

The Gospel Dunamis Absent From Today's Churches and Seminaries

At the close of our 2009 Pastors & Pews event in Virginia Beach, Virginia, Hector Falcon handed me a book by Joseph Boot, titled *The Mission of God, A Manifesto of Hope For Society*. The book is a tour de force describing the Puritan vision of Christ's sweeping Lordship over all of society and the powerful faith that the American founders in the 17th century brought to our eastern shores.

Hector Falcon is a graduate of Regent University, University of Wisconsin and Christ for the Nations Bible College. He studied historical theology at Westminster Seminary and now teaches classes in world religions, American Christian history, American government, Christian history, political science and Christian worldview.

Last week, he submitted a highly instructive response to our op-ed, "The Return of American Christendom in the Public Square":

"You stated in your response, 'Politics in and of itself, for sure, won't change the culture. Spiritual men and women moving from behind the four walls of the building into the public square, obeying Jesus' Kingdom ekklesia assignment from Matthew 16:18 will ... because they bring with them the dunamis of the Word of God. ... bringing dunamis to the public arena, of course, is a big assumption for those raised on cotton candy.'

"The beauty of what happened in the Reformation was how Luther, Calvin, and the other reformers dealt with the root of the problem with a corrupt Roman Catholic church leadership. The result was a revolutionary change because the truth of the

corrupt teaching of the church leaders was revealed and there was a return to the Scripture with regard to truth and the actual mission of the church—to evangelize and disciple the nations.

“In like manner today, to address the cultural degradation of both our secular and Christian cultures we need to address the theological roots that have made the Gospel impotent ‘cotton candy,’ which has failed to change both our people and the culture.

“What kind of theological belief has led to an impotent church that hides the dunamis of God’s word within the four walls of the church? We need to be willing to have this discussion or we will just be spinning our wheels in wasted efforts to address the impotent Gospel we currently have within our churches and seminaries. Since time is short, I will get right to the point.

“If we look at church history there was a major theological shift that occurred in the mid-1800s. This was when dispensational theology arose via John Darby. His theology eventually displaced the covenant Reformed theology that arose from the Reformation and fueled much of the cultural reformation that occurred in Europe. It also laid the foundations for our government here in America.

“Prior to this era, the church leaders in America and England were pretty active in their efforts to both address cultural issues and disciple nations. Vishal Mangalwadi reveals this history in his work *The Book that Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization* [2011]. In the book, he describes the work of Christian leaders in England and their efforts to both evangelize and disciple the nation of India. These men had an optimistic postmillennial view of the future extension of the kingdom of God on Earth. They were motivated in their mission efforts by this positive theology, which resulted in a major spiritual and cultural change in

India.

“But when dispensational theology arose there was a dramatic shift within the thinking of many evangelical church leaders, which we see even today. Rather than seeing the Great Commission as the need to both evangelize and disciple the nations, the focus now was on just evangelization. This led to the gospel being confined to the four walls of the church, which you described earlier. This cotton candy theology became an inward focus for church leaders. Their agenda became primarily developing a personal relationship between you and God. The power of God’s word to change both people and their cultures was rejected for this new fatalistic theology. After all, why polish the brass on a sinking ship if the anti-Christ is going to win the world and beat up the bride of Christ? Discipling nations is seen as a waste of limited resources and time. It’s a lost cause, as John Darby, Hal Lindsay, Tim LaHaye, John Hagee, John MacArthur, and others have clearly pointed out. And we wonder why our youth are walking away from a gospel that lacks the dunamis to change the world.

“Francis Schaeffer pointed out how the church today suffers from a false pietism that confines the Gospel to the four walls of the church. This false pietism is what you referred to as ‘cotton candy theology’. A Gospel with no dunamis.

“To truly bring about lasting change, this theological issue needs to be addressed. Luther and Calvin gave us the template with what they did during the Reformation. The result was revolutionary because they unleashed the dunamis of the Gospel.

“Today our churches lack a full-orbed Gospel that addresses all facets of life with the dunamis of God’s spoken word and his law. The lawlessness in our nation began with our own church leadership. One of the teachings Darby brought in with his theology was a rejection of God’s law for this church dispensation. This totally undermined the earlier views

developed in the Westminster Confession that held that the Bible teaches three uses for the law of God today. The reality is that the law of God is a gift to mankind. This is because we are given clear revelation by God regarding what is right and wrong. God's law provides the mechanism for attaining both liberty and justice in the world, as Os Guinness points out in his book *The Magna Carta of Humanity*.

"I propose that we bring back the dunamis of God's word by doing what both Luther and Calvin did. We need to get to the root of the problem and address the false theologies and ideologies that have infected the Gospel being taught in our churches today. The early church suffered ungodly persecution because they believed Jesus was the absolute sovereign of the world—not Caesar! Caesar was aware that this new religion was political and a direct threat to his throne, which is why he wanted to eliminate it right away.

"Once we start preaching the real gospel that Jesus is King of kings and Lord of Lords, the persecution will come. It will come from both the pagans and those leaders within our own churches who refuse to recognize the total sovereignty of God and his law for today. Yet, this is the gospel dunamis you referred to and which we lack today in both our churches and seminaries.

"Unless we return to the full-orbed gospel of the Reformers, our efforts will only be temporary and ineffective for the long game. We will lose the nation God blessed us with and for which many men have bled and died, so we could be free. Time to let the Lion of Judah out of his cage!"

Gideons and Rahabs are beginning to stand. {eoa}

David Lane is the founder of the *American Renewal Project*.

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