

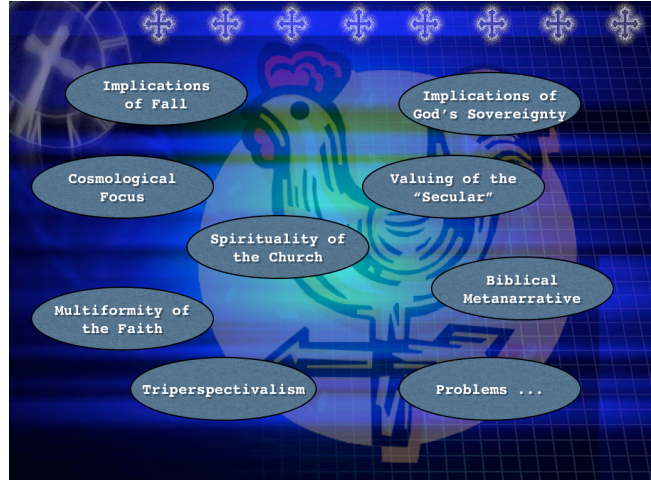
Week 9 • October 22, 2008

Getting Perspective on Kuyper (cont.)

Problems ...

Implications of God’s Sovereignty

Personal Election • Immediacy of Relationship • Egalitarianism (“equals before God and consequently equal as man to man” ... “bow the knee to God in order to lift the individual’s head with respect to others” — pp. 27,88) • Derived Authority of Various Spheres (p. 166 — art interested in the hidden and insignificant)



Implications of the Fall

Normalism vs. Abnormalism

Cosmological Focus

pp. 22,79 — Contrast between Luther’s starting point as the special soteriological principle of a justifying faith vs. Calvin’s starting point as the sovereignty of God “over the whole Cosmos, in all its spheres and kingdoms, visible and invisible”

Valuing of the “Secular”

p. 70 — God’s “ordinances” to be discerned: in our bodies, in logic, for our imagination, for the whole of human life

p. 121 — Two means of knowing God: Scripture & Nature — for Calvin, Nature not just an accessory to theologians, but Scriptures like a pair of spectacles, enabling us to decipher God’s thoughts written in nature but obliterated by the fall. Student of nature not wasting his time — study of body as well as soul, “and the social organization of mankind on earth was again looked upon as being as well worthy an object of human science as the congregation of the perfect saints in heaven. This also explains the close relation existing bet/ Calvinism and **Humanism**. In as far as Humanism endeavored to substitute life in this world for the eternal, every Calvinist opposed the Humanist. But in as much as the Humanist contented himself with a plea for a proper acknowledgment of **secular life**, the Calvinist was his ally.”

p. 130 — Calvinism’s “certainty of faith” deprives human merit and good works of salvific merit; ironically, this move “called Christendom back to the order of creation: “Replenish ... subdue ... have dominion...”

"Christian life as a pilgrimage was not changed, but the Calvinist became a pilgrim, who, while on his way to our eternal home, had yet to perform on earth an important task. The cosmos, in all the wealth of the kingdom of nature, was spread out before, under, and above man. This entire limitless field had to be worked. ... For the earth with all that is in it, had, according to God's Will, to be subjected to man."

Subduing the earth required knowledge of the earth: its oceans, its nature and the attributes and laws of this nature.

p. 158 — Four Spheres, and Four Supports: Arts (Renaissance); Politics (Italian Republicanism); Science (Humanism); Religion (Reformation) — fundamental laws specific to each

p. 162 — Earth no lost planet ... no aimless mass of people ... not just the womb of Christians ... the world is the theatre of the mighty works of God ... even apart from salvation, in the present dispensation, the ungodly contribute to the glory of God.

"Spirituality of the Church" (not Kuyper's term)

pp. 30-31 — the church recedes to be the congregation of believers, emancipating every department of life to be developed according to its own principles to the glory of God — the church withdraws again within its spiritual domain so that in the world we should realize the potencies of God's grace

p. 106 — the mutually limiting sovereignty of the state and the church

p. 159 — the church forced back into her spiritual realm

Multiformity of the Faith

p. 17 — the free development of life, with a center and a circumference

p. 63 — "according to different degrees of purity"

p. 101 — "many forms"

p. 106 — "the complex of Christian churches as the multiform manifestation of the church of Christ on earth"

p. 141 — the USA: where denominational multiformity gave separate church-embodiment to every differentiation of principle

p. 191-192 — "our inborn one-sidedness" will always necessarily lead to the manifestation of the church in many forms — why the Calvinistic movement will remain small

pp. 194-195 — multiformity and courage of conviction in distinctly Calvinistic churches

Biblical Metanarrative

p. 134

Triperspectivalism (Normative, Situational, Existential)

p. 70 — Last Judgement: a **heart** aimed at **God's glory**, and in accordance with the **ordinances** of the Most High

p. 141 — every scientist needs to own his worldview

pp. 188-189 — **hand** for deed, **head** for world, **heart** for mysticism.

Questions I'd Be Asking about Calvinism for the 21st Century

How do we reconcile Calvin's cosmological *historia salutis* approach with Luther's soteriological *ordo salutis* approach?

Does "common grace" mean Europeans are winners and Africans are losers? or that Europeans and Africans have a lot to learn from each other?

What's the relationship between "common grace," "multiformity," and "abnormality"? Should "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" embody itself in ecclesiastical uniformity? is ecclesiastical multiformity purely a function of sin? or is there a "common grace" and "multiformity" factor as well? is variability in worship style, for instance, good or bad?

In the intersection between special revelation (Scripture) and general revelation (Nature), does the church have no opinions?

What's a healthy relationship between "secular" and "sacred"? are the spheres (art, politics, science, religion) totally autonomous from one another? Conversely, does the church that thinks "worldviewishly" risk losing its particular mission: to preach the Gospel, minister the Sacraments, shepherd the faithful? Will the Kuyperian vision of cultural spheres in complementary relationship with each other just fall apart without there being living faith among artists, politicians, and scientists? (e.g., C. Everett Koop on hospital ethics committees; Weber on the "iron cage" of a post-Christian capitalist West).

What is the reigning scientific metanarrative, and how does the biblical metanarrative speak to it? How does science look post-Einstein and the discovery of the interdependence of time, energy, and matter? How does the sovereignty of God play out if science suggests randomness is built into the fabric of reality?

Do some sciences (e.g., psychology and sociology) lie at a peculiar intersection between science and religion?

Do Kuyper's views on art lead to Gnosticism when it comes to the question of art and the church? Is his view of worship so "spiritual" that there's no need for the materiality of baptismal waters, the bread and the cup, the kiss of peace? Conversely, how do we honor the principle that the tabernacle is in heaven, not made of hands? that *we, the church* are God's work of art (Eph. 2:10) — can art in church support that principle? or does art in church necessarily subvert that principle?

Future of Calvinism: if the future of the race lies in the "commingling of blood" does that mean the triumph of Western culture or does it mean mutual deference across national and ethnic boundaries? Does Calvinistic influence lie in drawing tighter community boundaries (after the pattern of the Amish) or bringing a Reformed sensibility to eclectic church communities (like Reggie being a pastor at a Bible Church or an elder at nondenominational megachurch)?

If Kuyper is right about the Calvinistic principle being the sovereignty of God, how do you live that: is it a call to control or to submission? Does belief in the sovereignty of God lead to pride or to poverty of spirit?

Issues to come:

We've looked at *worldview* — you'll keep working on it as you refine your paper.

We're looking at *character* all along in small groups.

Hopefully, you're learning about *worship* in conversation with your Singing Savior.

What we want to take up now are:

- **the distinctives of Reformed *theology*;**
- **how to decide what's negotiable and not negotiable — how to make responsible and faithful judgments about where to land on particular issues; and**
- **how to treat others who land elsewhere.**