

The Antithesis:

Written by Calvin Fox

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The word "Antithesis" commonly means: opposite (thesis à anti-thesis à syn-thesis à thesis) but in Reformed Theology, particularly Neo-Calvinism, there is a deeper dynamic involved.

Antithesis is not only opposite, it is also means "in opposition".

Specifically, a consciousness that divides Christians and non-Christians. A. Kuyper writes ' . . . we have to acknowledge two kinds of human consciousness: that of the regenerate and the unregenerate; and these two cannot be identical. . . .it is an impossibility that both should agree, and that every endeavor to make them agree must be doomed to failure.' Because a Christian and a non-Christian start from completely different pre-suppositions (or should, at least), the conclusions they come to about things they observe in the world will be different. The doctrine of the antithesis explains the radically different conclusions Christians and non-Christians can come to in all...fields (even where there are areas of agreement).

Genesis 3:15-- I will put enmity between you [Satan] and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you will bruise his heel."

The antithesis is explicitly declared by God in this verse where He said that He "will put enmity" between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent -- between the children of God and the children of the devil (cf. John 8:44). It is worth noting that the emphasis falls upon the word "enmity" as the first word in the Hebrew of Genesis 3:15 ("Enmity will I put"). God himself is said to constitute, establish, and deliberately impose this enmity between men.

The opposition and antithesis between followers of God and followers of Satan is not simply predicted by God and is not simply commanded; it is sovereignly inflicted as God's judicial curse. The distinction and antipathy between the two seeds must and indeed will be maintained.

Were that antithesis disregarded, diluted or dispelled, the very meaning of the gospel of salvation would be lost... The entire Biblical message of redemption and the historical establishing of God's kingdom both presuppose the antithesis between the regenerate and the unregenerate. And yet, this Doctrine is virtually unknown or denied by younger contemporary Evangelicals, who tend to have a much more sanguine view of the relationship between Christians and non-Christians.

"Throughout history Satan has tempted God's people to compromise "the antithesis" -- whether by intermingling in ungodly marriages (Gen. 6:2), or by showing unwarranted tolerance toward the enemies of God (Joshua 23:11-13; Judges 1:21,27-36; Ps 106:34-35), or by departing from the authority of God's word so that "every man does what is right in his own eyes," (Judges 21:25), by committing spiritual adultery with other gods (e.g. Ps. 106:36,39; Hosea 2:2-13, 4:12;

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Exek. 16:15-25), by trusting in some power other than God (e.g. Kings 18:21; Chron. 16: 7-9; Isa 30:7, 31:1; Ezek 16:26-29), or by repudiating the Messiah along with the world (John 1:10-11), or by bowing the knee both to Christ and to Caesar (cf. Acts 17:7; Rev 13:8,11-17). In fact, Satan even dared to tempt Jesus, the Son of God, to achieve God's ends by compromising the antithesis with Satan himself. In Matt 4:8-10,... Satan showed Jesus the kingdoms of the world, and he said all of them would belong to Jesus if He would just bow his knee to Satan. ...So...we must be sure not to ignore the tempter's persistent device of suggesting that we can tone down or disregard the antithesis which God has imposed between His people and the world." – Dr Greg Bahnsen

Today's common rejection of Absolutes (including doctrinal distinctives) and the insistence on pluralism and relativism is a rejection of the Antithesis. And this concept of Antithesis has serious ramifications for Evangelism and Apologetics. More primary is its ramification for a Theory of Knowledge and thus for Education (See the next Article below)