



## What Chalcedon Believes:

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In a lawless, compromising, and apostate age, any Christian individual, church, or institution that stands unequivocally for the Biblical authority and the orthodox Christian Faith and, moreover, obedience to the Word of God and its application for all of life, is likely to be misunderstood, maligned, and slandered, both outside and inside the church. Often, these assaults are the result of misinformation, in that professed Christians routinely break the Ninth Commandment. Unintentionally, they just as frequently pass on to others erroneous information. The fact that their intent is often not malevolent does not absolve them from their guilt of violating God's law. Others are truly malevolent. Their intent is malicious, and they employ their tongue to spread deceit, which they *know* to be deceit.

Chalcedon is often the object of these attacks, both clearly malevolent as well as simply misinformed. Christians suckled on a pietistic view of the Faith and life simply cannot conceive of a world-conquering Christianity; because they cannot grasp this premise, they dismiss its defenders and spread misinformation about its position. Some are simply too irresponsible (or lazy) to acquaint themselves with our position and, failing to understand it, impute to Chalcedon positions and statements we do not espouse, and, in some cases, just the *opposite* of what we espouse. The malevolent detractors, on the other hand, know fully well what we believe and teach; their objective is to erect straw men, paint Chalcedon in the poorest possible light, and assassinate our position and character. We are not interested in dialoging with or defending ourselves against the accusations and innuendo of these malicious individuals. We are, however, patient with those who have not been sufficiently exposed to or who do not adequately grasp our position, and have simply been the recipients of misinformation. For that reason, I will set forth eight particular positions, often imputed to us, which we do *not* believe. At least on these points, I will set the record straight as to what Chalcedon actually believes so that sincere, honest inquirers may gain an informed understanding of our position, whether they agree with us or not.

### **Justification by Law or Works**

Because we strongly emphasize the authority of Biblical law, holding it to be a verbal description of God's character, and because we hold that Biblical law should govern every area of man's life and thought, it is sometimes suggested we believe that man is justified by keeping the law, or somehow by his good works. This charge is not merely seriously erroneous; it is monstrously mistaken. As Calvinists, we believe that sinners are saved *solely* on the ground of Christ's

substitutionary, atoning death and law-keeping life, the passive and active obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24). Further, we believe that justification, man's legal acceptance in the sight of God as "not guilty," is appropriated by faith *alone* (Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:8-10). Because faith itself is a gift of God, no law-keeping or works of any kind that man can perform could in any way secure or contribute to his justification or acceptance before God. God does not cooperate with man in saving him. God saves sinners; He does not help them save themselves. Law-keeping and good works are the essential *results* of justification; they are not the *ground* or means of *appropriating* justification. All who are truly justified will obey God's law, progressively, though not perfectly, in this life (1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Jn. 1:8). God, by His matchless grace in the atoning death of His Son, saves those whom He has chosen. He does the deep work of regeneration and conversion in their lives. This is God's work, not man's. But the God who justifies also sanctifies, and sanctification means progressive obedience to God's requirements, His law of the Old and New Testaments.

Those who teach that man is justified by law-keeping or good works are pronounced cursed by God (Gal. 1:8-9; 2:16); just as clearly, those who as God's covenant people do not obey His law are cursed by God (Dt. 28:15-68). Men are justified by Christ's redemptive work alone, and appropriate this justification by faith alone; but those who are truly justified manifest that justification by their obedience to God's law.

## **Political Dominion**

Because we believe that the Bible should apply to all of life, including the state; and because we believe that the Christian state should enforce Biblical civil law; and finally, because we believe that the responsibility of Christians is to exercise dominion in the earth for God's glory, it is sometimes assumed that we believe that capturing state apparatus and enforcing Biblical law on a pervasively unbelieving populace is one of our hidden objectives. Our critics sometimes imply or state outright that we are engaged in a subtle, covert attempt to capture conservative, right-wing politics in order to gain political power, which we will then use to "spring" Biblical law on our nation. This is flatly false. We do not believe that politics or the state are a chief sphere of dominion.

It is understandable why many people assume that we do hold this position, however. We believe firmly in social change. *Liberals* believe firmly in social change. Liberals believe that social change is the effect almost exclusively of politics and state coercion. For example, they believe that we can change society by means of state-financed and governed "public education"; health, education, and welfare programs; and speech codes. In other words, they believe, like communists, that man is essentially a plastic being that can be fundamentally reshaped by external means -- education, wealth, health, penitentiaries, and so forth. Since no later than the French Revolution, most civil governments in the West have believed that social change occurs

by revolution, not by regeneration. When, therefore, liberals (and even some alleged Christians) see us supporting and working toward social change, they presume that we are interested in political power. In simpler words, because *they* believe in social change exclusively by means of politics, they assume that *anyone* who supports social change or gets involved in politics is attempting to gain state power in order to further a social agenda.

This is a serious miscalculation. We believe in *regeneration*, not in revolution. Men are not changed fundamentally by politics, but by the power of God. Men's hearts are changed by regeneration (Jn. 3:3). They are translated from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13). From that point, they progressively work to reorient their lives and every sphere they touch in terms of God's holy, infallible Word. Long-term, pervasive social change is the result of extensive regeneration and obedience by the people of God. This means, of course, that there can be no Christian society of any significance or longevity unless a large number of its members are Christians.

We do encourage Christian political involvement, but not for the reason that many people suppose. In fact, we believe it is important for Christians to get involved in politics *because we do not believe politics is too important*. The great problem with modern politics is that it is used as an instrument of social change. We at Chalcedon passionately oppose this. The role of the state is in essence to defend and protect, in the words of the early American Republic, life, liberty, and property. It is to reward the externally obedient by protecting them from the externally disobedient (Rom. 13:1-7). Its role is not to make men virtuous; we have a name for civil governments that attempt to create a virtuous society: totalitarian. Biblically, the role of the state is to suppress external evil: murder, theft, rape, and so forth. Its role is not to redistribute wealth, furnish medical care, or educate its citizens' children.

We do believe that the state one day will be Christian, but this no way implies that the role of the state is to Christianize its citizens. The Christian state is highly decentralized (localized). Our objective, therefore, in supporting Christian political involvement is to *scale down* the massive state in Western democracies, reducing it to its Biblical limits. We do not believe in political salvation of any kind.

## **A Dispensable Church**

Because we believe that men should seek first the kingdom of God, not the church; because we believe that the kingdom of God is much wider than the church; and, consequently, because we believe that the institutional church is simply one dimension of the church, it is often charged that we believe the institutional church is a dispensable, and perhaps even unnecessary, institution. This is greatly in error. While in the Bible there is but one true church, this church can be seen from several different perspectives. The Reformers recognized, for example, the *invisible* dimension of the church: that group of genuine believers throughout history seen only

to the eye of God. This was not, in their mind, the institutional church. They were far from dismissing the institutional church, however. The Calvinists of the British Isles, for example, went so far as to concur with the church of Rome in identifying the institutional church with the kingdom of God. To their credit, more recent Reformed theologians have recognized the mistake of this view, though this does not imply that they believe that the institutional dimension of the church is unnecessary. On this we agree fully with them.

The church as mentioned in the New Testament is the *ecclesia*. It began in the Old Testament as the visible covenant community. It is, in Rushdoony's words, God's *government* in the earth, and it is this government both within and without its institutional dimension. But its institutional dimension is one *vital* aspect of the church. Must the church be limited to its institutional expression? Surely not. Schools, colleges, mission agencies, evangelistic organizations, Christian foundations, and on and on may truly be considered an aspect of the church even though they are not themselves the *institutional* church. The kingdom of God is bigger than the church, just as the church is bigger than its institutional dimensions. However, the institutional church as the visible covenant community under the government of godly elders is a vital part of the church and the kingdom of God. Every Christian should be a member of some orthodox, institutional church. This institutional church should not monopolize or dominate the Christian life or the Faith, but it is a vital part of it. The institutional church as an agency for preaching the gospel, administering the sacraments, edifying the saints, and exercising godly dominion is an essential feature of God's kingdom.

## **Kingdom by the Power of Man**

Because we affirm postmillennialism, and because we believe that no church (in any of its dimensions) will ever have any qualitatively different and superior divine resources at its disposal than it now has, we are often accused of believing that man by his efforts, ingenuity, and strength is to bring in the kingdom of God on the earth. We are accused, in other words, of an implicit humanism. This is a woefully mistaken charge. In the first place, Jesus Christ already "brought in the kingdom" at His first coming. His glorious reign was formalized at His ascension (Dan. 7:13-14), after which He showered His royal gifts on His people so that they could advance His kingdom in the earth (Ac. 2:17-18, 30-33). Christ's kingdom is something that Christ Himself brings in. Christians do not bring in the kingdom; Christ brings in the kingdom.

We do believe that God uses Christians as instruments to advance His kingdom. Thus, just as He used His covenant people in the Old Testament to advance His kingdom among the Hebrews, so He uses His people in the great multi-racial, multi-national church to advance His kingdom and His world-conquering gospel. The so-called Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20) is the Marching Order of the King. Christians are His subjects, and they are called to obey Him in every area of their lives. Further, they are called to exercise godly dominion in every sphere with which they come into contact. Every area of the Christian's life is to be governed by God and His written

Word, the Bible. God uses man's obedience to advance His kingdom. Jesus Christ did not tell His disciples that it was essential for Him to remain on earth so that the kingdom would be advanced; rather, He told them it was essential for Him to leave so that they could do *greater* works (Jn. 14:12; 16:7). Christians can do greater kingdom-advancing works in the King's absence, because at His ascension He was crowned with great gifts which He bestowed on His people by which His saints take dominion in the earth (Dan. 7:18, 22, 27).

But fundamentally the work is God's, not man's.

## **Persecution for Religious Beliefs**

Because we believe that the state is an inherently religious institution, and because we believe that a Christian state should enforce the law of God appropriate to the civil sphere, some have accused us of endorsing state persecution for religious beliefs. This is wrong. Biblical law does require criminalization of a few sins like murder, kidnapping, theft, and child sacrifice; but these are not religious beliefs; they are violent *practices* that assault the fabric of society. The Bible does not permit the state to persecute or suppress any religious belief, only certain dangerous, socially destructive *practices*.

Further, Biblical civil law is designed for a *covenanted* society, just as Biblical ecclesiastical and familial law are: Paul's epistles, for example, are written to *Christian* churches, not to Satanic synagogues. Biblical law governing the family is designed for *Christian* families. Likewise, Biblical civil law is created for a covenanted, *Christian* society. This is why God dictated His legislation (including civic legislation) to ancient Israel *after* He had entered into covenant with her (Ex. 19). Biblical civil legislation is for a covenanted nation, not for modern, secular Western democracies at war with God. Our first objective is to work to Christianize them.

## **Automatic Christian Children**

Because we believe that the children of Christian parents are to be included in the visible covenant of the church, and because we believe that these children should be treated as though they are among God's elect unless they give definite, objective evidence otherwise, occasionally some assume that we believe children of Christian parents are "automatically" saved because they are born into a Christian family, and that they do not need to hear the gospel. This is flagrantly untrue. The gospel is the chief component of man's salvation (Rom. 10:13-15). The gospel is the good news of salvation by faith in Christ alone, in His great sacrificial work of redemption on the cross. No one is saved apart from this work, or from the message of the gospel. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16).

Nevertheless, the Bible generally promises salvation to covenant children -- that is, the children of Christian parents. This is one vital provision of the Abrahamic covenant: God would be a God to the seed of Abraham in the same sense He was a God to Abraham himself (Gen. 17:7). This is the promise to which Christian parents cling (Gal. 3:29). It is the promise not merely of "common grace," or general providential provision, but of salvation. This fact is reinforced in Acts 2:38-39:

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

The promise of salvation is not just to those adults who believe, but also to their children. This is not a promise that every single covenant child will *certainly* be saved (Rom. 9:6-9), but we have good Biblical warrant to assume that our children are the elect of God unless they demonstrate otherwise by their faithlessness and disobedience. In the pithy Puritan quote: "God casts the lines of elections in the loins of Christian parents."

In no way does this imply that they do not need to hear the gospel; indeed, it means that we must be more urgent in preaching to them the gospel. 2 Timothy 3:15 teaches us that the Old Testament Scriptures instructed the child Timothy in salvation, and it is most likely that his godly mother and grandmother nourished him in the gospel (2 Tim. 1:4-5). This is the calling of Christian parents: *to nourish our children in the gospel and in the Faith*. From infancy they must be taught that they are sinners and stand under God's judgment, that the only hope of salvation is Christ's redemptive work which can be appropriated only by faith. Those who do not nourish their children in the gospel, but simply presume that their covenant inclusion guarantees regeneration, run the risk that their children will never, or only rarely, hear the gospel by which men *alone* are saved.

We may very well never know the exact moment of regeneration and conversion in Christian children; our calling as parents is not to absolute knowledge, but to faithful obedience. We nourish and bathe them in the gospel and the Faith and train them up as Christians (Eph. 6:1-4), as God's property (Ezek. 16:8, 20-21). Sinners are saved by the sovereign grace of God, but the preaching of the gospel is the instrument by which He accomplishes this salvation.

## **Faith is Mainly Scholarship**

Because we stress the importance of ideas, and because we believe that sound Christian scholarship is essential to the advancement of Christ's kingdom, it is sometimes thought that we

believe that the Christian Faith is mainly a matter of Christian scholarship, and that those who are not scholars are second-class Christians. This is severely in error. God and the Faith, not scholarship, are central. Scholarship is instrumental; it can be used for good or evil purposes. The Bible forbids and condemns godless, faithless scholarship, not godly faithful scholarship (1 Cor. 1:18-31; 1 Tim. 4:13). Moses, Paul, and Apollos all used their extensive learning for the sake of Christ and His kingdom. Festus declared of St. Paul, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad" (Ac. 26:24).

Critics of Christian scholarship often draw attention to 1 Corinthians 1, where Paul extols the foolish things of the world that confound the wise. What Paul is arguing against, of course, is not godly learning, but the pseudo-scholarship of the Greeks. The apostle's methodical argument in the book of Romans is a masterpiece of scholarly theological argumentation. In today's world, scholarship is almost exclusively on the side of God-haters, humanists, and apostates. Almost all of the leading seminaries in the country are apostate, and this is only slightly less true of colleges. Higher education is morally *lower* education. Many Christians, therefore, simply equate scholarship and learning with modernism, apostasy, and so forth.

This is not merely mistaken from a Biblical standpoint; it is historically uninformed. The highest point of scholarship in the medieval world was within the bosom of the church; and although it was defective at certain key points, it was at least an attempt at intellectual reverence for God. The scholarship of the Reformation was even more rigorously Biblical, and this was no less true of the Reformation's successors, the Puritans, who greatly influenced England and the formation of the United States. The earliest institutions of higher education in the Americas were distinctly Christian, and only later apostatized with the advent of Deism, Rationalism, Transcendentalism, and other heresies.

Scholarship should grow out of a vigorous Faith, but it is God and the Faith, not scholarship, that is central. Chalcedon agrees with Richard Weaver's premise that ideas have consequences. Men are saved by grace, not by ideas, but ideas are the result of a work of grace -- this is why salvation has an inescapably intellectual component (Lk. 1:77). The Bible itself is a revelation of ideas as much as it is words; it is not a collection of isolated words, but of words that are divinely inspired and arranged to set forth ideas. Biblical revelation is *propositional*: it comes to us in words and sentences, conveying thought. To say that we should dismiss ideas and the work of scholarship is really to say that we should dismiss God's written revelation. One is deeply impressed, for example, with the wide scholarship of men like the Apostle Paul, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Kuyper, Van Til, and many others. But this scholarship, in every case, springs from a simple faith -- faith in the sovereign, Triune God and the authority of the Word of God. Scholarship is an instrument in the service of the advancement of the Faith and of Christ's kingdom. Scholarship is not central to the Faith, but a vigorous Faith requires scholarship. It is this sort of scholarship to which Chalcedon is dedicated.

## Racist Religion

Because we believe that the godly are called to exercise dominion in the earth; and because the notion of godly dominionism has been revived in the United States; and, finally, because some who claim to believe in dominion are also racists, it is occasionally presumed that we hold to a racist religion. The term "racism" itself can be and has been variously defined. One thing is for certain: We do *not* believe that one race is inherently superior to another, or that only one sector of the race is to take dominion as Christians, or that sinners of whatever race do not stand equally guilty in the sight of God, or that Christians of a certain race do not stand equally justified in the sight of God. Therefore, we believe that the racism of the KKK, the Arian Nation, the Identity Movement, Black Power, the Black Panthers, and the Asian, Hispanic, and Indian racist movements are anti-Christian at their very core.

Chalcedon supports only one form of "racism": God blesses, nourishes, and honors the Royal Race of the Redeemed, all of those of whatever physical race that have placed their faith and trust in Jesus Christ, and God curses the race of the First Adam, all of those who live in unbelief, rebellion, and work-righteousness (Rom. 5:12-21). This is the only "racial discrimination" the Bible knows anything about. God discriminates in favor of covenant-keepers, and discriminates against covenant-breakers (Dt. 28). Some may object that He favors the race of Israel in the Old Testament era, but it must be immediately noted that His choice was not fundamentally racial, but religious. For this reason, Gentiles could become a part of the Jewish race, and thus a part of the covenant people of God (Gen. 17:12-13). The non-racial aspect of Biblical Faith is clear from Ephesians 2:11-15:

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace....

All converted Jews and Gentiles stand on the same plane of blessing in God's sight, just as all unconverted Jews and Gentiles stand on the same plane of judgment in God's sight. The race God *favors* is the race of the *Second* Adam; the race He *disfavors* is the race of the *First* Adam. And this has nothing to do with physical race.



## Disposable Eschatology

Because we believe that Christ's first coming established His kingdom (Mt. 3:2), and His church is presently energized to advance that kingdom (Mt. 28:18-20, and because some heretics have suggested that His Second Advent, and the final resurrection and judgment of the just and unjust occurred in A. D. 70, we are sometimes criticized for diminishing the importance of the great eschatological (future) events of Christianity. This charge is quite erroneous. As we noted above, Jesus Christ bestowed His royal gifts on His people after His ascension. He does not delay His blessings for kingdom advancement until His Second Coming.

Nonetheless, there will be no sinlessness until the eternal state, which follows the Second Coming (1 Cor. 15:23-25). There will be a great time of future earthly peace and prosperity before the end (Is. 65:17-25), as a result of the success of the gospel; but there will still be death and sin in this era (Rev. 20:7-10). Death will not be finally overcome until Christ returns (1 Cor. 15:24-27). The millennium is a Godly Golden Age, but it is no utopia. The Second Coming definitively puts the finishing touches on God's plan for the earth and human history. It is the ringing culmination of His providential dealings with man.

Further, those who claim that Jesus Christ's Second Advent, and the final resurrection and judgment of the just and unjust occurred in A. D. 70, assault the Bible and the Faith. Acts 1:11 tells us that Jesus will return just as he ascended -- bodily and visibly, with his disciples gazing at him, and we know that this has not yet happened in history. He is to come "[i]n flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thes. 1:8). Likewise, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 declares:

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

This teaches that the final physical resurrection of the redeemed will occur when Christ returns, with great royal fanfare: "a shout...voice of the archangel, and...the trump of God." This is the announcement of the King's return to his earthly jurisdiction. It is a *physical* coming creating momentous *physical* consequences: resurrection of bodies, and the equipment of the redeemed for the eternal state and the unredeemed for eternal perdition. It concludes human history.

Thus, while we must never diminish the power granted the church because of the operation of Christ's First Coming, we must be careful also never to diminish the finality of Christ's work in the world which the Second Advent initiates. The Second Coming and its attending events are crucial to the Christian Faith.

## **Conclusion**

This should set the record straight on certain key issues on which Chalcedon's views are often misunderstood. We will continue to suffer slander at the hands of unscrupulous, devious men — inside the church and out. But honest Christians, whether they agree with us or not, are entitled to hear a forthright declaration of our position on these misunderstood issues.