

Theonomy- Living by the Law of God

Written by Calvin Fox

Tuesday, 26 January 2010 11:20 - Last Updated Tuesday, 16 February 2010 11:21

This is my response to current renewed interest in the Two Kingdom Theory and, in particular, my response to an Essay by Dr Mike Horton

horton-on-the-two-kingdoms-now-complete.html

I advocate Theonomy and reject the Two Kingdom Theory (2KT), but please read carefully. Theonomy is not Theocracy and, as I define it, Theonomy is not the same as "Christian Reconstruction". We must be clear about this. Theonomy literally means the Law of God. Theonomy is the belief that Christians should submit to the Law of God and seek to live their lives according to it. (This is known in Reformed circles as the "Third" use of the Law". In no way does it contradict the Gospel of Grace and Salvation by Faith and Grace alone.)

However, it is a serious mistake to limit or confine the Law to the Decalogue or to the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy which elaborate and apply the Decalogue in the life of Israel. I define the Law of God as the first 5 Books of the Bible, the entire Pentateuch, otherwise known as the Torah. This means the Law begins with Genesis. Beginning with Genesis makes a very big difference when discussing what is in the Law.

Furthermore, I do not agree with the traditional 3-fold division of the Mosaic Law in Exodus to Deuteronomy into Ceremonial, Civil and Moral. All 3 elements are found in the Mosaic Law, but they are often intermingled and connected with each other. I find that the process of dividing them 3 ways is very arbitrary and impractical. I also find that this historically has led to the common, but exceedingly simplistic and erroneous, reduction of the entire Law to only 6 of the 10 Commandments and considering them to be only rules for personal morality.

Beginning in Genesis, I interpret the Law of God first as universal Principles and Norms given by God (before there was an Israel) for all Humanity to follow. The Decalogue in Exodus codifies them and the rest of the Books of Moses elaborate on them and applies them to the Nation of Israel. The Prophets will call the People of Israel back to the Law, as well as apply sections of it to the Gentile Nations of their day. Jesus and the Apostles do not annul the Law as such, but add further meaning and application of it to the Church. All of this together is the context or prism through which we interpret and apply the Law today, both to the Church and to the Nations. By "Theonomy", I mean obeying this Law, the Torah, so interpreted.

The ethics of the Sermon on the Mount or of the New Testament as a whole do not in any way replace or supersede the Principles and Norms found in the Law of God (the Torah). They do

Theonomy- Living by the Law of God

Written by Calvin Fox

Tuesday, 26 January 2010 11:20 - Last Updated Tuesday, 16 February 2010 11:21

add deeper meaning and more extensive application of the Law for application in the lives of Christians and the Church.

I do not believe America is a Christian nation today, although it still maintains and its Judeo-Christian Heritage and Biblical Principles in its Constitution. I do not advocate renewing a so-called national covenant with God (whatever that would entail)

I do not identify Christ's kingdom with the Church or with transforming societies, cultures, economies, and political orders. I do not advocate some kind of "cultural dominance" by Christians over America, whatever that means. I do not advocate trying to take over cities in the name of Christ's millennial kingdom, whatever that means.

"Calvin wrote explicitly of the "two kingdoms": both under the reign of the risen and ascended Christ, but "in different ways"; one, by common grace and the moral law inscribed on the conscience and the other by saving grace and the gospel. Neither Lutherans nor Calvinists have been consistent in working out their theory, but the two-kingdoms doctrine has a substantial body of reflection throughout the whole history of the church. Allegedly, In His heavenly kingdom, Christ reigns by saving grace and the gospel. In the Kingdom of this world, Christ reigns by common grace and the moral law inscribed on the conscience." I do not see this arrangement in the Bible at all.

I agree this is how Christ creates the Church. I do not agree with identifying the Church as "His Kingdom of Grace".

I do not regard moral, cultural, and social reform as the main business of the church.

I agree God's common grace satisfies the needs of believer and unbeliever alike to promote the general welfare

The Kingdom was imminent in Christ and active in his earthly ministry. But Horton completely overlooks or denies the social, political, economic impact of that ministry, including his teaching and conduct. He confronted, challenged and changed religious and political powers structures as well as deeply rooted social mores.

But, Jesus' primary enemy was Satan, Prince of this world. Jesus' ministry on earth was to destroy Satan and the spiritual powers of darkness and he did that. The healings and exorcisms were victories over Satan and his demons. His crucifixion and resurrection dealt them the death blow. And it must be remembered that this spiritual conflict continued to be played out after the ascension of Jesus and through the ages ever since.

Some say we do not find a blueprint in the New Testament Epistles for a Christian economic or political system, a Christian theory of art or science, or a plan for universal hygiene. Epistles? How about in the entire New Testament? How about in the entire Bible? Christian? How about Biblical? "Blueprint"? How about universal Principles or Norms? Here it is the crux of the debate over Theonomy.

Theonomy- Living by the Law of God

Written by Calvin Fox

Tuesday, 26 January 2010 11:20 - Last Updated Tuesday, 16 February 2010 11:21

God has no will, no Word, no guidelines or instructions for economic or political systems, the Arts or Science, or a plan for Health Care? I find it incredible that any Christian would say this! Of course God has revealed His will for all of these matters and more. They are found in the Bible, starting in Genesis and the Torah.

Many Evangelicals are content to say they are simply to live godly lives in the present, as parents, children, spouses, employers, and employees, caring for the needs of the saints. Sure, but this begs the question: how are we to live "godly lives" in all these areas? The answers are in the Law! not simply "common grace and the moral law inscribed on the conscience".

We are, they may also say, "to exercise our legal rights to defend justice and engage in acts of charity". Sure, but who's "legal rights"? Who's "Justice"? How are Rights and Justice to be defined? The answer is: by the Law of God. Likewise, "acts of charity" as defined by whom? Public opinion? local community standards? Judges on some Court? Congress? Again, we need a God-given yardstick.

On subjects such as "Gay Marriage", Illegal immigrants, Universal Health Insurance, Poverty, Capital Punishment, Capitalism, Abortion, War, etc how do we decide what are truly "acts of love"? What about racism. affirmative action and discrimination? How do we "serve our neighbors" Are some way detrimental and other ways truly helpful? People strongly disagree about all such matters. Is there a yardstick, a measure? Has God said anything about such matters? Yes He has. We find guidance in His Law. As Christians we will want to submit to that Law. Our non-Christian neighbors will not.

It is said, "Pastors aren't authorized to create their own blueprint for transformation, but are servants of the Word. Where Scripture has clearly spoken, he must speak. Where it is silent, he must keep his personal opinions to himself. Of course, pastors are called to preach the whole council of God: not only the gospel, but the law—including its third use (to guide Christian obedience). That's enough to occupy our prayerful action in the world, without piling up commands that God never gave."

Absolutely! Well said. I agree with what Dr Horton says here. Pastors must speak what Scripture has clearly spoken. But this is what the debate is about. What does Scripture say?

I agree when Dr Horton says, "We're never called to transform the world (or even our neighborhood). We're called to be faithful in our vocations at work, at home, in our neighborhoods and in our witness to those individuals whom God brings across our path in ordinary ways every day."

We are not called to "transform the world", but yes, we are called to be faithful. But faithful to

Theonomy- Living by the Law of God

Written by Calvin Fox

Tuesday, 26 January 2010 11:20 - Last Updated Tuesday, 16 February 2010 11:21

what? To Christ and His Law. It is by that Law Christ rules the world. Thus we are to be faithful to obeying His Law. That is Theonomy.

Psalm 119:33-48 [abridged]

Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes, and I shall keep it to the end.

Give me understanding and I shall keep your law; I shall keep it with all my heart. Make me go in the path of your commandments, for that is my desire.

Incline my heart to your decrees ... your judgments are good.

Behold, I long for your commandments;

I shall continue to keep your law; I shall keep it for ever and ever.

I will walk at liberty, because I study your commandments.

I will tell of your decrees before kings and will not be ashamed.

I delight in your commandments, which I have always loved.

I will lift up my hands to your commandments, and I will meditate on your statutes.