s reign is not manifest only in heaven, but also on earth. His reign was manifest in 1st century Ephesus. Notice where Paul places his sublime statements on Christ’s reign. He has heard of the Ephesians’ faith and their love for the saints (v. 15). He prays that the Father would give them wisdom and knowledge (v. 16). He prays that they hope in their glorious inheritance (v. 17). He prays that they would know God’s power in those who believe, which is manifest in Christ’s resurrection (vv. 19-20).

These magnificent metaphysical statements are written to the local church, to the gathered saints at Ephesus. Why would they not apply to

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the saints of Cary? Christ is reigning, so why doesn’t your neighbor know it?

Of course, these grand truths will do no good if they simply remain in our heads. In chapter 2, Paul reminds the Ephesians what they were *saved from* (“dead through the trespasses and sins”), and what they are *saved to* (“created in Christ Jesus for good works”). Christ’s reign is manifested by the good works his servants, which he has prepared for them (v. 10).

It is the purpose of *Christus Rex* to proclaim the truth of Christ’s total lordship, and to help equip the saints to walk in good works. There are several key presuppositions that guide our efforts:

1. We are ministry of *Christ Church, NC* (a plant of Christ Church in Moscow, ID, a member of the Confederation of Reformed Evangelicals. We are not just a bunch of guys who think we are guarding the true flame of orthodoxy. God doesn’t need our help in spreading his kingdom, but we pray that he will use our feeble efforts for his glory.

2. We are accountable to our elders and to our presbytery. If a reader does not like what is written here, we would ask you (if you are in the covenant) to address the problem Biblically. Talk to us, then talk to the elders (Matt. 18:15-17)
3. We are Reformed. We subscribe to the Westminster Confession, and believe that Biblical Christianity is most faithfully expressed in the Reformed tradition.
4. We are catholic (“universal”). We seek to recover the orthodox consensus that existed from the earliest days of the church. We reject all forms of man-made tradition, but embrace apostolic tradition. We believe that those who think God’s truth disappeared from the earth only to be recovered by a specific denomination woefully ignorant of history.
5. We are devoted to the local ministry. God has placed us in a specific community for his own sovereign reasons, and we seek to focus our efforts on our local community.
6. We believe that husbands are the heads of their families, and as such, responsible to God for the spiritual state of their households. We aim to equip men to minister to their own families, rather than usurping their God-given authority. We are “into” families (like Wal-Mart and the Mormons), but we believe that the priority is on the husband of the family.
7. We believe that the lordship of Christ extends to every corner of the universe. There is no area of life that is not to be brought under his lordship (2 Co. 10:3-6). As such, the church has divine mandate to meddle. The Bible is relevant to politics, art, cooking, sex, finances, and changing a baby’s diaper.
8. We believe that God commands us to educate our covenant children in a way that acknowledges Christ’s lordship (Eph. 6:4). We also believe that the best way to educate children is some form of classical education.
9. We believe that all of life flows from how we act in the house of God. We are more interested in worship than missions, since the ultimate goal of missions is worship. If we are mixed up in how we worship, we will inevitably be confused in other areas of life.
10. Like the household of Stephanas, we want to addict ourselves to the ministry of

the saints (1 Co. 16:15, KJV). Speaking truth in love is a necessary part of this ministry. If a man has gigantic green bits and pieces on his teeth, it does no good to politely ignore the fact. But speaking the truth must never be divorced from love.

Finally, we pray that this publication will hasten the day of unity and maturity among all of God’s people. “Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him which is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love,” (Eph. 4:15-16, RSV).

The Testimony of the Human Will

Rob Nash

“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: **There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.** They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one.” (Romans 3: 10-12 KJV)

The experiential knowledge given the Christian during his term of discipleship in the School of Christ testifies with a resounding voice, ‘I am but carnal, sold under sin.’ By ‘experiential knowledge’ we simply mean that knowledge which is an affirmation of spiritual truth, revealed and proven by the Holy Spirit through the daily experiences of the Christian.

The Apostle Paul gives us a clear example of how the Holy Spirit uses our experiences to teach and lead us into Truth: Romans 5: 3-5. “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope...” That being said, that the Holy Spirit uses experiences to teach his revealed truth, let us examine one experience common to every believer: The Incapability of the Human Will.

The Biblical doctrine of the incapability of the human is opposed to the doctrines that underlie much present day Evangelical teaching, namely, Arminianism. One may ask, “Well what exactly is the will incapable of doing?” And our answer should be as clear as God’s word; the will is incapable, inept and powerless of choosing any good. Without a doubt, the Bible is clear to the utmost degree that man cannot

choose good! (Ro. 3) The clear inference of this statement should be recognized immediately; then by no means of our will can we choose God! It is the very 'desire of our hearts' to do evil rather than good. Is this not true in your experience?

Is this not true even since you have become a follower of Christ? The honest person admits with a broken heart that his experience testifies that he would often times rather despise and hate God than to love and worship him. It was to this end that the Apostle Paul cried out, 'O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?'

A quick word needs to be said to those who will object to the notion that man can do no 'good.' We are not suggesting that the 'natural man', forever and always, is incapable of doing anything that is morally good. Rather, the use of the word 'good' in this sense is that the natural man never does anything that is wholly pleasing or good in the sight of God. i.e. The natural man might love his wife, or he might give to the poor, he may even work for the Gideon's but, he never does any of those things for God, or unto God's glory; he only does 'good' works to serve his self interests.

The natural man will often do 'morally good things' in order to feel good about himself, or to gain the recognition of the world, but he never does these 'good' things for God's glory. The logical inference from this precept is: The only things that are good in God's sight are those things in which he is glorified. And the ratiocination of the latter is that we can only do good if enabled by God.

So, dear Christian, I ask you now, If you have found it to be the testimony of your own heart, even since you have been converted, that you can by no means of your own love Christ; what then makes you think you ever had any ability to come to him, let alone to love him? Do you not acknowledge that you could not even choose good? How then did you choose God? The answer is simple: You never did choose God, He chose you. You never longed to know God, He longed to know you. You never desired to love God, He loved you!

One should well ask then, "How does any man love Christ and do good works for his kingdom?" In this question lies the power of the Gospel! The Gospel does not come to you to see if you are willing, the Gospel comes to you and makes you willing. The Gospel does not ask for a place in your heart, the Gospel comes in power and takes dominion of your heart. It is in this

moment that a new nature is born within your soul. At this moment nothing could be more precious to you than the fragrance of Christ. You have gone from an enemy of God, to a child of God. You once fought against Christ with all of your might, but now you ask "How may I love him with all of my soul?" This transformation is no less than Justification, no less than the power of the Gospel. This God-initiated transformation is the answer to our question.

The Bible says, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." And again, "You were bought with a price, you are no longer your own but Christ's." Yet again, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." And again, and again, we see that we are all in all Christ's, even a slave to him. And what a wonderful thing this has become, and what a freedom there is in being bound to Christ!

Has your experiential knowledge as a Christian not testified to this truth? Are you so deceived that you believe the power of sanctification is in your control? Do you embrace, like the Wesleyans of yesterday, that by the same power with which you supposedly 'chose' Christ, is the same power that you will exert to walk in him? Would you also with a clever smile look upon your soul and cheerfully embrace the foolish doctrine of "Perfectionism?" If so, you are unlike the saints of the past, who cried out in one voice, "O wretched man that I am!"

I know of some dear brothers who hold vehemently that we must be 'able to choose.' They cry that their will has been 'violated,' and that it is 'just not fair.' But who are you, O man, to question whether or not God is just? Will you, a sinner, point your finger at the nose of Holy God and demand a retrial? I think not! Do you really believe that it was the 'Calvinists' who have invented this doctrine of incapability? Does the scripture not scream out at you that you are totally depraved? Will you continue to cling to your fallen sense of 'fairness' instead of believing what God has said? I pray not!

If you are among the elect whose hearts have come to know and love these truths, then rejoice in them, and take heart that God will save many more in the future. We are assured that God will save, for Christ has already purchased his flock through his precious blood. We long for the day when the Great Shepherd will call many unto Himself; and we rejoice in this call, knowing

with out a doubt that it is already destined to be effectual.

Shepherding Family *and* Church

Marcus Rench

The Apostle Paul started many churches in his lifetime, and we have in one of his letters a description of the man who would be an elder. In his letter to Timothy, Paul gave a sketch of the man qualified for this important calling in the church. Timothy received the letter while he was in the midst of doing the work of an evangelist, erecting churches, and establishing elders in Ephesus. One of the areas Paul addressed in his portrait of the elder was that of the family. Paul writes of the man who aspires to be a bishop that he is “. . . one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence . . .” (Titus 1:6 says, “having faithful children”). Paul’s follow-up question is intriguing, though: “. . . for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?” (1 Tim. 3:4-5; verse 5 is in parentheses in the NKJV, as if tagged on).

While debate rages in the Reformed world over the issue of belief in the elder’s children, we may be missing a very important point in Paul’s afterthought. Similar to the Aqua Velva man, there’s just something about a man who *knows* how to rule his own house — and does it well. Paul’s reasoning is this: if a man can rule his wife and children *well*, he has already shown a degree of accomplishment that is crucial in managing the family of God.

This kind of Biblical attainment seems to be a lost art in many Reformed churches. Often the Pastor can delineate ninety-nine reasons for embracing an optimistic eschatology, yet he is not equally optimistic in changing his own wife. You see, family accomplishment doesn’t come only from thinking all the right Reformed stuff (homeschooling, catechizing, etc.). Rather, it comes from *knowing* and *doing*, a ‘know-how’ that is applied to the family in such a manner that it actually leads to the sanctification of the wife and kids. A man with this family-know-how is ready to shepherd the family of God.

I ask you, how many parishioners are actually embarrassed to invite their friends to church, knowing that the Pastor or the Pastor’s kids will be offensive or shocking, respectively, to the guests? Or worse yet, the Pastor’s wife causes the guests to make a quick exit.

Regrettably, the aforementioned ability is so often lacking in our Bible-thumping churches that I would say it is something of a phenomenon. The Apostle Paul knew that when a man has become accomplished in his family, then that man knows the right stuff — *the right way*. Simply put, he knows what the Word says, and he also knows how to persuade and shepherd others in progressive godliness. This simple trait is critical in the elder’s life, and there is a very good reason — the Elder is to shepherd, oversee, and rule in an *efficacious* way.

Biblical shepherding requires this organic wisdom - wisdom that has been honed out by an informed and accomplished practice in the microcosm of the church — the family. A godly family culture is the proving ground for a godly church culture that will affect surrounding culture. And this wisdom is not infused through reading reams of affirmed writings, but rather it is cultivated in the heart *and* around the hearth. The man who meets this requirement is properly prepared, and to turn Paul’s phrase, a man who *knows* how to rule his own house, *will* take care of the church of God.

I fear that there are too many churches of the “Really Reformed” that are, in reality, a one-generation (or less), flash in the pan. Lacking the organic wisdom Paul requires in their elders, these churches have an emasculated existence, fade to a whiter shade of pale, and then like Bilbo, disappear. When current members move, die, or leave; the only thing left will be a pile of hard to read books. Paul steers Timothy away from this sterility when he writes in his second letter to Timothy, “the things that you have heard . . . commit these to faithful men who will be *able* to teach others also” (2:2). Paul cultivated robust and viral producers.

What is one to do? Well, that depends on your situation. First, make sure that you are a man in the reproducing category and that you are developing a believing household. Again, you need to know the right stuff, the right way. Make use of the work of solidly Reformed men who combine theology and a degree of accomplishment in family and church.

Second, make sure that you are in a Bible-believing and Reformed church which has, in seed form at least, this organic wisdom in her elders. They don’t have to be perfect, just meet the Biblical qualifications of doctrine, character, and family. Hopefully they are able, through God’s grace, to lead others into this garden of godliness they have cultivated.

Third, if you find yourself in an inadequate situation, then you need to remedy it, and this can be most complicated. It will take wisdom and caution. It may require you to speak to your Elders, in an appropriate manner, about their apparent lack. It may require you to look elsewhere for a church that is Reformed *and* producing godly men. It may even be necessary to move to a healthy covenant community. Your well-being may depend on it. Your family needs it, and they depend on you.

Presuppositional Primer

Maurice Hagar

“Our willingness to accept scientific claims that are against common sense is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural. We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs...in spite of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment...to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover that materialism is absolute for we cannot allow a divine foot in the door.”

—Harvard geneticist Richard Lewontin

fact (fakt) *n.* 1. a thing which can be admitted without being explained.

- G.K. Chesterton

“**T**he facts, ma’am, just the facts” implored Sergeant Joe Friday week after week on the syndicated television program *Dragnet*. But just what are the facts? And how do we know, as Francis Schaeffer put it, “true truth?” And how do the answers to these questions change how we live? Such concerns are the age-old quest of philosophy: metaphysics, knowing the

fundamental nature of reality and being; epistemology, understanding the nature and grounds of such knowing; and ethics, living out our moral values and obligations in the light of who we are and what we know. Rousas John Rushdoony reminds us:

Each philosophy differs as to what constitutes a fact. The conception of the physical world and the facts thereof vary radically in Augustine, Spinoza, Hume, and Kant. The ‘facts’ vary from philosophy to philosophy; they are precisely the point of difference, in that each begins with certain basic assumptions and presuppositions... a person’s conception of what constitutes a fact is thus governed by his starting point (51-52).

The starting point for every one of us, whether or not we are willing to admit it, is a basic, objective knowledge of God and His creation ordinances (Ps. 19:1-3; Rom. 1:18-21). Christian theologians call this general, or natural, revelation—Calvin’s *sensitus divinitus*. The noetic effects of mankind’s plunge into sin, however, are a depraved mind (Rom 8:7) and an incessant struggle to suppress the objective truth and knowledge of God in rebellious unrighteousness (Rom 1:18). This we do by formulating our own subjective theories of reality consisting of corrupted presuppositions—facts, assumptions, commitments, biases, and prejudices. As we venture out into the world of depraved minds these autonomous principles are confirmed, refined, reinforced, and synthesized into humanistic, inter-subjective (communal) philosophies and traditions of men (Col. 2:3-8) that are explicitly or implicitly at war with God, His revelation of “true truth,” and His sovereign rule, or theonomy.

The implications of all this for Christians are enormous and enormously important to understand. Gary DeMar explains:

All of us think in terms of worldviews. A worldview is the way each of us looks at and evaluates everything that is seen, experienced, or thought about...As worldviews develop and mature over time, they sort and interpret familiar information instantaneously. New

information is evaluated in terms of what is already known and thought to be true. If some new facts or experiences do not fit within the boundaries of our already established worldview, they are either rejected, ignored, or reinterpreted to make them conform (41-2).

Andrew Hoffercker and Gary Scott Smith elaborate further:

Christian and non-Christian leaders alike acknowledge that their fundamental ideas directly or indirectly shape their thoughts, choices, and actions. Worldviews thus are not only total in scope but also totalitarian in their daily, even hourly, impingement on life. Like the incessant ticking of a clock, our basic ideas continually intrude into our living... Thus we must not draw back from the conclusion that all of life is religion—that all people are religious...all world views are religions, not just those expressed by theologians (319-20).

Yes! At the very core of every system of thought from philosophy to science to education to economics to politics (whether conservative or liberal) and so on lies a bedrock, *a priori* faith commitment to humanism of one sort or another that, like a pair of good sunglasses, unconsciously filters and colors all our perceiving, thinking, and knowing. And any of these presenting itself as “neutral” or “values-free” is nothing other than a wolf in sheep’s clothing seeking whom it may devour—most likely the naïve kids of unsuspecting Christian parents (the simpletons of Proverbs).

Make no mistake about it. The City of God is at war with the City of Man and the primary battlefield is the human heart/mind. God forbid that we would violate His first and greatest commandment (Mt. 22:37-38) by bowing in deference to the idols of secular, humanistic thought. No, we will not “tolerate” the futile reasoning of those who, professing themselves to be wise, have become utter fools (Rom. 1:22-32; 1 Cor. 1 19-20), self-deceived and deceiving, blind leaders of the blind—in politics, education, media, the arts, et cetera, even our churches! We unapologetically refuse to “keep an open mind” to the “facts” and “evidence of those who tempt

us with forbidden fruit that promises to make us wise (Gen. 3:6)!”

By the grace of God who calls His covenant people to spiritual transformation through the renewing (versus removing) of our minds (Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 4:17-23; Heb. 5:14), the starting point for Christians is the Triune I AM who created mankind in His image—our metaphysical foundation—and God’s Word/Christ and word/Scripture—our epistemological foundation (Gen. 1:1; Ex. 3:14; John 1:1, 8:58; 2 Tim. 3:16). Greg Bahnsen says it all so well:

God’s word... has absolute epistemic authority and it is the necessary presupposition of all knowledge which man possesses. All our knowledge must be a receptive reconstruction of God’s primary thoughts; the Lord is the originator of all truth. God’s word must then be taken as the final standard of truth for man. Those who would feign intellectual self-sufficiency and refrain from presupposing the word of Christ in Scripture are led into foolish ignorance. One must *begin* with Christ in the world of thought or else surrender any hope of attaining knowledge—about himself, the world, or God (29).

Secular thinking implores us to clear our minds of Christian presuppositional clutter and open up a clean slate, a *tabula rasa*, to life’s rich empirical experiences in the hope of attaining true knowledge. Christian beware! Godly thinking reminds us that “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7) and that “in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). The difference all comes down to one’s presuppositions, which are in turn a product of one’s *a priori* faith commitment to either autonomy, self-rule, or theonomy, God-rule.

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Verbi

Various Reformers

“Thus it is that we may patiently pass through this life with its misery, hunger, cold, contempt, reproaches, and other troubles—content with this one thing: that our King will never leave us destitute, but will provide for our needs until, our warfare ended, we are called to triumph. Such is the nature of his rule, that he shares with us all that he has received from the Father. Now he arms and equips us with his power, adorns us with his beauty and magnificence, enriches us with his wealth. These benefits, then, give us the most fruitful occasion to glory, and also provide us with confidence to struggle fearlessly against the devil, sin, and death. Finally, clothed with his righteousness, we can valiantly rise above all the world’s reproaches; and just as he himself freely lavishes his gifts upon us, so may we, in return, bring forth fruit to his glory.”

- John Calvin¹

FROM PSALM 150:

“When all the things you have made praise you, O almighty God, not only do they do something owed to your dignity and greatness, but they perfect themselves in a rich and wondrous way. There is nothing we can do which is more excellent than glorifying you as the highest and supreme good of all things. Every single day we experience your boundless benefits toward us. Besides, while here the huge weight of our sins rest heavy upon us and because of them we are hard pressed by a tremendous burden of afflictions, we cannot focus very well on your benefits and your infinite goodness. The result is that a person praises badly what he scarcely knows. We pray to you, O God, from the bottom of our heart that the burden of our sins be lifted from us; having put that aside, we do not doubt that you will drive the darkness of present troubles away from the Church. Then she will be able to lift her eyes to you, her maker and redeemer, and she will glorify with the highest praises, as is right, the riches of your goodness and the wonders of your wisdom. But now, we are everywhere confronted with such sad and sorry spectacles that we see nothing but your wrath which threatens us. We do not deny that we have fully merited your wrath; we beg and beseech you that you take it from us so that we may be stirred to the worthy praise of your name

¹ *Institutes*, II.15.4., trans. Ford Lewis Battles

not only by words but by every instrument which is suited to lifting up our hearts to you. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.”

- Peter Martyr Vermigli²

Christus Rex is a publication of Christ Church, NC. As such, it is tool of the church, and derives its purpose from the purpose of Christ’s Church, which is to preach the gospel to all nations, baptize them into new life, and disciple them. It is the first and last duties of this Great Commission that Christus Rex seeks to obey.

We hope to one day be reviled and mocked our clear presentation of the Gospel and the ramifications of Biblical teaching in every area of life. In the meantime, we’ll settle for snide remarks about our color uncoordination and hideous ties.

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² The Peter Martyr Reader, Donnelly, James, McLelland, eds. (Kirkville: Truman State UP, 1999).