

CHALCEDON

Report

No. 402, January 1999

FIGH THE FUTURE

R. J. Rushdoony on
Conspiracies

Andrew Sandlin on
the Apocalyptic Faith

Brian Abshire on
Tough Times Make Tough People?

Craig Dumont on
Faith and Scientific Progress

Plus. . .

**Exclusive Report on Hurricane Mitch
and Mario Aviles's Vital Ministry
in Nicaragua**

Chalcedon Vision Statement

Chalcedon labors to articulate in the clearest possible terms a distinctly Christian and explicitly Biblical solution to the prevalent evils of the modern world. Our objective is nothing short of setting forth the vision and program for rebuilding the theological fortifications of Christian civilization. These fortifications have been eroded by the forces of humanism and secularism over the past three centuries. We are not committed, though, merely to reproducing a glorious Christian past. We work to press the claims of historic Christianity as the Biblical pattern of life everywhere. We work for godly cultural change across the entire spectrum of life. We strive to accomplish this objective by two principal methods.

First, Chalcedon is committed to recovering the intellectual foundations of Christian civilization. We do this in two main ways. Negatively, we expose the bankruptcy of all non-Christian (and alleged but compromising Christian) systems of thought and practice. Positively, we propose an explicitly Biblical system of thought and action as the exclusive basis for civilization. Only by restoring the Christian Faith and Biblical law as the standard of all of life can Christians hope to re-establish Christian civilization.

Second, Chalcedon is dedicated to providing the tools for rebuilding this Christian civilization. We work to assist individuals, families, and institutions by offering explicitly Biblical alternatives to anti-Christian ideas and practices. In this way we guide Christians in the task of governing their own spheres of life in terms of the entire Bible: in family, church, school, vocation, arts, economics, business, media, the state, and all other areas of modern life.

We believe that the source of godly change is regeneration by the Holy Spirit, not revolution by the violence of man. As God regenerates more and more individuals, and as they reorient their lives and areas of personal influence to the teachings of the Bible, He employs them to advance His kingdom and establish Christian civilization. We believe that God's law is the divine pattern of sanctification in every area of life, but it is not the means of justification; man is saved by grace, not by law. The role of every earthly government—including family government, church government, school government, vocational government, and civil government—is to submit to Biblical law. No government in any form can make men Christians or truly obedient; this is the work of God's sovereign grace. Much less should civil government try to impose Biblical law on an unbelieving society. Biblical law cannot be imposed; it must be embraced.

A guiding principle of Chalcedon, in fact, is its devotion to maximum individual freedom under God's law. Chalcedon derives its name from the great ecclesiastical council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), which produced the crucial Christological definition of Jesus Christ as God of very God and Man of very man, a formula directly challenging every false claim of divinity by any human institution: state, church, cult, school, or human assembly. Christ alone is both God and man, the unique link between heaven and earth. All human power is therefore derivative; only Christ may announce that "All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). Historically, therefore, the Chalcedonian creed is the foundation of Western liberty, setting limits on all authoritarian human institutions by acknowledging the validity of the claims of the One who is the source of all human freedom (Galatians 5:1). Consequently, we oppose top-heavy, authoritarian systems of government which are, by definition, non-Christian. We advocate instead a series of independent but cooperative institutions and a highly decentralized social order.

Chalcedon is an educational institution. It supports the efforts of Christians and Christian organizations to implement the vision of Christian civilization. Though unapologetically Reformed, Chalcedon supports the kingdom work of all orthodox denominations and churches. Chalcedon is an independent Christian foundation governed by a board of trustees, Christian men in accord with Chalcedon's vision statement. The foundation is not subordinate to the authority of any particular denomination or ecclesiastical body.

CHALCEDON *Report*

A Monthly Report Dealing With the Relationship of Christian Faith to the World

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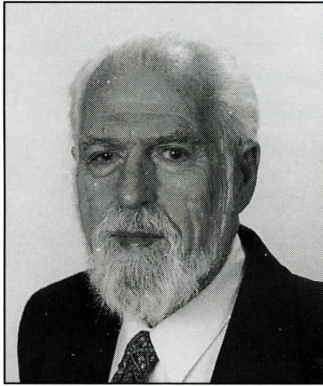
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The Psalms

By Rev. R. J. Rushdoony



I feel sorry for those who have not made, apart from other readings in the Bible, the Psalms their constant reading and companion. Psalm 1 begins (*vv. 1-2*) by declaring *blessed* the man whose “delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doeth he meditate day and night.”

Our lives, we are told, depend on this, and our prospering in the Lord.

Because we live in a sinful world, we shall face no light adversities for our stand, but God knows us and guides us to the end. Because we are known of the Lord, we share in his victory over the forces of darkness.

The Psalms are good bedtime reading and meditating: “commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still” (*Ps. 4:4*). The peace of such meditation gives strength to all our days.

The writers of the Psalms did not lack troubles and persecution, but they came out victorious because they were allied to God who is the victory.

Why then neglect the Psalms? What other reason can there be other than a sinful laziness? When we know the grace so readily given by the Lord, to neglect it becomes sinfulness itself.

I grew up as a member of a poor and much persecuted people, and yet a happy one. The Psalms were often on

their lips and crept into everyday speech in their early years in the United States. Prosperity tended in some to do what persecution could not.

The Psalms were written by men living like us in a fallen world, and they thus speak to us also. For years, I dreamed of writing a book on some of the neglected Psalms, but now I am too old to think of it.

In this century, we have gone from being a country where every school child knew Psalm 23 by heart to one in which few do today. We are the poorer for it.

I can, however, speak of the joy, peace, and strength they have given me, and how, in the trying days of my life, I turn to them to hear God speak to me as my Shepherd and to know therefore that I shall not want (*Ps. 23:1*). In this century, we have gone from being a country where every school child knew Psalm 23 by heart to one in which few do today. We are the poorer for it.

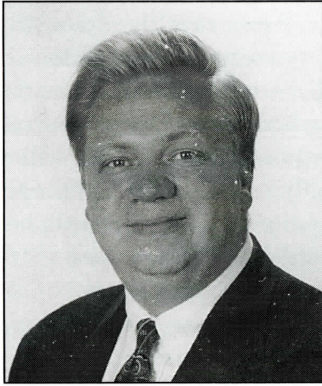
We can begin to change the world by changing ourselves. Begin reading the Psalms tonight.

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The Apocalyptic Faith

By Rev. Andrew Sandlin



Some professed Christians exercise greater faith in impending doom than they do in an omnipotent Deity and the promises of Sacred Scripture. This inclination ranges across the theological spectrum from end-of-the-world imminent rapture dispensationalists to God-guns-and-gold “remnant” survivalist recon-

structionists. Both have been blessed with the great faith that before things get better, they must get very, *very* bad. Doomsday dispensationalists have great faith that imminent apostasy precedes the imminent rapture (they are not always certain about which imminence is truly imminent). Remnant reconstructionists, on the other hand, have great faith that godly social transformation is impossible unless preceded by great societal collapse. They consider societal collapse a mechanism of divine judgment out of whose ruins the Prometheus of a reconstructed culture will emerge, sculptured (of course) by the minute number of faithful remnant reconstructionists themselves. In addition, divine judgment in the form of social collapse will provide undeniable, visible testimony to the inviolability of God’s law—and, not coincidentally, validate many years of economic prognostications ordinarily gone seriously awry. (It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the desire for divine justification and the desire for self-justification.)

Though if the doomsday dispensationalists and the remnant reconstructionists are certain that the magical year 2000 is destined to initiate a massive world-wide apocalypse and resultant Christianization of culture, both believe the world must get much worse before it can get better. The doomsday dispensationalists believe that the rapture and “seven-year tribulation period” necessarily precede a great earthly millennium over which Jesus Christ will personally, physically rule, while the remnant reconstructionists hold that massive social collapse will pave the way for the godly remnant to reconstruct society on the ashes of the apocalypse.

The Error of the Doomsday Dispensationalists

Both are wrong. The parables of the wheat and tares (*Mt. 13:24-30*), of the mustard seed (*Mt. 13:31-32*), and of the yeast and loaf (*Mt. 13:33*) refute both notions. The

doomsday dispensationalists believe that *twice* Christians will be physically separated from the world before the final judgment: first, the Christians living at the “rapture” will be caught up with the Lord, and second, the deceased Christians at the beginning of the millennium will be resurrected; the living and deceased unregenerate will not be judged, they hold, until the final judgment at the close of the millennium. But the parable of the wheat and tares assures us that there will be no physical separation of the converted from the unconverted until the end of the harvest, the end of the world (*Mt. 13:39*). There will indeed be a rapture and resurrection for believers, but these will occur at the end of human history at the second Advent of Jesus Christ (*1 Cor. 15:24-25*). The Bible does teach that near the end of the millennium, Satan is “loosed” from his incarceration and permitted to mount one final assault on Christ and his kingdom. His and his followers’ rebellion will be short-lived, however, inasmuch as it will be squelched by God’s judgment (*Rev. 20:7-10*).

The Error of the Remnant Reconstructionists

The principal error of the remnant reconstructionists is their assumption that godly social transformation is impossible apart from great societal collapse. History itself, and not only Sacred Scripture, refutes this notion. The erosion of the Roman Empire which created a vacuum filled by establishment Christianity was anything but a collapse—it was a gradual atrophy of evil within the society of pagan Rome and correspondingly gradual extension of Christ’s kingdom (see Charles Cochrane’s *Christianity and Classical Culture* [New York, 1957]). In other words, *it operated precisely as Christ’s parables predicted it would*. The same is true of the Reformation. The Renaissance, despite much of its intently anti-Christian bias, recovered a scholarly interest in the texts of antiquity and thereby created an atmosphere in which respect for the Sacred Scriptures as the word of God shorn from traditional accretions could prevail (consult Allister McGrath’s *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation* [Grand Rapids, 1987], 32-43). The close of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century was a time of great transition, but that transition was not generated by any massive social collapse. To the contrary, in many ways the Protestant Reformation as one of the great Christian revivals in history is more accurately identified as the final segment of the Middle Ages than of the initiation of modern times.

What Social Collapse Tends to Produce

In fact, far from heralding a revived Christian

civilization, widespread social collapse seems more often to precede extensive social evils. Think, for instance, of the Turkish invasion of Europe and Byzantium; the French Revolution; and, in more recent times, the Russian Revolution and the Weimar Republic. Widespread social collapse is no precursor to the revival of Christian civilization. It is often just the opposite.

None of this means, of course, that the world will soon be spared local and regional pestilences, famine, natural disasters, authoritarian regimes, and the like. Until the millennium fully blooms, we cannot expect global tranquillity. Nonetheless, the absorbing accounts in Otto Friedrich's *The End of the World* (New York, 1986) rehearse particular historic epochs when for certain individuals and societies, the end of the world *did* seem imminent. The sack of Rome, the Roman Catholic Inquisition, the Anabaptist terror, the Black Plague, the Lisbon earthquake, the Russian Revolution, and the "kingdom of Auschwitz"—all seemed to herald the end of the world to the individuals subject to their horrors. Friedrich notes, however, that what seemed to be the end of the world was soon transformed into a return to life's routine and almost the omission of any memory of the tragic past (p. 64). A sign in the obstetrics wing of the hospital in which all five of my children were born stated the truth succinctly but profoundly: "Babies are proof of God's intention that life should go on." While, therefore, until the fullness of the millennium, we can expect local and regional tragedy, whether it be God's judgment, testing his people's faith, or any other providential work, it is an aspect of his ultimately inscrutable will for his creation (the remnant reconstructionists are fond of referring to "predictable" sanctions in history—in much the same way that the "sanctions" suffered by Job were

"predictable" [by his miserable comforters: *Job. 11:6; 15:16; 20:4-5, 24-29; 22:5, 22-23; 34:7-12, 31-37, cf. 42:7-9; 21:7-34*]! Predictable blessing and judgment? Yes. Man's infallible reading of the timing and nature of the sanctions? Not quite. The lust for exhaustive knowledge of God's will is an apostate desire).

If the kingdom of God is to advance slowly and incrementally, almost imperceptibly, we should not expect the sort of massive social collapse that the doomsday dispensationalists and the remnant reconstructionists predict, and which conflicts with the incremental leavening effect of the kingdom of God. A globalized version of the localized or regional social collapse which ordinarily produces ungodly civilization is simply incompatible with Christ's promises of the gradual, but relentless, advance of his kingdom in history (*Gen. 9:11-17*). We must never presume that the collapse of an ungodly civilization is an essential step in establishing Christian civilization. God no more needs to destroy ungodly civilization in order to maintain his advancing kingdom than he needs to destroy the ungodly individual in order to convert him. Make no mistake: God judges individuals, God judges families, God judges churches, God judges nations, and God judges civilizations. But God's redemptive work outdistances his retributive work. Grace exceeds judgment (*Rom. 5:20*).

The apocalyptic faith places greater hope in retribution than in redemption, greater trust in judgment than in grace. But in the advancement of Christ's kingdom, God slays the wicked by his irresistible grace (*Ps. 110:5-6; Rev. 19:11-21; cf. Rom. 6:2-11; 2 Cor. 5:14; Gal. 2:19; Col. 2:20; 2 Tim. 2:11*). Our faith must be placed in Christ's irresistible kingdom, not in apocalypticism and the end of the world.

ATTENTION SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA!

Andrew Sandlin will be in Southern California in mid-January 1999.
Invite your friends and family to come and hear him.

He will be presenting lectures at the following times and places:

January 15, at the Pasadena Hilton, 150 South Los Robles Avenue, **Pasadena, CA** at 8:00 p.m. The Pasadena Hilton is located at the corner of South Los Robles and Cordova. It is 1/2 mile south of I-210 and 10 miles north of downtown Los Angeles. It is one block from the Pasadena Convention Center. Direct Dial: (626) 584-3170

January 16, at 7:00 p.m. at the Quality Hotel – Maingate, 616 Convention Way, **Anaheim, CA** 92802. The Quality Hotel direct dial is (714) 750-3131.

For more information, please contact Chalcedon's Administrative Assistant, Susan Burns at (209) 532-7674 or sburns@goldrush.com.

Contentment vs. Covetousness

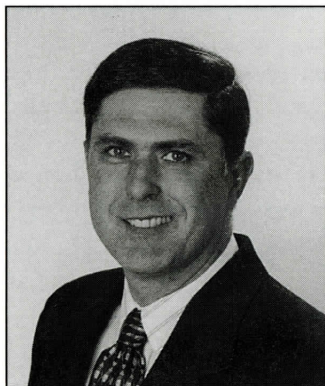
By Rev. Mark R. Rushdoony

*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.*

(1 Timothy 6:6-10)



Paul had just warned servants to honor their masters and believers to withdraw from false teachers. One of the characteristics of the false teachers they were to shun was that they supposed “gain is godliness.”

The false teachers had it backwards, Paul here says. Godliness is itself “great gain” (v. 6). God’s judgments are described several times in Scripture by a parenthetical expression—“which if a man do, he shall live in them” (*Lev. 18:5; Neh. 9:29; Ex. 20:11,13; Eze. 20:21; Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:12*). This is not talking about justification by the works of the law as antinomians have suggested; if it were so used, Paul would not have quoted it to refute that doctrine in Galatians 3:12. The phrase conveyed the idea that the benefits of living in God’s law were their own reward. God’s law was not given to spoil man’s joy or as a punishment for sin; it was given to man so that he might know what God expected in the real world—the world of creatures accountable to their Creator. It is a blessing to be able to know God’s will and it is a blessing to live in terms of that will. Now knowledge of God’s law or even living under it does not make us God’s children; that comes from the adoption that comes of faith. That is why Paul would quote this phrase from the Scripture in condemning justification by the law to the Galatians. When he said, “And the law is not of faith; but The man that doeth them shall live in them” (3:12), he was merely saying the law is something other than faith; it is however, a blessing to those who

live in terms of it. This was the essence of Paul’s statement to Timothy, “Godliness . . . is great gain.”

*Now knowledge of God’s
law or even living under
it does not make us God’s
children; that comes from
the adoption that comes of
faith.*

More is required of us, however, than merely understanding the value of godliness, for it is that virtue with *contentment* that Paul speaks of. Remember that he had just spoken at the beginning of the chapter of slaves honoring their masters. If a slave must be content with his estate so must we, though free, be content with ours. Contentment is an important element in considering what Scripture says about wealth because avarice is as much a problem with the poor as it is with the rich. Hence the poor are often the ones who must be on guard. Thus, we must be reminded that it is better to have a “little” with righteousness:

... than the riches of many wicked (*Ps. 37:16*),
... than great treasure and trouble therewith”
(*Pr. 15:16*), or
... than great revenues without right (*Pr. 16:8*).

One must “be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (*Heb. 13:5*). Contentment is understanding that you are truly blessed by God, and that his goodness to us is itself of immeasurable value.

Paul quotes Job 1:21 when he says we brought nothing into the world and will carry nothing out. We are told in Psalm 49 of the tendency of wealthy men to accumulate wealth that passes to others when they die. “Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations.” Nevertheless, they perish. Still, their children repeat the same folly—“their posterity approve their sayings” (vv. 10-13).

Men tend to want to repeat the first sin. They want

to “be as gods, knowing good and evil” (*Gen. 3:5*). Sinners want to declare their independence from God; wealth is a mechanism men see as conveying independence and power. With wealth man thinks he can be self-sufficient, first of all economically, then spiritually. The power that comes from wealth gives man a false confidence that blinds him to his own condition and need. Men, who tend to trust what is tangible, see wealth as a source of safety, and genuine needs can then become covetous.

Paul names only food and clothing as conditions necessary for contentment. After fleeing Esau’s wrath and seeing the vision of the ladder at Bethel, Jacob promised to serve God, asking just food, raiment, and a return to his father’s house (*Gen. 28:22*).

Those who seek wealth fall into “temptation and a snare.” We must be careful to note it is how one regards wealth or why one desires it that is the real issue. Covetousness is the immoral desire for wealth by unlawful means. The desire for wealth can become all-consuming. The poor are as inclined to be consumed by a desire for wealth as the rich:

As sick men used to love health better than those that never felt the want of it; so it is too common with poor men to love riches better than the rich that never needed. And yet, poor souls, they deceive themselves, and cry out against the rich, as if they were the only lovers of the world, when they love it more themselves though they cannot get it.¹

For the rich, wealth can be a false sense of power and security;

Christ telleth us, “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 heaven.” Our Savior, indeed, doth not speak of impossibility, but of the difficulty of it and the rareness of it. Job unfolded the riddle, and got through the needle’s eye with three thousand camels. But it is hard to be wealthy, and not wanton.²

Those who desire desperately to be rich are often carried away by their own recklessness, perhaps to financial ruin, or perhaps to “many foolish and hurtful lusts.”

We all know the warning of verse ten, “For the love of money is the root of all evil.” Calvin felt it was to miss the point to try to comprehend every vice under covetousness. He merely took this as meaning that the love of money produces all sorts of evil and crime. He listed “frauds, falsehoods, perjury, cheating, robbery, cruelty, judicial corruption, quarrels, hatred, poisonings, murders, and nearly every other kind of crime.”³ Evils do spring from avarice, just as they spring from adultery, envy, and slothfulness. Every sin has evil consequences, and a pattern of covetousness will display a wide-ranging array of effects.

Covetousness can lead men even to apostasy (*v. 10*). Because such men do not have Jesus Christ and his kingdom as their priority, they “pierce” themselves with sorrows. Their own selfishness and materialistic desires cause them to drown in their own self-made torments. Where there is covetousness, there can be no contentment.

¹ I. D. E. Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Puritan Quotations* (Chicago, 1975), 250.

² *ibid.*, 249.

³ Torrance and Torrance, eds. *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1980), 10:275.

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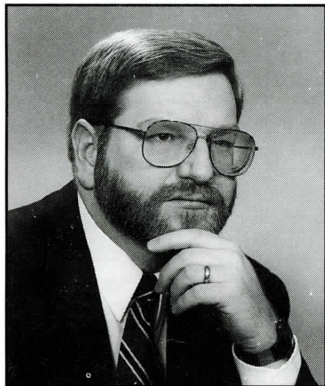
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For more information contact Brian Abshire at:
abshire@thevision.net, or (209) 544-1572.

Tough Times Make Tough People

By Rev. Brian M. Abshire



The worst nightmare of my life happened in February 1973. After six weeks of Air Force basic training I had finally graduated and was awaiting orders. Casual squadron life was a great relief after boot camp. No pressure or cursory inspections, and you could actually eat in

relative peace without some sloped-headed, beetle-browed fanatic suffering from an undiagnosed—but obviously serious—psychopathology standing behind you screaming, “Move it! Move it! Move it!”

The nightmare occurred my first night. I woke up about 3:00 A.M. trembling in fear and sweating through my bed-sheets. I had dreamed that I had not really graduated from boot camp, but still had another six weeks to go! Arrrrrgh!

What makes this anecdote even more pathetic is that boot camp was hardly arduous. While I should have known better because my Dad and one older brother had also been Air Force vets, I really did think that the military was going to turn me into a hardened, steel-eyed, cold-blooded killer, something I thought would be an interesting career move (Hey! We’re NOT discussing MY psychopathologies here!). Instead, the only difference between Air Force basic training and Boy Scout summer camp was that the Boy Scouts had adult supervision. Instead of becoming the airborne commando trained to fight and die for my country, I discovered a world of petty bureaucracy, silly regulations, blind eyes, and pencil whipping. Even worse, I wasn’t very good at it. I failed both the physical conditioning examination and the rifle qualification (how utterly devastating for a country boy to admit) but I did get extra points for neat penmanship! Even more amazing was that out of the forty-four men who started training in my flight, fourteen of them gave up because it was too “hard.”

I would have quit too, except the Air Force was my final hope. I had no place else to go, no skills to find a job, no money to go to college, nothing back in Maine except long winters and admitting I had failed. So by God’s grace (even though I didn’t know what that meant at the time), I stuck it out, and learned one of the most

valuable lessons of my life. Tough times make tough people. While I wish I could share war stories about how, armed only with a rusty pocket knife, I won undying glory against impossible odds by sheer force of right, I can confess only to spending six years doing hard, unglamorous work for low pay under sometimes appalling weather conditions. But I did learn how to keep my mouth shut (not always practiced), how to take orders (even dumb ones), submit to authority (even when the authority had IQ points roughly equivalent to room temperature), and do my job as unto the Lord.

A Tempering Process

Yet I treasure my time in the Air Force because it was a tempering process. They forced me to do things I would never have done; they stretched me in ways I never knew I could be stretched. The Air Force, through the grace of God, helped transform a lazy, insolent, self-oriented young punk into a responsible citizen. Yeah, it was tough, and humbling, and much better to remember than it was to live. But it was necessary.

God in his sovereignty uses everything in our lives to create the character of Christ. Hardship, affliction and, sometimes, even persecution are all tools in his hands. God is always in control; God always knows what he is doing. God is always working to advance his kingdom in history through the work of his people, and a large part of that work is preparing us for dominion. He purposely put enemies before Israel to prepare them for war. He scourges us when we fall into wickedness to bring us to repentance (*Heb. 12:7ff.*). He shapes and molds our experiences to prepare us for future glory (*Rom. 8:28-29*).

Hence, it is astounding that a great number of people in our camp seem consumed by fear of the future. Whether it be the conspiracies of evil men in high places, nuclear missiles pointing at our cities, the growing federal deficit, fractional reserve banking, Y2K, etc., many, many people who claim to be postmillennialists seem to live their lives in fear of the immediate future; fear that colors their work, worship, and ministry. Some retreat to the hills, stock their survival retreats with MRE’s and assault rifles, fearing the day when the BATF comes a’calling. Others are consumed with uncovering the latest conspiracy. Neither is really dominion-oriented.

I am not for a moment blind to the dangers of living in this present world. Crime is rampant; the Federal Government IS out of control; evil men ARE conspiring

against the Anointed. Certainly, wise men WILL take certain precautions to protect their families (see my essay, "Y2k and Disaster Preparedness," in the November 1988 *Chalcedon Report*). But, and this is an important "but," God is in control. Granted, this nation deserves judgment, and unless she repents will receive judgment. But we do not have to live in fear. God is in control, and God is a whole lot more gracious, kind and forbearing than most of us realize.

Israel repeatedly apostatized. But God did NOT destroy her for almost FIVE hundred years: from the time of David to the fall of Jerusalem. Afterward, he gave them another five hundred years of grace before finally destroying them by Rome. Rome was certainly an evil, tyrannical, and satanic empire fully worthy of divine judgment. But God postponed their judgment for FOUR hundred years until his fledging church was ready to step into her place.

We must learn how to persevere through problems, trials, and difficulties until we establish a genuine counter-cultural movement.

God reveals himself as slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. Of course, we must not presume upon his mercy. We should be calling from the rooftops for widespread repentance. There are many institutional evils that must be rebuked and, in God's timing, replaced. But God will not bring his judgment UNTIL he is ready and, more importantly, until we are ready.

One of the ways that he prepares us for future dominion is by giving us small trials to handle that toughen us up. Hence, with all due respect to certain brothers, the doom, gloom, and BOOM! scenario that some seem so enamored of is unlikely. Life has always been tough. Death, disease, and disaster have always surrounded God's people. Millions died in World War I, but millions more died in the Great Influenza Epidemic that came soon after. In the nineteenth century, women routinely died in childbirth, while men routinely died of old age in their forties. In our history, we fought one war to gain our independence, another

to preserve it, still another to free it—all while building the freest, most prosperous, most godly nation in history. Our ancestors were men and women who had been tried by God. They were not pessimistic about the future even amidst circumstances that most of us would find unbearable today. The problem is, we are too soft. Does anyone deny that the great appeal of a pre-tribulation rapture is the fear of persecution? Is it any wonder that our brothers in Mozambique, Angola, Uganda, Zambia, Sudan, China, Romania, Albania, North Korea, etc., all scratch their heads in bewilderment of this doctrine of escape? No rapture prevented their persecution and suffering. But they survived. And they thrived!

Conclusion

Instead of giving in to fear, Christians should be preparing for victory. Granted, we may not see that victory, and neither may our children. But our grandchildren just might. And it is certain that each generation brought into the world is closer to the day when the whole earth is full of the glory of God. Therefore, we ought to focus on preparing for long-term dominion by learning the lessons now that our descendants will need.

We need to become self-governed people, industrious, diligent, and conscientious in our labor. We must restore the Biblical family by making men into elders of their homes, women confident in their calling, and raising covenant children who embody our values and priorities. We must reclaim a sense of genuine Christian community and establish churches that work. We must learn how to persevere through problems, trials, and difficulties until we establish a genuine counter-cultural movement. We must discard the transient values of apostate America and rebuild a genuine Biblical model of relationships. We need to learn how to handle authority when it is given to us, and how to submit lawfully when it is given to others.

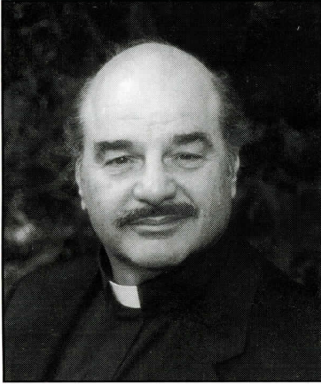
Whatever comes, comes from the hand of a sovereign and gracious God. If there are things we can do, or our families can do, or our churches can do to have a prophetic witness against evil or stem the tide of wickedness, then we must dedicate ourselves to them. But we do not have to give in to fear. We do not have to become paranoid. We do not have to frighten others. By God's grace, we can survive, we can grow, we can flourish, and we will conquer in Christ's name.

"For I know the plans that I have for you," says Jehovah, "plans of peace, and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. And you shall call upon me, and you shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And you shall seek me, and shall find me, when you search for me with all your heart."

(Jeremiah 29:11-13)

The Future and the Fruit of the Womb

By Rev. Ellsworth McIntyre



Good testimonies are usually told to my wife. That is the way reports of blessings come to this pastor. Sometimes news of bad events is made to my face, but good tidings seem always to be said to my wife. One of the ladies of our church snares my wife, looks both ways, and says,

“Oh, by the way, your husband’s preaching has changed our lives!” The most frequent blessing I receive in this fashion is that couples have decided to have a child for the first time, or to have additional children after years of birth control. I am always glad to hear this because years of “prophecy-mongering” by premillennial preachers have terrified some Christians into birth control and even childless marriages. Barrenness is just one consequence of premillennial prophecy teaching; wrecked careers and poverty are others. For example, about thirty years ago, Dr. Jack Van Impe held a giant rally in Greenville, South Carolina. He solemnly told the audience that, in his learned opinion, we didn’t have five years until the Lord would return. Rapture fever gripped the campus of my Christian university. One of my fellow students, a 30-year-old freshman, quit school because he believed it was a waste of valuable time to train for a future that didn’t exist. He had prayed and “was definitely moved,” so he said, to evangelize on the street, if necessary, to snatch as many souls as possible from the tribulation certain to come.

I met my friend six years later at a conference of Christian educators in Tampa, Florida. He was an unhappy insurance salesman. When I asked about his family, he looked hurt and changed the subject. I didn’t press him. I could easily guess why the question hurt. My experience as a pastor is that many premillennial families suffer poverty and divorce. Bad theology has terrible consequences. I tried to lighten up the conversation by saying (with gallows humor, an Irish speciality), “Well, Van Impe was wrong, but I hear he’s still preaching to a full house. Marvelous thing, the ministry. In any other profession, mistakes get you less business, not more.”

My sad-faced friend didn’t smile; instead he remarked that he had an appointment to keep. He had dropped

by when he saw the marquee at the Dixon Convention Center advertising our conference. He was happy to find someone he knew. He said, “Good-by,” and then staring at me, he asked with a quivering chin, “Pray for me.”

Not waiting for my answer, he turned too late to hide his tears and walked away. I never saw him again. Probably there are other reasons that destroyed my friend’s dream of the ministry, but goofy reading of the future by a premillennial preacher played a part. The Lord will sort out the blame, and wise men fear his vengeance. But premillennialists seem oblivious to their peril, a sure sign of a curse (*1 Pet. 2:20*).

Precise eschatology, the doctrine of last things, is not found in any of the historic creeds, such as the Belgic or Westminster Confessions. Extensive future predictions are not one of the fundamentals of the Faith. We cannot deny credentials to a Christian on the basis of his understanding of prophecy. We can, however, exclude a person claiming to be a Christian if he denies the doctrines expressed in the Apostles’ Creed or the Athanasian Creed. These must be endorsed, or a person cannot be accepted into our number. There is a way, however, to judge and deny credentials on doctrine other than the fundamentals. It is, by their fruits you shall know them (*Mt. 7:20*). For example, a prophet who foretells an event that doesn’t come to pass is to be condemned as a false prophet (*Jer. 23:32*). Please do not write me letters pointing out that Van Impe and others of his ilk qualify their remarks by saying, “No man knows, but I can safely guess on the basis of the signs that we don’t have more than five years. I am not setting a date, because that is forbidden, but. . . .”

It seems after thirty years of such doubletalk, false teachers must either repent or keep silent. How much damage to the body of Christ must they do before someone says, “Your fruit stinks”? The fact that prophecy conferences draw crowds does not prove anything except that sinful men love to use the Bible as a witch does the entrails of a chicken.

On the other hand, the fruit of rejecting premillennialism is very good. I still recall with reverent excitement the testimony a self-employed mechanic presented before Tri-City Covenant Church in Somersworth, New Hampshire. He said, in a voice filled with gratitude and emotion, that for the first time in his life, he had cleared all his debts and had opened a bank account. “The Son is making us free,” his pastor told me, “and if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.” Robust Calvinism coupled with postmillennialism

is making Pastor Tom Clark's congregation triumphant in Christ.

I still remember the night his church rejected Arminian baptism for covenantal sprinkling. Over fifty parents and their children lined the front of the repentant Baptist congregation. Some couples had two and three children to baptize. Some of the mothers stood heavy with child. All of the mothers seemed happy, but the pregnant ones had the most radiant smiles of joy on their faces. Their proud husbands stood at their sides vowing to bring their children up in the fear and admonition of Christ. If Christ would be so gracious to bless their children, they vowed as parents and as church members to faithfully teach their children to claim salvation only after supernatural obedience to the law-word had marked their children's lives. A virtual population explosion has marked this church, and a large and growing Christian school is helping parents make good their vows. The command to multiply and take ownership of the earth to the glory of Christ (see *Gen. 1:27, 28*) follows the application of sound doctrine. False doctrine like premillennialism brings barrenness and totalitarian poverty. By their fruits we shall know them.

There are many other churches experiencing such

victory. Shiloh Christian Church in Leroy, Ohio, under Pastor Phil Vollman, is one that I visited recently. Healthy, happy children abound in this church. The men talk of starting businesses and optimism shines as the sun. The future belongs to those who trust in Christ. Just as a new bride trusts in her husband, so a church freed from the living death of dead theology greets each day filled with hope. Some brides trust wrongly in weak and false men, but our husband, the Lord, is omnipotent and faithful. His prayer for us is "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in good health, even as thy soul prospereth" (*3 Jn. 2*). "Rejoice in the fruit of the womb, which is His reward" (*Ps. 127:3*). Be fruitful, multiply, and take dominion. The future belongs to the bride of Christ.

Ellsworth McIntyre, one of America's leading Christian educators, is pastor of Nicene Covenant Church and founder of Grace Community Schools, and author of How to Become a Millionaire in Christian Education. He is available for speaking engagements, often without charge. For further information, contact him at 4405 Outer Drive, Naples, Florida 34112. E-mail EMcin24158@aol.com.

A Debate on Calvinism

Who: Andrew Sandlin, Calvinism Proponent, Charles Doughty, Calvinism Opponent

Where: Church of Christ at Mountain View (Auditorium),
Winchester, VA (Rt. 11 South, Next to DMV)

When: 6:30 PM Wednesday Evening, February 3, 1999

For more information contact: Maxine Shiflett at the Mountain View office
(540) 869-2250 ext. 100

This debate will be the beginning of annual discussions and debate type forums sponsored by Christian Kingdom College.

Attention Covenant Youth!

We intend to begin a new feature in the *Chalcedon Report*. Every month we would like to publish a brief article by young Christians (no older than 20) either home schooled or in a Christian day school. The article should be 500-1500 words and be on a topic in line with Chalcedon's Vision Statement.

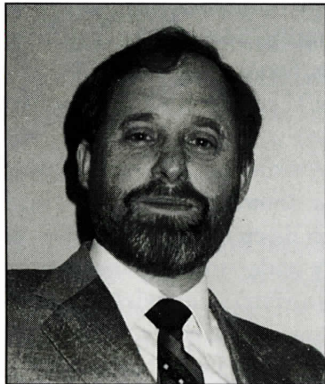
Chalcedon will pay \$50.00 for any article published.

Please send submissions to Susan Burns c/o Chalcedon,
P. O. Box 369,
Vallecito, CA 95251.
E-mail address sburns@goldrush.com

Stoning Disobedient Children

By Rev. William Einwechter

If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother ... all the men of the city shall stone him with stones, that he die (Dt. 21:18, 21)



Deuteronomy 21:18-21 contains what is, perhaps, the most vilified law of the Old Testament. It is widely believed that this law authorizes the stoning of children who disobey their parents. Accordingly, this law is used to prove how harsh, severe, and unworkable Old

Testament law is in “the New Testament age of love and grace.” When theologians advocate the use of the case laws as the standard for ethics and civil law today, often one of the first remarks they hear is something like, “So you advocate the stoning of children who disobey their parents.” The supposition is that by merely referring to this “harsh” law, they have proven that the theonomic view is absurd and cannot possibly be the standard for Christians today. Detractors of theonomy believe that the mere mention of the law of “stoning children” in Deuteronomy 21:18-21 will silence the theologian, and prove to all thinking Christians that these “cruel” Old Testament case laws should not govern our lives in this “age of grace.”

But as with most attacks on theonomic ethics, this objection to the use of the Old Testament case laws is based on a shallow reading of the law, a misunderstanding of the actual case law requirement,¹ and an attachment to sentimental impulses as opposed to a commitment to the high ethical provisions of Biblical law.² When this case law, which applies the moral law of the Fifth Commandment to a specific circumstance, is understood it will prove to be “holy, just, and good,” a delight to the heart of God’s true people (*Rom. 7:12, 22*).

This law is given in the standard case law formulation of “if . . . then.” The genius of the case laws is that they establish justice (or duty) in a specific case so as to enable us to know how to proceed (act righteously) in all such related cases. The particular case at hand involves a “stubborn and rebellious” son who will not heed the admonitions of his parents, nor submit to their discipline

(*v. 18*). It is vital to proper interpretation and application that the precise nature of the case be ascertained.

A Grown Son

First, the person in view is not a small child but a grown “son.” The Hebrew term for “son” (*ben*) employed here is indefinite. It is sometimes used of children of both sexes (*Ex. 21:5*) but most often of the male offspring of parents, and that is clearly the sense in this text. Of itself, the word “son” does not give any indication of age. It can refer to a child or a young man (cf. *1 Sam. 4:4; 19:1; 1 Kg. 1:33*); age must be determined from the context. In this case, the son in view is not a child, for the sins brought forth in testimony to show his contumacious manner are gluttony and drunkenness (*v. 20*), hardly the sins of the average 6 or 10 year old! The case also indicates that the parents have tried to restrain their son, but all their efforts have failed (*vv. 18, 20*); specifying that he is physically beyond their control. Furthermore, the parents bring their son to the magistrates to judge the matter (*v. 19*); hence, the son would have opportunity to speak on his own behalf. All of this indicates that the “son” in question is no mere child, but, rather, a young man at least in his middle teens or older. As Wright observes, “The law is not talking about naughty children but about seriously delinquent young adults.”³

Severe Disobedience

Second, the problems associated with this son are *severe*. This is not the case of a child who has failed to do his chores, spoke back to his parents, or even committed a serious act of disobedience, but of a son of dissolute character who is in full rebellion to the authority of his parents—he holds them and their word in contempt. The text says that the son is “stubborn” and “rebellious” (*vv. 18, 20*). Both of these descriptive terms are active participles, thus indicating habitual action. The son does not display a stubborn streak now and then, or act rebelliously from time to time, but is continuously stubborn and rebellious. The word “stubborn” refers to one who is obstinate in his resistance to authority. It is used in the Old Testament of a wild, untamed heifer (*Hos. 4:16*); of an immoral woman who has cast off restraint and indulges in lust (*Pr. 7:11*); and of Israel as a stubborn people who will not submit to God’s authority (*Ps. 78:8; Is. 1:23*). The word “rebellious” means, literally, to strike or lash, and is used of those who contend against authority and refuse to heed their words. The “rebellious” individual lashes out in contempt against those who have

authority over him verbally, and perhaps even physically. In light of this, it is important to note that the law of the covenant prescribes death for anyone who strikes his parents (*Ex. 21:15*) or curses his parents (*Ex. 21:17*). There is, therefore, reason to suppose that the son in this case law has broken the law of the covenant in one or both of these ways. The parents also describe the character of their son as being a “glutton” and a “drunkard.” These sins are put forth as examples of a life lived without restraint.

In the case of such rebellion and riotous living, and after all attempts at discipline and control have failed, the parents are to bring their son before the magistrates for judgment. If the magistrates concur in the parents’ estimate of the situation, they are to order the men of the city to stone the rebel with stones so that he dies (*vv. 20-21*). The purpose to be served in the execution of the rebellious son is to “put evil away from among you” and that all will “hear and fear” (*v. 21*).

The Real Meaning

Therefore, the law of Deuteronomy 21:18-21 is *not* about stoning disobedient children. The Bible does not instruct parents to use stoning in dealing with the rebellious nature and disobedience of their children, but to use the rod and reproof (*Pr. 29:15*). Children are to be trained from a young age by consistent and loving discipline so that the foolishness that is bound up in them can be driven out (*Pr. 22:15*), and they will learn to honor and obey their parents and all those whom God has placed in authority over them. The case law in discussion does not apply to young children during the formative years, but applies, instead, to a grown son (and by extension to a daughter as well) who, for whatever reason, has rebelled against the authority of his parents and will not profit from any of their discipline nor obey their voice in any thing. It is a case of habitual contempt of parental authority characterized by a young adult living a life without moral restraint who lashes out verbally and/or physically against his mother and father. It is a case where the evil character of the son is apparently *set*, and there is no reasonable hope of his ever changing.

The kind of rebellion against parental authority described in this case law is called “evil” (*v. 21*). It is evil because it holds both God and his law (*i.e.*, the command to honor parents) in derision. It is evil because it threatens the very existence of the family, and therefore, of society itself. It is evil because it signals the rejection of all God-ordained authority and leads to civil and ecclesiastical disorder. God considers it such a dangerous evil that it must be extinguished by death at the hands of the civil magistrate.⁴

Inescapable Death

Those who consider death as a horrible punishment here must realize that in such a case as described in

Deuteronomy 21:18-21, “death” is *inescapable*. Contempt of parental authority, if left unchecked, is the death of the family, law, and order. The question then is: Who or what should die? The rebel, or family and society? Furthermore, the life of a rebel inevitably leads to the grave (*sheol*; cf. *Pr. 30:17*); he will die an early death, and probably take others with him. Finally, God himself declares that even if such a rebel against parental authority escapes the judgment of man, his curse is upon that man and he shall be cut off (*Dt. 27:16*; *Pr. 30:17*). Therefore, the execution of the rebel in view is just, merciful, and preventive. Just, in that the transgressor deserves to die; merciful, in that his quick death prevents the destruction of the family, society, and others; preventive, in that it strikes fear in the heart of other would-be rebels and restrains them from taking a similar ruinous course.

Theonomists must not be embarrassed by the law of Deuteronomy 21:18-21, nor should they be chagrined when others try to use it to discredit the case laws of the Old Testament. Properly understood, it displays the wisdom and mercy of God in restraining wickedness so that the righteous might flourish in peace. It is those who reject this case law that should be embarrassed, for they have cast reproach on God and his law, cast aside the testimony of Christ,⁵ and have substituted their own imaginations (*Jer. 7:24*) for the blessed word of God.

¹ To understand and properly apply the case laws of the Bible requires diligent work. The Lord anticipates this need by repeatedly reminding us of the need to “meditate” in the law of the Lord “day and night” (cf. *Ps. 1:2*; *119:15*, *97-99*; *Jos. 1:8*). The wisdom and justice of God’s law is perceived by those who diligently search for it as for hidden treasure (*Pr. 2:1-9*).

² By nature, we are bent to reject the standards of a just and holy God for “that which seemeth right in our own eyes.”

³ Christopher Wright, *Deuteronomy* (Peabody, MA, 1996), 235.

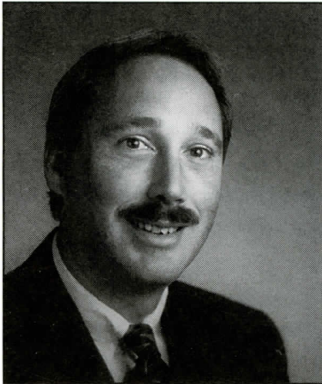
⁴ The family does not have the power of the sword. Only the state has the authority to execute those who are worthy of death. Therefore, if a state refuses to follow the law of Deuteronomy 21:18-21, parents are left only with the option of covenantal death (*i.e.*, disinheritance by the family and, where applicable, excommunication by the church).

⁵ Jesus himself specifically endorsed the death penalty for cursing parents (*Ex. 21:17*) in Matthew 15:4.

William O. Einwechter (Th.M.) is an ordained minister. He currently serves as the Vice-Moderator of the Association of Free Reformed Churches and Vice-President of the National Reform Association. He is also the author of the books Ethics and God’s Law: An Introduction to Theonomy, and English Bible Translations: By What Standard? and editor of the newly released Explicitly Christian Politics and The Christian Statesman. He can be contacted at 9385 Royer Rd., Mercersburg, PA 17236, or by e-mail at WEinwechte@aol.com.

Faith and Scientific Progress

By Craig Dumont



Many Americans don't realize how fortunate we are to live in an overwhelmingly culturally Christian country. We daily enjoy the tremendous benefits that have been derived from being founded as a Christian nation and an earlier generation's determination to establish a solidly and unapologetically monolithic Christian culture. Our citizens, even the most vicious critics of the Faith, are reaping incredible fruit harvested from the belief structure planted centuries ago. However, we must not assume that our prosperity will continue unabated if we forego the Faith that has liberated mankind and return to religions which kept nations locked in superstition and fear.

Pagan Multiculturalism

For an idea of what our country would resemble if we forsook Christianity we need not look to the past, but to a common story that has unfolded in "modern" India, a nation that is "multi-cultural" if ever there was one. (India is very proud to be known as the home of the proverbial "three hundred thousand gods.") The people of India are facing a deadly plague carried by rats; hundreds are dead and the possibility of thousands more dying soon is very real. Although the plague can be literally wiped out overnight by getting rid of the rats, health officials are helpless to act. According to Hindu mythology, the rats are not to be killed, but to be worshipped!

A recent Associated Press news report from New Delhi, India described the scene as follows:

It's a health official's nightmare: Tens of thousands of rats racing across the floor, feasting on fruit and candy.

At the Karni Mata temple in the desert state of Rajasthan, the effort to stifle the first outbreak of plague in 28 years takes a back seat to an old Hindu practice—rat worship.

In Hindu mythology, the elephant-headed god Ganesh is accompanied by a rat whenever he travels. No Hindu worship is complete without an offering to Ganesh and his small companion.

Unfortunately, there are many people who would like nothing more than to eradicate America's Christian heritage and replace it with the quagmire of superstitions, hopelessness, and helplessness that has bogged down pagan nations such as India. Paganism and pantheism have kept entire nations mired in human degradation based on fear and ignorance. This drive to diminish the influence of Christianity here at home is reflected in movements as diverse as what attempts to pass as "environmentalism," but is in reality more often a subtle form of pantheism (turning all living and non-living things—such as trees, ants, spotted owls, etc.—into gods that must be worshiped, *i.e.* Hinduism), to business people reviving the ancient Chinese practice of feng shui.

Feng shui is the practice of using a shaman (a nicer name for witch doctor) to "interpret signs from the elements on where to build a house or cemetery to best harmonize with nature," and shamans "have been revered in the Far East for centuries as priests able to read the heavens and take the pulse of the Earth." They are making huge profits by giving men like Donald Trump advice about where to put fish in the hotel lobby to absorb "negative energy" and where to hang mirrors to "reflect spirits" so they'll make lots of money. In a nutshell, the resurgence of feng shui once again places man at the whim of mystical nature spirits and returns us to the dark ages where roofs had pointed spirals to keep demons from sitting on housetops!

Christianity and Science

Although we hear a constant crescendo of opposition to Christianity, it is belief in God and Jesus Christ that has led to the incredible scientific breakthroughs we enjoy in our country. Christianity has been pivotal in lifting men and women—indeed, entire nations—out of the pit of superstition and fear to provide the foundation for scientific advancement and human progress. It shouldn't come as a surprise that as far as scientific discoveries are concerned, Christians, or those heavily influenced by Christian thought, have been on the cutting edge of progress. Someone once said, "It is just the Bible which sees both together: creation and Creator, nature and revelation, the visible and the invisible, man as the king of the earth and the earth as his kingdom."

Erich Sauer, a brilliant German theologian, points out that "we cannot rule over nature without first discovering its laws. It is a fact that only after the pagan

deification of nature had been conquered did true inquiry into nature enter the history of the sciences. For as long as men, even in classical antiquity, believed that nature was animated by gods or evil spiritual powers, awe in the face of these gods and demons was a restraint on the objective study of nature.”

To illustrate his point, Sauer gives several powerful examples:

- Anaxagoras, a personal friend of Pericles, the great Athenian statesman, and of Phidias, the most outstanding Greek sculptor and artist, was accused of atheism and exiled from Athens because he taught that the sun was a glowing mass of stone and that the stars also consisted of stone. He also taught that the moon received its light from the sun and that they were subject to the same gravitational force as earthly bodies. Because the people of his day believed the sun, moon, and stars were the divine rulers of earth he was condemned for blasphemy and banished.

- The Emperor Nero, although undoubtedly personally irreligious, had to capitulate in an important plan in face of the nature-deifying superstitions of his subjects. He stopped the very important cutting of a canal through the Isthmus of Corinth, by which the voyage from the Adriatic to Athens could have been shortened by about 200 miles, because many of his contemporaries felt it to be an unwarranted intrusion into the secrets of the earth and desecration of spirit-animated nature, and so feared the wrath of the gods.

And finally Sauer writes, “Those who deify nature are always, through awe of the mysterious spirit forces that rule within it, kept from looking more deeply into the life of nature and from penetrating into its laws. . . . For their deification of nature stood in the way of all scientific progress.”

Scientific progress is a natural result of Christianity precisely because we do not deify nature. Christians enjoy nature, care for creation as stewards and realize that all creation points to God “since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse” (*Rom. 1:19-20*).

The Biblical View of the Creation

God’s original revelation to man was that he had created all things and that creation was simply that: creation with man as the crown jewel made in God’s image given dominion over all the earth. Splendid, majestic, beautiful, incredibly intricate and fascinating, yes. But still only a creation that could do nothing of

itself except to point to and praise the One True God (see Psalm 148 for details). To understand nature was to understand the Creator. In this sense scientific investigation became a form of acknowledging, praising and worshiping God. The writer of Psalm 8 understood this as he declared, “O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth! When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place. . . . How majestic is Your name in all the earth!”

However, as man sought to escape from his responsibilities to God, he lowered himself to the point that he worshiped those things that God had placed him over. The apostle Paul declares in Romans 1:21-25 that “although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles . . . They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator.”

The Deification of Nature

Today we are witnessing a powerful resurgence of the deification of nature—the devaluing of human life combined with an exaltation of nature as something that is above man and requires us to “get in tune” with its mystical powers. This movement, if successful, will take us back to the pagan dark ages where men and women were intimidated and enslaved by unseen ghosts and goblins behind every tree and under every rock. It will attempt to overthrow scientific progress—human progress—as incompatible with nature. The end result of the re-deification of nature (Gaia worship) would be the elimination of the nation of Holland because the sea god, Neptune, doesn’t take kindly to dams and barricades keeping him off of land occupied by “inferior humans.”

For those who think that America is too “enlightened” to return to this pagan nonsense, consider the following:

- In Illinois, crews refurbishing Route 1 have been told to take extra precautions so they don’t disturb rice rats.

- A farmer in California recently had his \$70,000 tractor confiscated because he inadvertently killed a rat while working in his field.

- A corn farmer in Missouri was prosecuted for repairing a sunken levee on his property, thereby restoring 150 acres of brushland to crop land, on which he planted corn.

However, the Army Corps of Engineers considered his cornfield a "wetland" with cattails (the "cattails" actually were sorghum, planted by the farmer himself) and therefore the improvement was a federal violation.

- Malaria is on the increase because "environmentalists" have persuaded the EPA to outlaw pesticides that kill mosquitos, which are one of the main carriers of the disease. Why? "The smallest form of life, even an ant or a clam, is equal to a human being," says one leading environmental spokesman.

- Congress has passed animal-rights legislation to make medical research more expensive. One amendment requires researchers to protect the "psychological well-being" of monkeys.

- Ingrid Newkirk, former head of People for the Equitable Treatment of Animals (PETA) placed mankind on the same moral level as chickens when she complained on national TV, "Six million Jews died in concentration camps, but six billion broiler chickens will die this year in slaughter houses."

And these are just samples of what is taking place across the nation. The time is upon us when we, as Americans, must make a choice and that choice is a clear-cut one. Either we recommit to our faith in God who made us the greatest nation in history, or we return to the pagan nightmare of centuries past that will produce nothing except doom and despair. The Old Testament hero Joshua's words are words that need to be proclaimed today. After giving example after example of God's blessing upon Joshua's people, he ended a speech by stating "Choose you this day whom you will serve . . . but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (*Jos. 24:15*).

Craig Dumont is the pastor of Okemos Christian Center in Okemos and also the Grand Ledge Christian Center in Grand Ledge, MI. He writes a regular column called "Biblically Speaking" for The Towne Courier community newspaper and presents Biblical principles of government at a weekly Luncheon Lecture Series at the State Capital to about 20 Senate aids, lobbyists and business leaders.

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Urban Nations Update: Doorkeeper Blues (Part 2)

By Steve M. Schlissel



"THIS WAY IN"

Rev. Schlissel welcomes immigrants in Christ's name.

In our last UN update we began to frame the problem of "doorkeeping." We noted that there must be some mechanism whereby church membership is regulated, else anyone could, with impunity, claim to be a member or, alternatively, no one could legitimately claim to be a member. Let's talk now about *who* determines admission and next time *how* that determination should be made, that is, *by what standard*.

The Reformed Faith has traditionally assigned this doorkeeping task to the elders of a local church collectively subject to review (in disputed cases) by elders of nearby churches. However, the *actual* administration of the tokens of membership is, in the Reformed and other traditions, exclusively in the domain of the minister. A. A. Hodge, with characteristic clarity, argued for the traditional Presbyterian position: "[S]ince the church is an organized society, under laws executed by regularly appointed officers, it is evident that ordinances—which are badges of Church membership, the gates of the fold, the instruments of discipline, and seals of the covenant formed by the great Head of the Church with His living members—can properly be administered only by the highest legal officers of the Church, those who are commissioned as ambassadors for Christ to treat in His name with men."

Hodge, then, following the Westminster Standards, is asserting that ministers *alone* may lawfully function as the doorkeepers of the church, though, presumably, they do so with the consent of the other ruling elders who make up the session (the ruling body of a particular church). It is not, therefore, simply any elder but exclusively "teaching elders," *i.e.*, clergymen, who open and close the gate at the point of contact.

The only proof texts offered by Hodge are 1 Corinthians 4:1: "Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God," and 2 Corinthians 5:20: "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God." The Westminster Confession of Faith, upon which Hodge had been commenting, adds these texts in support of the proposition that the right of sacramental administration belongs exclusively to "minister(s) of the Word lawfully ordained" (*Mt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 11:20, 23; Eph. 4:11-12*). All the texts taken together, though, hardly constitute a compelling case.

In 1 Corinthians 4, Paul is urging the church to see that the apostles, collectively, were given to the whole church as instruments by which the truths concerning Christ were being made known. It says nothing of pastors and sacraments. In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul is relying on his apostolic authority as given directly by Christ to add weight to his appeal for their hearts to be turned toward God. This is classic Pauline appeal, and though we may and should follow its example, it says nothing about clergy exclusivity in sacramental administration.

In Matthew 28 we find our Lord commanding his apostles to preach the gospel, and baptize nations, and to teach everything he has commanded. Clearly, apostles were authorized to baptize.

1 Corinthians 11, at most, references Paul's apostolic authority as one who had been given direct, explicit instructions from our Lord concerning his Supper: "When therefore ye assemble yourselves together, it is not possible to eat the Lord's supper, . . . "For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." This passage does not support clergy-exclusivity, especially when Paul's remedy for their problem is considered: it is that each man should examine himself, NOT that each man should be examined by the elders!

And the Ephesians passage reminds us how Christ, in love for the church, supplied her with officers for her well-being: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." We learn nothing here of exclusive rights to rites.

I see little in these passages which would constitute a compelling case for ministers being the exclusive administrators of the sacraments. But lest you think I'm arguing against our received ways, let me tell you where

I'm headed. I'd like for us to keep our current Reformed practice, but I'd like to see that practice established on Biblical, *covenantal* principles rather than hierarchical presuppositions arbitrarily imposed on the texts. Hodge was right, I believe, but he went beyond Scripture in his argument.

For example, please note how Hodge presupposes of the sacraments that they are "instruments of discipline." I would assert that they are such only incidentally and not essentially. In the case of baptism, it is not an instrument of "discipline" at all, in any fair sense. And as regards the Supper, the denial of the Supper to an "excommunicant" is a *consequence* of the discipline and not the instrument by which his status came to be. He is an excommunicant *by deliberative and judicial pronouncement*. It is the decree of the covenant community, delivered by its officers, which makes a man as if he were "a pagan or a tax collector."

Covenantal Democratization

But the question of sacramental administration may put us on the cusp of a new extension of the Reformation itself. For the Reformation was, perhaps as much as anything, a redistribution of power that had been unlawfully and unbiblically concentrated in the hands of the priests. It may not be too much to say that the whole of the Reformation can be seen in the single issue of the Lord's Supper. Rome said grace was a commodity which could be dispensed. Priests were those who received power to change the elements from mere bread and wine to "actual" body and blood.

With the light of Scripture delivering the people from the superstitions of the Roman mass came a liberation from the unlawful power of the priests. If the bread and wine remain bread and wine, if the benefits of the rite are appropriated not by magic but by faith, then the administrators are at best servants, never lords. But it may be that we have not taken this manumission seriously enough or far enough.

For while the Reformers rightly saw the sacraments as being two in number, it seems they only dimly saw—if they saw this at all—that the Old Testament analogs of these two rites were the most democratically administered of *all* Old Testament rites. There is, for example, no Old Testament office of "circumciser." The rite was performed by interested parties or their appointees. Abraham, it seems, performed the rite himself upon himself and his household (*Gen. 17:23*), though it is not at all unlikely that he was assisted. After all, Genesis 14:14 tells us that there were more than 300 males reckoned in Abraham's household. Tough day's work for one man, and enough to make everyone after the first, say, fifty, very nervous. "Abe, you sure you don't want to take a nap first?"

And in the famous case of Moses' son, we know that it was his *wife* who, hastily but legitimately, performed the ceremony. However exceptional this instance may be, it is not exceptional in that the important thing was the

fact of circumcision, not the *who* of the administrator. This, of course, is confirmed in our Confession (27:3): "The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them; neither doth the efficacy of a sacrament depend upon the piety or intention of him that doth administer it: but upon the work of the Spirit, and the word of institution, which contains, together with a precept authorizing the use thereof, a promise of benefit to worthy receivers."

But when we come to the Lord's Supper we seem to forget that its Old Testament antecedent, the Passover, was strikingly unique in its administration: Passover was Father's Day in Israel. Philo noted that at Passover, the fathers of Israel were "raised for that particular day to the dignity of the priesthood. For at other times the priests according to the ordinance of the law carry out both the public sacrifices and those offered by private individuals. *But on this occasion* the whole nation [*i.e.*, each father] performs the sacred rites and acts as priests with pure hands and complete immunity . . . On this very day *every dwelling-house* is invested with the outward semblance and dignity of a temple."

This agrees with Scripture. Exodus 12:3, 6 states "Speak to *all the congregation* of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth day of this month *every man* shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household.' . . . Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the *whole assembly* of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight."

Thus, while all other sacrifice was committed to the house of Levi, this one sacrifice, the antecedent of the Christian Supper, was different.

The Passover sacrifice was entrusted to the fathers in Israel. Each daddy offered the Passover lamb for his household. That this was indeed the normal practice is confirmed by a noteworthy exception recorded in 2 Chronicles 30:17: "Since many in the crowd had not consecrated themselves, the Levites had to kill the Passover lambs for all those who were not ceremonially clean and could not consecrate [their lambs] to the LORD." Whereas the Levites would normally be involved in sacrificing animals on other occasions, they were *exceptionally* involved on this occasion, serving as substitutes for ceremonially unclean fathers. The implication is clear: given ceremonial cleanliness, the fathers in Israel were qualified to administer this sacrament.

Does this mean that we must abandon any notion of office in the New Testament-era church? Certainly not! But it does mean that a reexamination of our practices and their underlying presuppositions may be in order.

Fathers in the Church

What we may find is this: it is perfectly legitimate for fathers to collectively assign their administrative responsibility to local church "fathers" for the sake of neatness, expediency, and order. Every church must have

a plurality of elders. However, if the elders, as those entrusted with ecclesiastical administration, are reluctant to give any of it back to fathers under any circumstances, then it may be that we are closer to the spirit of Rome in our practice than the spirit of the Reformation.

Minimally, this consideration should lead us to see the propriety of church officers administering the sacrament of the Lord's Supper *by household, through each household's head*, thus retaining, confirming, and reinforcing the covenantal way in which God has ordered the New Testament church: *i.e.*, as a community of households, not isolated individuals each directly under the authority of the elders. The elders of each church are appointed not only by Christ, but by the fathers in each church. This is the way of the covenant. This way retains all. In the photo

accompanying this article, you'll see me with immigrants from Urban Nations whom I welcomed into the church, not only as a servant-representative of Christ, but also as a servant-representative of the fathers of our local church. Covenant is the key, even in administration.

Perhaps this is provocative enough for one article. We'll leave this aspect of our subject now and return next month, Lord willing, to consider more about the subject of church membership. In the meantime, let's hear from you.

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Conspiracies

By R. J. Rushdoony

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Roots of Reconstruction ©1991, R. J. Rushdoony

The question of conspiracies is often discussed and seldom understood. Usually, the term "conspiracy" is reserved for the hated opposition. Communists refuse to regard their movement as a conspiracy because they believe in its historical inevitability; only the enemies of the proletariat are conspirators. Similarly, in the 1880s, the bomb-throwing anarchists of the day actually held that "Anarchy is the negation of force"; their reasoning was that capitalism was using violence (the police power) to block the historically inevitable death of the state, so that anarchist action was simply an attempt to nullify force. Again, South American military regimes hold that they seized power to block radical conspiracies: they themselves were not conspirators but patriots. While one of the dictionary definitions of conspiracy is that it is a "combination of men for an evil purpose," another meaning is a "combination of men for a single end." Conspiracies thus are more than enemy action: they are any and all plans to gain a particular goal through more or less covert action.

The important question to ask is this: What makes a conspiracy work? Let us suppose that a number of us conspired together to turn the United States into a monarchy, and ourselves into its nobility; let us further suppose that we could command millions from our own circle to achieve this goal. Or, let us suppose that, with equal numbers and money we conspired to enforce Hindu vegetarianism on the country. In either case, we would

have then, not a conspiracy, but a joke. A successful conspiracy is one which is so in tune with the faith and aspirations of its day that it offers to men the fulfillment of the ideals of the age. It is an illusion to believe that dangerous or successful conspiracies represent no more than a small, hidden circle of diabolical men who manipulate the world into ruin. Such groups often exist, but they only exist and succeed because their plan and hope is closely tied to the public dream and the faith of the age. If the threat were only from small circles of hidden men, then our problem would be easy. Then, as Burton Blumert has observed, "if we only unmasked the conspiracy, all our problems would be solved, but if the trouble is in all of us, then we really are in trouble."

He is right: we really are in trouble. The Enlightenment dream, as Louis I. Bredvold pointed out in *The Brave New World of the Enlightenment*, has five basic tenets in its faith: 1) there is a rejection of the past and of history; man makes himself and his world, and the past is a hindrance; 2) there is a rejection of institutions and "customs," in particular, Christian institutions and standards; 3) evil is not in man but in his environment; 4) "by changing human institutions human nature itself will be born again"; and 5) those who should manage human affairs are the scientific planners, the educators, and the statesmen. These are the men who best represent the will of man in terms of man's potential and future.

Man today believes this with all his heart. All over the

world, the reigning faith is in this democratic, humanistic faith in the scientifically guided order. The communists affirm democracy and the ballot box; they hold elections even though there is no choice on the ballot. Men who have started private or Christian schools all too often subscribe to democracy to the point that they insist on giving teachers and parents a voice in a school which represents only their funds and planning; the result is democratic chaos or failure.

The myths of the Enlightenment infect all of us. In church, state, school, press, in every area, the myths are held with earnest faith and zealous endeavor. The conservative in most cases simply holds to an earlier version of the myth.

Recently, I heard a number of conservative candidates for a city school board speak and almost all simply repeated the basic humanistic faith. Within the first few minutes, I jotted down these sentences: "The proper education can cure all our ills." "The right to vote is the most precious right man has won." "We need representation from every ethnic group in order to be just." "You can do without everything else in the world, but you can't do without an education." And so on.

If tomorrow the secrecy were stripped from all conspiracies, and their goals revealed, most people would merely say, "Well, isn't that what we all believe?" and go on with their daily lives.

A conspiracy has power to the degree that it speaks to the prevailing beliefs and hopes of the day. And our age, as a humanistic one, dedicated to "man's fulfillment" in a humanistic sense, is ripe for every conspiracy which promises to deliver on those dreams. Man believes that he can make a new start, create a paradise on earth, without God and without regeneration. We have for some time been in process of revolution against Christianity, and we have been moving towards this "Great Community" of Man. Our establishment, political and educational, represents the older phase of the revolution, and youth is in part in rebellion against the older phase of the revolution in favor of a faster fulfillment of the dream. The more radical the conspiracy, the greater its appeal, because it is then all the closer to the dream.

The basic myths of the day are so much a part of the age that most conservatives simply want to return to an earlier phase of humanism; they believe in statist schools, in the priority of politics to religion, economics, the family, and all things else.

But, meanwhile, some people are losing faith in the dream: they are *dropping out*. They are dropping out, because the humanistic dream has failed them. No new faith has taken its place. As a result, their attitude is one of total negation. They hate the dreamers of the dream,

the men who make promises, and they hate the society and social order which surrounds them. As drop-outs, whose faith is negation, their only action is to destroy, to burn, loot, kill, and bring down the old order.

There is thus a double revolution and conspiracy at work today. *First*, there is the humanistic revolution against the whole world of Christian order; this revolution is well entrenched and nearly successful. *Second*, there is the revolt against the new humanistic establishment by its own sons, who are bent on destroying everything in sight. This is a revolt within the revolution and against the revolution, and it is present in the Marxist states as well as in the West.

Thus, we are in trouble. As Arnold Rosin observed, in *The Age of Crisis* (1962), "Only dreamers believe there is a peaceful way out." Communism is dedicated to the total destruction of Christian order and the conquest of the Western and Eastern non-Marxist states. The democracies are steadily moving into dictatorships. The student generation is disillusioned with the whole of the present era and is readily led into hostile and destructive action. And the economic crisis is steadily pushing the world towards a total monetary collapse.

Our crisis goes deeper than a circle of conspirators. The conspirators themselves are creations of our faith, called in part into being by our own apostasy. When men forsake God's law-order, they must inescapably resort to a man-made order, and this is what men have done. The answer is not simply to unmask the conspirators but to unmask ourselves, to know that we are sinners in rebellion against God and his law-order. Ours is a total problem, a religious problem. It cannot be solved on any other level.

It is thus distressing to see a man who denounces Marx turn then to Emerson and write glowingly of him: he has not gone far from Marx! After all, before Marx, Emerson had renounced Christianity: he was a high-level leader of the Secret Six conspiracy which worked to bring about the Civil War and financed John Brown. Members of the Secret Six helped Horace Mann bring in the state school system. One of Emerson's closest associates and a top Six leader, Thomas Wentworth Higginston, founded the L. I. D. and the Intercollegiate Society of Socialists. The distance between Marx, Comer, Emerson, Stalin, Whitman, Hitler, F. D. Roosevelt, John Dewey and others is a short one: they were all humanists who offered variations of a humanistic dream.

Their dreams and their world are under God's judgment and shall perish. If we are not to perish with them, we must move in terms of another order and rebuild in terms of it. The duties are ours; the results are in God's hands.

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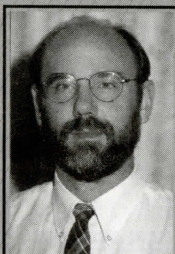
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Our Speakers



Dr. Kenneth L.
Gentry, Jr.

Ken Gentry graduated from Tennessee Temple University (1973), and received a Masters degree from Reformed Theological Seminary (1977). He received a second Masters from Whitefield Theological Seminary (1986), and later earned his Doctorate (1988) from the same institution.



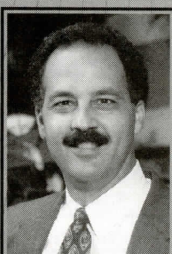
Dr. Peter
Leithart

Peter Leithart graduated from Hillsdale College (1981) and later received two Masters degrees from Westminster Theological Seminary (1986, 87). His doctoral work was done at the University of Cambridge.



Dr. James E.
Bordwine II

Jim Bordwine graduated from Graham Bible College (1977) and received two Masters degrees from Biblical Theological Seminary (1980). He received his Doctorate from Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary (1993).



Gary
DeMar

Gary DeMar is a graduate of Western Michigan University (1973) and Reformed Theological Seminary (1979).

Conference Topics and Schedule

MONDAY

6:00 PM

The Origin of Biblical Eschatology «BORDWINE»

7:00 PM

The Eschatological Perspective of the Psalms «GENTRY»

8:00 PM

The Eschatological Perspective of Jesus (part 1) «DeMAR»

TUESDAY

6:00 PM

The Eschatological Perspective of Jesus (part 2) «DeMAR»

7:00 PM

The Eschatological Perspective of the Prophets «BORDWINE»

8:00 PM

Explanation and Critique of Dispensationalism (part 1: an explanation of Dispensational hermeneutics, as compared with Covenant theology) «GENTRY»

WEDNESDAY

6:00 PM

Explanation and Critique of Dispensationalism (part 2: the character of modern Dispensationalism, with attention paid to recent developments in this school of interpretation) «GENTRY»

7:00 PM

Eschatological Expectation and the Nature of the Atonement «BORDWINE»

8:00 PM

The Eschatological Perspective of the Apostles «LEITHART»

THURSDAY

6:00 PM

Eschatology and the Church «LEITHART»

7:00 PM

The Revelation «GENTRY»

8:00 PM

The Character of Modern Popularized Eschatology and Its Influence on the Church and Society «DeMAR»

9:00 PM

Panel Discussion



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Nicaragua: Ground Zero

By Susan Burns



The first nine days that Hurricane Mitch hovered over Nicaragua the storm dumped 4 inches of rain per hour for 6 days. And then the rainfall lessened to 10 inches a day dumping an additional 30 inches of rain in 3 days. The flooding and mudslides took their toll on human life, agricultural land,

livestock, roads, bridges, houses—the landscape once flourishing with signs of life was quickly covered by water and mud. Then, as if to add insult to the injury, the crater of Casitas Volcano, filled with water from the heavy rains, broke, sending an ocean of water, mud, and debris into heavily populated villages below. It left a 30 square mile path of destruction. It is estimated that 1,500 were killed in this one location and many thousands remain missing. In one town, only 92 residents were found alive; 172 towns were cut off by floodwaters, 80 percent of the big bridges in the country were washed away, as were almost 50 percent of the roadways. Managua Lake rose 15 feet during the flood, forcing the relocation of 10,000 families. We may never know the complete death toll of this terrible storm. However, it is estimated that 5,000 died, while another 8,000 remain missing, and 400,000 are homeless in Nicaragua alone with estimates that the number of homeless may rise to as many as 750,000.

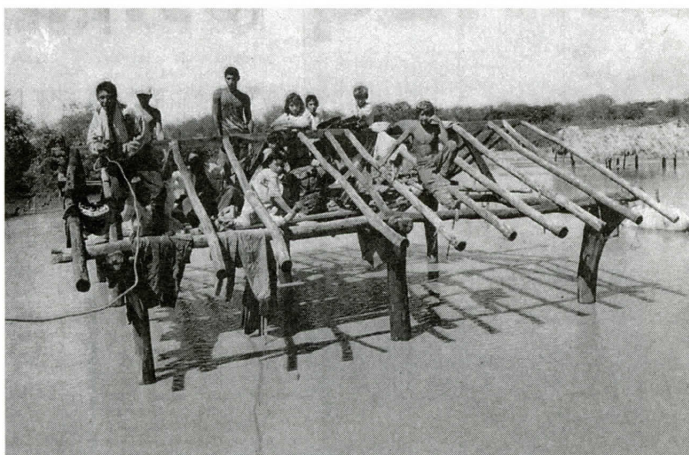
In the aftermath, International Church Relief Fund's

Nicaragua Director, Mario Aviles, called the U. S. office in tears. He and his team were trying to get food to eight people who had tied themselves to a tree to keep from being washed away. On the way to help these folks, he saw a pig eating the corpse of a small child—it was too much for this former guerilla warrior who, after conversion, had dedicated the last ten years of his life to rebuilding his homeland after the ravages of years of civil war.

He told the *Chalcedon Report*, "After the civil war, we were reconstructing the nation. After 10 years, we were looking good. New roads, new bridges, democracy and liberty. Then we received this brutal impact. We have



One of many mass funerals in Nicaragua



Without food or drinkable water, this family clung to the remains of their roof for 8 days waiting to be rescued.

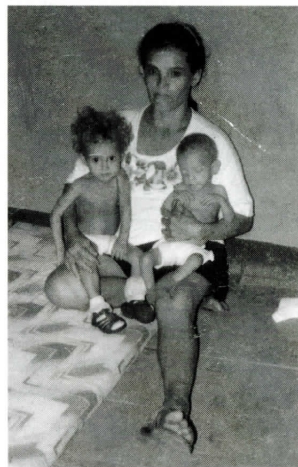
been working hard and it is like somebody punched you. Sometimes we just say, 'Why?' Well, I don't know what God wants for Nicaragua, but I know he wants something good. We have always been a stubborn people. So we are going to begin again."

Mario and his congregation immediately set up a refugee shelter about 25-30 minutes from the capital city of Managua. This is the area where Lake Managua forced the evacuation of 10,000 families. Within days, Mario's church provided shelter, blankets, mattresses, medical help and food for 65 families. This number grew quickly to 202 families receiving shelter and three meals a day. ICRF quickly sent a check to help with supplies and food. Of those entrusted to his care, Mario says, "It is not enough to keep the refugees in rice and beans. We must focus them on the future. We have to rebuild their lives. Some reconstruct buildings; we reconstruct lives."



Overwhelmed by the devastation

The Mayor of Los Brazils provided a building where some of the refugees are being housed. He also promised Mario land in the area where permanent homes can be built for the homeless. Mario is praying for God's wisdom as to how best to use this property to help the refugees rebuild their lives. His current thinking is that if homes are built with property surrounding them, the people will be able to grow food for their own use and for sale in the neighboring towns and cities. This will be a major step to rebuilding self-sufficient lives.



This young mother of 4 hiked for several days with her children until she arrived at ICRF's shelter.

Mario is hopeful. He told the CR, "I think that in months these people can begin to work and to produce instead of sitting down like beggars. I want them to have dignity. These people are hard working people. They used to live near the lake and they had livestock and agriculture. This place is near Managua, the capitol, where everything can be taken by road. Here the people can sell their products. It will be better for them if we can

stop feeding them and let them begin to produce for themselves."

This will require strengthening the microenterprise programs that have been a staple of ICRF's ministry in Nicaragua. Hurricane Mitch ravaged the marketplaces of Nicaragua and all but stopped trade and commerce. The buildings used as markets have been destroyed as has the means of producing products to sell. Re-establishing

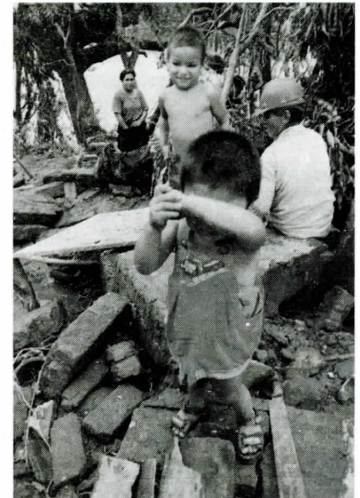
microenterprises is a key component in Mario's strategy to rebuild his nation.

Currently, Mario and ICRF are scrambling to meet the immediate needs of feeding, clothing, and sheltering the homeless. They are prayerfully seeking God's wisdom as they seek to rebuild families and the nation.

The emotional impact on the survivors has been tremendous. Many families have been destroyed. Grieving survivors who watched their loved ones being torn away to drown in flood waters or sinking helplessly in a sea of mud have also had to watch recovered bodies being burned to stop the spread of diseases like typhus and cholera—diseases which could prove more deadly than the thrashing floodwaters. The surreal scenes of livestock—pigs, ducks, chickens, dogs—eating decaying human bodies has been repeated so many times that soldiers are routinely slaughtering all livestock to prevent the spread of disease.

Mario says of the survivors, "These are not just numbers, these people have names, they are human beings." Mario and his congregation spend time praying with the survivors and offering God's comfort and hope to them. Already ten families at the shelter have turned to Christ in repentance and faith. Mario and ICRF hope this is just the beginning of a mighty spiritual harvesting for the people of Nicaragua.

The devastation of Mitch reminded Mario of a sight he had seen often repeated in flooded jungles, "When the river goes up, I have seen a lion with a deer in the same woods. The lion does not try to attack the deer and the



Children among the ruins



Young mother ankle deep in flood water



This young couple has lost everything. They are wearing masks as protection from disease brought by decaying bodies.

deer does not try to run from the lion because they are so busy trying to stay alive. It seems the only way that you see Jerusalem on earth is when there is a big emergency. This tragedy is different from the civil war because our civil war separated brother from brother. This tragedy has united brother with brother. Now, Nicaragua is united in pain and mourning. We will rebuild our nation. We have no options. We have to go forward."

Going forward and rebuilding in the midst of such total devastation requires our help. For \$25.00 ICRF can put together a one-week survival package of basic foods and supplies for a homeless family. After meeting the immediate needs to help the homeless survive, more funds will be needed to help them rebuild self-sufficient lives. Mario and the ICRF team can help their fellow



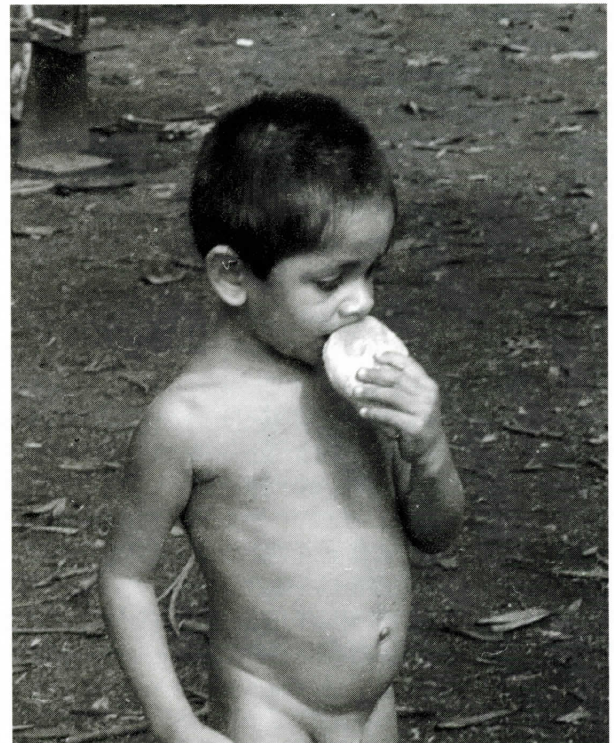
Mrs. Aviles handing out Family Packs to rescued victims. Packs provide one week worth of supplies for a family.



Children stand in the flood water as a medic checks an infant for respiratory illness.

Nicaraguans only to the extent that our generosity allows. Please send your donations to International Church Relief Fund, P. O. Box 5366, Santa Rosa, CA, 95402-5366, designating in the memo section, "For the Nicaraguan Relief Effort."

Susan Burns is a native Virginian and graduate of Reformed Theological Seminary. Her work has been published in over 25 publications. She co-authored (with George Grant) Perot: The Populist Appeal of Strong-Man Politics and served as the news editor and investigative reporter of The Presbyterian Advocate. She is Chalcedon's administrative assistant.



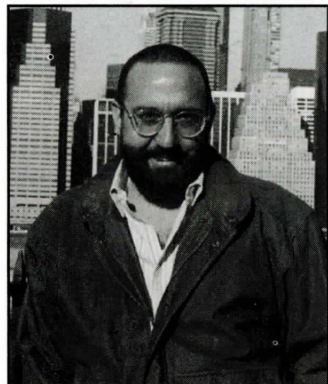
Due to the growing number of orphans, ICRF has made room in each orphanage for 1/3 more children than they currently house.

All I Really Need to Know I Learn in the Bible

(Part 2)

By Steve M. Schlissel

God's Witness to the Covenant in the Bible



God covenanting with Noah: Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: 'I now establish my covenant *with you and with your descendants after you*' (Gen. 9:8-9).

God covenanting with Abraham: "Then God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you must keep my covenant, *you and your descendants after you for the generations to come*. This is my covenant with *you and your descendants after you*, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. *For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring. Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant*'" (Gen. 17:9-14).¹

No Covenant Without Covenant Seed

The very purpose of covenanting is to fulfill in our children the promises received by us.

God covenanting with Abraham, again: "Then the LORD said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. *For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him*'" (Gen. 18:17-19).

Now quickly read the New Testament, addressed to adherents of Universal Judaism. We are Abraham's heirs; unbelievers are cut off. The promise belongs to *us* and to our children.

"For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything He tells you. Anyone who does not listen to Him will be completely cut off from among his people.' Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days. And *you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers*. He said to Abraham, "Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed" (Ac. 3:24-25).

"If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29).

And again: "The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.' *So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith*" (Gal. 3:8-9).

God's covenant with the fathers included the children: "Because *He loved your forefathers and chose their descendants after them*, He brought you out of Egypt by His Presence and His great strength" (Dt. 4:37).

"But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath He swore to your forefathers that He brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt" (Dt. 7:8).

"Yet the LORD set His affection on your forefathers and loved them, and He chose you, *their descendants*, above all the nations, as it is today" (Dt. 10:15).

Being elected into covenant did not relieve covenant members of the obligation to offer God a new heart, or, as some since the Puritans have put it, improve their baptism: "*Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer*" (Dt. 10:16).

But look at the promise given to those who did "improve their baptism": "The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts *and the hearts of your descendants*, so that you may love Him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live" (Dt. 10:6).

God covenanting with Phinehas: "The LORD said to Moses, 'Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites; for he was as zealous as I am for My honor among them, so that in My zeal I did not put an end to them. Therefore tell him I am making My covenant of peace with him. *He and his descendants* will have a covenant of a lasting priesthood, because he was zealous for the honor of his God and made atonement for the Israelites'" (Num.

25:10-13). Because Phinehas was zealous, his sons received a promise. The true God works no other way.

God covenanting with David: "You said, 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant, *"I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations"*'" (Ps. 89:3-4).

Though the covenant continues in the line of generations, that does not mean it has no conditions: "When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, *I will raise up your offspring* to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for My Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be My son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But My love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before Me; your throne will be established forever" (2 Sam. 7:12-16).

God covenants with his servants: "The children of Your servants will live in Your presence; *their descendants* will be established before You" (Ps. 102:28).

God covenants with those who fear him: "Who, then, is the man that fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him. He will spend his days in prosperity, and *his descendants* will inherit the land" (Ps. 25:12-13).

God covenants with the Recabites: "Then Jeremiah said to the family of the Recabites, 'This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "You have obeyed the command of your forefather Jonadab and have followed all his instructions and have done everything he ordered." Therefore, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: *"Jonadab son of Recab will never fail to have a man to serve me"*'" (Jer. 35:18-19).

The God of the Bible does not make covenants which don't include children: "For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit *on your offspring*, and my blessing *on your descendants*" (Is. 44:3).

The thought is absolutely contrary to his revealed character: "As for Me, this is my covenant with them," says the LORD. 'My Spirit, who is on you, and My words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, *or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants* from this time on and forever,' says the LORD" (Is. 59:21).

And again: "As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before Me," declares the LORD, "so will your name *and descendants* endure" (Is. 66:22).

We should go further still and say that God's servants did not enter into covenants with others which did not include the others' households. Two examples. One, the spies' covenant with Rahab of Jericho: "Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give

me a sure sign that you will *spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them,* and that you will save us from death." "Our lives for your lives!" the men assured her. "If you don't tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the LORD gives us the land."

To treat her kindly could not possibly exclude treating her family kindly. But this example also illustrates the *obligation* of the beneficiaries of the covenant to remain where God has graciously caused them to be connected:

The men said to her, "This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us unless, when we enter the land, you have tied this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you have brought your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your house. If anyone goes outside your house into the street, his blood will be on his own head; we will not be responsible. As for anyone who is in the house with you, his blood will be on our head if a hand is laid on him" (Jos. 2).

Two, David's covenant with Jonathan:

When Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honor. David said, "Mephibosheth!" "Your servant," he replied. "Don't be afraid," David said to him, "for I will surely show you kindness *for the sake of your father Jonathan*. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table" (2 Sam. 9:6-7). And later: "The king spared Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, *because of the oath before the LORD between David and Jonathan* son of Saul" (2 Sam. 21:7).

This is the way covenants work. There is no other way. That view of the New Testament church which sees it somehow suddenly shorn of children is every bit as destructive of the true religion as the covenant presumptuousness it was invented to combat. Berkhof properly cautions us to remember that early in church history "increasing worldliness and corruption of the Church gradually led to reaction and gave rise to the tendency of various sects, such as Montanism in the middle of the second, Novationism in the middle of the third, and Donatism at the beginning of the fourth century, to make the holiness of its members the mark of the true Church." Surely, this is cause for pause.

Covenant and Baptism

This controversy over baptism among Christians is just as stubbornly rooted in presuppositions as the issue of blood atonement is for the Jews (see my December column). If you grant them their premise upon which they insist—that Jesus is not the Messiah, period—then their

system will be seen to have some sort of cohesion. But is that presupposition one which best accounts for all the data of Scripture, not to mention history? It is not.

Similarly, the Baptist filters every text through a grid which insists beforehand upon profession, or born-again-ness, as a requirement for covenant status. But is the Baptist presupposition the one that best accounts for all the data of Scripture? It most certainly is not. Rather, it begins with, and depends upon, a view of the Old and New Testaments as essentially antithetical, a view we can never embrace.

Which view can take the following passages in stride, with no discomfort or lust for asterisks?

On the day of Pentecost: "Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. *The promise is for you and your children* and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call'" (Ac. 2:38-39). If children were, from Pentecost on, to be excluded, someone forgot to tell Peter.

Of the household of Cornelius: "He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, 'Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He will bring you a message through which you *and all your household* will be saved'" (Ac. 11:13-14).

Of the household of Lydia: "On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When *she and the members of her household were baptized*, she invited us to her home. 'If you consider me a believer in the Lord,' she said, 'come and stay at my house.' And she persuaded us" (Ac. 16:13-15).

Of the household of the jailer: "Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, 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. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house" (Ac. 16:29-33).

Of the household of Stephanas: "Yes, I also baptized *the household of Stephanas*; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else" (1 Cor. 1:16).

As I said, if we presuppose hostility between testaments, it becomes a matter of mere hermeneutical gymnastics to justify the exclusion of children. "You see, the jailer's whole house *believed*," etc. But this misses the point. It is not a matter of hermeneutics. It is a matter

of which covenant presuppositions inform your hermeneutics.

Covenant and Election

There has always been, we maintain, one covenant, and that covenant has always and only been efficacious through faith in Christ, and that covenant has always included children (and does even now). God's people were, together, an elect people, and spoken to by God as such. But never are we required to believe that everyone regarded as properly in covenant is therefore elect.

My Baptist brothers functionally deny covenant at its administrative core by withholding baptism from their offspring. This act of hostility toward covenant babies (yes, hostility can be powerfully expressed in passive ways; just ask your wife!),² is the fruit of a view of Scripture which imposes a fundamental hostility between the testaments.

Instead of rejecting just *unbelief* in both testamental administrations, Baptists equate unbelief with the Old and faith or belief with the New. This is not only unbiblical; it is anti-historical. Does anyone dare to suggest that the period from Christ to the present has been characterized, not necessarily exhaustively but even substantially, as an administration of *faith* without much unbelief? I trust not!

No. The Baptist rejection of the Old Testament covenant motif is as destructive to the proper view of Scripture's unity as is the Jews' rejection of the New Testament.

The Baptist approach to Scripture effectively redefines the "peoplehood" of the people with whom God covenants, and therefore suggests, however subtly, however gross, that the Old Testament administration was *carnal* while the New Testament administration is *spiritual*. We have already shown that Scripture itself will not countenance any such dichotomy. Spiritual and carnal, if the words must be used, describe the difference between belief and unbelief, not between the Old and the New Testaments.

In Scripture we find a single message organized around a single motif: covenant. The Baptist denial of this is just as radical in its impact on our view of the unity of the Bible, though not as deadly, as the Jewish denial of the New Testament's authority.

This was evident to our Fathers who taught us, in the Belgic Confession, Article 34, to confess: "*Therefore we detest the error of the Anabaptists,³ who are not content with the one only baptism they have once received, and moreover condemn the baptism of the infants of believers, who we believe ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant, as the children in Israel formerly were circumcised upon the same promises which are made unto our children. And indeed Christ shed His blood no less for the washing of the children of believers than for adult persons; and therefore they ought to receive the sign and sacrament of that which Christ has done for them; as the Lord commanded in the law*

that they should be made partakers of the sacrament of Christ's suffering and death shortly after they were born, by offering for them a lamb, which was a sacrament of Jesus Christ. Moreover, what circumcision was to the Jews, baptism is to our children. And for this reason St. Paul calls baptism the circumcision of Christ."

The Unity of God's Plan

All I really need to know I learn in the Bible. There is but one Bible. There is but one God. There is but one Christ. There is but one covenant. At the heart of that covenant is the atonement through the blood of Christ. From the moment of their conception, my children were heirs of that covenant. They were born under that blood, covered, and secure. God, my God, is more willing to forgive my children than they are, by nature, to be forgiven. This is the heritage of grace. This is the way of God. Now they have an obligation: to keep covenant with God.

Their Savior has told them: "Abide in Me, and I in you." They are in Christ. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love" (Jn. 15:4-10).

H. C. G. Moule said it so well: The doctrine of election "is a lamp, not a sun. It is presented to us everywhere as a truth not meant to explain everything, but to enforce this thing: that the man who truly loves God has to thank, not himself, but God. He must thank the true God that his eyes, guiltily shut, were effectually opened."

Seeing things in this light frees us to read the Scripture with humble hearts, seeking to be edified in the ways of the Lord, not with proud hearts seeking to build our lives upon that which God has not seen fit to reveal. For the sum of the matter is this: "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us *and to our children for ever*, that we may do all the words of this law" (Dt. 29:29). Amen, Lord Jesus.

¹ In case you are wondering, yes, I would affirm that if a man were to have slaves in his household today as then, they ought to be baptized. Yes, I believe in household baptism. Indeed, I believe in baptizing nations, if we could get at their heads. Compare Matthew 28:18-20.

² The hostility I speak of here is real but objective; it would be obviously and utterly false to say that Baptist Christians deny baptism to their children because they *feel* hostility toward them. Nevertheless, withholding the sign and seal of God's grace from proper candidates is, *objectively* considered, no act of love.

³ Today's Baptists are not direct descendants of the Anabaptists here mentioned, but they most certainly do embrace the error here condemned.

Steve Schlissel has been pastor of Messiah's Congregation in Brooklyn, NY since 1979. He serves as the Overseer of Urban Nations (a mission to the world in a single city), and is the Director of Meantime Ministries (an outreach to women who were sexually abused as children). Steve lives with his wife of 24 years, Jeanne, and their five children.

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Chalcedon Itinerary 1999

- January 8** 7:00 p.m. Chalcedon Lecture Series, **Vallecito, CA.**¹
- January 15** 8:00 p.m. at the Pasadena Hilton, 150 South Los Robles Avenue, **Pasadena, CA**, lecture by Andrew Sandlin.²
- January 16** 7:00 p.m. at the Quality Hotel–Maingate, 616 Convention Way, **Anaheim, CA**, lecture by Andrew Sandlin.³
- January 24** Reformed Heritage Mini-Conference. Featuring Brian Abshire and Andrew Sandlin. Worship at 10:00 a.m.; lunch and fellowship afterward and lectures in the early afternoon. Reformed Heritage Church meets at the Dena Boer School, 4801 Gold Valley Road, **Salida, CA**. Call Brian Abshire at (209) 544-1572 for more information.
- February 3** 6:30 p.m. A Debate on Calvinism with Andrew Sandlin and Charles Doughty, Church of Christ at Mountain View, **Winchester, VA** (Route 11, South, next to the DMV). Call Maxine Shiflette at (540) 869-2250 for more information.
- February 12** 7:00 p.m. Chalcedon Lecture Series, **Vallecito, CA.**
- February 14** 10:00 a.m. Reformed Heritage Mini-Conference, **Salida, CA.**
- February 26** 7:00 p.m. at Airport Marriott, **Tampa, FL**, lecture by Andrew Sandlin.
- February 28** Nicene Covenant Church, 4405 Outer Drive, **Naples, FL**, Andrew Sandlin at morning worship. For more information, call (941) 566-7167.
- March 12** 7:00 p.m. Chalcedon Lecture Series, **Vallecito, CA.**
- March 14** 10:00 a.m. Reformed Heritage Mini-Conference, **Salida, CA.**
- March 19** **Dallas, TX.** Andrew Sandlin lectures, details to be announced later.
- March 20** **Houston, TX.** Andrew Sandlin lectures, details to be announced later.
- April 9** 7:00 p.m. Chalcedon Lecture Series, **Vallecito, CA.**
- April 11** 10:00 a.m. Reformed Heritage Mini-Conference, **Salida, CA.**
- April 16** **Portland, OR.** Andrew Sandlin lectures, details to be announced later.
- April, 17** **Seattle, WA.** Andrew Sandlin lectures, details to be announced later.
- May** **Peter Hammond** travels to the U. S. for speaking engagements, details to be announced later.
- May 14** 7:00 p.m. Chalcedon Lecture Series, **Vallecito, CA.**
- May 16** 10:00 a.m. Reformed Heritage Mini-Conference, **Salida, CA.**
- May 21, 22** **Northern Virginia.** Andrew Sandlin lectures, details to be announced later.
- June 11** 7:00 p.m. Chalcedon Lecture Series, **Vallecito, CA.**
- June 13** 10:00 a.m. Reformed Heritage Mini-Conference, **Salida, CA.**
- June 15-20** **Midwest.** Andrew Sandlin lectures, details to be announced later.

¹ The Chalcedon Lecture Series meets at the Chalcedon Chapel, 3900 Highway 4, Vallecito, CA 95252.

² The Pasadena Hilton is located at the corner of South Los Robles and Cordova. It is located 1/2 mile south of I-210 and 10 miles north of downtown Los Angeles. It is one block from the Pasadena Convention Center. Direct Dial: (626) 584-3170.

³ The Quality Hotel direct dial is (714) 750-3131.

***“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.”***

First Timothy 5:8

The Apostle Paul wrote those words near the beginning of the First Millennium A.D. We stand on the threshold of the Third Millennium, the Year Of Our Lord 2000, “Y2K.”

Many credible individuals around the world are quite concerned about “Y2K.” They believe that businesses and governments will not be completely prepared. Some computers that run the world will “go on strike” at midnight, 1/1/00 (or sooner). And it may take weeks, months, or even years to get them working right again.

Although we know there will be problems,
no one knows HOW BAD they will be,
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