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In our Christian walk, it doesn't take to long for us to be challenged with the Jesus' words from Matt. 6:10 "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

For many, it is an obligatory mantra beseeching the Almighty to "do that thing you do in heaven here on earth"... somehow... some way... however you want to do it. It rarely gets beyond the question, "Where is your kingdom to come and through whom is your will to be done?"

In the past few years there has been a renewed call which I think attempts to answer those two questions. I'm speaking specifically here regarding taking back the "7 Mountains of Influence". The "7 Mountain" teaching helps to realign us with the "where" (the gates of influence) and the "thru whom" (we Christians). But is this really a new direction or is this a continuation of something that has been in process for some time? For the answer to that question, let us look back on our rich Christian heritage.

For this article, I have chosen to rewind back to Europe in the 1500's. It was the time of the "Reformers". Martin Luther issues his "Ninety Five Theses" in 1517. The inquisition is ratcheting up against these so-called "heretical" leaders. John Foxe (Foxe's Book of Martyrs) is writing what will become probably the greatest book influencing Protestant sentiment in that day. Throughout all of Europe there is profound unrest... But in that unrest, God is getting ready to unleash his will through a young 27 year old by the name of John Calvin. *"The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, but the violent take it by force". Matt. 11:12*

It was during one of his covert trips, that young Calvin was forced to alter his route because of the presence of imperial and French forces. His new route causes him to pass by Geneva where he stays with William Farel. While there, Farel requests Calvin to stay and help with the cause of the church. Calvin, in writing of Farel's request says this, *"I felt as if God from Heaven had laid his mighty hand upon me to stop me in my course."* Yes, Calvin was stopped in his course and would be responsible for altering the courses of many others.

It was in fact Calvin, who being fiercely committed to the concept of the sovereignty of God, not only formed a cogent theological position regarding sovereignty, but also proceeded to engage in a practical implementation of that

position.

For our purpose, we will examine how his concept of sovereignty was played out in a society that was plagued with profound economic challenges, religious upheaval, persecution and ruthless struggles for power.

The core of his belief was that in Christ, we have been given liberty... a thought completely foreign to society at that time. Furthermore, this liberty in Christ is realized as we submit to God's sovereignty over his established authorities. This was a culture-shattering concept that not only defined different spheres of authority but separated those spheres one from another. Robert Reymond notes in his book "John Calvin, His Life and Influence, *"This separation of the church from under the influence of the government, while enabling Christians to influence the governments of the time, also enabled the church truly to be the church in the world"*.

Calvin established four overall categories of offices based on his understanding of biblical injunctions or "spheres of authority". These were:

Ministers of the Word were largely responsible for the church.

Doctors were mainly responsible for education.

Elders functioned as moral police that enforced justice.

Deacons were to oversee charity work and hospitals.

Under this atmosphere of liberty and new governmental structure that was coming in line with his understanding of the principles of sovereignty, other seemingly "spontaneous" developments began to occur.

It was at this time, in the midst of a worsening economic period, that we find the Huguenots emigrating from France to Geneva Switzerland in order to escape religious persecution. What is interesting is that many of these émigrés were skilled watchmakers. France, at this time, was known for its watch making and possessed some of the finest watchmakers in the world. Unfortunately for France, the guilds during this period, created a "Master Craftsman" designation that excluded many skilled watchmakers from membership. This protectionist policy coupled with the increasing religious unrest drove much of the industry to the welcoming atmosphere of "reforming" Geneva.

In addition to the establishing of watch making (which developed more rapidly in Geneva than in any other country in the world), the Huguenots were also credited with laying the foundation of Switzerland's banking system.

The effect of young Calvin's theology of sovereignty caused a profound shift in the church, government, education, judicial, economic and social spheres. The instituted reforms opened the door for the influx of skilled workers and entrepreneurs who developed world dominating industries that continue, even today, to set an exemplary standard in the world for both banking and watch

making. This, I believe was largely the beginning of our Kingdom heritage to possess the gates of influence.

As we advance forward to the late 1800's we find this, *"There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all does not cry: 'Mine!' "... Abraham Kuyper*

Kuyper was widely known as an accomplished journalist, Prime Minister of the Netherlands, and theologian. His radical thought and fierce determination dramatically changed Dutch society. He was responsible for a political party that saw six Reformed prime ministers take office in a century and founded a university that competed with the State universities. He even established an educational system that included vouchers! Today, he is probably best known for what is now called the theory of "Sphere Sovereignty".

What makes his theory of Sphere Sovereignty so compelling is that it became a successfully applied theory. Consider his remarks from this speech... *"I call these credo's about sovereignty.. life convictions, not theories. For the gulf that separates them lies not in a different arrangement of ideas, but in recognition or denial of the facts of life."* For Kuyper, there was a clear, biblical, practical and sovereign god-given order to things that could be understood and followed.

It was within this context that he developed the concepts that would bring not only a profound change in the Netherlands, but also provide a basis for others like Herman Dooyeweerd upon which to build.

As such, we are able to see that his ideas were firstly biblical and then practical. A position that would not ingratiate him to his critical peers nor would it give him credibility in the eyes of the societal norms of the day.

Defining Kuyper's ideas regarding Sphere Sovereignty can be challenging in that it was not a well-defined doctrine, but rather a practical outworking of a "doctrine in process". He viewed Sphere Sovereignty in terms of "creation" rather than a personal "right". In other words, Sovereignty is authority delegated to man by his creator. Following further, Sphere Sovereignty then becomes the responsibility of that sphere to function in its unique created biblical order and innate authority.

While Kuyper's spheres included the State, Society, the Church and the Social (which he broke down into sub-spheres of social relationships, corporate, domestic and communal.), understanding the created sovereignty of these spheres was crucial in knowing how to provide leadership in order to align government, the church, the family etc. according to those created parameters. Many believe that his greatest contribution was that of being able to practically integrate biblical principles in a secular structure in order to bring a Kingdom oriented order to the society of the day. His life's work gives us additional roots that should encourage us in our ongoing pursuit to possess the gates of

influence.

Lastly, in light of all the recent economic upheaval, I want to look briefly at the contributions of Fredrick Hayek, the father of what is often referred to as "Austrian Economics". While there is no indication that Hayek came to the saving knowledge of Christ, it is evident from his economic theory that there were sovereign "spontaneous" forces at work that could not and therefore should not attempt to be centrally planned. Consider this statement with respect to his idea of "free markets" pertaining to what he termed, "spontaneous order" "that which is the result of human action but not of human design". This is to say that in Hayek's view, markets were not designed by anyone but evolved slowly as a result of human actions... not human design. Which of course begs the question, "If not human design then who's design?" My point here is that regardless of his religious views, this idea that the markets were sovereignly directed is the foundational concept God used to silence the socialist agenda that was promoted by Keynes and largely accepted by many economists and leaders of the day in the 1940's.

In recent days, it was Margaret Thatcher who shortly after becoming the leader of the Labor Party held up Hayak's book "The Constitution of Liberty" and spoke vociferously saying, "This is what we believe!" and proceeded to bang it down on the table. During the same period, Ronald Reagan and many of his economic advisors embraced Hayak's free market beliefs, broke with the concept of "big government", and set a direction that would embrace the idea of a changing economic order regulated not by government, but regulated sovereignly by forces outside of human control... sounds like God to me. Interestingly, when asked as to what might cause the collapse of free markets, he offered this prophetically chilling answer:

One cause, he said, was increases in the money supply by the central bank. Such increases, he argued in Prices and Production, would drive down interest rates making credit artificially cheap. Businessmen would then make capital investments that they would not have made had they understood that they were getting a distorted price signal from the credit market.

Therefore, he concluded, artificially low interest rates not only cause investment to be artificially high, but also cause "malinvestment" – too much investment in long-term projects relative to short-term ones, and the boom turns into a bust. Hayek saw the bust as a healthy and necessary readjustment. The way to avoid the busts, he argued, is to avoid the booms that cause them.

As I read these words I could not think of anything more pertinent to our situation today. I must admit that I did chuckle at his way to avoid the busts. In this age of GEICO reminding us that... "Even a cave man can do it" it would seem plausible that "even the government" could make this simple adjustment.

In conclusion, I would submit to you that possessing the gates of influence is not new. We have a rich Christian heritage on which to draw. Make no mistake;

there is a defining battle of ideas going on which will ultimately bring the world to its knees. We should remember that in fact it was Vladimir Lenin who first used the phrase “commanding the heights” to refer to the segments and industries in an economy that effectively control and support the others.

Today we are faced with many challenges to our faith, our government, our businesses, our society and our world. All around us we hear the cries for new ideas, a change in direction and leadership with integrity. What are we waiting for? We have the answers to all of these issues. We are the ones filled with the Holy Ghost and power. We know the One who holds sway over heaven and earth and thunders... “Mine!” We have been anointed by God for such a time as this. It is time for the “silent majority” to be silent no more!

What can you expect if you get more vocal? Expect to be challenged. Expect to be “arrested” mid-stride by God himself to do great things. Expect to be given your personal assignment. Expect to receive opposition. Expect to be maligned. Expect to face the specter of failure. Expect to prevail. Expect to occupy. And most importantly, expect that as you complete your assignment and possess your gate, change will occur in your sphere of influence.