

The Antithesis – its Biblical Basis

Do the churches of the Reformation still acknowledge what the Bible teaches about the antitheses? Many claim that the antithesis cannot be taken seriously in our modern and complex world. How can we approach secular issues from a religious point of view? Does this not smack of fundamentalism, oversimplification? Some in our circles call the antithesis a left-over from Abraham Kuyper's philosophy.

The Godly Good, the Ungodly

The term antithesis was scarcely used by theologians before Kuyper's time. However, it has been on the minds of Christian thinkers for ages. Known to the church ever since apostolic times was the fact that since the fall of Adam and Eve, a cosmic struggle has been going on between the forces of God and the forces of Satan, between Christ and the anti-Christ. The world is divided between the city of God and the city of Satan. This contest is uncompromising and fierce. The world is the battle ground on which these spiritual forces contest each other (Eph. 6:12).

When we read the Bible we immediately see that there is a fundamental and central division of mankind into two groups. God created mankind as one. All men are equal. But man is now a fallen creature (Rom. 3:23). Sin is the source of all evil and alienation from God. All men are rebels against God. And fallen rebellious humanity has never stopped revolting. It lives in continuous apostasy from the living God. But God didn't leave mankind to perdition. He broke through with His grace. And God's grace sifts, elects and gathers. There is now a separation between the godly and the godless (Ps1).

Gods Antithesis

The antithesis principle was neither invented nor initiated by man. God Himself laid it down in the beginning of history when God proclaimed the first Gospel message. He put enmity between the seed of the woman (the Incarnate Word and all those who are incorporated into Christ's body), and the seed of the serpent (all those who are still in enmity with God, and who persist in their unbelief). As history developed, the contrasts between the two forces became sharper.

Noah and his family were the only God-fearers left from among their wicked generation. Abraham had to separate himself from his family, leave Ur of the Chaldees and travel to the promised land (Gen. 12:1). Dividing lines were drawn between Isaac and Ishmael, Esau and Jacob, Israel and the surrounding nations. Israel was commanded to live in isolation, separated from its neighbors. The whole Old Testament is filled with descriptions of the covenant God of Israel waging war against those forces which try to thwart and subvert His plans for His creation. There are battles against substitute gods, Baal and Ashtaroth, magic and astrology. Divine principles were laid down for public and private life.

Christ and the Demons

When Christ came, the demons furiously opposed Him. The Gospels are filled with incidents of demonic possession, opposition and affliction. They tried their utmost to prevent the fulfillment of Christ's mission – His death on the cross, the resurrection from the grave and the defeat of Satan. Christ came as the Redeemer from the curse of sin, the Restorer of the Law, the second Adam. Through Christ, the elect are restored to God's fellowship and service.

Humanity is divided. Christ is the Divider. He said. "He that is not with me is against me" (Matt. 12:30). When we, through faith are in Christ, the second Adam, we are alive unto God and are called to spiritual warfare. There is no neutrality possible. We are soldiers of the cross, enlisted in the army of Christ (Eph. 6:10ff; II Cor. 6:14-18; 10:3-6). When we have been made alive in Christ, we undergo a change. Our new life affects our thinking, our lifestyle. The unregenerate suppress the truth (Rom. 1:18). The regenerate have been set free by the truth (John 8:32). And they seek true holiness (Eph. 4:24). They live godly lives dedicated to good works (Heidelberg Catechism q.a. 91).

Spiritually Grounded

Is the antitheses a preoccupation of old-fashioned Dutch Calvinist immigrants? No! It is soundly based on Scripture. Its nature is absolute and all pervasive. God's people are bound by the Word. If we don't want to be guided by it for our political, economic and social life, we devalue it. As we face ever increasing pressures, and as the Spirit of the anti-Christ manifests itself more and more, we, as Christ confessors should join in the battle. The antithesis is a reality. The anti-Christ will appear victorious for a while (II Thess. 2). But not until Christ returns, and all things are united in Him shall we have a harmonious and new world (Eph. 1:10). Lord Jesus, come soon!

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September, 1984