

R2K and milk or Where is the Gospel¹

1Pe 2:2 As newborn babies, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

“*Pastor, I have an elder who ...*” (fill in the blank) – So begin questions from young pastors forced into solo positions fresh from seminary prepared just for this task: Not! I have managed as many as a hundred internet forums primarily in reformed circles for over a decade now. Being exposed to the world has had its curses and blessings, but mostly blessings. One of the greatest blessings has been questions like the one above as a young man eager to serve the Lord seeks the *practical* knowledge and experience to properly oversee God’s flock where providence has placed him.

Pastoral or practical theology is a mere elective in many seminaries whereas multi-semester classes in systematic theology are a requirement for the MDiv Degree most pastoral candidates are seeking. Systematics, hermeneutics, Bible, and many other subjects are and should be mandatory. That is not the point of this article. Nonetheless the man armed with only an MDiv will soon face a world he is ill prepared to lead in. Our schools attempt to fill part of this gap with internships at least during the senior year. Few indeed are the young men in seminary that have *true* mentors assigned.

Part of the answer lies within the army of retired pastors with a wealth of experience and education to share. The nature of the beast requires our schools to seek out men with one or more post-graduate degrees. Simply holding one of these elusive pieces of paper however is not enough, they must distinguish themselves from the pack to find and hold the most desirable positions in the academic world.

For example one of the current theology wars raging in cyber space and on many college campuses is that known as the *Radical Two Kingdom Theology* (R2K). Simplistically this theory says there are two kingdoms, one of the world and one of a spiritual nature. The latter (spiritual) is under the direct supervision of God and comes under special grace. The kingdom of this world operates more within a so-called common grace. They admit God is sovereign over both but see a need for this division to *protect* the sovereignty of God. As in all debates the antagonists search our historic creeds and the theologians of our birth as the Protestant churches to find support for their position. Kuyper as an example is used by some to teach that R2K is reformed.

I for one do not think Kuyper may be recruited for this purpose, but that is of no significance here. The simple fact is that God is totally sovereign over all things and for the believer he is not part of two distinct kingdoms. He may live in the world but the Bible simply says we are of the world but not in the world.

Most tell me this is reductionist and too simplistic I must engage the issue. What is the issue? They claim they are *protecting* the sovereignty of God. Praise God! I serve a sovereign God. However, while I don’t like to burst bubbles my God doesn’t need their help much less protection.

¹ This short article is far from complete much less comprehensive. I am pragmatic to a fault and tend to be very reductionist and admit these weaknesses. What I share here is intended more as an *attention getter* than theological paper. Houston, we have a problem! This is my summary of the problem so we all might pour ourselves into the solutions needed to correct the problem before we burn out more eager young men to the detriment of the whole church.

Another example is the debate over regeneration and effectual calling being two different and distinct events. God is sovereign in the calling (the active element) and regeneration is the result that is seen in this world. (Another of my overly simplistic presentations)

I have read several rather long articles recently where each word is taken apart in the original languages to show how this works. Really? Who cares? It is not the young pastor trying to deal with cranky sheep in his first pastorate. It is not the lost soul on the street dying for lack of attention. Both sides of this can and do present quite scholarly papers; it takes careful reading and study to know where one should take their stand; that is if they care. I for one do not care about this issue nor the so-called *ordo-salutus* (order of salvation). My pragmatic self is quite content to lump all of this together under conversion and deal with the elements in no particular order as the Scriptures reveal them. Is there an order? Scripture has lists of sorts and logic says there must be because God is an orderly Being. A pastor should be able to explain all of these elements and know this supposed order of things. For that he attended seminary. This however will not help him to find the funds to fix the furnace in a financially strapped church. This will not help him comfort the family with a dying child.

These things are not the *Milk of the Gospel*. They are not intended to *feed* the sheep in God's pasture. *Lu 11:42 But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.* As the Lord warned those Pharisees centuries ago, so should we today take care of our young pastors and churches, not to leave these other things undone, but put in proper place and perspective.

Sadly these issues do spill over into the church and at the grass roots level. We have more informed and educated laymen today than in the history of the church. They can and do follow these debates well. The problem is they expect to hear these *doctrines* preached from the pulpit too. Really, these are doctrines of the Reformed churches? Since when has this been the truth despite many proponents of both of these debates? I have seen far too many men departing a church because they were not being fed; the pastor was too simple and didn't preach the whole *Gospel*.

Those gifted of the Lord to be enabled to lead and make a difference in the kingdom of God instead become blind fools seeking after a supposed knowledge that is mere illusion of over active minds. Instead of places of edification and learning they become gad flies causing dissention and division within the body of Christ. Read John 3:16 and you have just read the whole Gospel, you do not even know what you are talking about and you dare attack God's called? That the world and liberal church refer to the whole New Testament as the Gospel is of no value because you will stand convicted by your own conscience on that Day of Judgment to come.

Such men demand less topical and more expository sermons. Do what? Since when does the person receiving the message dictate that message to the messenger? God called, God leads, and God speaks though these men He called just for this reason. You are not attacking that pastor, you are spitting in the face of the sovereign God who sent this messenger to you personally.

The young man born into this place of academic trivia stands no chance in a church filled with blind and hurting sheep looking for a leader. All the theology in the world will not make him a pastor. God makes and sends pastors. The church should have a place in making sure of the call and even of the education of these men. However, ultimately the calling is of God.

I do not lay this at the feet of our schools though they do play a part. It lies within the courts of the church where scant attention is given to the greatest resource God places in her hands, his children

called to go forth with His message teaching the whole world to obey everything which God has commanded.

I have my ideas just like everyone else as to what the solution should be. Again, that is not my purpose but rather to say to our churches and schools, wake up and smell the coffee, we have a huge problem right before us.

To the young person still in school or his first pastoral position, seek out the resources and read what other men have said about all the *practical* problems you will face every day. The classes may not be mandatory, but I can assure you they are necessary for your well being and that of the church God ultimately places you in. I know that your reading load is heavy and you have scant time for outside or unnecessary things on the agenda. Please listen, they are crucial to you, take the time and you will never regret the first minute you spent learning how to shepherd God's sheep.²

Dr. Chuck Baynard

² Now out of print to my knowledge but still to be found in some college bookstores is a short work by Jay Adams entitled *Shepherding God's Flock – Vol 3* (P&R 1975). There are many others out there but I have found this one helpful in trying to train up young men in the reformed faith to be fully equipped for the pulpit.