

4th. The Second Service

Defended by Scott Clark in *Recovering the Reformed Confession* (292-342)

Introduction

He begins by noting the decline in the use of a second service, either in the afternoon or evening on Sunday. There is a significant second service history in the practice and piety of the reformed tradition. It took about a hundred years (after Luther and Calvin) for it to become “a uniform practice among Reformed churches” (294). Now, with it in decline among Reformed churches (as part of a large scale decline in Christian churches in general), Clark hopes to aid a recovery of the second service, which, he says, is a primary instrument historically in the meaningful development of Reformed theology, piety, and practice (341). He discusses two conditions for the recovery (the Sabbath, 295-326 and the means of grace, 326-337), argues for the second service (337-339), and then draws some final conclusions (339-342). We will follow this pattern to summarize his viewpoint as a basis for evaluation.

1A. Two conditions for the recovery of the second service (295-337)

1B. Necessary condition: the abiding validity of the Christian Sabbath (295-326)

In summary (p. 325), he notes that there is a consensus in reformed theology the Sabbath is a creation ordinance, a continuing memorial of the resurrection, it is therefore rightly called the Christian Sabbath. The essential function of keeping the day holy has always been the same: to look forward, to rest from daily work, and to worship in public assembly.

The consensus shows that the decline is not due to theological Qs; there is ignorance to be sure, but the chief difficulty is practical: it is the failure to recognize that we are bound to creational and revealed patterns that stand in antithesis to our hyperstimulated culture (325). The Sabbath *six and one gives structure to our use of time* and “corporate worship requires time and space” and “we will set aside that time only when our values are rightly ordered and the virtues of rest, worship and the consummation are meaningful again” (326). The “right ordering of our values” leads to discussion of the sufficient conditional.

2B. Sufficient condition: the doctrine of (due use of) the means of grace (326-337)

It is helpful to distinguish an emphasis on the means of grace from mysticism on one hand and pietism on the other. Mysticism tells us that God works immediately, that is, without means, agents, or instruments. Pietism sees God working primarily through private prayer and devotions [Note: books on the “spiritual disciplines” often neglect comment on the means of grace in worship by preaching, singing, praying, giving, reading Scripture, and observing the sacraments; these have great importance!]. We need to regain conviction that God has promised to work through means and we should not expect Him to do so apart from ordained means (326). Required is a “due use of ordinary means” (WCF 1.7) in conjunction with the ordained means of worship.

2A. Argument for the second service

1) Sabbath + means + Reformed History = 2nd/evening service (subtly from 295-337)

Part of Reformed piety historically is the use of the 2nd service. If we get this, then we will believe that God works through the evening service as a means, and therefore we will return to a second service with great anticipation of God’s blessing.

2) The case for the second service (quite brief from 337-338)

References to “morning and evening” (Gen. 1), and to David’s evening sacrifices (Ps. 92.1-2 & 141.2), he says, “apply to us only figuratively” but “they do give evidence that the “morning and evening” pattern of creation has some continuing place” (338). Evidence from the apostolic church is “scanty” but had affinities to the synagogue, which had two services each Sabbath. The reformed confessions strongly called for two services and “the entire Christian tradition, East and West, ancient and medieval, Roman and Protestant, has recognized the fundamental creational pattern of morning and evening services” (338-339).