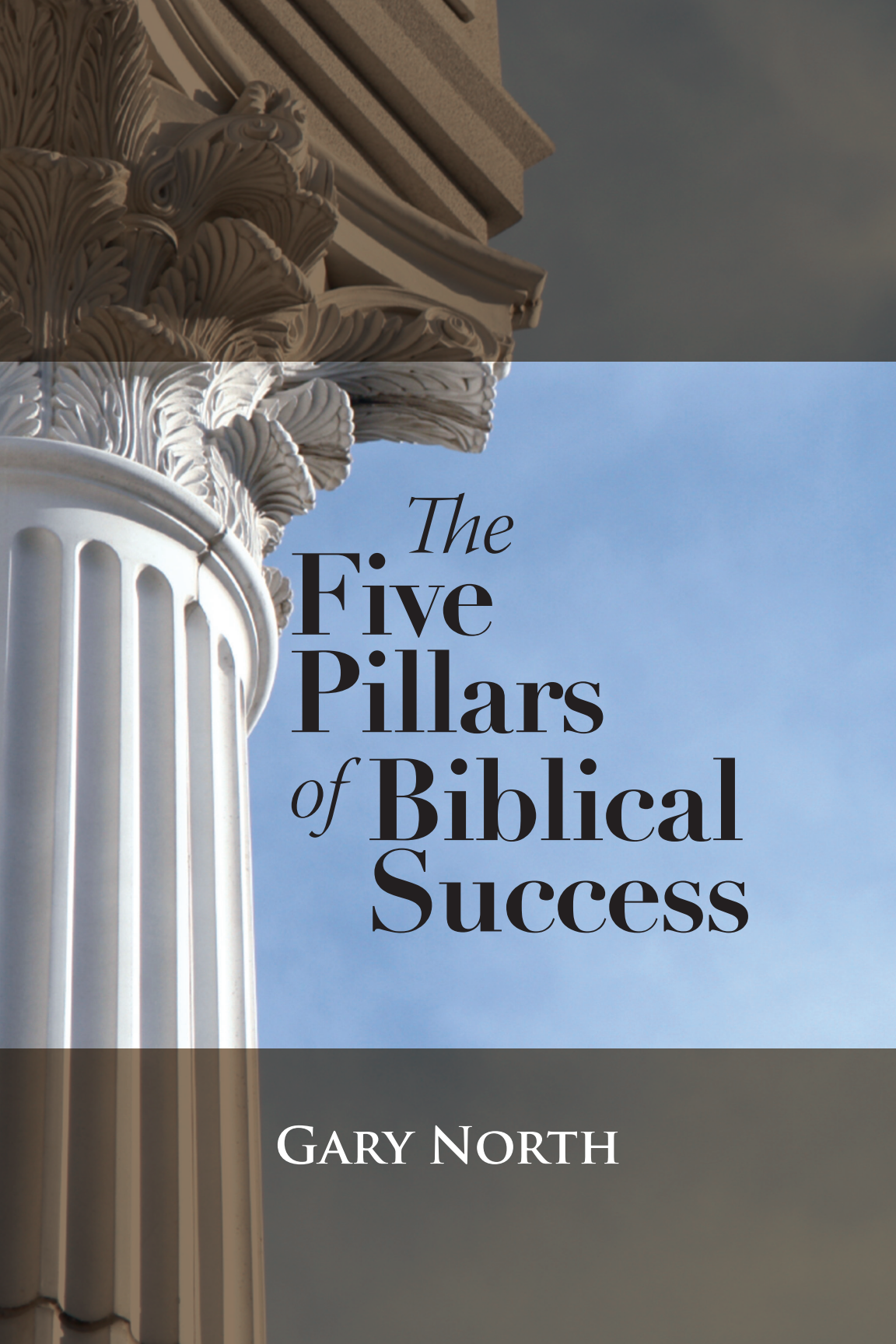
The
Five
Pillars
of Biblical
Success
Gary North

# The Five Pillars Of Biblical Success

Gary North

American Vision Press
Powder Springs, Georgia

**The Five Pillars of Biblical Success**

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This book is dedicated to

**Arthur Robinson**

scientist, businessman, sheep rancher,
author, publisher, commodity speculator,
home school curriculum developer,
self-taught lawyer (won), civil defense expert,
direct-response mail copywriter, political
campaigner, longevity expert, and
single father of six.

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# Preface

It is a well-known fact in the book publishing industry that there are two kinds of books that always have a ready market: diet books and self-help books on personal success. I have for many years wanted to write a Christian diet book. I even have the title: *The Wages of Thin . . . Is Dearth*. The title betrays my fondness for the King James Version, even when its grammar is incorrect. But this book is not a diet book. It is not a self-help book, either. But it is surely a book on personal success.

## *The Price of Success*

After many years of observation of what most people actually do with their lives, I have become convinced that very few people want what most people regard as success. They say they do, but they don't. What they want is success on their own terms. They want success without making major changes in their lives. They want success at a discount price, which they think they deserve. Most important, they want success without a proportional increase in their personal responsibility.

At some point, they recognize that success is not available on these terms, so they abandon any systematic attempt to achieve it. They re-define success to mean "just as I am, Lord, just as I am." Or, to put it more graphically, "As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly" (Proverbs 26:11). An unsuccessful man returns to his patterns of mediocrity or failure—or never abandons them.

The best example in the Bible of this failure to count the cost of success is found in Jesus' confrontation with the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16–24). "And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" It was clear that he did not understand that the price of eternal life cannot be paid by sinful man's good deeds. So, Jesus began a dialogue leading to the man's self-recognition.

> If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

These are unquestionably the Bible's terms of success. Israel recognized this. But, like Israel, the ruler thought these are possible to attain through one's own strength and self-discipline. "The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" He wanted eternal life, the New Testament's definition of success. He believed he was on the road to success. He believed he had almost perfectly mastered the system of success, lacking only the final piece, which he believed Jesus would reveal to him. This final piece would be the capstone of his personal success plan.

In fact, he had attained no success at all, and Jesus' words soon made this plain to him. Jesus went along with the man's self-deluded affirmation. He pretended that He knew the missing final piece. "Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." But this was not the final piece. It was instead the first piece: the man's public affirmation that he had to start from scratch—no wealth, no position of authority, nothing to bring to God's table.

This requirement was designed to produce the shock of recognition, which it did. It exposed the ruler's failure to recognize the true cost of his personal success program. "But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." The fact that he would not take this step pointed to the fact that his supposed successes in meeting the terms of his personal success program were a delusion—a delusion that would keep him from attaining eternal life if he persisted in it. His seeming success so far was a snare. He possessed success indicators, but no success.

> Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

### *Success and Failure*

I have had my share of successes. I have also had my share of failures. I am reminded of an observation made by an American comedienne, Sophie Tucker. "I've been rich, and I've been poor. Believe me, honey, rich is better." We all have a fondness for success and a repugnance at failure. Yet most successful people will tell you that their failures were part of their success. Success comes through trial and error. Vilfredo Pareto's nearly universal and unexplained 20/80 law informs us that 20 percent of our activities produce 80 percent of our success. If we could only eliminate that failure-generating 80 percent! But we can't. It is part of the package, or, as we Americans say, it comes with the territory—an analogy based on the sales profession, one of America's acknowledged successes.

I like to think of Pareto's law in terms of the human hand. There are four fingers and a thumb. The thumb makes all the difference: the crucial 20 percent.

As this book shows, you can count on one hand the principles for achieving success in history. Also like the human hand, there is a thumb that makes all the difference: the principle of the absolute sovereignty of God. I cover this in Chapter 1.

The first public step in the application of the first principle of success in history is to rest one day in seven.

> Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it (Exodus 20:9–11).

The second step is to tithe the required 10 percent. Tithing is the beginning of the process, not the end.

> Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith:

> these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone (Matthew 23:23).

The third and subsequent steps are not to leave the other things undone.

The first principle—a day of rest—should remind us that success is not earned. It is instead received. Success is based entirely on grace, and in no way on works—at least not our autonomous works. Success is a gift undeserved by its recipients. This principle should warn us against making the following conceptual error.

> And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day (Deuteronomy 8:17–18).

This book is not a handbook for success. Rather, it is a theological introduction to success and its tempting imitations. There are lots of self-help handbooks available. There will be lots more. The problem is, one of them may make you a nearly universally acknowledged success. Then what will you do?

With increased success comes increased responsibility. If your degree of success outruns your ability to exercise responsibility efficiently, you will be in trouble.

> And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more (Luke 12:47–48).

This book is more about the efficient exercise of responsibility than it is about gaining the visible marks of success, i.e., success indicators. Gaining success indicators is the easy part. Maintaining them without passing by success is the difficult part.

> Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success (Joshua 1:7–8).

Go and do thou likewise.

# Introduction

Most men suspect that something greater than earthly success is at stake in life, but they are easily bedazzled and then sidetracked. In American business history, no example of bedazzlement matches that of steel magnate Andrew Carnegie [carNEYguee]. On January 1, 1901, he became the richest man on earth when the sale of Carnegie Steel to the newly formed steel trust known as United States Steel, made up of his former competitors, went into effect. He then spent the rest of his life giving away most of his money. He abided by the rules of accumulating great wealth: wealth through productivity. Then he followed the advice of sages everywhere. He gave his money away.

After he died, his executor found a note in his effects. Carnegie had written it at the age of 33, when he was making $50,000 a year—in an era in which the average urban laborer earned $500. Here is what he wrote.

> Man must have an idol—the amassing of wealth is one of the worst species of idolatry—no idol more debasing than the worship of money. Whatever I engage in I must push inordinately; therefore should I be careful to choose that life which will be the most elevating in character. To continue much longer overwhelmed by business cares and with most of my thoughts wholly upon the way to make more money in the shortest time, must degrade me beyond hope of permanent recovery. I will resign business at thirty-five, but during the ensuing two years I wish to spend the afternoons in receiving instruction and in reading systematically.[1]

1. Quoted in Robert L. Heilbroner, "Carnegie & Rockefeller" (1960); reprinted in *A Sense of History: The Best Writing from the Pages of American Heritage* (New York: Smithmark, [1985] 1995), p. 431. Heilbroner was a multimillionaire socialist economist who made his fortune through royalties from an introductory textbook on the history of economic thought. It was appropriately titled, *The Worldly Philosophers*.

He spent the rest of his life obsessed with money: first making it, then giving it away. He made the world better off when he was making his money by reducing the cost of steel than when he gave it away to the humanists who controlled the distribution of his wealth in the various Carnegie foundations. The most famous president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace was Alger Hiss (1946–49), who had been a high-level U.S. State Department official, then became the Secretary-General of the United Nations Organization's charter conference (1945), and was a spy for the Soviet Union.

There is an old rule: "Be careful what you ask for. You may receive it." This book can help you ask for what you are capable of receiving in good faith. Begin with good faith.

### *This Book's Two Theses*

I will here summarize the primary thesis of this book. It is very simple to understand in the way a child could understand it. Yet it is difficult beyond belief to apply it personally. In fact, it takes the grace of God to apply it successfully in our lives, which is the only way that we should apply the things we know. Right?

Let us say that someone who is very important—world famous, even—takes the time and trouble to give you a very valuable gift. You are flattered that the person even knows your name, let alone that the gift itself is a treasure.

In response, you say two words: "Thank you."

This is success.

Success always involves more than one person. At a minimum, success is a two-way relationship. If you fail to understand this, you will never understand success.

Let us get five things clear about this relationship.

First, and by far the most important, it was the giver's decision to give you the gift. You had nothing to do with it. You did not in any way deserve the gift. That is why we call it a gift.

Second, your "Thank you" did not repay the giver for what he spent on the gift. He put far more into it than you have money in your bank account. Your "Thank you" was merely a heart-felt token of your gratitude.

Third, You did not buy the gift with your simple "Thank you." The gift came first. There is no organized market for gift-receiving.

Fourth, you are incapable of estimating the gift's real value, for it is in the giving, not the receiving, that the gift's real value lies… for the giver, who is very important, not you, who are less important.

Fifth, your "Thank you" does not legally guarantee you a stream of future gifts, although your perfectly correct response may well get you more gifts from the very gracious giver. That all depends on his motivation, not yours.

Do you understand this? A child would—anyway, a well-trained child would.

How well-trained are you? This book may help you discover the correct answer.

This book's secondary thesis is less simple to understand: *Success is different from success indicators*. This is probably the number-one problem you will encounter in evaluating your personal success.

The New Testament, unlike the Old Testament, offers a single definition of objective success: *Your name is written in the book of life*.

> And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:12–15).

Look no further for objective success. This is it. There is no other valid standard. There is no other valid definition.

Here is everyone's practical problem: No one has access in history to the book of life. I have good news and bad news. The good news is that there is a preliminary substitute for access to the book of life, and quite reliable: residence in heaven or hell until that final day. The bad news is that there is no exit from hell—no backtracking allowed (Luke 16:23–31).

Here is the supreme practical, two-part question of this life:

**Are there reliable temporal indicators of eternal success, and if there are, how can a person accurately apply them to his or her personal judicial condition?**

This book is my answer to this crucial two-part question.

Before I begin to present my answer, I need to make one thing as clear as I can: *There is no program for success*. Well, this is not quite true. There was such a program, and Jesus Christ successfully pursued it. No one else ever has. No one else ever will. No one else ever could. Success is attained solely by God's grace: God the Father's judicial imputation of Christ's successful completion of the program.

> For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:8–10).

"Wait a minute," you may be thinking. "If success is based on God's grace, and success is defined as salvation, then what about eternal rewards for 'good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them'? Aren't good works worth rewarding, once a person has salvation by grace?" Paul wrote that good works are eminently worth rewarding.

> For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, and precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire (1 Corinthians 3:11–15).

There are objective differences between gold, silver, and precious stones vs. wood, hay, and stubble. The person described in this passage gets into heaven, but he enters empty-handed, because his life's output was accounted by God as wood, hay, and stubble. But other people arrive at heaven's gate with assets that survived the fire of testing.

So, there is eternal success, with a capital S: salvation. There are also successes: gold, silver, and precious stones. But they are not literally gold, silver, and precious stones. In fact, literal gold, silver, and precious stones do not survive the fire of testing. They are accounted as wood, hay, and stubble. Jesus said:

> Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matthew 6:19–21).

There are two vaults in history: an earthly vault and a heavenly vault. They correspond to the two kingdoms.

## *Two Kingdoms*

There are two kingdoms in history: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of mammon. No one can be a member in good standing of both kingdoms. Jesus warned:

> No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (Matthew 6:24).

Each kingdom has its own definition of success. Each has its own success indicators, although there is some crossover here. Each has its own program for attaining success. In Part 1, I present a discussion of success indicators in the kingdom of God. In Part 2, I identify some of the illusions of success in the kingdom of mammon.

The kingdom of mammon is a perverse replication of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of mammon does not extend beyond the grave. So, its replication of the kingdom of God is truncated: cut short. Its highway is wide, but this highway is short.

> Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is

> the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Matthew 7:13–14).

At the end of this highway is a sign: **Dead End**. There is only one off-ramp. You must take it before you reach the dead end. It is well marked, but comparatively few people have noticed it, and fewer still have taken it.

The world is full of self-help books. These books are like travel guides. Most of them have some good suggestions as to which sights to see, where to shop for bargains, and how to write off the holiday as a legitimate business expense. The problem is, they do not warn you that there is a plague in Shangri-La.[2] This plague is even worse than the one in your home town, which is bad enough. The one in Shangri-La kills you in stages. First, it reduces your sensitivity to physical pain. Then it induces false perceptions of grandeur and safety. It is better to come to grips with the local plague, which has the twin benefits of being more painful and more easily perceived. You might get to the physician in time (Matthew 9:12).

Both kingdoms have a doctrine of sovereignty: God's vs. man's. Both have a concept of authority: delegated vs. original. Both have criteria of success: eternal vs. temporal. Both offer rewards and punishments for performance: eternal vs. temporal. Finally, both have concepts of inheritance and disinheritance: eternal vs. temporal.

2. Shangri-La is the mythical kingdom in the 1933 novel by James Hilton, *Lost Horizon*.

# Part 1

# The Covenantal Structure of Success

# Introduction to Part 1

> *This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success (Joshua 1:8).*

This is the only verse in the King James Version in which the word *success* appears. I am pleased to report that this is an excellent representative example of the thesis of my book. You could do no better than this verse as a starting point in your quest to gain an improved understanding of the meaning of success.

The Hebrew word, *sakal*, here translated as *success,* can be translated in a number of ways: prosper, be wise, understand, instruct. The word is used to describe the most successful failure in history.

> And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one **wise**, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat (Genesis 3:6).

This was a great success for Satan—a success for which he has paid dearly and will pay for even more dearly.

> Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).

In short, this was a failure disguised as a success.

For Adam and Eve, this was also a failure disguised as a success. They got away with their rebellion, but only briefly. They gained a form of wisdom

that had been open to them through time and experience. This prospect was insufficient for them. They wanted instant wisdom, instant illumination. This, they received.

> And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons (Genesis 3:7).

The implementation of success in history is to gain wisdom through God's approved means rather than Adam's. What is God's approved means? The procedure known as trial and error. This procedure has five aspects. First, it rests on the assumption that wisdom has its origin in God's perfect knowledge. Second, it rests on man's position as a creature made in the image of God and therefore capable of gaining wisdom. Third, it rests on the law of God: law over nature and law over man. Fourth, it rests on the God-given ability of His specially redeemed people to apply their understanding of God's law to specific circumstances. Fifth, it rests on confidence that, over time, covenant-keeping man's wisdom will increase with experience, and also that the process of trial and error will increasingly be weighted against error.

I have said that Adam's rebellion against God was a failure disguised as a success. This rebellion resulted in Adam's grim legacy to his heirs: original sin and death. This raises a crucial question: "How can the sons of Adam overcome this comprehensive, death-producing failure in their lives?" God has an answer: through an even greater success disguised as an even more monumental failure, namely, the cross of Christ.

> Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:1–2).

Herbert Schlossberg made an important observation in his book, *Idols for Destruction*. The history of Christianity is a series of victories disguised as defeats. This process began at Calvary.

I would modify Schlossberg's statement. There will come a time when these victories will become more obviously victories, and Satan's defeats will become more obviously defeats. Isaiah spoke of such a day.

> And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly. The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful (Isaiah 32:3–5).

I would like to think that this little book may make a small contribution to this increase in what my teacher Cornelius Van Til called epistemological self-consciousness, but which I prefer to designate by a more common phrase: calling a spade a spade.

This book is based on the five points of the biblical covenant model. It rests heavily on the book by Dr. Ray Sutton, *That You May Prosper*, which was published in 1987. You can download a free copy of it here:

www.freebooks.com

# Chapter 1
# Legitimacy/Guarantor

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it (Isaiah 55:8–11).*

What is the best biblical model of success in this world? This text provides the answer: the Bible itself. God guarantees the success of His word in history. *God has a wonderful plan for His word*. He has decreed in advance that it will prosper. It has so far. This will continue. No other word will replace the Bible in history. No other word will serve mankind as the foundation of the fulfillment of the dominion covenant (Genesis 1:26–27).

What does the Hebrew word translated as "prosper" mean? It means to succeed, to flourish. It means what "prosper" means in English.

How can we prosper? By hitching our wagons to the star of God's word. This must begin with our covenantal subordination to the word, which also means subordination to the incarnation of God's word, Jesus Christ. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Success over creation begins with our self-conscious, oath-bound subordination to God the Father through His representatives: the Bible and the Son.

We can prosper in four major areas of life: individual, church, family, and civil government. These are God's covenantal administrations. There are only four. We have special obligations in these areas, which are uniquely

established by an oath to God that invokes His covenantal negative sanctions if we should violate the terms of the oath. No other areas of life are so bound. The oath acknowledges the possibility of our failure. What failure? Our failure to adhere to the terms of the oath.

This is how God wants us to view success and failure: in terms of His covenant and its four administrations.

The context of this passage was God's call to Israel to obey Him. Through the prophet Isaiah, God told the people of Israel to turn from their wicked ways.

> Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon (Isaiah 55:6–7).

The issue here had to do with conformity, inward and outward, to the law of God. This warning was presented in a special format: an assertion of the sovereignty of God. God's transcendent sovereignty is point one of the biblical covenant model. Here we read that God is far above mankind—not just a little above, but completely. God's ways and thoughts are so far superior to man's that they are determinative. Man plans and then acts, but man does not achieve all of his goals in this life. God, in stark contrast to man, achieves all of His goals.

Every word that God utters completes its task. God does not waste words. God also does not waste effort. As surely as the rain produces growth in the field, so does God's word achieve its appropriate productivity in history. This was Isaiah's message.

This affirmation places God over all history. No creature possesses this degree of authority. This is more than mere authority. This is sovereignty. God proposes, and God disposes. "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel" (Jeremiah 18:6). Babylon's king Nebuchadnezzar, after he had been delivered by God from the madness that God had imposed on him, affirmed God's sovereignty: "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to

his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Daniel 4:35).

God therefore possesses the God-given authority to declare a person's work either good or poor. He told the rebellious heir of Nebuchadnezzar that his work had been found substandard. He told him this by means of a hand that wrote words on a wall and by means of a prophet, Daniel, who interpreted the words. This happened in front of witnesses. Daniel said:

> And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians (Daniel 5:25–28).

Individual success or failure is determined by the God who is sovereign over all creation. So is institutional success or failure, as Babylon discovered that very night. The successor-inheritor of the kingdom of Babylon was Cyrus, king of Persia. Here is what God announced to him, through the prophet Isaiah, two centuries before Cyrus conquered Babylon, long before Cyrus was born.

> Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me (Isaiah 45:1–4).

So, it is not merely that God has established the criteria of success or failure. It is not simply that He retroactively evaluates individual success or failure at the final judgment. He also brings to pass His decree in history.

His word will not return unto Him void. No one else speaks a more powerful word in history.

> Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth? (Isaiah 45:9–10).

Mary's song of praise regarding her pregnancy was a prophecy as well as an affirmation of God's sovereignty over the successful and the unsuccessful.

> For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away (Luke 1:49–53).

This same God assessed the preliminary work of His Son, Jesus Christ. He did this in front of witnesses.

> While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid (Matthew 17:5–6).

These are the words that every covenant-keeper longs to hear:

> His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord (Matthew 25:21).

Success begins with a confession that God is absolutely sovereign over His creation, and that His word will not return unto Him void. God

proposes, and God disposes. His word—both inscripturated and incarnated—has revealed to us what God has proposed and how He intends to dispose.

### *Self-Government*

With respect to everything we think, say, and do, we should remind ourselves that we are not in charge. God is in charge. Yet we are fully responsible before God for what we think, say, or do, as well as what we do not think, say, or do. As surely as Adam and Eve were responsible, so are we responsible.

Each individual works out his salvation or damnation in this life. Paul wrote: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). There is no escape from this responsibility. Yet at the same time, "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will" (Proverbs 21:1). God is sovereign.

So, when we begin to make our personal plans for success, we should begin with God and His holy word, which always prospers. We should search the Bible for examples of success in history. These, we should imitate. A good place to begin is Hebrews 11, the chapter on people of great faith.

The first example is Abel. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh" (Hebrews 11:4). Yet Abel was killed by his jealous brother. Abel had great success. Cain's seemingly permanent triumph over Abel was a great failure. *Abel's victory was a success disguised as a failure.* This is a basic biblical model of success. Do not ignore it or forget it. When you think "success," think "Abel."

Abel's model is not the only biblical model. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Hebrews 11:8). He departed for the sake of an inheritance, even though he was childless. Abram was an economic success. "And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold" (Genesis 13:2). He was also a successful military leader. "And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people" (Genesis 14:16). He became a father of nations, as his new name promised: Abraham. "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy

name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:2–3). Abraham was a man of great faith in God. He trusted God's word.

In contrast, the Pharaoh of the exodus was a failure. Yet he possessed enormous power: the power of life and death. His covenantal predecessor was Cain. God used his power against him. Pharaoh believed that he could defeat God.

> And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness. And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go (Exodus 5:1–2).

As a result, he experienced total failure. Moses gained total victory over him—a victory that has come down through the ages as one half of the archetypal story of success and failure in history. In what did Moses' success consist? Not the attainment of great wealth, surely. Then what was Moses' reward? To be named as the greatest prophet of his era. "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face" (Deuteronomy 34:10). He wrote the Pentateuch, by far the most extensive and detailed single revelation of God ever recorded. Moses' words have been regarded as God-inspired by Christians, Jews, and Muslims. No man has had greater visible influence in history. No man has had greater fame.

Jesus, of course, is the Bible's supreme model of success. He obeyed God to the letter (Matthew 5:17–18). The result was His inheritance. This inheritance was, and remains, comprehensive.

> And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matthew 28:18–20).

He knew that He was well-pleasing to God the Father. He also knew what His reward would be: complete authority. Therefore, He could tell His disciples confidently that they would not, could not, fail.

> And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life (Matthew 19:28–29).

Yet Jesus was clear about what constitutes success. Success does not mean attaining great personal wealth, to be used for one's own pleasure. That is what mammon promises: "More for man in history." This is the wrong path, Jesus said.

> Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matthew 6:19–21).

This is an inheritance in the world beyond history. We exchange present uncertain assets for future certain assets. We also need not worry about our lack of assets in the present.

> Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matthew 6:31–33).

### *Church Government*

Jesus Christ is the head of the church. He possesses this title legitimately, both as the incarnate Son of God and by reason of His perfect humanity, which was publicly revealed at the resurrection and the ascension (Acts 1:9). This two-phase bodily raising of Christ is at the center of His lawful possession, Paul wrote.

> And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all (Ephesians 1:19–23).

Christ has established His church in history. Christ now rules it from heaven. Then how can the church fail in history? To ask this question is to answer it. *The church of Jesus Christ cannot fail in history.* It will not fail. Like God's word, it will not return unto God void. In response to Peter's correct confession of Jesus' office, Jesus told him, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). *Hell is on the defensive, not the church.* Hell's gates cannot resist the expansion of the church.

There are no literal gates for the church to overcome, obviously. The battle in history is spiritual, not military. Then what did Jesus mean? He meant that Satan's kingdom is on the defensive. Satan is fighting a losing battle. God is sovereign. Satan is not. God empowers His church. Satan also empowers his troops, but they do not receive from their commander comparable empowerment, which is spiritual success. God sanctifies His church through the power of His word. Jesus prayed:

> Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they

> also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word (John 17:17–20).

Conclusion: Satan and his forces cannot win this battle.

### *Family Government*

God places each family member in a special position of personal responsibility. All family members are under God. They did not obtain their positions in terms of their own autonomy. God is in charge. The classic example of this principle in the Bible is the rivalry between Esau and Jacob. Paul made it clear that their respective positions with respect to God's blessing was based entirely on God's grace from the very beginning.

> And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated (Romans 9:10–13).

It should not be amazing to us that God hated Esau. Esau was a son of Adam, as we are. What is amazing is that God loved Jacob. Jacob was the second-born son, yet he would lawfully claim authority over his firstborn brother.

Jacob later bargained with Esau to attain his birthright through mutual exchange. "And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob" (Genesis 25:31-33). But he inherited because of God's grace, not because he was a successful bargainer. He possessed legitimate title to the birthright: from God first, and then from Esau.

The basis of success in the family, as in all of life, is adherence to God's word. God guarantees the success of His word in history. Men participate in this success by subordinating themselves to His word.

### *Civil Government*

God is the source of every position of leadership, as well every position of servitude. He determines the distribution of authority. Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar: "Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory" (Daniel 2:37). God sets up rulers and also pulls them down.

> Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him (Ezekiel 21:26–27).

Jesus, as the ultimate King of kings, was the one whose right it was, and is, and will always be.

> And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS (Revelation 19:14–16).

It is through a covenant-keeper's judicial subordination to Christ that one can become a success in history. God is the source of this success.

### *Conclusion*

In history, success is a result of performance that meets God's standards: adherence to God's word. There is only one way to do this: by God's grace. God distributes this according to His preference.

> For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose

> have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. (Romans 9:15–18).

In history, there are multiple forms of success. Sometimes success is economic (Abraham). Sometimes it is significance (Moses). Sometimes it is influence (Daniel). Sometimes it is a good reputation (Jesus). There are also varying degrees of success. But God is the source of every blessing. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

Success is a legitimate goal because God is the guarantor of success: before history, during history, and at the final judgment. But success must be on God's terms, not man's. Better to be Abel than Cain.

## *Summary*

God's word is the ultimate criterion of success: inscriptuated (Bible) and incarnated (Jesus).

Men succeed or fail in four main areas of life: individual, ecclesiastical, familial, and civil.

God's decree is sovereign over all successes and failures.

Abel's success was disguised as a failure.

Abraham's success was visible to all.

Pharaoh's failure was visible to all.

Jesus offers the supreme model of success.

Treasures can be earthly or heavenly.

Christ protects and prospers His church.

The Christian family is under God's protection.

God raises up and pulls down rulers.

God is the source of every success.

# Chapter 2
# Stewardship/Assignment

*And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth (Genesis 1:26–28).*

This is the model for mankind throughout history. This is what defines mankind. Man is made in the image of God, who is both one and many. God assigned to mankind (the one) the task of administering the creation under God's authority. He also assigns to individuals (the many) their specific tasks of administration. Mankind is not autonomous. Our species is subordinate to God. Neither is any individual autonomous. He is under God. But this subordination entitles him to be an authorized master of his temporary share of the universe.

God is the Creator, so He possesses original sovereignty over the universe. He can do with it as He pleases. What pleases Him is to delegate specific areas of authority to individuals and groups that represent Him, i.e., who are made in His image. God delegates authority. There is a hierarchy of authority: God is over man; man is over the creation. Hierarchy is point two of the biblical covenant model.

The great question for each person as he goes through life is this one: What am I responsible for right now? This is a question that involves two primary issues. First, what is my legitimate area of responsibility? What

am I in charge of? This is the *inclusive* aspect of responsibility. Second, there is also the *exclusionary* side of the question: What am I not responsible for? What activities can I therefore legitimately defer to others, simply by refusing to intervene? Both questions involve identifying boundaries of responsibility.

There are secondary issues. Here is the big one: To whom can I lawfully and wisely delegate responsibility? This question faces God, too. This is the *vertical* issue. Then there is the *horizontal* issue: Who will share part of this responsibility with me, and at what price? Both issues involve the division of labor.

Both questions have their origin in the Trinity. God is one, yet He is plural. The three Persons of the Trinity are equal in honor and their very being. None of them is "sort of God." Each is fully God. Yet they cooperate. Put differently, within the Godhead, there is a division of labor. In this division of labor, there is a hierarchy. This testifies to the fact that there can be no division of labor without hierarchy: a chain of command.

We see this in the life of Jesus. Jesus was one with the Father. "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). Yet He was subordinate to the Father.

> And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist [know] ye not that I must be about my Father's business? (Luke 2:48–49).

> For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him (John 5:22–23).

The Holy Spirit has His particular assignment in relation to the church.

> If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither

> knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you (John 14:15–17).

So, the model for solving the problem of authority, which necessarily involves the division of labor, is found in the personhood of God, who is both unified and plural. The three Persons of the Trinity are *equal in honor* yet *hierarchical in service*. Only Christianity proclaims such a God. Therefore, only Christianity offers a viable intellectual solution to the problem of the one and the many, one aspect of which is the problem of the division of labor.

Stewardship requires an accounting. This in turn requires objective standards of performance. God's accounting is both intermediate and final. First, intermediate. God provided a public accounting of Christ's work before it was complete.

> While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid (Matthew 17:5–6).

Second, final. In Matthew 25, which provides a glimpse of the final judgment, Jesus introduced the discussion by a parable of the kingdom. A rich man hands money to three stewards and tells them to manage it. Much later, he returns and demands an accounting. Then he passes judgment (Matthew 25:14–30). Conclusion: *Authority always involves accountability*. Accountability in turn implies two things: standards and sanctions, i.e., point three and point four of the biblical covenant model.

Here is one of the most difficult problems in life. How can the objective success indicators be kept from becoming ends rather than means? This is the problem of *representation*: point two of the biblical covenant model. A success indicator represents success, but it is not success in itself. It points to success, but it is not success in itself. Most dangerous in this regard are success indicators that are numerical. They are easy to define, easy to measure, and a threat to the soul.

In every area of life, for every set of success indicators, people are tempted to substitute success indicators for success, means for ends. A student seeks good grades so that he can advance his education. Grades are

numerical: a grade point average. He then pursues a higher grade point average to the exclusion of everything else. He studies for the test, not for knowledge. He cheats. He gets good grades, but he fails God's test. Similarly, a businessman pursues profit so that he can expand his business. He wants to serve more people. Profits are numerical: an accounting procedure. But then he forgets his primary goal: service. He pursues profit to the exclusion of everything else. He uses false advertising. He lowers the quality of the product line to save money. He gets wealthy, but he fails God's test.

Sanctions involve rewards and punishments: positive and negative. Sanctions are success indicators. There are biblical standards for them.

### *Self-Government*

There will be a final judgment. For this, there will be no sharing of responsibility.

> And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works (Revelation 20:12–13).

This final manifestation of individual accountability reflects a fundamental principle of biblical law: "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin" (Deuteronomy 24:16).

There will be no committee to share the blame. The division of labor in history is not a replacement for individual accountability in history. There is no safety in numbers. There is no access to invisibility in a group. God sees everything.

To each person God gives assets and opportunities. This is the message of the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14–30). This is also the message of the two craftsmen who built the tabernacle.

> See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: And I have filled him with the spirit

> of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship. And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee (Exodus 31:2–6).

These were specialists. They were placed in charge because of their peculiar personal gifts. Their area of responsibility was bounded by their skills and their opportunity. Their area of responsibility extended beyond what they could personally do on their own. God gave them the gift of teaching. By means of this gift, they extended the division of labor through the delegation of authority.

> And he hath put in his heart that he may teach, both he, and Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. Them hath he filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work, of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work. Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whom the LORD put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the LORD had commanded (Exodus 35:34–36:1).

Their success was two-fold: the construction of the tabernacle, for which they were given credit by Moses, and the establishment of their names in history.

## *Church Government*

The conflict between God and Satan is not a matter of power. If power were the deciding issue, Satan's defeat would be immediate. The conflict is a matter of representation. God has His representatives: angels and humans. So does Satan. The supreme institutional question is this: Which

institution best represents its commander's interests in history, the institutional church or Satan's oath-bound imitations of the church? Jesus' answer is clear. "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

There is a hierarchy of authority in the church. There are officers. To them God has assigned leadership. This leadership is based on service: service downward, not upward.

> But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Mark 10:42–45).

Servanthood is a basic principle of Christian leadership, but it is manifested most clearly in the institutional church. A successful church leader is a successful servant.

Servanthood is not the concept of success that Jesus said was common to the gentiles: the exercise of power. Biblical success inside the church is the exercise of authority: voluntary submission by those who seek justice, wisdom, and counsel. This is what those inside Jesus' circle of followers sought when they came to Jesus.

> And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth (Luke 12:13–15).

This is a bottom-up system of authority. It is submission based on self-interest of those lower in the chain of command. Judicially, God appoints church officers, which is revealed in the rite known as the laying on of hands.

Those in authority extend this authority by formally anointing others into the hierarchy of authority. But they do so on behalf of those served, who initiate the action.

> Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them (Acts 6:3–6).

Stephen was so successful that he was illegally executed by the Jews (Acts 7). Paul consented to this act of murder (Acts 8:1). This in turn led to God's direct intervention to call Paul into service (Acts 9). This changed the world.

### *Family Government*

The family is structured in terms of a hierarchy: husband, wife, children, and all those living under the permanent authority of the household. The mark of this authority used to be circumcision.

> And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant (Genesis 17:12–13).

Under the New Covenant, the mark is baptism. We learn this with the story of the Philippian jailer.

> And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto

> him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway (Acts 16:30–33).

Husbands possess authority over their wives.

> Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing (Ephesians 5:22–24).

Children are under their parents.

> Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth (Ephesians 6:1–3).

This hierarchy of authority places responsibilities on parents: "…the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children" (2 Corinthians 12:14b). This points to service as the basis of authority.

For the husband, this service is above all financial. "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8).

For the wife, this service is to her husband above all. "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives" (1 Peter 3:1). "Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement" (1 Peter 3:6). But she is entitled to reciprocal honor from her husband. "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered" (1 Peter 3:7).

Husbands are tempted to seek an escape from responsibility. They hand over decision-making authority to wives. Adam handed over responsibility

to Eve with respect to the forbidden fruit. This was not her area of authority. She was not equipped to make this decision. "For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1 Timothy 2:13–14). He did not escape from the consequences (Genesis 3:17–19).

## *Civil Government*

Civil government is a bottom-up hierarchy. The model is an appeals court. This was best described by Jethro, the priest of Midian, when explaining the procedure to Moses. Moses had to adopt the principle of the division of labor, Jethro warned. Otherwise, Moses would wear out both himself and the people.

> Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to Godward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee. If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace (Exodus 18:19–23).

Only after Moses adopted this system, which involved a system of 78,000 judges, did God covenant with the nation (chapter 19), give the Ten Commandments (chapter 20), and give the case laws (chapters 21–23).

There is a fundamental principle of all government: *Power flows to those who voluntarily take responsibility.* This is no less true of civil government. The ruler who is willing to accept responsibility for his actions is more likely

to be trusted. Also, those who want to escape responsibility are willing to hand over their authority to such a person. Sometimes this is for better, as when the people acquiesced to Jehoiada the priest's anointing of King Joash, which constituted a revolt against Queen Athaliah (2 Chronicles 23:10, 12). Sometimes this is for worse, as when the Israelites defiantly handed over power to a king who would rule them harshly (1 Samuel 8).

Absalom, David's son, understood this principle of transferred responsibility.

> And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel. And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice! And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel (2 Samuel 15:2–6).

He believed that this acceptance by the people justified a revolt against his father. This eventually cost him his life (2 Samuel 18:14). He sought success beyond his lawful station in life.

## *Conclusion*

God reigns over nature through men. He delegates authority, which is inescapably hierarchical. Men are told to receive grants of authority from God. They are also warned where the limits of their authority are, and not to violate them.

There is a sharing of responsibility downward and outward. This is the basis of the division of labor. There is a transfer of responsibility upward to those who are willing to take responsibility. Sometimes this transfer is

justified. Sometimes it isn't. It depends on the boundaries. We are supposed to remain inside those boundaries which God has assigned to us.

## Summary

The dominion covenant defines mankind.

God delegates responsibility to mankind and individuals.

Responsibility is hierarchical.

Men must delegate responsibility.

God is one and many.

The Persons of the Trinity are equal yet hierarchical.

There is a division of labor within the Godhead.

The division of labor requires hierarchy.

Authority requires accountability.

Success indicators are not the same as success.

Accountability is individual.

The church is a hierarchy of service.

The family is a hierarchy of service.

The state is a hierarchy of service.

# Chapter 3
# Criteria/Objectivity

*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matthew 7:21–23).*

These condemned men had believed that they were accepted by God. They had drawn this false conclusion from what they had achieved in history. This indicates the nature of life's supreme practical problem: reliably evaluating the likelihood of our eternal success based on evidence in history.

There are eternally meaningful temporal successes. Jesus surely attained complete success. His covenant people can attain meaningful, though imperfect, successes in history. These successes can sometimes be far more impressive than anything Jesus did. Jesus said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12).

As we shall see in Chapter 4, success is imputed by God. This imputation is subjective, for God is a Person, yet the imputation is objectively true, because God is the imputer. The imputation is objective also because there is an objective standard of success: ethical perfection. Standards are associated with point three of the biblical covenant model.

Our problem is this: Whenever we look to other men as imputers, we look to those who cannot know men's hearts, including their own. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know

it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). We begin to solve this problem only by adopting God's Bible-revealed success indicators as our standards of judgment.

We must make determinations regarding other people's competence and reliability, as well as our own. Why? Because we must cooperate with others in the division of labor. We are better served and therefore made more productive when we cooperatate with reliable people. Our search for objective indicators of success in other people's performance is legitimate, because we cannot know each other's hearts.

Eternal success is revealed by temporal success indicators only in a loose and imperfect way—not in a way that is judicially binding on God. No one ever puts God in the witness chair, demanding that He explain Himself—a fact Job learned, and we should learn from Job.

There is an imperfect working relationship between future temporal success and the attainment of past success indicators. Otherwise, we could not make reliable judgments about objective performance: past and future, ours and others'. We could not see the operation of ethical cause and effect in history. By God's providence, there are meaningful temporal success indicators. Jesus prefaced His warning about those who cry "Lord, Lord" with this statement.

> Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them (Matthew 7:16–20).

What is good fruit? This is every individual's crucial self-assessment question, and also every organization's. Good fruit is a success indicator. In searching for the supreme success indicator in history, we find in the Bible one above all others: a good name. "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold" (Proverbs 22:1). But who supplies it? On what terms? Is it earned? Or is it granted by God's grace?

The supreme example of a good name is Jesus Christ's. Peter declared:

> Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:10–12).

Unlike all other people, Jesus earned His good name. His good name was God the Father's reward for Jesus' successful service. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:9).

This same success indicator is sought after by covenant-breakers, as we read regarding the tower of Babel. "And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11:4). Men seek to establish a legacy—a name—that will be remembered. For what will someone be known? What will be his reputation? Within which circles? For how long?

In the book of Ecclesiastes, the issue of being forgotten appears repeatedly as a curse.

> One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever (Ecclesiastes 1:4).

> There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after (Ecclesiastes 1:11)

> For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool. Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit (Ecclesiastes 2:16–17).

Why is posthumous remembrance by others so important? Dead men do not care. So, why do living men care? Why are name and fame so important? Why do rich people pay publicists to gain a better reputation? Why do they care what the middle class or the poor think of them today or will think of them in a century?

A good name is a success indicator. But it is not success. It is a reward of temporal success. The New Testament is clear: *Temporal success is ethical conformity to God's law by means of His grace*. The sanctions are separate. They may or may not reveal to other men the degree of temporal success that a person has achieved. The supreme success is *favor with the King*. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16).

There are other success indicators besides name. Moses provided two lists of them: in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28.

> And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field (Deuteronomy 28:1–3).

Moses then presented indicators of success and failure. These were corporate sanctions for the nation of Israel, but they become individual through participation in the covenanted nation. Nowhere else in the Bible are there comparably detailed discussions of success and failure.

The list of success indicators (vv. 1–14) is significantly shorter than the list of failure indicators (vv. 15–68). The Bible does not tell us why.

There is a problem with this list. Moses stressed corporate earthly blessings and curses. Jesus spent more time discussing the treasures that lie beyond the individual's grave than the misery that also lies beyond the grave. He contrasted these future individual treasures with individual treasures in history. That is, He compared present treasure with future treasure, not future treasure with future misery. Why? Why didn't Jesus spend more time comparing heaven—barely mentioned and not described

in detail—with hell (Luke 16:22–28), and the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21, 22) with the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14–15)? Instead, He described present treasures and post-grave treasures.

The New Testament mentions hell as a place of torment. The Old Testament does not. The doctrine of hell is Jesus' unique addition to Old Covenant theology: a wholly new sanction for people to contend with emotionally. When it comes to misery to avoid, hell is second on the list. The lake of fire is number one: not just a tortured soul but a tortured resurrected body and soul. This possibility should suffice to focus men's fear of pain. So, the New Testament focuses on future blessings, comparing them with present blessings. The Old Covenant focused on temporal curses to be avoided more than temporal blessings to be pursued.

Blessings are marks of success. Cursings are marks of failure. In Jesus' focus on success, nothing He said was more to the point than this:

> For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:26).

This is not merely the heart of the matter. This is the heart, mind, and soul of the matter. Having said this, Jesus went on to discuss treasures in heaven.

> Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Luke 12:32–34).

This was good advice for a newly formed church, which was an outcast in society. The church in Jerusalem fled when systematic persecution began. "And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles (Acts 8:1b).

### *Self-Government*

What of a world of capital, of great institutions, of civilization? What should be the attitude of a rich Christian toward his personal wealth? This: a willingness to get rid of it when asked to by God through one's Bible-informed conscience and the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

> Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life (1 Timothy 6:17–19).

Uncertain riches are readily marketable riches: "easy come, easy go." They are disposable. Then what of less uncertain riches? Paul puts contentment at the top of the list. Then come righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and meekness.

> But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness (1 Timothy 6:6–11).

These are *objective criteria*, yet they are *experienced subjectively*. But so is every other wealth criterion. All economic value is subjective. The main difference between these criteria and mammon's is that the successes recommended by God cannot be priced. They are not marketable. There is no futures market for contentedness.

A famous saying by Oscar Wilde is this: "A cynic knows the price of everything and the value of nothing." It is a keen insight. He who is ready

to sell his honor for money is rightly regarded by society as a fool. He who would sell his good reputation for a bribe is considered a scoundrel and maybe a criminal. Yet in our cynicism, we say: "Every man has his price." This statement is wrong, and the martyrdom of early Christians, as well as deeply committed people of other faiths, testifies to the falsity of that slogan. In fact, a good way to learn a man's true faith is to enquire what idea he is so committed to that he would not renounce it on threat of death. This is never easy to discover. The best way to find out is to make the threat. This is not permitted by God, however.

Jesus said there are only two gods, God and mammon. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). Who is mammon? He is the god who offers this to his followers: "More for me in history." He is the god that lured this man to destruction.

> And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God (Luke 12:16–21).

## *Church Government*

A covenant-keeper is bound by oath sign—baptism—to the institutional church. This means you, Christian.

In your legal capacity as a publicly acknowledged bearer of Christ's name, you possess rights—legal guarantees—as well as specific benefits. The crucial benefit is legal access to the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11).

You also possess access to the church's court system (1 Corinthians 6).

With these as your foundation, you are entitled to participate in the life of the church, which is Christ's bride.

You may be eligible for church office. Here, you are granted authority—maybe over money, maybe over church planning, maybe over church discipline (1 Timothy 3). Some men regard it as a great benefit to be elected to high civil office. Being elected or ordained to church office is a great honor. This surely constitutes success.

Maybe you can become a teacher, shaping the thinking and lives of others. This is the success of influence. It is much sought after, especially by people who have attained financial security. Paul wrote,

> Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity (1 Timothy 2:7).
>
> Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles (2 Timothy 1:11).

There are many avenues of service in the church. Is serving others a means of success? Paul said so, citing Jesus: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35b).

There is a great division of labor in the church. "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Romans 12:4–5). This means that you can demonstrate your skills before other people. You can gain recognition, which is a blessing widely sought after.

> For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ (1 Corinthians 12:8–12).

There is something for everyone to succeed in. You don't have to be among the best and the brightest.

> And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked (1 Corinthians 12:23–24).

In other words, you can attain what millions of people have sought and not attained: membership in a significant community—a special community hand-picked by God.

> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved (Ephesians 1:3–6).

## *Family Government*

Success indicators in a family are many. One is peace. We read this twice in Proverbs—the only proverb that achieved this level of notoriety.

> It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house (Proverbs 21:9)

> It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house (Proverbs 25:24).

Another success indicator is wealth. "And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold" (Genesis 13:2). But it is an uncertain indicator.

A more secure indicator is a good reputation. We know this, not because of major examples in Scripture of families that had good reputations, but

rather through the negative sanction of a bad reputation. Among these are the sons of Aaron, whom God sent a fire to consume (Leviticus 10:2), the sons of Eli the priest (1 Samuel 2:12–17, 22–25; 4:1), and the sons of Samuel the prophet (1 Samuel 8:1–3).

Another success indicator is significance, such as Boaz gained, for he graciously married Ruth, and his heirs were David and Jesus (Matthew 1:5–6, 16). The apostles had significance, yet none had wealth and some had great trouble.

Then what is success, as distinguised from a success indicator? For fathers, success is the exercise of God-honoring leadership. A father does the right thing. Yet sometimes, this is insufficient. Children or wives rebel. So, a success can produce misleading indicators.

Visibly successful fatherhood is a success indicator used by the church to screen its leaders: a pre-requisite for holding church office. A success indicator in one area becomes a success indicator for another area. Paul listed this as a criterion for holding the office of elder. Such a person must be "One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)" (1 Timothy 3:4–5). The same criterion applies to deacons. "Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well" (1 Timothy 3:12).

A father represents God to his family. He is entitled to respect.

> Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it (Ephesians 5:24–25).

But this honor requires a reciprocal obligation: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them" (Colossians 3:18–19).

As for children, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:1–3).

As in the case of individual success and church success, there are obligations involved. *Success is the comprehensive fulfilling of these obligations.*

"His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21).

### *Civil Government*

The civil covenant establishes civil government. Its criteria of success have to do with justice.

> Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt. Therefore shall ye observe all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: I am the LORD (Leviticus 19:35–37).

Success here is a good reputation for justice in lands not under God's covenant.

> Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? (Deuteronomy 4:5–8)

Warriors are successful on the battlefield. David is the great example in the Bible. But he paid a heavy price. God did not allow him to build the temple.

> Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: As for me, I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building: But God said unto me, Thou shalt not

> build an house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood (1 Chronicles 28:2–3).

This is what David forfeited through the incident with Bathsheba. Word got out. Nathan the prophet told him, "Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die" (2 Samuel 12:14).

There is a good reputation, which David lost. Solomon had this for a time. Rulers came from other nations to see it in action. Yet he married 700 wives, had 300 concubines, and finally worshipped other gods. Power did him no good.

## *Conclusion*

The criteria of success are different in each of the four covenantal administrations. What is a valid sanction for one covenant, such as great individual wealth, may not be valid in another, such as in the church or the civil government.

The criteria of success have to do with building the kingdom of God in history. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). Any form of success for which there is a ready market—mammon's premier form of success—is least in the kingdom of God.

## *Summary*

Success is not the same as success indicators.

Success is imputed by God.

Men need success indicators to make judgments about performance.

There is only an imperfect relationship between objective success and visible success indicators.

The supreme success indicator is a good name.

Men seek to make a good name for themselves.

Only Jesus earned His good name. For all others, a good name is God's gift.

Remembrance is essential to significance.

Other success indicators are listed in Deuteronomy 28:1–14. Failure indicators are listed in Deuteronomy 28:15–68.

Jesus discussed treasures: temporal and eternal.

Wealth is uncertain.

Success in church is open to all, for each person possesses skills to use in service to others.

Church office is a special form of success.

Success in a family is tied to leadership and obedience to lawful authority, which are manifested by service.

Success indicators relate to the building of the kingdom of God in history.

# Chapter 4
# Performance/Imputation

*He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch (Proverbs 11:28).*

*The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit (Proverbs 18:11).*

Trust in God vs. trust in riches: This is the crucial decision associated with success indicators.

Rich men mistakenly believe that they own their riches autonomously. They prefer to assess their degree of success by means of money, which is a numerical indicator and therefore seems to be objective—also autonomous. Rich men appear to be in control, for they own their riches. They do not own God, so they do not feel comfortable when placing their trust in God. They may not believe God exists. They may think He is distant and unconcerned with what rich people do. They may think He lacks power. Better to trust in riches, the rich man believes. Riches will protect him. "You never can be sure about God." The fact that riches are fleeting may occur to him fleetingly, but he prefers to trust what most other people also trust: money. In short, he trusts their judgment. But their judgment is incorrect.

Poor people also trust what little they own, for the same reason. They seem to be in charge here: owners. Rare in every era are people like the poor widow with two small coins who gave them away for the sake of God's kingdom (Luke 21:2). She understood that two coins could not protect her. The rich man thinks that a lot of coins will protect him. She had a far better understanding of her own vulnerability.

We are all in God's hands. He owns us. Furthermore, we only think we own our wealth. We are in fact God's stewards. He owns us. He therefore owns whatever we own.

Not only does God own whatever we own, He also provided it as a gift. The Bible says that God is the source of every person's gifts, which are assets. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). Not everyone believes this. Even for those who do believe it, there is a problem for the recipient, especially a rich person: how to identify correctly the reasons for whatever wealth he owns today.

Here is the first aspect of his problem: His possessions are success indicators, not success itself. They are representative of worldly success. But worldly success may be an illusion regarding eternal success, and in fact usually is an illusion: mammon's illusion. Wealthy people may be successful in men's eyes, though not if they are known criminals or tyrants. But what of success in God's eyes?

Here is the second aspect of his problem: There is the ethical question of his personal motivation. Different motivations can result in the same success indicators. Example: Two men go to work each day. They do the same kind of work. They are equally gifted. They both work hard. They both seek to improve their skills in their occupation. Their work is equally satisfactory to their employer. They both receive the same wage. One of them seeks great personal wealth but does not believe in God. The other seeks wealth because he gives away money to Christian causes. Their goals are different, but their work ethic is the same. Their performance standard is the same. Yet God regards them very differently. His sanctions will be different on the day of judgment. "Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Corinthians 3:12–13).

Sanctions are associated with point four of the biblical covenant model. There are positive and negative sanctions. There are sanctions in history because there are sanctions in eternity. The difference between eternity and history with respect to sanctions is the degree of conformity between performance and sanctions. In heaven (Luke 16:22), which is temporary, as in the new heaven and new earth after the general resurrection (Revelation 21), which will be permanent, there will be one-to-one correspondence between what covenant-keepers do for God and the positive sanctions they will receive. Similarly, in hell (Luke 16:23), which is temporary, as in the

lake of fire (Revelation 20:14–15), which will be permanent, there will be one-to-one correspondence between the evil that people did in history and the degree of pain imposed.

> And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more (Luke 12:47–48).

There will be another crucial difference in their respective conditions, however. Those in the new heaven and new earth will continue to exercise dominion. They will continue to gain positive sanctions in terms of their productivity in the kingdom of God. They will be future-oriented. In contrast, those in the lake of fire will have their ability to exercise dominion removed. They will be governed exclusively by their personal histories. They will be past-oriented. Here is a picture of the two conditions:

> He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (Revelation 21:7–8).

There is perfect judicial continuity between history and eternity. Whatever men think and do in history produces results in both history and eternity. But there are fundamental differences between the two eternal environments. The covenant-breaker will have all grace removed: all positive sanctions. There will only be varying degrees of negative sanctions, reflecting the degree of evil committed by each person in history. This will be a continuity of cursing. In contrast, the covenant-keeper will have all curses removed: all negative sanctions. There will only be varying degrees of positive sanctions, reflecting the degree of good performed by each person in history. This will be a continuity of blessing. This condition will be an extension of God's

grant of eternal life to covenant-keepers in history, a process of forgiveness that has already begun.

> He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us (Psalm 103:10–12).

Paul taught that even a totally unproductive covenant-keeper will enter heaven. There will be no trace of the evil that he committed or that Adam committed on his behalf.

> For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire (1 Corinthians 3:11–15).

The good that a covenant-keeper does in history will be rewarded in eternity, which will serve as his initial foundation for eternity's phase of the dominion covenant, which will still define redeemed mankind. We can think of this stored-up legacy as each person's intitial capital base for eternity—the larger, the better. Therefore, Jesus declared:

> Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matthew 6:19–21).

In history, unlike eternity, there is no exact correspondence between covenant-keeping and prosperity or between covenant-breaking and poverty. No text reveals this more clearly than Psalm 73.

> For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment (Psalm 73:3–6).

This fact distressed the psalmist until he thought through the implications of God's positive historical sanctions and the discontinuity that will be experienced by covenant-breakers.

> When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors (Psalm 73:16–19).

The covenant-breaker's success indicators are a snare to him. They are the beginning of a slide down slippery places. Because of Jesus' teaching on hell and John's teaching on the lake of fire, we know that even if a covenant-breaker avoids slipping on the slippery slopes of life, what appear to be positive sanctions are for him negative sanctions: illusory successes that are lost in a moment and will be lost after his death. He receives no warning from his success indicators. His economic condition in history does not testify to his judicial condition in history and eternity. His judicial condition will prevail. "An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed" (Proverbs 20:21). "For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out" (Proverbs 24:20).

## *Self-Government*

Our names are associated with our deeds. To have a good name is to have a good reputation. "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold" (Proverbs 22:1). "The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot" (Proverbs 10:7). Yet we consciously remember only a tiny percentage of all the past events in our own lives. As for anyone's memory of us a century in the

future, there will be nothing, unless we are famous—and even then, only a few details will persist in a few people's minds. Those who remember a man's deeds will die, one by one. With them dies the memory of every person's name. Hardly anyone worries about this. It does no good to worry about it.

For a tiny handful of people—almost always males—bits and pieces of their stories have survived if (1) they were part of a literate culture; (2) someone wrote down their stories; (3) these written documents survived physically; (4) someone discovered them; (5) they were translated; (6) someone thought the information was worth remembering. This means that just about nobody gets remembered.

The fact is, prior to the Greek city-states of the eighth century B.C., only the Old Testament survived in anything like historical order. There are inscriptions of Egyptian monarchs or other high officials in ancient kingdoms, but nothing like what the Old Testament provides: chronologically ordered, detailed stories of people other than civil rulers.

Then why does a person's name matter to him? That is, why does his reputation matter? It will not survive in history. Everyone knows this from an early age. Yet they ignore it.

They should ignore it. There is a record. It will be remembered—not in history, but in eternity.

> He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels (Revelation 3:5).

> And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works (Revelation 20:12).

God remembers everything. He will impute—publicly declare—each person's judicial standing retroactively on the last day. That declaration will be perfect. There will be a flawless one-to-one correlation among deeds, God's evaluation, and His sanctions. "Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile" (Psalm 32:2).

For most people, temporal wealth matters. It is tangible. It has value because other people impute value to it. It distinguishes its owner from non-owners. No one says that he really believes the T-shirt slogan, "He who dies with the most toys wins." Yet most people do believe it, if we are judge what they believe by what they do.

Who imputes success to any person's actions? The list is long. It includes consumers, investors, employers, and neighbors. There are many judges who have many standards. But one standard has become the universal success indicator: money. Why? Because money is the most marketable commodity. This characteristic is what defines it.

Jesus identified mammon as the rival god that matters. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). Mammon is associated with money.

Money proves nothing by itself. It is an objective success indicator, but only because men subjectively impute value to it. They judge money as a mark of success. But success is in the eye of the beholder. Who is the beholder whose evaluation counts? God or man? And when we say "man," we must ask: Which man? Which representative of mankind? Most people believe that money best represents all mankind. Jesus fully understood this. So did Paul.

> But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Timothy 6:9–10).

The error here is monumental. Men impute value to their own money because other men impute value to money in general. Men trust the judgment of other mortals. But how reliable are they? How good is their judgment? Should a man bet his eternal future on the judgment of fallen men? Fallen men think so.

That which can be sold for money is, by God's definition, not the greatest success indicator. Success indicators that are not marketable are of far

greater value as evidence of success than money is: reputation, influence, and significance—in short, one's name.

### *Church Government*

John described the church's eternal success. "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21:2). But what about temporal success? Here, the success indicator is straightforward: to live in peace.

> I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour (1 Timothy 2:1–3).

Why is being a peacemaker a mark of success? Because Jesus so designated it. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

One foundation of church peace is justice. This is why covenant-keepers are required to settle their differences in a church court, where God supplies both the standard of justice and the sanctions of justice (1 Corinthians 6).

Peacemaking and rendering justice are aspects of judgment. Just as God renders honest judgment, so should churches.

The church also administers the sacraments. These are *oath signs.* They are sanctions. Through baptism, the covenant between man and God is established publicly. Through the Lord's Supper, the covenant is renewed publicly.

### *Family Government*

A major positive sanction is a large family. God is the source of this success indicator.

> Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate (Psalm 127:3–5).

This is clearly an aspect of dominion: being fruitful and multiplying.

Then there is the success indicator of a wise son. A wise son is someone who understands God's law and applies this knowledge successfully in his life. In contrast, a foolish son is a failure indicator.

> The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother (Proverbs 10:1).
>
> A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him (Proverbs 17:25).
>
> A foolish son is the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping (Proverbs 19:13).

Why is there a connection between a father's success and his son's wisdom? Because of ethical cause and effect in history. This applies in the family. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

This is why one criterion for being a church officer is successful ruler over his family: "One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)" (1 Timothy 3:4–5). We gain important information about future performance from others' past performance. We can draw valid preliminary conclusions regarding someone's future performance by means of applying God's law to his past performance.

## *Civil Government*

The institutional goal of civil government is to raise the cost of crime to criminals by imposing negative sanctions.

> For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil (Romans 13:3–4).

A covenant-keeping civil government's means of accomplishing this goal is to discover God's laws for civil society and then enforce these standards by the imposition of those specific negative sanctions that are mandated by God.

Law enforcement is accomplished through a judicial process that results in a formal, public declaration: guilty or not guilty. Then the magistrates impose appropriate negative sanctions. This is how civil government represents God's government. What civil government does temporally, God will do eternally: render judgment.

> And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works (Revelation 20:12–13).

Should you ever become a civil magistrate, you can gain a good reputation by providing wise judgment. Solomon did (1 Kings 10:1–9). This becomes a testimony to covenant-breakers.

> Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? (Deuteronomy 4:5–8).

## *Conclusion*

There are positive and negative sanctions in history. These point to the positive and negative sanctions in eternity. Historical sanctions are less clear than eternal sanctions with respect to God's validation of the deeds that resulted in them. Jesus warned:

> Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matthew 7:22–23).

What looks like success in history may turn out to have been a monumental failure. This is why wisdom is so important.

> Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding (Proverbs 4:7).

> How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver! (Proverbs 16:16).

Wisdom is the ability to distinguish right from wrong, relevance from irrelevance. It is the ability to judge correctly. It begins with God's judgment. It then extends to self-judgment that is in conformity to God's judgment.

## *Summary*

Rich people trust in their possessions rather than trust in God.

Poor people trust in their possessions rather than trust in God.

Great possessions may not be indicative of God's saving grace.

In the afterlife, sanctions will perfectly match each individual's performance in history.

For covenant-keepers, negative sanctions will be removed.

For covenant-breakers, positive sanctions will be removed.

We are to lay up heavenly treasures in history.

In history, there is no exact correlation between performance and sanctions.

The supreme earthly reward for good performance is a good name.

God will remember every good name.

Temporal successes are uncertain.

The god of exclusively temporal success is uncertain: mammon.

What matters most is who imputes value to what we do: God or men.

# Chapter 5
# Inheritance/Compounding

> *Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened (Matthew 13:31–33).*

Jesus was clear about the nature of the kingdom. It begins small, but it has comprehensive effects over time. It requires work at the beginning— planting, baking—but it produces a reward at the end of the process. In between, there is visible growth. God's kingdom does not attain visible success as a surprise event at the end of the process of development. Its success is not an overnight success. It is the success of a long process of growth.

God was the inaugurator of the kingdom. In His description of the final judgment, Jesus said: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). Yet the inheritor is Christ. Paul described the kingdom's hierarchy: Father to Son. Jesus Christ will extend His personal reign in history on behalf of the Father.

> Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things

> under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:24–28).

This will be the fulfillment of Psalm 110.

> A Psalm of David. The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies (Psalm 110:1–2).

This process has already begun.

> And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matthew 28:18–20).

The kingdom of God is an expanding kingdom in history. This expansion is visible. The defeat of Christ's enemies is visible. Put a different way, the kingdom of God in history is institutional. It includes all three covenantal administrations: church, family, and state. Christ's kingdom is not limited to the hearts of covenant-keepers, where it would remain invisible. Christ's kingdom is a civilization. The gospel offers comprehensive redemption. It leaves no sinful stone unturned. Therefore, wherever sin visibly reigns through Satan's human agents, Christ is to reign visibly through His human agents.

Men participate in this expansion either as covenant-keepers or as covenant- breakers. The former will inherit both in history and in eternity.

> What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth (Psalm 25:12–13).

> For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace (Psalm 37:9–11).
>
> Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5).

The essence of success is to be a part of this kingdom inheritance in both history and in eternity. This principle of success applies to collectives as well as individuals. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD: and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance" (Psalm 33:12). It also applies to individuals. "For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off" (Psalm 37:22).

Inheritance is associated with point five of the biblical covenant model. Inheritance is governed by the law of God. An inheritance will not persevere in history through the operation of evil. "An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed" (Proverbs 20:21).

Isaiah called God's kingdom the new heaven and new earth. He described it as operational in history, for there is no death or sin beyond the grave. It progresses over time, resulting in an era of rejoicing.

> For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed (Isaiah 65:17–20).

Clearly, this era has not yet arrived, but it will. We look forward to the fulfillment of this prophecy in history—anyway, we should. Success in his-

tory is marked by these features: rejoicing, long life, and avoidance of the curses associated with sin.

When the terms of the covenant are obeyed, the covenant is self-reinforcing: from victory unto victory. "But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day" (Deuteronomy 8:18). One form of confirmation of God's covenant is greater wealth, which is in turn supposed to persuade the beneficiaries to obey God with greater confidence. This is a system of *positive feedback*. It leads to expansion over time: the process we call *compound growth*. If maintained, this growth process eventually will fill the earth. What is growing? The kingdom of God.

Should this growth be accompanied by economic growth? The text says yes. So does Deuteronomy 28:1–14. Economic growth is therefore a legitimate social goal. But the motive is not wealth's visible confirmation of the kingdom of man but rather the kingdom of God.

## *Self-Government*

Jesus announced: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). He was clear in His challenge to the lusts of the heart. He knew what the contest was about: *allegiance to God*. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).

With respect to the question of success, the issue of inheritance and continuity through history is crucial. A person who believes that he will leave no legacy beyond his death adopts a short-run view of his efforts. In contrast, Christ called men to the longest run possible view: eternity.

> And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens

> that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Luke 12:29–34).

Christ said that a person can inherit treasure in eternity if he surrenders what other people accumulate in history. The kingdom of God is the covenant-keeper's inheritance. This inheritance extends into eternity. "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matthew 19:29). Christ could not have been any clearer. It is not that His disciples do not understand Him. They just do not believe Him.

As an individual, each person is as a blade of grass: temporary. This includes the rich. "For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways" (James 1:11). This places the rich man alongside the poor man.

> As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them (Psalm 103:15–18).

The central issue is the covenant. This means that the central issue of inheritance, as in all else, is ethical: the commandments of God. Membership in the kingdom of God, not the inventory of possessions, is the supreme manifestation of success in life. What each person should seek is favor with the King.

## *Church Government*

Inheritance is by covenant. Thus, orthodox confession is more important for maintaining the inheritance than is blood, meaning the family name.

> Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the

> LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD (Deuteronomy 6:3–4).

Jesus made it plain that discipleship is more fundamental than family membership.

> While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother (Matthew 12:46–50).

The institutional church is God's designated agency of discipleship: the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20). To the institutional church God has granted lawful control over the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11). This is very important, for this continuity is the single most important inheritance in history. Similarly, God has granted to the institutional church the keys of the kingdom.

> And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:18–19).

This has to do with church discipline (Matthew 18:16–18).

### *Family Government*

The heart of inheritance is this: "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just" (Proverbs 13:22). There is continuity between covenant-keeping and his-

torical inheritance. This necessarily involves the disinheritance of covenant-breakers in history.

There is supposed to be an increase of wealth in history—a build-up of capital—generation after generation. The familiar story of rags to riches to rags in three generations is not supposed to apply to covenant-keeping families.

> The family is the training ground for success. This training is supposed to be covenantal. What begins in youth will extend to old age. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).
>
> That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey (Deuteronomy 6:2–3).
>
> And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up (Deuteronomy 6:6–7).

Success is seen in the ethical performance of one's children.

> The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother (Proverbs 10:1).
>
> He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame (Proverbs 10:5).
>
> A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother (Proverbs 15:20).

The inheritance is primarily ethical. The wisdom of an heir indicates that the inheritance has been successfully transferred.

### *Civil Government*

Success in civil government is the administration of justice. By what standard? The answer has to be: God's standard. Where do we find this standard? In the Bible.

The kingdom goal of covenant-keeping civil government is *continuity*. Specifically, the following must be avoided.

> And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God (Deuteronomy 8:19–20).

The discontinuity of Canaan's tribes is what every society should seek to avoid. God removed them from control over Canaan. God disinherited the Canaanites.

> I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee. I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land (Exodus 23:27–30).

The continuity of stable government in all four areas of covenantal life is the goal. Ministers of the civil government are supposed to perform their services to God and men with this goal in mind.

Civil government is not to promote the kingdom of God by discriminatory legislation favoring Christians. It is to promote the kingdom of God by enforcing the Bible-revealed law-order on all convicted lawbreakers. Under such conditions, the kingdom of God will replace the kingdom of mammon in society.

## *Conclusion*

The biblical covenant model teaches a system of compound growth. It teaches that covenantal faithfulness produces visible blessings in history. The proper use of these blessings in history will produce blessings in eternity.

Blessings are marks of success. This is why covenant-keepers should expect the long-term accumulation of blessings in history. These blessings include wealth, but are not limited to wealth. Also involved are population growth for covenant-keepers, the growth of the institutional church, greater obedience by members of this church, and greater justice in every area of covenantal government.

## *Summary*

The kingdom of God grows visibly over time.

Christ acts on behalf of God the Father.

Christ will reign in history until His enemies are defeated (footstool).

Covenant-keepers will inherit the earth.

One sign of the kingdom's expansion is economic growth.

Covenant-keepers inherit wealth in history and eternity.

Kingdom membership is the supreme manifestation of success in history.

Inheritance is by covenant.

Inheritance is accompanied by disinheritance.

Being covenantal, the inheritance is primarily ethical.

Civil government is supposed to enforce God's law impartially.

This will facilitate inheritance by the righteous in history.

# Conclusion to Part 1

It is legitimate to pursue personal success. Jesus recommended that you do this. So did Moses. The question is: *What constitutes success?*

There are additional questions. What constitutes the meaning of "personal"? Does this include your family? Most people think so. Then what about your church? Church members think so. But do they think so enough to tithe to their local church? All of a sudden, fewer church members think so.

Then there is civil government. To what extent is a person's personal success linked to, dependent on, or threatened by civil government? This question divides Christians, just as it divides non-Christians. What we rarely see is Christians discussing this question from the point of view of the Bible. Instead, they adopt arguments presented by covenant-breakers. Christians therefore remain on the sidelines of society, cheering for one group of covenant-breakers and booing another. This is appropriate behavior for a captive people. It is not appropriate for covenant-keepers who are not living under bondage as part of God's temporary imposition of negative sanctions.

In Part 2, I shall deal more with covenant-breakers' arguments regarding success in general. Their conclusions are different from what the Bible teaches.

The Bible is clear: all of creation is personal, for it was created by a Creator God. It is sustained by this God. So, nothing is impersonal.

Everything that men do is covenantal. This does not mean that one of the three institutional covenantal administrations is solely responsible for any area of life. It means the opposite: none of them is solely responsible. But each man is responsible for that lawfully bounded zone of personal responsibility over which God has placed him. Every man is a covenantal agent of God. The dominion covenant defines him.

> And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them (Genesis 1:26–27).

God has established a system of institutional hierarchies, a system of laws, and a system of sanctions in history to enable covenant-keepers in general to fulfill the terms of this covenant. He has established an integrated set of criteria by which individuals can and should judge their personal success in fulfilling their God-given assignments in this comprehensive corporate covenant. These criteria are encapsulated in one phrase: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33)

# Part 2

# Conflicting Views of Success

# Introduction to Part 2

Success should always be defined covenantally. Success has to do with the dominion covenant.

> And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them (Genesis 1:26–27).

This is why the structure of success parallels the five points of the biblical covenant model. I have presented the five pillars of covenantal success in Part 1.

If I am correct in my conclusion that a five-point biblical covenant structure governs the biblical concept of success, then there should be a parallel structure governing non-biblical concepts of success. This is because a parallel five point structure governs all non-biblical covenants.[1]

In Part 2, I survey the conflict between Christianity and Darwinism. This includes both forms of Darwinian social theory: the top-down Darwinism of state central planning and the bottom-up Darwinism of free market economic planning. There is an irreconcilable conflict between Christianity and Darwinism. There is also an irreconcilable conflict between the two forms of Darwinism.

1. Gary North, *God's Covenants: A Layman's Guide* (Horn Lake, Mississippi: GaryNorth.com, Inc., 2006), Part 2. (www.GaryNorth.com/covenants.pdf)

# Chapter 6
# God vs. Mammon

> *No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (Matthew 6:24).*

Point one of the biblical covenant model is transcendence/presence. The God of the Bible created the universe, and therefore is distinct from it, yet He also cares for His creation and is present with it. Every rival god to the God of the Bible is part of the creation. It therefore cannot exercise sovereignty over the creation. It is part of the creation.

Jesus here did not identify Satan as the rival god. He identified mammon. What is mammon? The context reveals the answer.

> Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? (Matthew 6:25–26).

Whatever a society believes is the source of its success is the god of that society. Every society asks: What is the source of success? Jesus said there are only two possible answers: either God or mammon. Jesus made the correct answer clear: God. What other sources do men identify as the source of their wealth? That other source, whatever it is called, is mammon.

Jesus asked a rhetorical question: "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" But for some people, this is not a rhetorical question. When they think "more than," they do not think of personal contentment or a good reputation or wisdom. They think of more things to own—things that are offered for sale in some market. This is the heart of

mammon's religion: marketable wealth. Mammon is the great god of *more*. Its adherents have a confession: "More for me in history."

Mammon is the god of this world. Jesus asked another rhetorical question about this god's religion. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). If gaining the whole world in exchange for one's soul is a poor bargain, how much more foolish is it to gain less than the whole world?

The delights of this world dazzle men. The book of Ecclesiastes is an account of a man's samplings of this world's delights. The conclusion is always the same, delight by delight: vanity, vanity, all is vanity.

> I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun (Ecclesiastes 2:8–11).

Jesus had this as background material when He spoke to the people of Israel. They already knew all this, but, like most people, they had forgotten. Or perhaps they had never really believed it. The book's conclusion covered the basics of biblical religion.

> Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil (Ecclesiastes 12:13–14).

The idea behind the Preacher's conclusion is the comprehensive judgment of God. This idea presumes the omniscience of God. He sees every-

thing, evaluates everything, and reveals everything. Nothing is hidden to Him. "If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god; Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart" (Psalm 44:20–21). Conclusion: "Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?" (Isaiah 29:15). No other god is omniscient.

## *I. Christian Covenantalism*

### The Blessings of God

**Sovereignty.** The source of life's blessings is a person's true god. This is the god worshipped by men. The Bible identifies the source of all blessings: God. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). If every blessing is a gift, then God's grace is the basis of all blessings.

God gave life to Adam and Eve. He gave them a garden. He gave them authority over the creation. None of this was earned. All was based on grace. Conclusion: *grace precedes law.*

The relationship between God and man precludes repayment by men to God for benefits received. Even before sin, this was true. It is far more true after sin. What can man offer to God that God does not already own? God declares:

> For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof (Psalm 50:10–12).

Yet God demands payment from men for the sin committed in Adam, and also for the sins that they commit on their own authority. Payment has been made on man's behalf by Jesus Christ.

> But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from

> wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life (Romans 5:8–10).
>
> For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (1 Corinthians 6:20)

**Authority.** Men have received a task from God: to subdue the earth on His behalf (Genesis 1:26–27). This requires tools. These tools include knowledge, wisdom, and law. They come directly from God.

> Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whom the LORD put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the LORD had commanded (Exodus 36:1).
>
> And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore (1 Kings 4:29).
>
> Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart (Psalm 119:34).

God's gifts are designed by God to further men's assignments before God, "having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us" (Romans 12:6a). The greater the gift, the greater the degree of personal responsibility.

> And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more (Luke 12:47–48).

**Law.** There is an obligation on each man's part to put his gifts to God's use. First comes the gift.

> And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days (1 Kings 3:13).

Then comes responsibility: obedience.

> And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days (1 Kings 3:14).

In short, grace precedes law.

**Judgment.** God sometimes intervenes directly in history to grant success to men or groups. This is why people pray to God. They expect His special intervention.

> And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you (Matthew 17:20).

> And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive (Matthew 21:22).

God also uses men to implement His judgments in history. This is why He sets up governments. When societies obey His laws, they receive predictable blessings. God's judgments in history guarantee corporate success.

> And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. (Deuteronomy 28:1–2).

**Inheritance.** God's gift to covenant-keepers is that they get to participate in God's kingdom as workers of righteousness. Membership in His kingdom is a gift. So is righteousness. Righteousness cannot be pur-

chased with the goods of this world. It is inherently nonmarketable. This, rich men do not understand.

> Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:23–26).

The belief that God's righteous kingdom is open to the highest bidder is a mistake common to the religion of mammon, which is the religion of quid pro quo. God's religion is the religion of the open hand, both for God and for His disciples.

> Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened (Matthew 7:7–8).

> And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give (Matthew 10:7–8).

**Conclusion.** Here is the essence of all the gifts of God: They cannot be purchased by the recipient. There is no market for biblical success. There is no buying and selling this success. Gifts come from a sovereign God. They are a free gift from this God. He initiates the relationship with man and nature through grace. This is what distinguishes biblical success from mammon's success. Both ask something in return, but God asks only after the fact of the gift. Mammon seeks payment in advance. With God, men look backward to gifts received and forward to additional manifestations of God's grace. With mammon, men look forward to payment owed, for mammon's religion is a religion of permanent debt. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36–37)

## *I. Non-Christian Covenantalism*

### The Blessings of Mammon

**Sovereignty.** The source of life's blessings is a person's true god. This is the god worshipped by men. Mammon offers divinity to men. "Ye shall be as gods" (Genesis 3:5). This is a false offer. Mammon cannot deliver what he promises. He delivers only trinkets: things confined to this world.

Covenant-breaking men believe that the works of their hands are the source of their wealth. Moses warned against this sin: to say in one's heart, "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:17).

Satan wants to get man to worship him. Satan's temptation of Jesus is indicative.

> Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. (Matthew 4:8–9).

Nevertheless, Satan is satisfied with man's worship of anything else but God. Man's worship of man will be sufficient. Because of original sin, such worship is sufficient to keep men locked outside the kingdom of God.

**Authority.** Men are born under Adam's implicit covenant with Satan. Jesus said of faith in God, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). The words, "condemned already," testify to man's spiritual condition, his "default setting."

Every gift proceeds from God, but covenant-breaking man is unwilling to give thanks to God. This would acknowledge his existing debt to God and his subordination to God. He refuses to acknowledge this, for this would imply that he is incapable of paying off his debt on his own authority, without representation by someone with assets sufficient to pay off this debt.

Man seeks to gain success at the lowest possible price. He bargains. He deceives. "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth" (Proverbs 20:14). He seeks to get a better deal from the devil than God offers as a free gift. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). He would rather not attain eternal life than to receive it as a free gift on God's terms, for a free gift would show subordination to one whose grace is not for sale, who does not need man or the fruits of man's labor.

**Law.** There are standards of mammon's success. The familiar ones are money, sex, and power. These are positive sanctions that are thought to be worth pursuing, worth sacrificing for. Others are added: fame, influence, and good looks. But money, sex, and power are central, because there is a ready market for them. It is *the existence of ready markets* that marks mammon's most desirable successes.

Men believe that they can buy security with these assets. These are the currency units for buying security. But they cannot buy life eternal, and only rarely can they buy additional time.

> And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God (Luke 12:16–21).

The primary mark of mammon's success is money, which is the most marketable commodity. With money, men believe they can buy all of the other marks of success, or at least compensate for non-marketable defects, such as a lack of good looks. *Mammon's success is marked by markets.* Mammon promises man access to these markets at some price—a price that each man can afford, either alone or through debt: the loss of his soul. But a

man's affirmation of this confession of faith is evidence that his soul is already lost.

Wealth in general is widely respected. Free market economists attribute wealth to the private property system. Those defending socialism have become rare ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. They attribute socialism's successes—difficult to identify—to scientific planning by elite experts. Defenders of the mixed economy attribute success to an ever-shifting combination of profit-seeking entrepreneurship and wise planning of aggregates: taxes, monetary policy, ecology legislation. In all three cases, man and man's material environment are seen as the dual sources of all wealth.

**Judgment.** Men want to execute their judgments autonomously. This means that they must become the sources of success. They must do this collectively, either for money's sake or power's sake. Yet each man wants his say in the judgmental process. Men seek a resolution to this age-old problem: the one and the many, corporatism and individualism. An individual brings judgments in modern society in two ways: as a consumer in the marketplace and as a voter in a voting booth. This means that modern society identifies mammon as a combination of two institutions: the free market and the state. Modern man believes that there is an elusive proportional mixture of the free market and the state that will maximize mankind's economic blessings, which modern man regards as the main success indicators. Free market sovereignty and state power are modern man's versions of "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth."

Success is defined by man, both individually and collectively. There is no higher source of better judgment than man, man believes. There is no higher court of appeal. Man proposes, and man disposes. Then man evaluates the work of his hands: "It is good." Anyone who thinks otherwise must then either accept the prevailing judgment or seek to overturn it. If he wants to overturn it, he must amass the tools of judicial transformation: money and power. If he is consistent with his worldview, he will not pray to God for deliverance.

**Inheritance.** Covenant-breakers seek their inheritance as members of an autonomous kingdom. The kingdom of man is marked by its autonomy from God. It answers to no one or no thing. It is autonomous man's arena of dominion. It is temporally limited by the survival of man as a species.

But this is thought to be a very long time. Autonomous man discounts the future: the future beyond the grave and the future of mankind in a world that is moving toward extinction because of the second law of thermodynamics. In between then and now, men seek to establish a kingdom. Daniel warned king Nebuchadnezzar against this.

> It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth. And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him (Daniel 4:22–23).

Men seek both meaning and purpose through their participation in one or another kingdom. Yet final meaning and purpose are imputed by God, not by men. He imputes meaning to men's kingdoms. The end is the same for all of them. "And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it" (Daniel 5:25 26). Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar what the end of the fourth kingdom would be.

> Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth (Daniel 2:34 35).

The kingdom of God's own Son has replaced all pretender kingdoms.

**Conclusion.** Mammon offers success in history, but only in history. Success is offered for sale in two well-organized markets: economic and political. Success is imparted by a contract to buy or sell: money. It is imparted by an electoral victory: votes.

Adherents of the religion of mammon assume that everything has a price because every participant has his price. Integrity, honor, faithfulness, and a good reputation are all for sale, at some price. This is the operational faith of mammon. Its adherents do not ask themselves this question: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

## *Conclusion*

God offers success as part of his grace to man. He offers success for obedience to His law (Deuteronomy 28:1 14). He does this in order to confirm His covenant. "But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day" (Deuteronomy 8:18). Yet even the ability to obey is a gift from God.

> Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight (Psalm 119:33 35).

Mammon offers success as part of a market. Man can purchase success at a price. That which cannot be purchased is suspect, for it announces that something is not for sale. This is blasphemy. Mammon asserts that every man has his price, that nothing is sacred. Mammon tells man that man deserves whatever he can purchase. In some religions of mammon, men believe that they can lawfully steal anything they cannot purchase, even if they must re-write the law to do this.

God offers success on the legal basis of payment already rendered by a representative. Success is not earned; it is awarded by grace. Success follows good performance, not as a payment for services rendered, but to help the worker trust in God's future grace in history.

## *Summary*

The source of blessings is the god of a society.

Anything other than God that offers man blessings is mammon.

Marketable wealth is mammon's religion.

Mammon is therefore the god of the covenant-breaking world.

Ecclesiastes identifies all anonymous success as vanity.

The Bible says to obey God, who judges all things.

God gives men creativity and wisdom, then assignments.

Grace precedes law.

Righteousness is non-marketable.

There is no organized market for biblical success.

Mammon promises more than it can deliver.

It offers money, sex, and power.

Men believe that these can buy security.

Men claim the authority to reward obedience with wealth.

Mammon's kingdom announces autonomy from God.

Mammon's success can be purchased: works, not grace.

# Chapter 7
# Dominion vs. Power

*But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Mark 10:42–45).*

There are three main varieties of religion: dominion religion, which is biblical and judicial; power religion, which is activist and most closely mimics dominion religion; and escape religion, which is passive and mystical. Each has its own unique definitions of success and also the success indicators that represent success.

Every religion has a covenantal framework. They all adhere to some version of the covenant's five points. They offer different implementations of the five points. They offer different justifications for accepting the five points. But they all are structured in terms of the same five points. The five-point covenant model is an inescapable concept.

The Bible's dominion religion requires men to subordinate themselves to God through formal oaths: individual, ecclesiastical, marital, and civil. Covenant-keepers are required by God to extend their authority in God's name over the creation by lawful means. The law-order that God requires them to use as their tool of dominion is Bible-revealed law. The attempt to substitute any rival law-order seeks to usurp God's authority, thereby transforming dominion religion into power religion: from obedience to God to obedience to men. Dominion religion defines success as attaining the special grace of salvation and membership in the kingdom of God. It warns against the pursuit of money, the pursuit of power, and the pursuit of sex

outside of marriage. It asserts that the only success indicators worth attaining in this life are those that flow both supernaturally and naturally to people who do not pursue them for their own sake, but who instead pursue opportunities for service.

Power religion is a perverse imitation of biblical religion. It operates in terms of a rival god, a rival hierarchical system, and a rival law-order. Success for power religion is easy to summarize: "Ye shall be as gods, knowing [determining] good and evil." Power religionists seek to imitate God by displaying their own autonomous power. This is the religion of the tower of Babel. For power religion, the most prominent success indicators are money, sex, and power. The supreme manifestation of power religion in the twentieth century was Communism, a religion of revolution that created a culture of bureaucracy.

Escape religion attempts to avoid any confrontation with power. It also attempts to escape responsibility for extending authority over the creation. It offers spiritual transformation to the individual through techniques of physical self-discipline leading to mystical illumination, or through emotional celebration in isolation from the general culture. It professes unconcern with the details of social and civil law, as long as society allows the specific escape religion to remain autonomous from the general culture. Its supreme success is the attainment of individual spiritual autonomy—an imitation of God. This goal requires varying degrees of unconcern with the division of labor, which involves dependence on others. Buddhists are escape religionists. So are the Amish. Escape religion distrusts the money economy, avoids politics altogether, and often avoids sex (though not the Amish).

Power religion emphasizes point two of the biblical covenant model: hierarchy. Power religion entrusts power to an elite that imposes sanctions on all those lower in the hierarchy. This is a top-down system of administration. Members of the elite do not see themselves as specialized civil judges whose main task is to settle disputes that arise lower in the social pyramid. They see themselves as members of an initiating elite that provides much-needed direction to those who are lower in the social pyramid. The most obvious manifestation of the power religion is empire (Daniel 2:37–45). The dream of empire lures power religionists into extending their power across national borders.

Power religionists seek power for the sake of their names—not necessarily a good name, but a famous name. These are self-conscious power religionists.

Power for them is a success indicator, not success itself. But power is seen as the main success indicator in this life. All rival success indicators must be sacrificed to power. Power is therefore an idol: a representative of the true god, which is autonomous man.

Other men seek power for the sake of gaining money. This is not common. There are easier ways to make money—also safer. Money is more commonly seen by power-seekers as an indicator of success in politics—a fringe benefit. So is sex. Sex is always available to men who possess lots of money or lots of power, which is a major incentive to accumulate both. But sex is rarely regarded as something to be pursued for its own sake, except by addicts. Sex is merely a success indicator: representative of success in other areas of life. It must not be paid for directly. Any man who must resort to prostitutes is regarded as a loser in all societies.

All forms of power religion rest on a single strategy with three components, each of which encourages other men's acceptance of the ruling elite's judicial claim of the right to exercise power. First, men must be persuaded to attribute legitimacy to a powerful institution or person, and therefore obey. Second, men must be encouraged to seek favors (positive sanctions) from the powerful, and therefore obey. Third, they must fear an institution's negative sanctions, and therefore obey. He who seeks to exercise power is wise to seek legitimacy first, so that he will not have to spend so much money on extending favors or purchasing the implements of fear.

Dominion religion asserts the fear of God as the foremost principle of all government. Jethro told Moses, "Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens" (Exodus 18:21). Power religion asserts the fear of man as its foundational principle.

> Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin (John 19:10–11).

Some men seek to obtain power for themselves through political manipulation or revolution: to replace the prevailing elite. Others, having no taste for power or skills of power, seek escape. Some seek escape through drugs. Some seek escape through mysticism. Some seek it through a retreat from the affairs of this world: the monastic response or the Amish response.

The biblical goal is to replace the power religion, not just replace the power elite. The biblical strategy of replacement is service to others.

> Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away (Matthew 5:38–42).

The Mosaic law established the judicial principle of an eye for an eye (Exodus 21:24). We know this principle by a different slogan: "The punishment must fit the crime." This principle of civil law restricts judges, who might otherwise impose punishments that do not fit the crime.

Did Jesus abandon this principle? He did not abandon it for judges. This principle of justice never did apply to individuals; it applied only to civil magistrates. Jesus' advice was directed to victims of power religion: Jews living under the Roman Empire. Jesus preached the principle of non-violence and cooperation in the face of systematic state coercion: power religion.

Members of the power religion's elite seek public obedience. They impose negative sanctions on those who resist. So, the correct tactic in the strategy of replacement is to give no offense. The elite possesses only a limited supply of resources for the enforcer of its power. The elite must spend resources on suppressing visible dissenters. Meanwhile, covenant-keepers can go about their business of extending the kingdom of God. This process of kingdom-building begins with self-government under God's law. The manifestation of self-government under God is service to others. Such a religion is attractive to peace-seeking victims of power. It overcomes organized resistance.

Paul fully understood this principle of not giving offense. He wrote to Timothy:

> I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty (1 Timothy 2:1–2).

Dominion religion does not seek to replace civil rulers in a society governed by power religionists, as the Roman Empire was. Instead, covenant- keepers are to work to replace power religion. Dominion religion seeks neither a revolution nor a coup. It seeks self-government under biblical law. Self-government under God, said Jesus, must manifest itself through service to God by service to others.

There is no better example of this in history than the victory of Christianity over Rome's power religion. This took almost three centuries. Christians peacefully withstood persecution, discrimination, and taxation. Rome's power religion visibly went morally bankrupt, then economically bankrupt, then fell. This was repeated in the Soviet Union, 1917 to 1991.

## *I. Christian Covenantalism*

### Dominion Religion

**Sovereignty.** God is the source of all success in history. So, He is the true God. The supreme form of success is eternal life. God grants grace to those whom He has chosen. God's selection of beneficiaries is arbitrary from man's point of view. This is God's favor. The supreme benefit in life is finding favor with the King. God is wholly sovereign is this matter.

> For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

> Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth (Romans 9:15–18).

God is in complete control over the affairs of this life. He has issued a decree, and none can reverse it. "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Daniel 4:35).

Because He is the master of the universe, He possesses legitimacy. Nothing else does except as an extension of His decree.

This enables those under His covenant to rest in His sovereignty. God is in complete control. Man is not. Therefore, His people can safely place their trust in Him. They can safely rest. This is an internal mark of success.

**Authority.** God delegates authority to men, who represent Him in history. He who lawfully represents God has achieved success in history. He is part of the kingdom of God.

Success as a ruler is based on success as a servant. If anyone ceases to rule according to God's law, he becomes a usurper. He has substituted power for dominion. One mark of corrupt rule is seeking after bribes. Samuel the prophet, under the inspiration of God, condemned his own sons. "And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment" (1 Samuel 8:3). Bribes are illegitimate success indicators. So are the trappings of power, if sought for their own sake.

> When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (Luke 14:8–11).

This follows Christ's example.

> Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name (Philippians 2:5–9).

Elevation to the highest room, like Christ's elevation above all other names, is a gift of God. Both are rewards for lowly service.

**Law.** There is no law of success for recipients of eternal life. Eternal life is granted by God as a gift. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8–9). This reflects the supreme law of success: It cannot be purchased by fallen men.

This law of success also governs the law of success indicators. They cannot be earned, either. Man cannot buy God's favor. He possesses nothing of value to offer God. Man cannot bind God to some contract in which he has equal status. This is the message of the book of Job. Success indicators are given by God to His subordinates as a way to confirm His covenant, to show them that He can be trusted. Moses was clear on this: "…it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day" (Deuteronomy 8:18b). Success indicators, like success, flow downward from God. There is no market for covenantally valid success indicators. They are all of grace. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

**Judgment.** Biblical judging involves evaluating performance and then awarding appropriate rewards for services rendered. This is what God the Father did with Jesus Christ. God announced: "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles" (Matthew

12:18). It is on this basis that God rewards Christ's servants for services rendered—not their services but Christ's. Only for Christ was any reward a transaction between equal partners, yet He affirmed His subordination in the relationship. "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30).

The parable of the talents/pounds reveals that there are performance standards and rewards consistent with performance. But note: The owner gives the initial capital to his stewards. They own nothing on their own. So, when he returns, demands an accounting, and distributes appropriate rewards, he does so out of his own capital. The stewards do not purchase favor with their multiplied capital. Their rewards far exceed their multiplied capital. They return a few coins. They receive cities. "And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities" (Luke 19:17). The reward is proportional to performance, but on a magnified scale. This is not a purchase. What is the nature of the reward? Greater authority—more opportunities to serve God and men.

There are many forms of earthly success. They are all gained by God's grace for services rendered by Christ. The services are rendered representatively: by Christ first, then by His stewards on Christ's behalf: hierarchy. These successes are awarded by God so that they might lead to even greater blessings. The more we give, the more we receive. *But the primary blessing is in the giving, not the rewards.* Paul wrote: "I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Conclusion: Giving is its own reward. The payment from God—success indicators—affirms that God is fair and reliable, and that He wants us to increase our giving. What is the success that is indicated by the success indicators? The act of giving. This is a system of positive feedback.

**Inheritance.** This system of positive feedback extends God's visible kingdom in history. This is the extension of God's system of service.

What is the supreme mark of God's kingdom? Peace: swords into ploughshares.

> And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the

> God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it. For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever (Micah 4:2–5).

Peace under the rule of God's law is the supreme visible success indicator associated with the fulfillment of the dominion covenant. It is a legitimate social goal. It is the historical inheritance of the righteous.

**Conclusion.** God's kingdom is extended in history by God through His specially chosen people. They rule through positions of authority. These positions are gained through service to others: upward service to God vertically; service horizontally to our equals; and downward service vertically to those who cannot repay us, just as we cannot repay God for His mercy. The fulfillment of the dominion covenant is manifested by the kingdom of peace. This is an inheritance, a subordinate goal.

## *I. Non-Christian Covenantalism*

### Power Religion

**Sovereignty.** Man is identified as the source of men's success in history. Sovereignty is attributed to the People. Democracy affirms this god. But the People are an insecure god.

This god is not unified. There are competing sovereignties, meaning competing gods.

This god is not omnipotent. It cannot guarantee success—not for itself and not for those who affirm the sovereignty of the People.

This god is overwhelmingly political. It extends its rule primarily through politics. A few social thinkers would substitute the free market for the State, but their numbers are small and their influence is marginal.

Ultimately, this god is hypothetical. It does not speak for itself and never has. It does not reveal an unchanging written word. It speaks only through its representatives. There is great competition among men to become its sole representative.

**Authority.** The authority speaks on behalf of the sovereign People. There are multiple authorities. But in centralized tyrannical systems, there are few authorities. He who speaks for the civil government is generally the highest voice of authority. This authority is the state, which can grant rewards to followers and impose penalties on resisters.

Politics is mostly negative sanctions. Therefore, political authority is based primarily on fear. Men are taught to believe that there is no chain of appeals courts beyond civil government. Politics is supreme. The People do not speak except through the existing authorities. So, revolutionaries seek to overthrow the prevailing system of ordination.

The rule of non-Christian authority is based on the exercise of power. "They which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them." This exercise of power over others creates resistance. Power is always insecure.

Lord Acton wrote in a letter in 1887, "All power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." This is true of men, but not of God. The more success indicators that the state can grant because of its growing power, the more corrupt politics becomes.

Corruption creates resistance to the state. Resistance can lead to revolution or organized political action to replace the rulers. Success in such a system is precarious. Those who are successful dare not rest in their successes. Alertness to one's potential replacement as a ruler is mandatory.

**Law.** The law of success in non-Christian religions is that man can either purchase success or steal it. In Darwinian humanism, cosmically autonomous men can purchase success from other men, or steal it from other men, or extract it from impersonal nature.

In power religion, the state is sovereign. Men can buy success from the state through bribes. They can buy it through political action committees: legal replacement of the existing political elite. They can buy it through revolutionary violence: replacement of the existing elite. But control of the state is the key to success in power religion.

Power religion is works religion. Men are always working to gain success. They see their own efforts as the basis of their success. If success is granted by others, then they must be bought off continually. When power religion grants its rewards through the state, the state must steal from taxpayers. When civil law is used to grant success indicators to specially favored people or groups, the law becomes an instrument of plunder: immoral. This undermines men's confidence in the civil law.

When the state becomes the source of rewards, there is always the possibility of corruption. Corruption is a universal feature of civil government. The power to grant favors creates opportunities for corruption: false judgment. This is described in the Bible as false weights and measures. "Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:36). This involves an assault on equality before the law.

Judgment. Success in the power religion is granted by those who possess resources or the power to get resources. How reliable are authorities who use the state's power to amass resources for rewarding those under their jurisdiction? Not very.

This places all those who want success in life, including success indicators, at the mercy or the favor of corrupt rulers. If men believe they can buy success, then in power religion, they must buy justice. But purchased justice is unjust. So, power religion is self-defeating.

In works religion, everything in principle is up for sale. "Every man has his price." This outlook undermines men's confidence in the judicial system, which is ruled by politics. In humanism, there is no appeal beyond the state. This is the doctrine of the divine right of the state. It leads to tyranny interspersed by bloody revolutions.

Inheritance. The supreme manifestation of power is empire. The divided sovereignty of the People must be unified. Authorities seek empire in order to declare a unified kingdom of man. This is the great inheritance.

Instead of peace comes war. This converts ploughshares into swords. The costs of war escalate. The costs of victorious occupation escalate. The old description is true of empire. "We are not ambitious. All we want is control over every country on our borders."

Benefits to the few are great: contracts with the government, special trading rights, and residence in the seats of power. But for the people, there is taxation and insecurity.

**Conclusion.** The power religion substitutes the inculcation of fear for service. It offers temporary success to masters of politics. But it can offer no rest. The resistance created by the exercise of power threatens the present occupants of the seats of power. It also threatens the system of rewards and punishments that always accompanies the power religion. All power creates resistance. Absolute power is an incommunicable attribute of God.

## *Conclusion*

Dominion is by service and by God-revealed law. It is exercised in a decentralized fashion by multiple hierarchies. No one hierarchy has been granted undisputed authority. Politics is inherently subordinate to individual authority and family authority, which jointly provide the productivity necessary to support the civil government. Success is easily defined: favor with the King of kings.

Power is achieved mainly through politics. It is based on sanctions: fear of the state and rewards to favorites. Resistance to power grows as the state expands its jurisdiction. Success is easily defined: favor with the state.

Power is inherently limited. It creates resistance. In contrast, service overcomes resistance. It invokes the law of attraction. But it is difficult to implement (Matthew 5:43–48).

## *Summary*

There are three religions: dominion religion, power religion, and escape religion.

Biblical authority is obtained by grace through service.

All meaningful success indicators flow by grace to servants.

Success cannot be purchased.

Power religion is a top-down religion.

It seeks a name for autonomous man.

The primary tool of power religion is fear of man.

Dominion religion seeks to replace power religion by service.

God grants success to His servants.

Success indicators must not be pursued for their own sake.

God's rewards are all of grace and exceed services rendered.

The reward for giving is gaining more to give.

Peace is the kingdom's supreme benefit.

The People is democracy's false god.

Power tends to corrupt autonomous man.

Covenant-breaking men believe they can buy or steal success.

This faith produces corruption, which undermines the state.

Empire is the goal of power religion.

# Chapter 8
# Giving vs. Receiving

*I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).*

This is a fundamental biblical principle of earthly success. The best business success books begin with a version of this principle. Serve the consumer, we are told. But in these books, the primary goal for each individual is always mammon's guiding principle: "more for me in history." The Bible's primary goal for each individual is different. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." This is the only direct citation of Jesus' words outside of the four Gospels. Paul reminded his listeners of the nature of positive sanctions in God's kingdom. The sanctions begin with giving. This model began with God's gift of life and land to Adam and Eve. It was manifested in history by Christ's surrender of benefits on behalf of mankind.

> Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that

> every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:5–11).

It is not that Jesus Christ has not received exaltation or will not receive even greater exaltation. But the process of His exaltation began with His subordination to God the Father and to men. God gives. Man receives. Man then repays, but never on a scale comparable to the original gift. Whatever man repays to God is a mere token of subordination. This is illustrated by the principle of the tithe. Man keeps 90 percent. He returns 10 percent as a token payment of subordination.

The church receives, then gives, and is exalted. "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21:2).

No one can buy his way into the kingdom of heaven. An outflow of money or time from man's tiny reserves will not gain the benefits of kingdom membership. It is an illusion to believe that anyone can buy his way into God's kingdom—the most fearful illusion in man's post-Fall history. This illusion lured Simon the magician into an enormous mistake.

> And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity (Acts 8:18–23).

Down through the ages, covenant-breakers have comforted themselves with the illusion that they have bought their way into the kingdom. Christ disabused them of this illusion.

> Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that

> day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matthew 7:21–23).

To redeem something means to buy it back from its lawful owner. There is a price to be paid. The question is: Who has paid it? "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Galatians 3:13). Christ has bought His people out from under the curse of God the Father. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1 Timothy 2:5–6).

The great divergence between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of mammon is its required means of payment. The kingdom of God rests on a completed transaction: the payment made by Christ representatively on behalf of His people. Christ bought our way into the good graces of the true sovereign. The kingdom of mammon rests on a suicidal transaction: buying one's way into the good graces of a false sovereign.

The supreme individual issue in this life is one's judicial status: guilty or not guilty. Any legal status that can be purchased by the accused is offered by a corrupt court. The offer is therefore inherently mammonistic. Both the judge and the accused are guilty as charged. They stand condemned.

There is a common phrase in English, "the currency of the realm." It is a very useful phrase. It identifies the premier success indicator of a particular society or group. The currency of a realm reflects the judicial status of that society or group. It identifies what kind of realm it is: its sovereignty, authority, law, sanctions, and future.

With this in mind, let us examine the currencies of two realms.

## *I. Christian Covenantalism*

### The Currency of God's Realm

**Sovereignty.** The God of the Bible is a God of grace as well as wrath. "For if ye turn again unto the LORD, your brethren and your children shall

find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him" (2 Chronicles 30:9). God is in a position to grant His grace to anyone. He is wholly sovereign in this capacity.

> For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy (Romans 9:15–16).

This grace is twofold. First, common grace, which is offered to all: life, power, knowledge, and any other unearned blessing in life, "for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45b). Recipients of common grace are responsible for the God-honoring use of this grace.

> And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more (Luke 12:47–48).

Second, He offers special grace: the grace of eternal life. For this, a token repayment is expected: productive work. And from productive work comes posthumous grace.

> Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire (1 Corinthians 3:12–15).

**Authority.** God grants the special grace of eternal mercy to recipients through means. The primary means is preaching. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). This is not limited to the institutional church. But mobilization for evangelism comes from the institutional church, for outside the church, there are no valid sacraments. There is therefore an ecclesiastical hierarchy involved in the extension of saving grace. It provides training, counsel, guidance, opportunities for service, and the other implements associated with an army of spiritual conquest.

This is not a system of initiation, either upward into a hierarchy of illumination or inward toward an inner circle. There are only two judicial conditions: saved and lost. These conditions are not matters of personal performance.

> Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit (John 3:5–8).

Then what are the representative success indicators, the evidence of one's judicial status as redeemed? There are but three: public confession (Romans 10:9–10), baptism, a definitive oath sign (Acts 16:30–31), and outward obedience to His commandments (1 John 2:2–4). This obedience includes participation in another, continuing oath sign. "After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:25).

These success indicators do not save. They are not saving works. They manifest publicly that salvation has been imparted by God apart from any transaction involving the recipient's currency. The recipient owned no marketable currency. "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (Isaiah 64:6).

**Law.** God's commandments impose a system of continuous outflow. God's covenantal system is based on service. This is personal service upward to God, outward to men, and downward to the creation. But this service is also corporate, for God is plural. Institutions are responsible to God.

Wealth in God's kingdom is measured by what covenant-keepers give away. Service requires lawfully owned assets: time, money, and assets that can be exchanged for time and money. The stewardship of these assets is what the dominion covenant is all about (Genesis 1:26–27). It defines mankind.

There must be a replenishing of capital in this process. This is why the accumulation of marketable wealth is a legitimate goal, as legitimate as conserving marketable time. But it is far easier to accumulate marketable wealth than to gain marketable time. Time is the unit of measurement for budgeting the allocation of marketable wealth in ways that serve others. Life expectancy statistically is relatively fixed. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (Psalm 90:10). Time is the universal currency of the realm of history, pursued equally by commoners and kings. But it can be spent only in history. It cannot be laid up for our heirs.

There is risk of loss in history. A man's heart is tied most closely to that which he fears losing more than any other thing. Yet if this thing is exclusively temporal, it must be lost when life is lost. As the post-obituary refrain goes: "How much did he leave behind?" "All of it!" Jesus warned: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold" (Proverbs 22:1). As men grow richer and older, they often seek to exchange the accumulation of money for the attainment of significance, which can be purchased, unlike a good name. Significance can often be gained by either the outflow or forfeiture of time and money. It can also be gained in non-marketable ways, such as by courage in wartime or by good judgment that is not for sale.

In all the Bible, the exchange of money for significance is best seen in the call of Levi/Matthew by Jesus. Levi was a tax collector. Jesus called him to a life of service. "And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto

him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him" (Luke 5:27–28). Levi did not hesitate. He did not delay. He left it all behind: his bag of money, his career, everything. He later wrote the gospel of Matthew, helping to change the course of history as few men ever have. He gained both significance and a good name.

**Judgment.** The supreme success is the final assessment of life: "Not guilty." This declaration cannot be purchased. There is no marketplace of the soul. The supreme currency of God's realm flows downward, not upward. It does so only once.

> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:35–39).

There are negative sanctions in history, as Paul listed here. These should be counted as nothing. So should the forfeited positive sanctions of this life, the ones for which there are common markets.

> Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith (Philippians 3:8–9).

**Inheritance.** Covenant-keepers should seek an inheritance as the capstone of their service: a secondary confirmation, not a primary goal. The visible inheritance of the whole earth is the ultimate inheritance in history. But there is more to this inheritance than history. The kingdom of God

encompasses time and eternity. So, a covenant-keeper's work must encompass time and eternity. This provides many opportunities for service—infinite, in fact. The outflow can continue forever. The blessings of giving can accumulate.

But how? Because the capital is replaced through God's grace. "But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day" (Deuteronomy 8:18). The dominion covenant is reconfirmed every time that capital is replenished. *This is a system of positive feedback.* This process is not just individual. It is equally corporate. God is one and many. So is his covenant.

**Conclusion.** The currency of God's realm is God's outflow. It begins with Christ's incomparable outflow. This outflow subsequently produced incomparable inflow. This was true for Christ. It is also true for His church. This inflow is acknowledged by subsequent token outflow.

He lost His reputation, but not for long. He suffered for the sake of others, but not for long. He is patient with covenant-breakers, but not for long.

## *I. Non-Christian Covenantalism*

### The Currency of Mammon's Realm

**Sovereignty.** Moses identified mammon's concept of sovereignty: "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:17). Autonomy is mammon's confession. Power and wealth are its currency.

Most Western versions of mammon's covenant identify the autonomous individual as the original sovereign. In non-anarchist versions of Western political philosophy, individuals are said to have surrendered sovereignty to the state at some point in history—a hypothetical but intellectually necessary historical event. A few conservatives lodge original sovereignty in the family. This view has not been widely accepted since the late seventeenth century.

There is a battle for the office of supreme sovereign: the free market vs. the state. Neither can establish final sovereignty. The free market offers efficiency. The state offers power. The free market decentralizes. The state centralizes. Mankind as a hoped-for coherent unity of the *voluntarily*

*cooperating many* comes in the name of liberty and individual ethics. Mankind as a hoped-for coherent unity of the *coercively unified many* comes in the name of power and unified ethics. In philosophical terms, the free market comes in the name of nominalism, and the state comes in the name of realism.

**Authority.** In both the free market and democratic politics, men's institutions are said to serve mankind. The problem is in deciding whether mankind is essentially multiple or essentially unified. Each social order reflects its confession of faith regarding the plurality or unity of man.

The free market proclaims the essential plurality of man. The free market therefore offers a hierarchy of riches. Each person can become rich through competitive service to consumers. Consumers impose their individual wills on producers by spending their money. They outbid rival consumers. *Money is the currency of the free market's realm.* Success and failure are measured by the inflow of money: profit vs. loss.

The state proclaims the essential unity of man. The state therefore offers a hierarchy of power. In democracy, each person can become more powerful through competitive service to voters. Voters impose their collective will on politicians by voting individually. They defeat their political competitors by outvoting them. *Votes are the currency of democracy's realm.* Success and failure are measured by the inflow of votes: victory vs. defeat.

The free market's success indicator is money. The democratic political order's success indicator is votes. Each indicator represents success: either consumer service or public service. Each indicator readily becomes a snare and a delusion in itself: an idol. An idol impersonally represents a would-be god. A success indicator impersonally represents success. An idol is not a god. A success indicator is not success. In each case, the representative is a means to an end. It is not the end itself. But men forget this. They confuse means and ends.

**Law.** The free market rests on the ethics of individual responsibility. Democracy rests on the ethics of corporate responsibility.

The free market allows all men to make offers to buy or sell. Its supreme legal right is the *right to bid.* Money is the currency of the free market's realm. The democratic state's supreme legal right is the *right to vote.* Votes are the currency of democracy's realm.

The free market takes a principled stand in favor of equality before the civil law. It therefore takes a principled stand against the doctrine of economic equality. There is no individual equality: not of skills, not of ambition, not of hope. Applying the law equally will lead to different economic outcomes. Socialism takes an official stand favoring the equality of economic outcomes. But to achieve this equality of outcomes, the state must apply the civil law in an unequal way, beginning with graduated income taxation.

**Judgment.** The free market's positive institutional sanction is wealth. The free market offers great wealth to the economically efficient. Its supreme offers are security and autonomy. "The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit" (Proverbs 18:11).

Politics' positive institutional sanction is power. It offers great power to the politically efficient. Its supreme offers are greatness and majesty. "The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30).

The free market's supreme negative institutional sanction is poverty. The free market imposes poverty on the economically inefficient. Politics' supreme negative institutional sanction is defeat. It imposes weakness on the politically inefficient.

**Inheritance.** Both the free market social order and the democratic social order are limited by time. Time is the great enemy of both. Time imposes decay on both. Each must seek to overcome time. Inheritance in the free market is through the accumulation of wealth. But skills vary, father to son. Fortunes made by one generation are consumed by the following generation. The corporation is the free market's attempted solution. A corporation survives the death of its shareholders and managers. But successful corporations grow lethargic and bureaucratic. They are replaced by newer, more aggressive corporations.

Inheritance for the democratic order is through party structures. Unlike money, votes cannot be accumulated. But political parties survive far longer than corporations. Party loyalty remains constant through generations. Brand loyalty is not equally long-lived, although it does exist in rare instances, generally only for products and services deemed by consumers as not being worth the effort to switch. (In the United States, I offer this as the supreme example: Arm and Hammer Baking Soda, which has controlled at

least 90% of the market for a century. It does this because consumers do not care enough about baking soda to switch brands. It is loyalty through apathy. This is every businessman's dream.)

There is no security in economic inheritance. The legacy is always at risk.

> Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity (Ecclesiastes 2:18–19).

There is also no security in political inheritance. The legacy is always at risk.

> Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him (Ezekiel 21:26–27).

**Conclusion.** The currency of God's realm is grace. The kingdom of mammon is the kingdom of autonomous man, either individual man or collective man. Man believes that he can attain entrance to God's kingdom on his terms, either by purchase—money or good works—or by legal right of inheritance. He seeks to leave a lasting legacy to his heirs. But man cannot guarantee his own success or the success of his heirs. He is not God.

The currency of man's realm is money, power, or a combination of the two. Some men believe they can gain power with money. Others believe they can gain money with power. Neither believes that he can gain both through service: to God first and then to men.

## *Conclusion*

Men seek success. It comes only by God's grace, on God's terms. Maintaining success requires covenantal faithfulness.

Success begins with a gift: first from God (inflow), then to others (outflow). The successful man is to become a middleman of God's grace.

What flows in should then flow out. That which flows out is then replaced by even more. This process is marked by positive feedback: growth. "But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day" (Deuteronomy 8:18).

In contrast is the kingdom of mammon: "More for me in history." It begins with faith in man's sovereignty: "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:17b). Faith in man is always a works religion. The goal is self-aggrandizement through accumulation. Some men pursue wealth, with which they hope to gain power. Others pursue power, with which they hope to gain wealth. But neither wealth nor power can save men, either individually or corporately. Jesus provided the solution. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

### *Summary*

It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Mammon's offer to man is to receive more.

Jesus gave, then was exalted.

The church receives, then gives, and is then exalted.

We cannot buy our way into God's kingdom.

Simon the magician tried.

We cannot purchase God's declaration of "Not guilty."

Grace should produce productive works.

There are three success indicators of salvation: confession, sacraments, and obedience.

God's covenantal system is based on service.

Kingdom wealth is measured by what is given away.

Capital replenishment requires a system of positive feedback.

Choose a good name over money.

Levi is a good example: career change.

God's currency flows downward and outward.

Mammon's currency is inflow: power and wealth.

Its sovereign: free market or state.

Success indicators: money or votes.

Biblical success: grace (inflow) then grace (outflow).

# Chapter 9
# Values vs. Value

> *And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive (Genesis 50:18–20).*

Joseph announced this to his brothers, who had fled a famine in Canaan to seek food in Egypt, which had food to sell. They had not recognized him, for he was the administrator of Egypt's food supplies. They had sold him into slavery many years before. Now their father was dead. Would there be reprisals? They expected him to impute their economic value to him in terms of their ethical values: envy. He imputed their economic value to him in terms of God's values: mercy.

Joseph as a young man had possessed a family success indicator: a coat of many colors. It was a sign of his father's favor to him.

> Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him. And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more (Genesis 37:3–5).

His brothers understood the biblical principle of success: favor with the king. Joseph had greater favor with Jacob than they did. They envied him for this. Yet Jacob had invested Joseph with his favor. Joseph had not earned it. Isaac's favor was a form of grace: an unearned gift. This is always the

basis of biblically defined success. Ultimately, they blamed Jacob, so they devised a plan that would hurt Jacob deeply. They plotted to kill Joseph. They would have killed him, had not some traders come by who were ready to pay for him.

> And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content (Genesis 37:26–27).

They were dissuaded from murder only by an opportunity for a profit. Yet this was kidnapping, a crime that God would later identify as a capital crime—execution. "And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death" (Exodus 21:16).

What were their ethical values? Theirs were covenant-denying values. But they did respond favorably to economic value—a chance to make a tidy profit. This switch changed world history.

Here we see a familiar conflict of values in action: the economic value that men place on some commodity or service vs. the ethical values that God has established to govern men's relationships. Men impute economic value to something in terms of their scale of values: economic and ethical. Then they devise a plan of action.

God simultaneously imputes economic value—success or failure—to their plans and to their subsequent implementation of these plans. He does this in terms of His scale of ethical values. These imputations of value differ when men's scale of ethical values and God's scale of ethical values are in conflict.

Men impute economic value. Joseph's brothers imputed negative economic value to Joseph's life. They believed that they would be better off if he were dead. Only an opportunity for monetary profit persuaded them to reconsider Joseph's value to them. He became more valuable alive than dead. Little did they know just how valuable he would become to them in the future.

By the time his brothers met him again, he had much greater success: favor with a greater king. Pharaoh had elevated him to second in command in Egypt. Because of this, Egypt had food in the midst of famine.

Joseph had gained this favor by interpreting Pharaoh's dream about the coming famine. Yet Joseph had not purchased this favor directly. God had raised him up from prison to bring him into the king's presence. Pharaoh recognized the source of Joseph's success.

> And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou (Genesis 41:39–40).

It was not that Joseph had bought favor from Pharaoh. On the contrary, it was that Pharaoh was buying favor from Joseph and Joseph's God. Pharaoh was in the market for success, which covenant-breakers believe is for sale. Joseph possessed success through his connection with God. Joseph had received favor from the King of kings. Pharaoh wanted in on the deal.

In contrast to Joseph's brothers, Pharaoh correctly imputed economic value to Joseph and Joseph's God. He recognized the economic value of a God who knew the future. Joseph was that God's spokesman. As a covenant-breaker, Pharaoh possessed a more reliable scale of economic values than the sons of Israel. They had been consumed by envy. Pharaoh was not. As a result, Pharaoh wound up with all the land of Egypt. "And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them: so the land became Pharaoh's" (Genesis 47:20). The brothers wound up scrounging for food.

Joseph told his brothers, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." The Hebrew word translated here as "thought" and "meant" is elsewhere translated as "impute."

> And said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart (2 Samuel 19:19).

The meaning is to assess or evaluate, to make a judgment—both a mental judgment and an action that is consistent with the prior mental judgment. It

means to assess a particular situation in terms of a general principle and then act in terms of that principle. This procedure used to be called casuistry.

To impute is to assess. This assessment can include several elements: (1) evaluating in the sense attributing meaning; (2) evaluating in the sense of attributing importance; (3) evaluating in the sense of attributing ethical implications; (4) valuing in the sense of attributing economic worth. This procedure is individual and highly personal. Yet it is also corporate. Groups impute and are held accountable by God, who also imputes. God is both one and many. So is imputation.

## *I. Christian Covenantalism*

### The Imputation of God

**Sovereignty.** God is omniscient. He sees all. He determines good and evil. He infallibly evaluates what men do in terms of His infallible standards. David proclaimed: "Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments. Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful" (Psalm 119:137–138).

God imputes righteousness to those who have found favor with Him. No fallen man can buy this favor. There is no free market where this supreme form of success is offered for sale. Paul wrote:

> For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works (Romans 4:3–6).

God is also omnipotent. He is a guarantor of His covenant.

> I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that

> there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else (Isaiah 45:5–6).

**Authority.** Joseph received a grant of power. Pharaoh granted him his high position. But God was clearly in charge, a fact that Pharaoh fully understood, which is why he gave Joseph such authority. Pharaoh's imputation matched God's regarding Joseph's value to Pharaoh and Egypt. Because of this, he publicly declared Joseph's competence. He began with a question: "And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?" (Genesis 41:38). Then he arrived at an answer.

> And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt (Genesis 41:42–43).

Because his imputation of Joseph's value to him matched God's, Pharaoh prospered.

**Law.** God's Bible-revealed law is man's tool of dominion. Deuteronomy 28:1–14 declares that success for a nation comes from obedience to this law.

> And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field (Deuteronomy 28:1–3).

Yet it takes grace to believe God's law and then impute in terms of it. David prayed to God:

> Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep

> thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way (Psalm 119:33–37).

Success is therefore not for sale to nations or individuals. It is granted by God's grace.

**Judgment.** Judicial wisdom is personal. A covenant-keeper can exercise godly judgment, for he can think God's thoughts after Him. "But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:15–16). Christ told His disciples,

> And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22:29–30).

To evaluate one's condition in terms of biblical law is the chief manifestation of practical wisdom. This is imputation. Then, once the imputation is complete, covenant-keepers are to take action consistent with their imputation. This is an ethical imperative. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

**Inheritance.** The inheritance is given by God in stages. There is an increase in spiritual maturity, individually and corporately. This progress is marked by preliminary grants of the final inheritance: *down payments.* These are confirmations of work well done so far. They are success indicators. They are cumulative. They are visible as the kingdom of God, meaning the civilization of God.

The essence of God's kingdom is growth over time. Like a mustard seed, it grows into a tree (Matthew 13:31–32). This is the compounding process in action. "Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened" (Matthew 13:33).

The product of God-honoring imputation, case by case, generation by generation, is the expansion of God's kingdom in history. The long-term goal is worldwide dominion. "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14). This is the product of a long process of individual imputations and declarations.

> For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear (Isaiah 28:10–12).

There will come a day when all men will call a churl a churl. "The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful" (Isaiah 32:5).

**Conclusion.** Imputation is fundamental to social order. There is no escape from this requirement. Everyone must impute meaning and relevance in terms of his overall concept of cause and effect. Everyone has a hierarchy of values. He is required by God to assess his actions and the actions of those around him and over him in terms of this hierarchy of values. These are not hidden values, limited only to covenant-keepers. They are universal. "I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right" (Isaiah 45:19).

## *I. Non-Christian Covenantalism*

### The Imputation of Mammon

**Sovereignty.** In the modern world of Darwinism, there is only one sovereign: man. Mankind is divided. A divided sovereign cannot declare his word coherently. He cannot enforce his will consistently.

He is also bound by the laws of nature. He cannot break the laws of nature. Nature is impersonal and therefore not self-conscious. The cosmos is not sovereign because it is not self-conscious. It cannot impute meaning

or value, so it is not sovereign. Man is. Man is autonomous from God but not from nature.

Man's sovereignty can direct nature, but it cannot survive if the conditions supplied by nature that sustains man's existence should ever fail. So, when nature inevitably dies in the final heat death of the frozen universe, man will die. There will be no sovereign to impute meaning retroactively to man. Darwinists are content to accept this worldview as payment for a world without God, who imposes another kind of heat death.

**Authority.** The free market invokes the sovereign consumer. The free market is generally described by means of the metaphor of a machine. The market process is described as mechanical, i.e., impersonal, automatic, and impartial. In contrast, the language of politics frequently invokes the metaphor of an organism. Society is described as a living being, which in turn justifies the absence of fixed civil laws. Civil laws are said to evolve, just as species supposedly evolves.

Democracy invokes the sovereign People, but the People are always silent. They speak only through self-proclaimed representatives, who claim authority in the name of the People. There is great competition politically to gain access to office in the name of the People. The People are silent. Voters are not. Democracy since Darwin has been seen as an evolving organism, not an unchanging machine.

A machine answers to nobody. An evolving species answers to nobody. A machine explains itself to nobody. An evolving organism explains itself to nobody. So, mammon's sovereignty does not impute. Man imputes. But man is divided.

There are competing voices of authority in every social system. This is because God has delegated authority to multiple institutions, most importantly church, family, and civil government.

For free market theorists, consumers are said to be the voice of authority. For theorists of democracy, voters are said to be the voices of authority, an office they share with unelected judges.

The problem is, consumers are plural. So are voters. So, how does the voice of authority speak with a unified voice?

Consumers have authority because they own money. Some own more money than others. Voters have authority because they possess votes. Each voter possesses only one valid vote.

Through market competition, consumers establish winners and losers. But because there are multiple buyers, sellers do not need to fail, just not maximize their income. Through voter participation, citizens establish winners and losers. The stakes are higher than in the free market: winner take all. So, the free market reflects God's plurality better than it represents God's unity. Politics reflects God's unity better than it reflects God's plurality.

**Law.** The ethical law of business is "serve the consumers." The ethical law of politics is "serve the voters."

The operational law of business is "make a profit." The operational law of politics is "win the election."

There are no universal institutional ways to guarantee that the ethical law corresponds to the formal law. In other words, there is no way to keep the institutional sanctions from producing institutions that do not adhere to the official law of their existence.

Business values officially favor consumers. Democratic values officially favor voters. These are ethical values. But, operationally, businessmen are rewarded for adopting a value: make a profit. Politicians are rewarded for adopting a value: win elections. Values can conflict with value.

**Judgment.** Success is defined operationally, for men respond predictably to the system of sanctions that govern their area of service. This is why designers of all systems include personal sanctions: to make results predictable by making employees predictable.

Consumers impute value—but rarely values—to specific offers made to them by sellers. One by one, they ask: "What's in it for me?"

Voters impute value—with a few verbal ethical values—to offers made to them by political candidates. One by one, they ask themselves: "What's in it for me?"

In the free market, consumers individually impute value to things offered for sale. Then competition—producer vs. producer, consumer vs. consumer—takes place through market bidding: a gigantic auction in which the highest money bid wins in each transaction. Subjective imputation becomes objective success or failure: monetary profit or loss.

In politics, voters individually impute value to offers from politicians. Then competition—candidate vs. candidate, voter vs. voter—takes place in voting booths. The highest number of votes officially received determines

the outcome. Subjective imputation becomes objective success or failure: political victory or defeat.

Politics is an all-or-nothing competition. Business isn't. Because political parties must mobilize enough voters to win an election, politics emphasizes group values more than business emphasizes group values. Politicians speak of ethical values more than personal self-interest. This sounds ethical, and voters respond positively to an appeal to their ethics. But politicians are expected to deliver the economic goods after the election.

Businessmen speak of personal self-interest more than ethical values. But if consumers believe that honesty is the best policy, they will be wary of dealing with suspected crooks.

The chief issue is imputation. Mammon's allure rests on this expectation: "More for me in history." Covenant-breakers therefore impute value in terms of individual self-interest.

**Inheritance.** In the kingdom of mammon, as in the kingdom of God, inheritance is cumulative. This inheritance is manifested by success indicators. Businesses prosper by repeated sales. The goal is the accumulation of wealth. Political parties prosper by repeated electoral victories. The goal is the accumulation of power.

Businesses can change the mix of products and benefits, but successful companies find this difficult to do and remain profitable. This is called re-positioning. It tends to alienate existing customers. Yet changing consumer tastes or changing competition forces this eventually. (An exception is baking soda.)

Political parties can change their philosophy, but this takes time and is risky. In American history, only one party has ever done this and survived: the Democrats, in 1896 (the first Bryan campaign). The party went from limited government, low taxes, and a gold standard to a Progressive party: large government, high taxes, and a central bank.

So, there is continuity in mammon's kingdom. But there is far more political continuity than business continuity. Businesses come and go. Political parties rarely come and rarely go.

**Conclusion.** Values in mammon's kingdom inevitably become subordinated to value: "More for me in history." The supreme value in mammon's kingdom is "value for me." People spend their money and cast their votes for sellers who promise to do the right thing, but who

usually discover that the right thing to do is whatever increases the total volume of objective success indicators.

## *Conclusion*

Imputation underlies all forms of success and failure. God imputes individual success or failure subjectively. He does the same with corporate success or failure. His imputation is objective, for he is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. He does not make mistakes. He imputes perfectly His comprehensive ethical standards to each case before him.

Men are made in God's image. Therefore, they can impute ethical values to specific decisions and offers. Their supreme individual value in each case should be to impute God's ethical values accurately and then act accordingly. But sin interferes. Adam could have imputed great value to the tree of life. Instead, he imputed great value to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Then he acted consistently, according to what he regarded as his self-interest, discounting the self-interest of his posterity. He imputed rebelliously and incorrectly. He imputed Satan's values rather than God's.

Covenant-breaking men listen to mammon's promise: "More for you in history." It is a lie. It substitutes a different standard of success. He who imputes value to anything in terms of this standard of values and then acts on it will reap eternal failure.

## *Summary*

Joseph received greater favor from Jacob than his brothers did.

His brothers sold him rather than kill him.

Men impute economic value in terms of their scale of values.

God imputes economic value to men's imputation of value.

Joseph received favor from Pharaoh.

Pharaoh wanted to buy favor from Joseph's God.

To impute is to assess.

God is omniscient.

He imputes righteousness to those who have found favor with Him.

God's law is a tool of dominion

It takes grace to believe God's law and impute in terms of it.

Covenant-keepers have the mind of Christ.

The kingdom's inheritance comes in stages.

Mammon's sovereign is man.

Man is divided.

Nature limits his sovereignty.

Man will die when nature dies: no imputing sovereign.

The free market speaks for the sovereign consumer.

Democracy speaks for the sovereign voter.

The market is seen as a mechanism.

The state is seen as an organism.

The ethical law of business: Serve the consumers.

The ethical law of democracy: Serve the voters.

The formal law of business: Make a profit.

The formal law of democracy: Win the election.

The formal law's sanctions need not promote the ethical law.

Imputation is the defining issue: sanctions.

Politics has greater continuity than business.

Values in both of mammon's systems are subordinated to value: "More for me in history."

Imputation underlies success and failure.

Mammon imputes value in terms of inflow: money or votes.

# Chapter 10
# Long Run vs. Short Run

*And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence (Luke 16:22–26).*

This is the only detailed discussion of hell in the Bible. The other major reference, which appears in the book of Revelation, mentions hell as a preliminary place of torment which is deposited in the lake of fire, along with its contents, after the final judgment (Revelation 20:14–15). This will take place after the general resurrection, when people have had their bodies and souls reunited. Hell will be bad. Then things will get worse.

Prior to Jesus' ministry, the world had no picture of hell as a place of torture. The Greeks had the nether world populated by conscious spirits that had continuity with the people who they had been in history. But nothing remotely as horrifying as hell can be found in any nation's literature, or in any religion, prior to Jesus' words in this passage. This is as bad as it gets. Then it gets worse: the lake of fire.

This passage represents a monumental theological and religious discontinuity in man's history. The doctrine of hell provided an historically unprecedented motivation for evangelism and foreign missions. No previous

religion had anything comparable to the foreign missions programs of the early church. Only Islam, a post-Christian religion that looks back to Jesus, has had anything comparable to the missions emphasis of the church.

This missions program has been the product of a deep and abiding concern for the lost. There is nothing in the New Testament that indicates that covenant-keepers are threatened with hell because they refuse to do the work of evangelism. The New Testament encourages concern for the lost, but Christianity is not a works religion. No one can work his way into favor with God. In any case, lack of performance is not a criterion for access into heaven. Even those covenant-keepers whose life's work is wood, hay, and stubble will get in.

> Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire (1 Corinthians 3:12–15).

Fear is not the primary motivation behind Christian evangelism. Obedience to God is the primary motivation. Next is concern for the lost. Christianity is an other-directed religion. Its supreme model is Christ, who sacrificed Himself to please God and to make atonement for fallen man. His life provides the non-intuitive biblical concept of success: the supremely successful life based on the supreme sacrifice on behalf of others.

> As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father (John 10:15–18).

In this passage is the motivation for foreign missions: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

Christianity is expansionist. It was the first major religion in history to be rigorously expansionist. The entire world is its arena. Its concept of success is the conquest of the entire world.

Old Covenant religion saw the world coming to Jerusalem for leadership.

> But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Micah 4:1–2)

In contrast, Christianity sees the church as the new Jerusalem, which extends outward to the entire world.

So, Christianity offers two doctrines that affect men's time perspective. First, the doctrine of eternal torment, with God as the cosmic tormenter/torturer. This doctrine persuades men to repent in history for the sake of their condition in eternity. Second, this doctrine is the great motivation for foreign missions, which extends Christians' view of history: the time it will take to bring the gospel to the whole world.

Success is individual: avoiding eternal torment. Success is also corporate: participation in a worldwide evangelism program that will establish the new Jerusalem—the culture of Christianity—as the culture of the world. "The law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem," as Micah put it.

## *I. Christian Covenantalism*

### The Time Frame of God

**Sovereignty.** God is eternal. Nothing else is. This places God outside time's boundaries. God established time's initial boundary. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). For God, the lim-

its of time are no burden at all. "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8). To use a slang phrase in English, God is not chomping at the bit to get things going or to complete them.

Failure for God is not an option. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11). So, success comes naturally to God in a supernatural kind of way. This makes God different from man, and vastly different from Satan, for whom success is not an option, to whom failure comes naturally in a supernatural kind of way. His end is sure: "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41).

**Authority.** Authority is associated closely with time  Men's authority is limited because their time is limited. Jesus, as the perfect man, had limited time in His earthly ministry. "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4). Each man and each group must budget time as if it were more precious than money, which it is.  Lost money is replaceable.  Lost time is not.

Men adopt the division of labor to save time and multiply their output. "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up" (Ecclesiastes 4:9–10).  Paul described the church as a body with members (Romans 12; I Corinthians 12). The division of labor requires an organization to coordinate men's efforts, which in turn requires a hierarchy: a chain of command. The one and the many find expression in human organizations. Organizations save money, but more important, they save time.  Success is achieved over time.

Man is to master his time as if it were a tool, which it is. Yet time is over him, grinding him down. The relationship is hierarchical. Because of God, this relationship is not impersonal. This is why covenant-keeping man can gain control over the time allotted to him by God.

**Law.** The main one is the law of death.  Moses warned:

> For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom (Psalm 90:9–12).

There are great differences in personal wealth. There are few differences in personal life expectancy. With respect to the universal capital asset that matters most to men, especially as they grow older, they are allocated a close approximation of equal distribution—more equal than is true in most other areas of life. God then sees what they do with this gift.

**Judgment.** God imputes meaning and purpose to all things. He evaluates men's performance with respect to their individual work in the overall process of time. But God is a trinity. God therefore evaluates in terms of the one—the earthly performance of mankind (Genesis 1:26–28)—and the many: the earthly performances of individuals and groups. He makes a judgment of one's work in history, including its effects beyond the grave, and then imposes sanctions, both in history and at the final judgment.

So, the timeline for individual success or failure is not one lifespan; it is all of history. God imputes success or failure in terms of the outworking of every person's works through history, beginning with Adam and Eve. If this were not true, there would not be original sin. There would also not be imputed redemption—past, present, and future—by Jesus Christ.

> But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:15–17).

This is why the issue of God's judgment always raises the question of the comparative success and failure of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of mammon in history.

**Inheritance.** Time is cumulative for covenant-keepers, just as their eternity is. Time is not equally cumulative for covenant-breakers, just as their eternity is not cumulative.

> Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments (Exodus 20:5–6).

The covenant-breakers' kingdom is cut off after a few generations. They lose their inheritance. The covenant-keepers' kingdom expands permanently. The compounding process produces great growth over long periods of time, no matter how low the rate of growth is. God supplies sufficient time. "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations" (Deuteronomy 7:9).

**Conclusion.** Time is highly limited for individuals. It is not highly limited for the church and for the kingdom of God. What anyone can accomplish in one lifetime is highly limited, except for the special few. But because of the division of labor in God's kingdom, each covenant-keeper's positive efforts can produce comprehensive change. The division of labor over long eons of time will be sufficient for covenant-keepers to complete as much of the dominion covenant as men who are under Adam's curse (Genesis 3:17–19) can accomplish in history.

Success is therefore both individual and corporate because of the division of labor. Success is imputed by God to each individual in terms of his contributions within a long process of dominion. The promise to Abraham applies to each of us. "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Genesis 22:18).

## *I. Non-Christian Covenantalism*

### The Time Frame of Mammon

**Sovereignty.** Satan has none. Everything that he possesses is a gift of God—a gift that will backfire on him in eternity. So, man has no sovereignty through his pseudo-covenant with Satan. But man, as the god mammon, claims sovereignty. This includes sovereignty over time. What kind of sovereignty is it?

In the world of Darwinism, nature has no purpose other than the purpose that mankind can impose on it. The sovereignty of mammon's kingdom is the sovereignty of man. But man is divided. He is one and many, just as God is, but he is not omnipotent, omniscient, and, above all, self-existent. So, he cannot control time. Man proposes, but God disposes. The decree of God, not the decree of man, is sovereign.

**Authority.** Every man is under time's limits. There are few surprises to match the surprise of old age, yet men can see it coming from an early age. One of the great benefits of letting a child have a pet is that the pet will die before a young child is an adult.

Time is ultimately the master of covenant-breaking man.

> As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them (Psalm 103:15-18).

Mercy is eternal. Time is limited. Success should be viewed in terms of that permanent mercy, not the grass-like temporality of life. But Darwinists have no concept of cosmic mercy.

**Law.** The main one is the law of death. It is manifested in the second law of thermodynamics. The only laws that are believed to be eternal are the laws of thermodynamics. The second law of thermodynamics condemns humanity and life itself to cosmic death: the heat death of the frozen universe. Ashes to frozen ashes, dust to frozen dust. The Darwinist has no doctrine of eternal life.

In between today and the frozen cosmos, when time will be no more, there are only the evolving, impersonal, meaningless, purposeless laws of evolution and the evolving personal laws of society. So, the quest for power to shape the laws of society is a feature of Darwinism's power religion. But what constitutes success? Mere survival? But the next phase of evolution may produce a new sovereign, one that hates mankind. Science fiction returns to this theme repeatedly. Or it may produce a killer bacteria that brings man low or to extinction. Maybe a failure in some laboratory will produce this new species. That failure will be a success for the new species. "Thanks, modern human science! We sure do appreciate your efforts, in our bacterial sort of way."

**Judgment.** Judgment requires sovereignty. He who is not sovereign can issue only preliminary and tentative judgments.

In the long run, modern man has no hope, because there is no sovereign to pass judgment on any man's efforts. There is no cosmic agent to announce retroactively to a man or mankind: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

The cosmos began purposelessly. It will die purposelessly. There is nothing outside of the universe that can impute purpose to it or anything within it. This also applies to meaning, significance, and all other categories of judgment.

So, man's success or failure is not grounded on anything more sovereign than fallible man. The Darwinist announces: "Man imputes success or failure to man." This means, paraphrasing C. S. Lewis, that some men impute success or failure to all the others. But in the long run, we are all dead, the Darwinist also believes.

**Inheritance.** For Darwinists, mankind's inheritance is exclusively temporal. But there is an inescapable problem for Darwinists: Time is running out for man. The kingdom of mammon is the kingdom of death: the heat death of the universe. It is a kingdom ruled by evolution, which is the law of competitive replacement. Then the day will come when the last replacement dies.

The works of every man's hands is swallowed up by time. Those who follow will forget everyone's previous works. The Preacher saw that this is the inescapable conclusion for would-be autonomous man. "There is no

remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after" (Ecclesiastes 1:11). This is vanity, a chasing after wind.

> As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand. And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind? (Ecclesiastes 5:15–16).

**Conclusion.** Modern man chases after wind. Yet even the wind will cease to blow when potential energy becomes expended energy. Success and failure have no meaning in such a universe, for meaning has no meaning. Meaning is imputed by a sovereign, personal agent, and Darwinism has only puny man as its sovereign, imputing agent. Mammon's kingdom is like Hinduism's kingdom. It stands on a great elephant. But what does the elephant stand on? A giant turtle. But what does the turtle stand on? "It's turtles all the way down." For the Darwinist, it's mutations all the way back. And forward? The heat death of the universe.

In a 1918 speech to students at the University of Munich, "Science as a Vocation," the greatest social scientist of that era, Max Weber [Mawx Vayber], warned his audience of the meaningless of their view of life, which he held, too.

> In science, each of us knows that what he has accomplished will be antiquated in ten, twenty, fifty years. That is the fate to which science is subjected: it is the very meaning of scientific work….

As grim as this sounded, he surrendered even this optimism a few minutes later. There is no meaning in a world marked by death, he said. "And because death is meaningless, civilized life as such is meaningless; by its very 'progressiveness' it gives death the imprint of meaninglessness."

## *Conclusion*

In 1719, Isaac Watts, the father of English hymnody, wrote the hymn that has become known as the English church's national anthem: "Our God,

Our Help in Ages Past." It is a hymn based on Psalm 90, Moses' psalm on man's life expectancy. This hymn serves as the epitaph for participants in the kingdom of God and the kingdom of mammon.

> Time like an ever-rolling stream
> Bears all its sons away;
> They fly forgotten as a dream
> Dies at the opening day.
>
> Like flow'ry fields the nations stand
> Pleas'd with the morning-light;
> The flowers beneath the Mower's hand
> Lie withering e'er 'tis night.

The final stanza belongs only to covenant-keepers.

> Our God, our help in ages past,
> Our hope for years to come,
> Be thou our guard while troubles last
> And our eternal home.

Success and failure are imputed by the God who makes an eternal home for covenant-keepers and an eternal torture chamber for covenant-breakers. Choose this day whom you will serve. Then serve until your time runs out. You will be there before you know it.

### *Summary*

Hell is temporary.

The lake of fire is permanent.

Jesus first announced to mankind the doctrine of hell as fiery torment.

The doctrine of hell was a great motivator for early church evangelism.

Christianity is other-directed.

Christianity is expansionist.

Success is individual: avoiding hell.

Success is corporate: expanding the kingdom of God.

God is outside time's boundaries.

He cannot fail in history.

Men deal with time's limits by the division of labor.

This requires hierarchy.

Time's main law is the law of death (entropy).

The timeline of success and failure is all of history.

Time is cumulative.

Eternity is cumulative for covenant-keepers (dominion).

Eternity is not cumulative for covenant-breakers.

Mercy is eternal.

Darwinists have no concept of cosmic mercy.

Time's process is one of ultimate failure: death.

Autonomous nature offers no meaning to life.

Success is to be part of God's household.

# Conclusion to Part 2

Christianity cannot be reconciled with Darwinism. The Darwinists understand this and act in terms of it. We find that Christians are less committed to this doctrine of irreconcilability than Darwinists are. Christians, especially academically certified Christians, too often spend their lives trying to convince Christian laymen and Ph.D-holding Darwinists that Christianity has a legitimate role to play in a joint effort between Christians and Darwinists in developing explanations of how the world works. Darwinists are utterly contemptuous of Christianity. Christian scholars are not equally contemptuous of Darwinism. Darwinists are fools. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good" (Psalm 14:1). They are the most self-conscious fools in history.

In Part 2, I did my best to show that the idea of success in Christianity cannot be conformed to the idea of success in Darwinism. Darwinism proclaims the survival of the fittest in an impersonal cosmos. Christianity proclaims the triumph of the covenantally faithful in a personal cosmos. Darwinism proclaims the heat death of the universe: the end of meaning and purpose. Christianity proclaims the heat death of covenant-breakers: the eternality of meaning and purpose.

Mammon offers a promise to mankind: "More for you in history." It is a lie. Covenant-breakers dearly want to believe this lie. Jesus made it clear that this is the most attractive lie that men are tempted to believe. Mammon is the most attractive god for covenant-breaking man. Mammon appears to serve man. But this is a lie, as it was in the garden. Mammon's offer is always man's subordination disguised as man's supremacy.

> Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me (Matthew 4:8–9).

In contrast, God's offer is covenant-keeping men's supremacy over nature through their self-conscious subordination to God. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). God's offer is *success through service:* service to God, service to other man, and service to nature. The model is Jesus. Paul wrote:

> Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:5–11).

The pattern is clear: first service, then inheritance; first subordination, then glorification. This is the biblical model for success. Everything else is some version of mammon's offer.

Darwinism also proclaims service. In one version, service is to the public as subordinate citizens, unable to care for themselves. The goal is power over the affairs of other men. He who promises to serve becomes the master. This worldview is based on a theology: salvation by law—civil law.

In the other version, service is to the public as money-bearing sovereigns. But the goal is personal wealth, personal influence, or personal significance. Adam Smith was a true son of Adam when he wrote these famous words in Chapter 2 of *The Wealth of Nations* (1776).

> But man has almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren, and it is in vain for him to expect it from their benevolence only. He will be more likely to prevail if he can interest their self-love in his favour, and show them that it is for their own advantage to do for him what he requires of them. Whoever offers to another a bargain of

> any kind, proposes to do this. Give me that which I want, and you shall have this which you want, is the meaning of every such offer; and it is in this manner that we obtain from one another the far greater part of those good offices which we stand in need of. It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages.

The motivation here is clear: "More for me in history."

Charles Darwin took this view of man, which was based on competitive self-interest, and applied it to all of nature: the survival of the fittest. Darwin's view of the biological world was consistent. Out of individual competition for scarce resources, Darwin argued, comes the order of nature. There is no creator God. There is no providential decree. There is no grand design. There is only individual competition for resources. The supreme motivation of every competitor, from the amoeba to mankind, is this: "More for me in history."

Christianity denies Darwin's premise, beginning with Genesis 1:1. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." It continues this denial until Revelation 22:21. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

The goal of statist Darwinism is autonomous power. The goal of Christianity is covenantal dominion. The goal of free market Darwinism is autonomous economic growth. The goal of Christianity is to inherit the earth.

What is the difference? Grace. Autonomous man seeks the whole earth and loses his soul in the attempt. Covenant-keeping man seeks obedient subordination to God through His grace and thereby inherits his share of the whole earth as God's confirmation of His covenant. "But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day" (Deuteronomy 8:18).

# Conclusion

In the Introduction, I wrote this:

> I need to make one thing as clear as I can: *There is no program for success.* Well, this is not quite true. There was such a program, and Jesus Christ successfully pursued it. No one else ever has. No one else ever will. No one else ever could. Success is attained solely by God's grace: God the Father's judicial imputation of Christ's successful completion of the program.

There, I defined personal success as having your name written in the book of life. Now is the time to consider the following fact: Whether or not your name is in the book of life was settled before the foundation of this world. John wrote:

> The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is (Revelation 17:8).

Covenant-breakers' names were not written in the book of life before the foundation of the world. This means that covenant-keepers' names were written in it. Paul taught this.

> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the

> adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. (Ephesians 1:3–6).

You may not believe this, but this is what the Bible clearly teaches. You may decide to argue with God, but please do not argue with me. I do not make the rules. I merely report them.

### *Temporal Success*

Now we come to a related issue: success indicators. Success indicators are an outworking of the dominion covenant (Genesis 1:26–27). They constitute temporal success. They do not guarantee eternal success. Only God's grace can guarantee eternal success. This success was decreed by God before the foundation of the world. That is why it is guaranteed.

Covenant-keepers are required by God to seek dominion self-consciously, as God's delegated agents. This is a stewardship function: dominion over assets in the name of the owner. Christ's parable of the talents serves as the model (Matthew 25:14–30). An owner gives three servants money. He then leaves. When he returns, he demands an accounting. Each servant is rewarded in terms of his success in multiplying the money entrusted to him. The servant who returns only what was originally transferred to him is punished unmercifully. The master then instructs his enforcers to arrest him.

> Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath (Matthew 25:27–29).

Temporal success is not an option. It is a covenantal responsibility. This is why it is so important that covenant-keepers correctly identify success. Then they must identify success indicators, which are not the same as success.

What is success? Favor with the King. What are the success indicators? Paul described both kinds:

> But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness (1 Timothy 6:9–11).

Paul offered his own career as an example of success. His personal success indicators are not widely pursued.

> But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:10–12).

Peter offered a similar list of successes.

> And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins (2 Peter 1:5–9).

These are all individual successes. Church, family, and state have their respective successes. Churches offer peace, justice, fellowship, the division of labor, and the sacraments. Families offer training in righteousness, love, and charity. Civil governments offer justice, protection against evil-doers, and defense against invasion. Achieving these goals constitutes success.

Numerical indicators of success point to success but do not constitute it. Substituting more acceptable numbers, even aiming at these better numbers,

will mislead decision-makers. Positive numbers are a manifestation of success, not the basis of success.

Covenant-breakers mistake the visible confirmations of success for success itself. The ultimate confirmation of success is the inheritance of the whole earth.

> What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth (Psalm 25:12–13).
>
> For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace (Psalm 37:10–11).
>
> For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off (Psalm 37:22).

The goal, however, is not the inheritance, but the fulfillment of the dominion covenant for God's sake, not man's. The covenant-breaker seeks the fruits but not the roots. This is self-defeating. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

Success indicators are legitimate subordinate goals. They should be seen in two ways: (1) as confirmations of the covenant; (2) as tools of the covenant's further extension. "But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day" (Deuteronomy 8:18). Success indicators are means, not ends. They are not to be sought for themselves.

## *Conclusion*

With respect to success, begin with this commandment:

> That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Romans 10:9–10).

With respect to success indicators, begin with this commandment: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

Everything else is peripheral—related, but peripheral.

What, then, are the five pillars of biblical success?

First, the God of the Bible, who spoke the universe into existence, is absolutely sovereign. He has determined that His word will not return to Him void. His word is manifested in history in two forms: Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, who is God's incarnated Word, and the Bible, which is God's inscripturated word,

Second, God created mankind to exercise dominion over the earth in His name, as His representative agent. These agents are made in the image of God and can understand the world as God does, but as creatures. But in the rebellion of Adam, men's perception is distorted by sin. Those whom God redeems by grace through their faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ are given the mind of Christ.

Third, God has revealed the work of the law in every person's heart (Romans 2:15) and has placed the law of God's covenant in every Christian's heart (Hebrews 8:10; 10:16). God's law is the tool of dominion.

Fourth, God's providence in history is revealed by a system of sanctions, positive and negative, which He imposes. These sanctions reinforce His covenant law. Positive sanctions are for obedience. Negative sanctions are for disobedience.

Fifth, covenant-keepers, who have been adopted by God through grace, progressively inherit the earth through grace, for they are empowered by God to obey His laws. Covenant-breakers are progressively disinherited in history.

The basis of individual success and corporate success is covenant-keeping. That was God's message to Joshua. It has not changed.

> Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper withersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein:

> for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. (Joshua 1:7–8)

Go and do thou likewise.

# About the Author

Gary North runs the economic website, **www.GaryNorth.com**. From there, he sends out the free eletter, *Gary North's Tip of the Week.*

Dr. North has written a library of books on the connections between capitalism and the Bible. They are available free for downloading here: **http://www.garynorth.com/public/department57.cfm.**

His other site, **www.freebooks.com**, has been on-line since 1996. There, you can download almost a hundred books for free: on economics, politics, education, and history.

He is the author of 42 books.

He received his Ph.D. in history from the University of California, Riverside, in 1972. His dissertation topic was a study in the history of economic thought: "The Concept of Property in Puritan New England, 1630-1720."

He joined the staff of the Foundation for Economic Education in 1971.

He has edited the financial newsletter, *Remnant Review*, since 1974.

In 1976, he joined Congressman Ron Paul's staff in Washington as his research asssistant.

His essays and reviews have appeared in over fifty publications, including *The Wall Steeet Journal, National Review, The Freeman, The Journal of Political Economy, The Commercial and Financial Chronicle, Coin Age,* and *The New York Times.*

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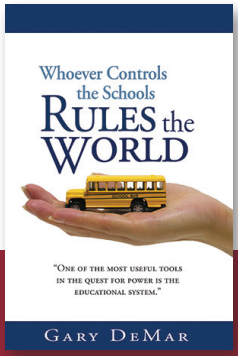


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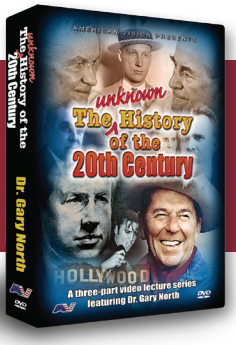


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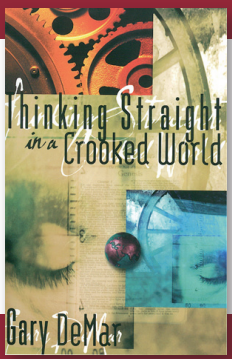


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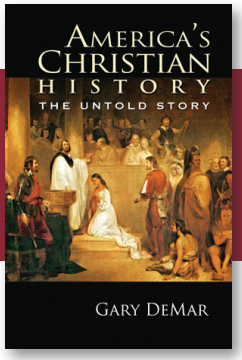


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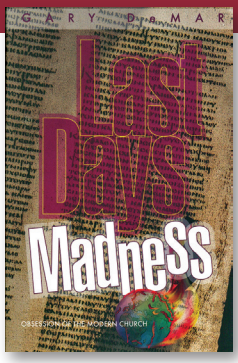


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