



The Antithesis

How it affects you

In current theology, the Biblical Antithesis means the division and opposition between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan. In historical terms this means the opposition between the sons of God and the sons of Satan. The term antithesis, then, is a relatively new term for an old doctrine. It's a convenient term for designating the essential conflict that exists within the human race. Instead of an essential brotherhood of mankind, which the Liberals keep talking about, the human race is hopelessly divided spiritually and nothing can overcome this antagonistic antithesis but redemption and regeneration in Christ Jesus.

The biblical background to the antithesis between men

It is important to understand that the antithesis dividing mankind has been created by God Himself! Genesis 3:15 is the basic text for understanding the underlying antithesis among men. We read in this very first revelation of the Gospel: *"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He (Christ) shall bruise you (Satan) in the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel."* Here is the first Biblical statement of redemption and the consequent antithesis: the heel of the Savior will come down on the head of Satan, bruising Christ's heel (His suffering and death), and crushing Satan's head (destroying his power over the woman and her seed, the elect church). The result of the redemption of the elect is a God-created division and enmity between men. Dr. Greg Bahnsen has stated it succinctly:

The Antithesis is explicitly declared by God where He said that He "will put enmity" between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent – between the children of God (who are united with their Savior, the Messiah: cf. Galatians 3:16, 29) and the children of the devil (cf. John 8:44). It is worth noting that the emphasis falls upon the word "enmity" as the first word in the Hebrew of Genesis 3:15 ("Enmity will I put") And God Himself is said to constitute, establish and deliberately impose this enmity between men.

(At war with the Word: the Necessity of Biblical Antithesis, p. 2)

Thus the antithesis between the saved and the unsaved is God's sovereign infliction, His judicial curse! This enmity involves men's thoughts about God in all their relations: religious, social and intellectual.

The late R. J. Rushdoony gave this summary of the Biblical doctrine of the Antithesis:

Scripture makes a distinction, at the very beginning, of the antithesis between the sons of Seth, the people or sons of God, and the line of Cain, the reprobate race of men, the sons of men (Genesis 6:2). Covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers are seen throughout Scripture as two humanities with different destinies. St. Augustine set forth this contrast in The City of God as between two kingdoms, the City of God versus the City of Man.

(Salvation and Godly Rule, p. 219)

It is to the credit of the late Cornelius Van Til of Westminster Seminary that he used the fact of the antithesis to develop his Biblical Apologetics, as he showed the enmity principle between the thinking of the unregenerate mind and that of the regenerate.

"Anyone who is familiar with the corpus (body) of Van Til's publications and writing will recognize that the subject of antithesis is one fitting hallmark of his scholarly contribution to twentieth century apologetical theory."

(Bahnsen, op cit.)

The cause of the antithesis

The enmity (antithesis) created by God in the human family results from the sovereign grace of God manifested in His redemption of His elect church. The seed of the woman came in the fullness of time to redeem the elect of God by His active and passive obedience to the law and justice of God. Those who were purchased by the blood of the Son of God were set part from the rest of mankind, fallen in Adam, to be the sons of God. *"Thou gavest Him authority over all mankind that to all whom Thou has given Him, He may give eternal life ... I manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me"* (John 17:2, 6).

Next in the manifestation of the antithesis, after Christ's redemptive work, is the divine work of regeneration and conversion. Regeneration or the new birth (John 3:3, 6, 7) in which the sinner, dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1), is given a new life in Christ, a resurrection of his soul to fellowship with God in the Holy Spirit. The Bible speaks of this new life as a *"new creation"* (2 Corinthians 5:17) for faith and good works (Ephesians 2:8-10). At this point the elect sinner is translated from the kingdom of Satan to the Kingdom of Christ, and the spiritual antithesis is created as a result. A God-created "enmity" is created in the soul of the converted person and he no longer is in fellowship with the lies of Satan, the dominion of sin and this evil world (Galatians 1:4). Second Corinthians 6:14-7:1 summarizes the antithesis between the regenerate and unregenerate. The born-again Christian is exhorted to recognize the antithesis between his thinking (his mind) and the thinking of the unregenerate world out of which he has been delivered: *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect"* (Romans 12:2).

The manifestation of the antithesis in our lives

The antithesis is first of all shown in the thinking process of the converted person. His thinking becomes informed by the Word of God, and he is thereby transformed in his life and his relation to the unbelieving world. The antithesis is sharpened as a believer grows in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:17, 18).

We will mention a few areas in which the antithesis will become more pronounced as a person grows in the knowledge of God's truth.

He will more and more recognize the antithesis, the spiritual conflict, in his own soul. Paul describes the inner conflict which every believer experiences between his old self and his *"new man"* in Romans 7. The flesh and the Spirit in every Christian are engaged in daily combat (Galatians 5:17). This is where the spiritual antithesis is primarily focused.

The antithesis is often found in family relations. Our Lord warned of this common conflict in Matthew 10:34-39. When we find ourselves involved with unbelieving relatives we must ask God for wisdom as to how best to relate to them and give a proper Christian witness, realizing that only God can remove the antithesis that exists.

The antithesis is present wherever the people of God are found in association with the people of darkness. This includes our employment circumstances that are often very trying, as the Christian endeavors to serve his employer and relate to his fellow employees in a godly manner. He must be honest and hardworking even though the enmity may be very evident in the office or workplace (Ephesians 6:5-8).

The antithesis between the regenerate mind and the unregenerate mind is very evident in the area of academics. In science we see the antithesis in the creation versus evolution debate (Hebrews 11:3) and in other areas of science, such as abortion, human cloning and stem-cell research.

As noted at the beginning of this article, in the fields of philosophy and theology, the antithesis in the form of presuppositions will control the methods and conclusions of these disciplines. It is a betrayal of the Word of God when Christian scholars try to ignore the antithesis and the intellectual

enmity that exists between Biblical and non-Biblical thinking. Again, we thank God for the scholarly work done by Christians in the field of presuppositional apologetics, which sharpens the real issues between those who are subject to the authority of Scripture and those who are not.

The antithesis is dramatically evident in the area of politics and government. The anti-Christians reveal their enmity against the Law of God in the courts and legislative chambers. We need self-conscious Christians in politics as never before! We need statesmen who know the difference between the rule of law and the rule of men (i.e. constitutionalism). We need politicians who know the difference between socialism and private property economics!

The last area we shall mention is the area of education. Here there can be no compromise by Bible-believers with an educational establishment that is at enmity with the Word of God. Many fine books have been written on this subject but we can only mention a couple of them here. Two books by the late R. J. Rushdoony will be eye-openers to those who have not thought much about this matter:

The first is *The Messianic Character of American Education*, first published by Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1963. The second is *The Philosophy of the Christian Curriculum*, published by Ross House Books, 1981. These books and many others dealing with the Christian worldview, based on the antithesis, may be ordered from Chalcedon, P. O. Box 158, Vallecito, CA, 95251-9989 (phone 209-736-4365). Amazon Books and E-Bay also handle them.

In closing, I quote from an article by Dr. C. W. Powell titled, "The End of Godless Education":

"They held the truth in unrighteousness." (Romans 1:18). Man's problem is not lack of knowledge, but the rejection of knowledge. He pretends that the heavens do not declare the glory of God. He pretends that he is not made in the image of God, and therefore pretends that God is not a conscious Person who holds all men accountable for their faith and actions. This pretense is the first step in man's apostasy ... In refusing to have God in their knowledge, they are judged by God, who gives them over to a "reprobate" mind. They refuse God and must bear the judgment in their own minds. They are intoxicated with their own folly ... They are no longer able to discern good from evil, wisdom from folly, virtue from turpitude. Their solutions become problems; their hope becomes despair; their peace becomes war; their tender mercies become war and death. The end of an age approaches.

(Basket of Figs, August, 1991).

Thus the God-imposed antithesis between the thinking of the godly and the thinking of the reprobate is a deadly reality.

The sooner God's people understand the antithesis the better they will understand the spiritual reality of their life in this world, and more effectively cope with it accordingly by the Word and Spirit of God.

Norman Jones

© 2014 Copyright by the **Reformed Church in die U.S.** All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.
The views expressed are not necessarily those of the editors or official positions of the RCUS.
www.christianstudylibrary.org