

# CHALCEDON Report

*Faith for All of Life*

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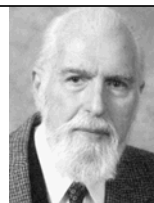
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# Revelation 21:1-8 The New Creation

(Reprinted from *Thy Kingdom Come: Studies in Daniel and Revelation* [Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2001 printing], 213-216).

According to Hebrews 12:22-29, “We ARE come...unto...the heavenly Jerusalem.” The New Jerusalem is a present reality as well as a future realization. M. S. Terry summarized the matter aptly, writing in 1890:

The New Jerusalem, then, is the apocalyptic portraiture of the New Testament Church and Kingdom of God. Its symbolism exhibits the heavenly nature of the communion and fellowship of God and his people, which is entered here by faith, but which opens into unspeakable fullness of glory through the ages.<sup>1</sup>

## A New Heaven and a New Earth

The creation of a new heaven and a new earth began with the resurrection, with Christ the first-fruits of the new humanity and the new creation. The new creation involves the “shaking” and recreating of the old world. The first “shaking” of the earth took place at Sinai, when the holiness of God in His law was death to the world’s sin and rebellion. The second and last shaking began with the resurrection: “Yet once more, I shake not the earth only, but also heaven” (Heb. 12:26). The Puritan expositor, John Owen, writing on Hebrews 12:25-27, said:

It is therefore the *heavens of Mosaical worship*, and the *Judaical church-state*, with the *earth of their political state* belonging thereunto, that are here intended.<sup>2</sup>

Again, Roderick Campbell has pointed out clearly:

The making of all things new has reference to moral and spiritual regeneration, to redemption in time, to “the resurrection of all things,” to “the time of reformation,” to the formation of the “new creation,” to the making and completion of “new heavens and a new earth,” in other words to the restitution rendered necessary by the entrance of sin and the fall of man (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 1:20).

Note carefully the phrase “all things” which is repeated no less than six times in Col. 1:15-20. Note particularly verses 19-20, “For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself: by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.” It should also be noted that the “all things” of 2 Cor. 5:17 has reference mainly, if not exclusively, to objective reality — to things outside the believer, as they now appear to him. In both passages the transformation of the “all things” relates to external fact rather than to subjective experience.<sup>3</sup>

Campbell further states:

The New Earth is the lower or manward side of the new universe which came into being as a result of the redemptive work accomplished by Christ when on the Cross. He said, “It is finished,” and then expired (John 19:30). The New Earth means the redemptive effects on earth which are spoken of in the New Testament as “the regeneration,” the “time of reformation,” and “the restitution of all things.” In contrast with and in opposition to this New Earth stands

the world which still lies in the evil one (Gal. 1:4; cf. John 5:4).

The word “heaven” in Scripture (as, for example, “the heavens do rule”) does not necessarily mean the physical or astral heavens, but rather the Divine government of the world and man. “Earth” does not necessarily mean the material planet on which we live or any part of it such as cities or fields. The New Earth does not mean (as some think) our present physical planet purified from its moral and spiritual evil. It does not mean that this present physical world will be purified so as to be a fit plane in which the saints will dwell when Christ returns, or after the last trumpet sounds. The New Earth means something wholly new — something which came into being with the inauguration of the age in which we now live. It means something which can be seen only by faith.<sup>4</sup>

Calvin’s comment on Hebrews 2:5 helps clarify this point:

To make the thing clearer, let us suppose two worlds, — the first the old, corrupted by Adam’s sin; the other, later in time, as renewed by Christ....It hence now appears that here the world to come is not that which we hope for after the resurrection, but that which began at the beginning of Christ’s kingdom, but it will not doubt have its full accomplishment in our final redemption.<sup>5</sup>

This makes the issue clear-cut: there is no kingdom for us, if we are not in the kingdom now; there is no new creation we can look forward to in eternity,

if we are outside the new creation now. The kingdom is and is to come; the new heavens and new earth are and are to come. The fullness is at the end of time, but it is here today in reality. This means that Christians are neglecting their inheritance and failing to make use of their power in Christ: they live in terms of victory tomorrow instead of victory today, in terms of joy tomorrow instead of joy today. How can we enjoy heaven if we cannot enjoy earth? How can we rejoice in the eternal order beyond time, when we cannot rejoice in the new creation today? Revelation was written to suffering and troubled Christians, and also to smug and self-satisfied Christians, who alike waited for the kingdom to come and felt that the world's problems presented a hindrance to Christ and His kingdom. But Revelation makes clear that the kingdom is now, and that, not by evading conflict, responsibility, and suffering, but by assuming it, do Christians and the church gain their inheritance. Both compromise with the world and flight from it assume that Christ is impotent and that His kingdom is in the future and has no power today.

The good news is announced: "no more sea." The sea is the world, the apostate and unbelieving world. The nations establish themselves as the true kingdom, as man's true commonwealth, in opposition to the kingdom of God. They claim dominion, control, and power. But God declares, "no more sea." The nations, he told Isaiah, are as nothing before Him (Is. 40:15ff.). Now, the new creation having been established and Christ's atoning work openly set forth, the Lord moves against the nations. There shall be no more sea, and the good news is announced in advance. The kingdom of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. The apostate nations shall be broken, and the way prepared for the

servants of the Lord.

In verses 1-8, we have the new heavens and the new earth portrayed in their eternal splendor and present reality, and contrasted with the eternal death of the world of Babylon. In verse 1, as we have noted, we have the great declaration, "and there was no more sea." The turbulent and raging sea, from whence came the beast, and which typifies the nations which establish themselves as the true kingdom, man's true commonwealth, in opposition to the kingdom of God, is no more, from the perspective of the eternal order. Through Isaiah, God declared emphatically that His judgment was upon the nations. Moreover, by the coming of Immanuel, the virgin-born Son of God, the sovereignty of the nations was revealed to be less than nothing, totally nonexistent, and the sovereignty of the Lord was fully revealed. The Christian today, as in John's day, too often is overwhelmed by the raging of the sea, and feels that God is remote, but the Lord declares through John, "there is no more sea." "The heathen rage" (Ps. 2), but all their plotting against the Lord's dominion is set at naught by the coming of Jesus Christ, who proceeds to "break them with a rod of iron" (Ps. 2:9). What we are witnessing is not the triumph of the nations but their shattering, and we must "Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Ps. 2:11) as we see these things.

The tabernacling presence of God is portrayed both in its fullness, as the glory of the eternal order, and as the reality of the true church's life. Death and the sorrow of life is abolished by the resurrection of Christ, and we enter into that victory here and now, and into its fullness at the resurrection of the dead. Not by compromise, nor by sitting on the sidelines in separation from the conflict, but by overcoming and by thirsting do we receive our inheritance

and drink of the water of life (Rev. 21: 6-7). And the Lord is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and Omega, of all things, including our Christian life, our hunger and thirst, our struggling, and our overcoming. Therefore, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him" (Ps. 2:12).

The word "new" is repeatedly used to describe this creation. Two different Greek words are translated "new" in our English text, *neos*, which relates to time, and *kainos*, which relates to quality.<sup>6</sup> The word *kainos* is used to describe the tomb of Jesus (Mt. 27:60; Jn. 19:41), and also the "wine-skins" or "bottles" for new wine, indicating in both instances not that the tomb or the wine-skins were newly made, but rather unused or fresh for the tomb, and fresh and elastic for the wine-skins. This same work, *kainos*, is used here and throughout the Book of Revelation. ■

1. Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1890), 382.
2. John Owen, *An Exposition of Hebrews*, vol. IV (Evansville, IN: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 1960), 366.
3. Roderick Campbell, *Israel and the New Covenant* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1954) 108.
4. *Ibid.*, 113f.
5. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, John Owen translation (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 58.
6. W. Boyd Carpenter, in Ellicott, *Commentary, op. cit.*, VIII, 627.



# The Resurrection and the New Creation

Christianity is based on the historicity of a miracle, that of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from a Jerusalem tomb two millennia ago. That event is why we celebrate Easter as the holiest of Christian celebrations and Sunday as the Christian Sabbath. Our faith depends on Christ's resurrection, His victory over sin and death. Too often, however, modern Christians express uncertainty about the implications of Christ's resurrection as it relates to the final resurrection at the second coming of Christ.

Part of our problem is that we still try to read Scripture in terms of philosophical distinctions that are rooted in the Enlightenment's revival of Greek philosophy. We use Scriptural terminology, but understand it, at times, in terms of non-Scriptural definitions, making God's Word less, not more, understandable.

## Greek Error

Greek thinking saw body and spirit as foreign elements only temporarily linked in life. Real freedom was escaping, through abstract ideas and eventually through death, from the body into what it saw as the real: spirit, or idea. Scripture does speak in terms of both body and soul, but its use of the term *soul* is not equivalent with the Greek use of *spirit*. If you think in terms of a deceased person's soul as being in an

ethereal, pure, and somewhat ghost-like existence, you are thinking in Greek, not Biblical terms. The Bible's use of the term *soul* refers to the fact that he is created a *person*, not that he has an ethereal spirit inside his physical body. When a *soul* goes to heaven, it means the *person* goes to heaven. The soul in heaven is a real person, though without a body.

Greek thinking made matter a lower state of being than spirit. To the extent that we envision heaven as a less-than-material place, we follow Greek modes of thought. When speaking of our resurrection, Paul did say that God would change "our vile body" (Phil. 3:21). The word *vile* in that text here means *humbled, of low estate*. Paul is referring to our earthly bodies as *humbled* in the fall, *in a low estate* because of sin and the curse. But Paul's reference to our humbled bodies in that text also looks forward to when God will change them from their humbled state to be "like unto his glorious body."

Eschatology deals with the doctrines of the last times. But God reveals end times, not for our curiosity, nor even for their study in isolation, but to give us perspective and hope. Last things are also not without preceding things. History is linear, moving toward its culmination in the purpose of God. Eschatology involves more than curiosity about end times, but also the direction of history toward those end times. Escha-

tology involves not just the final chapter, but the outworking of history leading up to that conclusion. Part of our eschatology must be our understanding of the resurrection of the dead at the second coming and the creation of the new heavens and the new earth. Our end-time thinking must then dictate our present realization of the hope that is ours in God's predestined climax to human history.

In his magnificent statement to the Corinthian church on the importance of the resurrection of the dead, Paul made clear that if Christ was not bodily raised from the dead our hope and even our faith itself is in vain (2 Cor. 15:17). He also told the Ephesians, that God "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6). God has caused *us* to sit with honor with the King at His Throne! God has called us to exercise power "in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," to proclaim the power of His resurrection in us. We are called to sit with the King to do more than enjoy our personal salvation; we are called to live and move in terms of God's power and purpose in the totality of our thinking and being.

Our understanding of last things must be in the context of our understanding of God's creation and providence and His revelation of His will from the beginning of the world, for

He does not change (Mal. 3:6). God made the world and man, and pronounced them very good. Man's sin has polluted both his creation (including his body) and his soul with sin. God's grace, however, has predestined both the world and man to be redeemed and re-created (Rom. 8:16-23; 2 Cor. 15:12-58; Rev. 21:1-5). This redemption has been revealed throughout history. Man's purpose was clearly stated in the Creation mandate, which was given as a blessing (Gen. 1:26-28) because man was created with the privilege of exercising dominion under God. It was basic to the covenant that God promised to Abraham and his heirs. Moses gave the people God's laws and the understanding that obedience meant blessing and sin meant judgment. The Great Commission opened up the covenant blessing to all the world. The writings of Paul and John, in particular, give us a clear picture of the end times and our bodily resurrection.

### Our World

As beautiful as it is, the world we see is not the world as God created it. It was cursed (Gen. 3) and later destroyed by the Flood. What we see is the regrowth on top of mud and volcanic debris. This symbol of judgment will also be redeemed as part of the new creation (Rev. 21:1-5). This new creation began with the resurrection of Jesus Christ, continues as the Spirit makes men into "new Creatures in Christ" and will continue through the millennium. It will climax, however, with our bodily resurrection and the creation of the new heaven and the new earth.

Man's problem is not his body, as in Greek thought. Man's problem is not metaphysical, but moral; he is a sinner. In Eden, man was made flesh and blood in perfect righteousness to serve God in His creation. Man's rebellion spoiled both body and soul, and even the origi-

nal creation in the Flood. It was Christ's incarnation in human flesh that began the change. His victory over sin and death on the first Easter Sunday made God's restoration certain. His resurrection defeated both spiritual and physical death, and His victory will one day be given us when we, too, are raised from the dead.

The resurrection of Jesus cannot be denied, but neither can it be limited to Him or His body (1 Cor. 15:12-19). It is the basis of our faith that we will be raised, that He is "the firstfruits of them that slept" (v. 20). Christ's resurrection ensures our own (vs.12-27).

Again, we must consciously dispel from our thinking the Greek separation of spirit as superior and body or matter as supposedly inferior. Such thinking leads us to think of heaven as an ethereal, dream-like world. If you have ever caught yourself thinking that heaven may be rather boring, you are likely envisioning a very "spiritualized" heaven, i.e. one of pagan Greek mythology. The eternity God has in store for His saints is in a very real place, with a very real existence.

In Romans 8:10-11 Paul tells us that though sin makes us dead, the Spirit is life and that as He raised Christ, He will also "quicken your mortal bodies." After His resurrection, Christ made a point of demonstrating that He was not a spirit. He ate with the disciples, and made Thomas feel His wounds (after just eight days they would have still been *wounds*, not healed scars). The resurrected Jesus was and is flesh and blood. Likewise, our redemption will not be complete until it culminates in the victory over the last enemy, death (2 Cor. 15:26). The fullness of the Spirit's work in us will come when He resurrects our flesh from the dead.

Our present bodies are distorted by sin and the entropy and destructive mutations it introduced. Our present

bodies are only a poor image of what our resurrection bodies will be (1 Cor. 15:35-44). Paul compares the difference to that between a seed and its plant (vs. 36-38). Our flesh will have a new material form compatible with and befitting our celestial home (vs. 39-44). This final victory, this climactic restoration, awaits the second coming when the old physical creation in which we now live will be melted away and reformed into a new physical creation (2 Peter 3: 10-14). Once again, it will be very good.

### In Heaven

A question naturally arises as to the deceased saints' present dwelling place. Christ promised the thief on the cross that he would that day be in paradise (Lk. 23:39-44), an obvious allusion to a place much like Eden. It was, note, a place, not a state of being; the thief would "be" with Christ "in" paradise. The believing thief was to be with Christ immediately after death. Previously, our Lord had declared at once that He was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that He was not the God of the dead but of the living. These patriarchs, then, are truly living; they have life in paradise. Their souls, their *persons*, are very much alive. When we die, we go to paradise, or heaven, which is a predecessor to the eternal, the new heaven and the new earth "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2).

Our eschatology must include our bodily resurrection. It is the climax of our redemption and human history. It is the final application of Christ's atonement to human history and hence God's conclusion to His complete redemption. We must, moreover, see our present responsibility in terms of this certain future historical event. Holiness is how we are set apart to God. Holiness is not a neo-platonic escape into the "spirit" as

*continued on page 37*

# The Meaning of Easter

Samuel L. Blumenfeld



The American holiday calendar commemorates religious, patriotic, and secular events. The year starts with New Year's Day, an event that celebrates a change of numbers with the dropping of the ball in Times Square, and a milestone in life as each one of us marches toward our final destiny; then it moves on in February to the commemoration of our great presidents; then into late March or early April to celebrate Easter, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ; then on to the Fourth of July, the most patriotic holiday of the year; then to Labor Day in September, a secular holiday celebrating labor unions. On October 31, there is Halloween, not a national holiday, but a relic of Druid paganism that the public schools have adopted as some sort of ghoulish festival of the black arts. From there we go to Thanksgiving Day, a combined religious-secular holiday, in which we thank God for His bounty and blessings. And finally we end the year in a blaze of light and music with Christmas, celebrating the birth of the most important person in history, Jesus Christ.

## Calendars

Indeed, the religious holidays memorialize the life of Jesus, which is honored differently by Protestants and Catholics. Actually, there are three calendars intertwined in the American calendar: the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish. The Protestant calendar reflects a simpler form of Christianity practiced by the Puritan Calvinists who settled in New England beginning in

1620. The Catholic calendar reflects the more elaborate religious festivals celebrated worldwide by Catholics: Ash Wednesday, Shrove Tuesday, Palm Sunday, Lent, Good Friday, Easter, and Christmas. The Jewish calendar, quietly subsidiary to the two Christian calendars, celebrates religious holidays only. You cannot secularize the cycle of Jewish holy days. They remain distinctively religious events.

But there is one holiday in which the three calendars converge: Easter. The Jewish holiday of Passover is an important part of the life of Jesus Christ, whose momentous Last Supper was a celebration of Passover. From there the Son of God went to His crucifixion, and from there He was laid in a tomb where He was Resurrected. At Easter, we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and His Ascension to Heaven.

But Easter has been so thoroughly secularized that most Americans see and enjoy it as a celebration of spring in Hollywood technicolor images. Here, show business merges with religion. Thus, we hear Judy Garland sing of her Easter Bonnet with the blue ribbon on it, and see television pictures of the Easter Parade in New York, with everyone decked out in their new modish clothes, with throngs of worshippers crowding St. Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue. And there are the Easter bunnies and Easter eggs for the little ones. Indeed, it is a joyous time all over the United States and among Christians the world over.

## The Most Important Day

But it is also the most important day in Christendom, for without the

Resurrection there could be no offering of salvation, forgiveness of sin, and life after death. There could be no Christianity without the Son of God, for it was the miracle of the Resurrection and Ascension that affirmed the divinity of Christ.

Of the Passover, the Last Supper, where the drama of Easter begins, we read in Mark 14:1-2:

*After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people.*

*And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover. And in the evening he cometh with the twelve....*

*And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body.*

*And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.*

After Judas's betrayal, Jesus is then arrested and taken to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, who answers the cry of the rabble to crucify him. We read in Matthew 27:27-33 what happened next:

*Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.*

*And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand; and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying Hail*

*King of the Jews! And they spit on him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him and let him away to crucify him.*

The drama continues in Luke 23: 26-27:

*And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus. And there followed him a great company of people and women, which also bewailed and lamented him.*

*And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father forgive them; for they know not what they do. (Lk. 23:33-34)*

*When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. (Matt. 27:57-60)*

Then we read of the miracle of the Resurrection:

*And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed. (Mk. 16:2-8)*

This is not fiction. It is not a myth.

Back in the 1980s, while on a tour of Israel, our guide took us to the actual tomb in Jerusalem or a tomb similar to the one described in Scripture. It is a cave hewn out of the rock with a stone surface inside where the body must have lain. To secure the tomb, there is a great round stone, like a wheel, that is rolled in a groove at the entrance of the tomb. No one from the inside could roll that stone away.

We are then told of the Ascension:

*So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following them. Amen. (Mk. 16:19-20)*

### An Actual Date

Thus the drama of Easter culminates. However, it was difficult to designate a date for the celebration of the Resurrection until 325 A.D., when the First Council of Nicaea, convened by Roman Emperor Constantine, adopted the Gregorian Calendar to regulate the ceremonial cycle of the Roman Catholic and, later, Protestant churches. The Council decided to keep Easter on a Sunday and constructed several special tables to compute the date.

Thus, Easter falls on the first Sunday following the first ecclesiastical full moon that occurs on or after the day of the vernal equinox, which is fixed as March 21st. Thus, Easter can never occur before March 22nd or later than April 25th. The Eastern churches, using a modified Gregorian Calendar, date Easter according to the astronomical Full Moon for the meridian of Jerusalem. In any case, in the year 2004, Easter is celebrated on April 11<sup>th</sup>, and in 2005, on March 27<sup>th</sup>.

It should be noted that the secular calendar that the world uses for commerce and politics is dated from the birth of Jesus Christ and revolves around the important events in Christ's

life. We tend to take the Christian calendar for granted because of its universal secular use, but its significance should never be underestimated. It provides and maintains the historical and ecclesiastical record of Christian civilization, the world's dominant civilization.

One of the reasons why the Jewish people have been able to maintain their peculiar identity over so many thousands of years is not only because of the Hebrew language and alphabet and their Scripture but because of their maintenance of the Jewish calendar, which in the year 2004 records 5765 years of continued Jewish existence. In other words, Jesus was born in the Jewish year of 3761. That, indeed, was a long time to wait for the coming of the Messiah. Jesus was a Jew, and his first followers were Jews. They were convinced that He was the Messiah prophesied in Scripture. And He went on to conquer the non-Jewish world so that every human being could be saved from sin and be brought into covenant with Almighty God. **CR**

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# THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST

## *A Movie Review by Brian Godawa*

**Brian Godawa** is a Hollywood screenwriter who wrote the award-winning feature film, *To End All Wars* ([www.toendallwarsmovie.com](http://www.toendallwarsmovie.com)), starring Kiefer Sutherland and Robert Carlyle. He is currently adapting two novels to film by best-selling author Frank Peretti. He has traveled around the United States teaching on movies and culture to colleges, churches, and community groups. His book, *Hollywood Worldviews: Watching Films with Wisdom and Discernment* (InterVarsity Press), is in its fifth printing. His website, [www.godawa.com](http://www.godawa.com), contains more of his cinematic, theological, and philosophical musings.

I've seen an advance screening of Mel Gibson's controversial new film, *The Passion of the Christ*. It was a digital projection with a temporary soundtrack and no special effects. Doesn't matter. It was still the most moving and memorable portrayal of Jesus Christ that I have ever witnessed. Produced by Mel Gibson, co-written with Benedict Fitzgerald, and starring Jim Caviezel, this masterpiece has clearly been providentially ordained by God for such a time as this.

### R-Rated Gospel

The story begins in the Garden of Gethsemane with Christ's betrayal at the lips of Judas and follows the last twelve hours of His earthly life and crucifixion, ending with a brief scene of His resurrection. But this is in no way merely another telling of the greatest story ever rehashed. It is an experiential exploration of the meaning of sacrificial substitutionary atonement like no other Jesus movie has ever depicted. Oh sure, most movies about Christ have covered the injustice, beatings, and crucifixion of our Lord and Savior—some of them better than others—but never like this. All other Jesus movies are revisionist candy-coated schmaltz compared to this one. Gibson based the gruesome details of his film upon a famous clinical



investigation of Roman crucifixion and punishment, "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ," published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* in 1986. The film translates this historical research onto the screen with a brutal vengeance: scourging whips of leather embedded with bone ripping off flesh, pools of blood, an unidentifiable Christ with His face bashed in. And all of it, true to the Scriptures:

*Isaiah 53:3–7 He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like*

*a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.*

*Isaiah 52:14 So His appearance was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men.*

Part of the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 53, quoted above, is shown at the beginning of the movie to provide a Biblical context for understanding all the violence that follows. Rather than "adding to the scriptures," this historical detail merely translates for contemporary culture what first-century Jewish believers, to whom the gospels were originally written, knew all too intimately, having lost loved ones themselves to the barbarism of Rome. (The film is not rated at this time, but it will most likely receive an R-rating. But that's okay. Much of the Bible is rated R anyway.<sup>1</sup>)

The point of it all is that the effectiveness of redemption portrayed in any story is exactly equal to the accuracy of the depiction of the depravity from which we are redeemed. The brutal realism of Christ's suffering points to the depth and costliness of atonement, which was achieved for God's people through His once-for-all sacrifice. To show anything less is to diminish the gospel. Watching this movie, with its in-your-face grisly realism, provides a much-needed corrective to our modern



pseudo-gospels with their bloodless Jesuses who exist to fill one's heart and life with peace, happiness, and fulfillment, rather than to die in place of sinners, saving them from God's wrath.

### Protestant Christian Concerns

There are several concerns that media-wise Protestants may have with *The Passion of the Christ*. These are (1) the second commandment's prohibition of images, (2) the shortage of doctrinal teaching in the film, and (3) the Roman Catholic viewpoints of its filmmakers.

Being a Reformed Protestant, I take these concerns seriously and want to address each of them as briefly as possible in order to alleviate any fears.

### Second Commandment?

Some Protestants insist that any visual representation of Christ, be it pictorial or dramatic, is a violation of the second commandment prohibiting graven images. I fully realize that there is considerable difference of opinion (fervently held) among people who are committed to the abiding validity of the law of God regarding this issue, and I cannot enter extensively into that discussion here. For my purposes it is sufficient to note that any understanding of the second commandment must do justice to the fact of the *incarnation* of God in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth. Moses' statement in Deuteronomy 4:15, offered as the ground of the second commandment, "You saw no form of any kind the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire. Therefore watch yourselves very carefully," can no longer be said of the incarnate God. It is true, we have no physical "portraiture" of Christ (and any such attempts must be acknowledged as imaginative), but that Jesus can be portrayed dramatically as a human being in historical situations does not seem counter to the concerns of the second commandment. We dare not allow our interpretation of

the second commandment to lead us into a docetic diminution of the human reality of the incarnation.<sup>2</sup> *The Passion of the Christ* is a narrative depiction of Christ's humanity and His fulfillment of His mission as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29), not an iconic representation of His divinity to worship.<sup>3</sup>

[NOTE: Having said all this, any reader who has Biblical scruples against viewing representational art involving the Lord Jesus should not take this review as an encouragement to go against his conscience. "Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind" (Rom. 14:5).]

### Shortage of Doctrine?

Most Jesus movies tend to reflect the prevailing zeitgeist of their era, and *The Passion of the Christ* is no exception. The first Jesus movies, made more in an era of belief, tended to emphasize His deity at the expense of his humanity (*Intolerance*, *King of Kings*). Later movies, made in an era of skepticism, tended to emphasize His humanity at the expense of His deity (*Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Godspell*), or worse, make Him out to be sinful (*The Last Temptation of Christ*). But all these movies were, to a degree, modernist renditions focusing on Christ's didactic teaching culminating in the cross as the ultimate embodiment of that theology.<sup>4</sup>

In *The Passion of the Christ* Gibson has chosen to dramatize a portion of Scripture where our Lord has comparatively little to say ("He opened not His mouth." Is. 53:7) and very much to do. Thus it is not surprising that there is relatively little overt doctrine portrayed in the film. The doctrinal perspective that is set forth, however, spare though it may be, is consistent with the Biblical narratives from which Gibson is working.

We live in a world in the grip of postmodernism with its negation of reason, language, and discourse. People are

bored with sermonizing and preachiness, especially in the arts. They just won't listen to reason. They want to experience your metanarrative, not mentally process it with the questionable faculties of "logocentric" rationality. Make no mistake, this postmodern prejudice is imbalanced, fallacious, and spiritually destructive. But like Paul identifying to a certain extent with pagan philosophers on Mars Hill, so *The Passion of the Christ* meets the postmodern challenge with a legitimate *experience* of Christ (dramatic and emotional, though not irrational). The story is presented through strong images and minimal dialogue that will transcend culture and denomination alike. That's the power of image. It may be the *only* movie about Jesus that most GenX or GenY postmodern young people will ever consider watching.

The answer to the potential dangers of a postmodern Christ narrative is not to dwell on the inadequacies of this particular approach. After all, no presentation is without blemish. Reformed thinking has sometimes emphasized a word-oriented theology to the near-exclusion of image and sometimes to the *total* exclusion of image, and we may suffer under an imbalance opposite that of the postmodern. The truth is "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn. 1:14), a perfect unity of word and image.

Rather than nit-picking imperfections, we should use this movie as a stepping stone, a tool to open doors. You should watch this movie with your unbelieving friends and family and fill in the holes of doctrinal truth and elaborate on the visual or experiential elements of the movie. Bring word in balance with image. People don't usually get saved watching movies, anyway. They usually get saved because a person explained the gospel to them in person, answered their questions, and filled in the gaps. Witnessing is more than sim-

ply abstract proposition; it is personal and relational as well. So engage in that human interaction that a movie about Jesus can inspire but not provide.<sup>5</sup>

### A Romish Bias?

A third concern of some Protestants regards the Roman Catholic theology of Mel Gibson, the producer and passion behind *The Passion of the Christ*. I don't know Mr. Gibson personally, so I can't speak for him; but as a Protestant Christian, I can say that if there is any Roman influence on the film, it is negligible to the point of irrelevance.

Christ's actual teachings in the film are minimal and told in flashback, so truth is delivered more through context than proposition. For instance, the Lord's Supper is remembered at one point in Christ's bloody punishment. Yet, this symbolic connection is entirely in accord with John's Gospel narrative, where "eating His flesh" and "drinking His blood" is a sacramental connection with His death and suffering (Jn. 6: 52–59). There is no apparent notion in the film of eucharistic transubstantiation, such as in *The Last Temptation of Christ*, where Christ literally rips out His flesh and asks His disciples to eat it.

Even the sensitive and loving portrait of Mary in the movie does not seem to elevate her to the position of "co-mediatrix." I watched for this exaltation, but was pleasantly relieved. If anything, Mary's part in the story is a welcomed corrective to the Protestant pendulum swing of downplaying the mother of Jesus. She is shown as a loving mother with a young adult Jesus who teases her affectionately. No "Queen of Heaven" there, just a good mom. She is shown racked with spiritual anguish—"pierced in her own soul" (Lk. 2:35)—at every beating of Jesus. And whose mother would not vicariously experience the punishment of her son? She wipes His blood off the ground in an ir-

rational reaction of helplessness. I know my mother would. There is a beautiful scene where Mary watches Christ fall on the Via Dolorosa and cannot help Him, but in her mind remembers Him as a little child falling and herself running to His aid. Very moving, very real, and very much like my mom.

Mary holds Christ's body after being taken down from the cross in what has come to be a symbolic "Pietà" pose. While it may be the case that the Pietá in Roman Catholic theology became a symbolic reference to Mary's co-redemptive unity with Christ, it was first of all an altogether believable expression of a mother's love of her dead son (even if the detail is not recorded in the Biblical narrative) and can be appreciated on that level. We are not uneducated plebeians relying on sculpture as our text.

There is also a powerful ironic moment where Christ is being led to His scourging and the devil appears in the crowd holding a mutant baby as an androgynous mockery of Christ's own virginal incarnation. Let's not forget that the virgin birth was, after all, a key event in Christianity, regardless of denomination.

The short of it all is that the filmmaker's Roman Catholicism brings mere accent and flavor to the film's orthodox presentation without slipping into partisan heresy. It shows the perfectly human realistic reactions and connection that Jesus' mother would have in such an extreme situation. And if such minor symbolic references are so easily reinterpreted, depending on the viewer's theological perspective, then those symbols need not compel us to specific didactic conclusions.

### Death Versus Resurrection

Lastly, it appears that the origin of Passion Plays in the Middle Ages was in part theologically motivated. Although there were Easter, Mystery, and Miracle Plays as well, the Passion Play did tend

to emphasize the death of Christ at the expense of His resurrection. True, the early church did not create art that focused on Christ's death. There were no crosses in the catacombs. Also true that the Protestant Reformation rightfully stressed the resurrection victory of Christ with His death as a means to that end. So, yes, there is the danger of imbalance in Passion Plays.

But the focal point of Christ's death in Romanism was also practically motivated, rooted in the interest of the peasant class that was largely illiterate or without access to the written Scriptures. Drama could incarnate the Gospel narrative for those without privileged status. The purpose of focusing on suffering was to evoke pity. The priests mistakenly believed that pitying Christ could be a starting point for faith. While this is a real danger for a non-Christian to fall into while watching *The Passion of the Christ*, it is also a danger for any truth claim in today's world.

Similar to the Middle Ages, many people today are largely unlettered and image-oriented, with entertainment media functionally operating as their canonical texts. Our society worships emotion over cognition or action. It mistakes feeling for participation. Many wrongly suppose that watching a celebrity charity rock concert is the same as actually helping the poor; they are deluded into believing that weeping over the plight of starving children on TV is equivalent to feeding the hungry. So also, many people mistakenly conclude that "believing in God" saves them from hell, being perilously unaware that even demons do so and shudder (Jas. 2:19). So this problem of erroneous participation in truth is more a function of the social milieu than the fault of artistic image. We must be sure to communicate with those who watch *The Passion of the Christ* that feeling sorry for Jesus as the ultimate victim is not the same as

being His disciple.

By the same token, it is just as fallacious for Christians to think that critiquing the imperfect attempts at bringing God into Hollywood movies is somehow participating in the cultural mandate. The cultural mandate is *not* to merely criticize but to create. You must interact redemptively with culture if you want to reform it.

### Conclusion

As Christians we are called upon by our Lord not only to promote His kingdom and righteousness (Mt. 6:33)—the work of cultural renewal—but also to “strengthen the things that remain” (Rev. 3:2). Here’s one way in which we can actually *participate* in the cultural mandate. Unfortunately, the success of any movie in the eyes of Hollywood studios is determined by the box office numbers of the *first two weeks*. Many good movies don’t make much money

and disappear into video oblivion because they don’t have the marketing support that big blockbusters do. This makes those good movies harder to produce because the studios don’t see the profit in it. Christians are always complaining about how Hollywood doesn’t make movies that share their values. Well, the best way to change that is to go to the few movies that do and buy the videos, too. You vote with your dollars. Mel Gibson is not releasing his movie through a big studio, so he doesn’t have the mega-marketing support behind him. If a ton of people don’t see this movie in the first couple weeks of release, it may die in the box office.

Here’s how we can change all that. Here’s how we can be a reforming force of cultural influence. *The Passion of the Christ* opens everywhere on February 25, 2004. If Christians go see the movie

in droves during the first two weeks of its release, then studios will sit up and notice. If you want to make a difference, if you want Hollywood to make more movies with a Christian worldview, **then go see *The Passion* within its opening two weeks.** Schedule it on your calendar now, so you don’t forget. But don’t just go by yourself, get a group of friends. And don’t just go once, go twice. It’s the multiple viewings that skyrocket a film’s numbers (i.e., *The Lord of the Rings*). And last of all, buy the video or DVD when it comes out.

Let’s not just critique culture, let’s actually transform it by being involved in it. I call that redemptive interaction with culture. I call that The Passion of the Church. **CR**

[NOTE: You can see the trailer for the movie on the web at [www.thepassion.tv](http://www.thepassion.tv)]

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# Resurrection and Commission Part I

Rev. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., Th.D.



In this issue and the next, I will be analyzing the Great Commission as found in Matthew 28. The Great Commission is simultaneously one of the most familiar passages in Scripture and one of the least understood. It is found at the conclusion to the Gospel of Matthew after the resurrection of Christ and as a consequence of that glorious event. Its appearance at the end of Matthew is most apropos, for this is the gospel designed to introduce Christ as the King. The Lord Jesus Christ is the authoritative ruler sent from God to establish the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 1:1 opens: “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.” As the introductory heading to the gospel, this clearly indicates its content: Matthew is presenting Christ as the Messianic King, “the son of David” (which title is applied to Him nine times, Matt. 1:1, 20; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15; 22:42).

In Matthew 2:2 we discover the Gentile Magi seeking the “King of the Jews.” This report troubles the political king, Herod. In Matthew 3:2 John the Baptist preaches that the Kingdom of heaven is at hand, then anoints Christ as the Priest-King, after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 5:6-10).

In Matthew 4:8-9 the newly anointed King is approached by the usurper king, Satan, “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4), “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2). In the temptation Satan offers Him the “kingdoms of the world.” After successfully resisting the

tempter, Christ begins preaching that the “kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt. 4:17). In keeping with his concern to demonstrate Christ’s kingship, the phrase “the kingdom of heaven” occurs twenty-seven times in Matthew’s gospel, while “kingdom” occurs forty-five times.

In Matthew 5 the King ascends a mountain to establish the legal structure of His Kingdom by affirming the law of God. He reaffirms the law of God by “filling it up” to its full measure over against the Pharisees who emptied it of its meaning: “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the Kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the Kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5:17-20). In that same discourse, He teaches His disciples to pray “thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt. 6:10).

Skipping ahead to Matthew 12, the Lord speaks of His battle against Satan, and of the victorious coming of the Kingdom in His day (Mt. 12:28-29). In Matthew 13 Christ extensively defines the nature, glory, and expectation of the Kingdom *via* the Kingdom Parables. Though it begins very small, it will grow to worldwide proportions, eventually

permeating the whole of human culture (Mt. 13:31-33).

A little later in Matthew 21, He enters Jerusalem and is lauded as King, in fulfillment of prophecy (Zech. 9:9). In Matthew 25 we see the King seated as a Judge over all the nations on Judgment Day. There He invites His faithful servants to enter His eternal Kingdom (Mt. 25:34), while banishing to everlasting condemnation those who refused His rule.

In Matthew 27 Christ is taunted for His kingship (Mt. 27:11, 29) and crucified beneath a sign declaring: “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews” (Mt. 27:37). It is from this reference that we jump to the Great Commission in which Christ claims kingly authority. Clearly Matthew is presenting One who is a majestic King.

## Christ’s Resurrection Authority

It is extremely important to locate the Great Commission in Christ’s ministry. He does not issue the Great Commission until *after* His resurrection. The significance of the resurrection is not fully appreciated by modern evangelicals, who are more theologically attuned to singing “There Is None Like the Lowly Jesus,” than “Crown Him with Many Crowns.” Their eschatology and overall view of historical progress is more shaped by the Fall of Adam than the Resurrection of Christ. But in this season of remembrance of His resurrection, we should re-orient our thinking along Biblical lines.

Prior to the resurrection, a frequent refrain of Christ was: “I can do nothing of Myself” (cf. Jn. 5:19, 30; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10). But now after the resurrec-

tion, He sovereignly declares: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Mt. 28:18). We should note that a literal rendering of the verse reads: "And having come near, Jesus spake to them, saying, 'Given to me was all authority.'"<sup>1</sup> Both the position and the tense of the word "given" should be noted. In Greek, words thrown to the front of a sentence are being emphasized as "given" is here in Christ's statement. Not only is "given" emphasized as being particularly significant, but according to the Greek verb tense,<sup>2</sup> His being "given" authority was at some point in *past time*. "Has been given" is an aorist passive verb, which speaks of this grant of "all authority" as occurring at a past point in time. This grant of "all authority in heaven and on earth" is given by God the Father, who according to similar terminology in Matthew 11:25, Acts 17:24, and elsewhere, is called "Lord of heaven and earth."

This investiture of Christ with universal authority is a frequent theme of later Scripture. Acts 2:30-31, the passage which the Lord used to deliver me from dispensationalism, reads: David "being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ." Here that investiture with kingly authority at His resurrection is to the Messianic throne of David.

The Lord is seated there in confident expectation of victory, as Peter points out by citing Psalm 110:1 in Acts 2:34: "For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: The LORD said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Ac. 2:34-36).<sup>3</sup>

In Romans 1:4 Paul observes that Christ is "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Again we see that He was invested with authority as the Son of God at the resurrection.

This great resurrection-based theme of "all authority in heaven and on earth" is echoed in Ephesians 1:19-22: "His mighty power worked in Christ when [God] raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church."

Philippians 2:9-10 follows suit: "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth."

The investiture of Christ with "all authority" is even anticipated in the Old Testament. We will consider but one passage in this connection.

In Psalm 2:6-7 we read: "I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, You are My Son, Today I have begotten You." When Christ is to be set up as a King on Zion is when He was "begotten." Contrary to the initial appearance, this does not refer to His conception in the womb of Mary. Paul interprets this Messianic reference for us in Acts 13:33-34: "God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: You are My Son, today I have begotten You. And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: I will give you the sure mercies of

David." This begetting from the dead leads to His inheriting the nations, according to Psalm 2:8: "Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession."

What, then, is the nature of this grant of "all authority"? The "all" here is used in the distributive sense. It indicates "all kinds" of authority; authority in every realm. He possesses every kind of authority in heaven (*i.e.*, in the spiritual realm) and on earth (*i.e.*, in the temporal realm). He does not claim authority only over the Church or over individual redeemed men. He claims authority over the family, education, business, politics, law, medicine "all areas of life."

The "all authority in heaven and on earth" reflects God's own authority in Matthew 11:25. We must ask ourselves: In what areas of life is God's authority limited? Obviously in no area, for "the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1).<sup>4</sup> When you call Jesus "Lord," you are not just speaking of His Lordship over your spiritual life as an individual. You are affirming His lordship in all areas of life, in whatever calling you or anyone else undertakes "on earth." Truly this is a Great Commission.

### Christ's Resurrection Rule

Though the gospel is "to the Jew first" (Rom. 1:16), though Christ "came to His own" (Jn. 1:9), though He originally sent His disciples to none but "the lost sheep of Israel" (Mt. 10:6), Matthew clearly sets forth the Messianic king as One who will rule *all* peoples. His Kingdom is a *universal* Kingdom.

I noted earlier that Matthew is the gospel of Christ's kingship. Interestingly, the first people showing an interest in Christ outside of His family are the *non-Jewish* Magi (Mt. 2:1). When John the Baptist preaches "the kingdom of

heaven is at hand," he rebukes the *Jews* and warns of their coming destruction (Mt. 3:7-10), thus opening the door of hope to the Gentiles.

In Matthew 4:8-9 Satan recognizes Christ's ultimate goal and attempts to allow Christ to achieve it on illegitimate grounds, when he offers Christ the "kingdoms of the *world*," not simply of the Jewish Promised Land. In Matthew 4:15-16 the first prophecy spoken of as fulfilled in His public ministry is Isaiah 9:1, 2: "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the *Gentiles*: the people who sat in darkness saw a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned."

In Matthew 8:10-12 we read: "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

In Matthew 13:38 the Kingdom of heaven is expressly said to involve the "world," not just Israel. The temporal phase of the Kingdom comes to an end with the resurrection and judgment of all men, not just of Israel. And then in Matthew 28, the Lord commissions His people to disciple "all nations."

As with "all authority," it is important we grasp the significance of "all nations." The word "nations" is the Greek word *ethnos*. It is based on the Greek word *ethos*, which indicates habits or customs of people; cultural relations. Thus, *ethnos* speaks of collected masses of men, considered as bound together by social bonds, forming a culture.

*Ethnos* here does not signify merely "Gentile." The Jews themselves are called *ethnoi* ten times in the New Testa-

ment (e.g., Lk. 7:5; Jn. 11:48; Ac. 10:22). The term indicates people grouped in terms of their cultural relations, and involves Jews and non-Jews. He speaks of every culture of man, when he speaks of "all nations." And He speaks of men in terms of their cultural relations.

It is important to recognize that the Lord did not say, "disciple all men" (*anthropoi*), as if His interest was individualistic, concerned with men only as stray individuals. Neither did He command: "disciple all kingdoms" (*baseleia*), as if His interest was purely political. The command to disciple "all nations" is directed to the conversion and discipling of the human race, as such, *in all of its cultural endeavors*. It begins deep within, involving the personal, spiritual aspects of life. But it branches out to include the social, legal, academic, economic, political, and all other areas of life, as well.

Thus, we see how the Great Commission is a counterpart to the Cultural Mandate of Genesis 1:26-28. In the Commission, Christ is implementing a plan to redeem all men and nations. The Commission is not designed so that the church might 'snatch brands from the fire.' It seeks the salvation of man in his every relationship, as massed in cultures. The Great Commission not only has cultural implications, it creates a redeemed culture.

We need to be careful when we say, "Christ is my personal Savior." Idol worshipers often had a "personal savior" that they could carry around with them wherever they went. Their gods were truly "personal," and significantly limited. Certainly Christ is my Savior: He intimately loves me as an individual. But too often Christians imply Christ is sparingly parceled out to individuals in history.

Here, though, we see He has called us to disciple "all nations" as such. This is based on His possession of "all author-

ity." And He surely expects the discipleship of all nations by His people and the full accomplishment of the task under His providence.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the Scripture speaks of Christ very often as "the Savior of the world." When it does so it is not setting forth the doctrine of universalism. Hell exists, and it has an everlasting population of unrepentant sinners. Rather, such references point to the eventual actual conversion of the world *as a system*, as a *kosmos*.<sup>6</sup> The passages that speak thus clearly portray salvation in all of its fullness. These passages do not merely say, "He is the only Savior available to the world," allowing for the vast majority of men to reject Him.

Consider the strong redemptive terminology used in these passages. John 1:29: "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who *takes away the sin* of the world!" John 3:17: "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." 1 John 2:2: "He Himself is the *propitiation for our sins*, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." Romans 11:15: "For if their being cast away is the *reconciling* of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?" 2 Corinthians 5:19: "God was in Christ *reconciling* the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation."

Truly Christ expects to see a redeemed world one day! The world will be saved, man's sins propitiated, and the human race reconciled to God. Certainly He commissions us to promote this very task. We are to disciple "all the nations" so that the world as a *kosmos*, a system of men and things, will become Christian.

Did not the Old Testament even expect this? Isaiah 9:6-7 points to the

birth of One destined to rule the world: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His Kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

Psalm 2:7-8 fits well with Christ's Great Commission to disciple all nations: "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession."

Daniel 7:13-14 speaks of the ascension, which follows upon the resurrection: "I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a Kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His Kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed."

Consequently, in the New Testament we learn that Christ is to become the Savior of the entire world, of "all the nations." He is even now King of kings and Lord of lords, ruling to that end. Revelation 1:5 says: "Jesus Christ [is] the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth."

It is abundantly clear that He seeks the actual discipling of all nations. They are to be brought under the yoke of the authority of the Triune God: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the na-

tions, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 28:19). The plural "them" in "to baptize," refers back to the plural noun "nations," which is separated from it by only one word in the Greek. And baptism is only for those under the rule of Christ's Kingdom "believers and their seed.

Truly the Great Commission is a "great" commission. It is a task that can

only be accounted for on postmillennial grounds, as I argue in *Thine Is the Kingdom* which was recently published by Chalcedon. In the next issue of the *Chalcedon Report* I will focus particularly upon the theonomic-postmillennial expectations of the church's obligation to "disciple the nations." **CR**

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# Sometimes I Feel Like a Toyota: A Penitent Plea for Perfection

*William Blankenschaen*



“Wow!”

Nothing else could he say when he walked in the showroom that day. An avid auto enthusiast, the man in the blue suit practically drooled at the dazzling display of classy automobiles in the equally spectacular showroom. His mouth remained fixed open as his feet mindlessly shuffled across the marble floor toward the nearest car.

His interest did not go unnoticed long. The wizened dealer recognized the response and strolled over to greet his enthusiastic guest.

“You like them?” The dealer folded his arms and relaxed against an ornate column. The gentleman tried pulling his eyes off the cars, but failed. He offered only a feeble reply instead.

“Yeeeeeesss.” A long pause. “Yes, I definitely li — I have never see — What a collection of exquisite cars! It’s incredible! Unbelievable! Impossible!”

“I assure you,” the dealer chuckled warmly, “it most certainly is possible.” He paused to look at the customer as if measuring before adding, “You know, what you may find even more remarkable is that every single one of these cars is reconditioned.”

The man didn’t bother trying to hide his disbelief. “No. Not possible. I could maybe believe your acquiring all of these rare and exotic cars new, but to recondition them all to look this good...” He shook his head and squinted as he now measured the dealer with a newer suspicious eye. “I don’t believe it.”

The gentlemanly dealer simply winked at him and tilted his head toward the corner. “Come. Let me show you.”

A side door, nearly obscured by a group of lush silk trees, opened, and they entered a darker area cluttered with cars in various states of repair. Some had windows, some tires, some gold-plating — none of them had everything. None of them looked anything like the beauties in the showroom. The blue-suited man stepped with care through the dingy piles.

“Come. This way.” The dealer’s face began beaming as he nodded toward a shadowy shed near the rear of the cluttered area. As they moved closer, the shadows cleared. An image emerged. A man, but covered in so much grease that he seemed but a walking shadow. A greasy arm reached for a greasy wrench before the mechanic bent back into the engine, his face obscured by the hood.

“Here is where the real work gets done,” the dealer proudly noted. The gentleman stared incredulously at the back of the stained mechanic’s overalls and the dreary surroundings then shook his head.

“Come on,” he drawled. “There’s no way —”

“This one will be in that showroom some day.”

“No way. That’s not possible.”

“All things are possible.”

“But this car he’s working on wasn’t much to look at even when it was brand new, and now look at the shape it’s in. There’s no way.”

“There’s one way.”

The silent mechanic shifted beneath the darkened hood and murmured a muffled request for a nearby tool. Still dazed in disbelief, the gentleman gingerly picked it up and extended it toward the greasy hand reaching toward him. “I just don’t think it can be do —”

He stopped short as his eyes fixed on the greasy hand reaching toward him, a hand with a hole in it.

“Trust me,” the dealer patted the man’s shoulder. “He can do it.”

## **Subcompact Christians**

Sometimes I feel like a Toyota — not that there’s anything wrong with that — but a charred one at that. Occasionally, I must confess, I even feel like a Kia or (dare we remember the Yugo) other similar subcompact after it has collided with a Hummer — head-on. Totaled, I think, is the word I’m seeking. Might as well open the junkyard doors because my life doesn’t seem capable of repair. Even if money, time, and parts were not issues, no one could take the grimy mess that is the sin-wracked me and restore it, let alone make it resemble the gold-plated beauties in the sparkling showroom.

But then I remember Paul’s prayer — a perfecting prayer, a penitent plea that the God of Peace would make us perfect. And I pause to consider why Paul thought the impossible possible. Why would the God of Peace — peace, of all things — have anything to do with the chaos in my soul? But then I read Paul’s qualifying remark, that the God of Peace is the one who brought up Jesus from the dead. And I begin to understand.



“Now may the God of Peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Heb. 13: 20-21)

Paul’s aim? High. His expectations? The complete package: all the bells and whistles and toss in the optional luxury/sport package. When he says *complete*, Paul sets a high standard. The Greek word he uses (*katartisai*) recalls the image of the veteran mechanic tinkering with the engine until it runs to perfection. It connotes a constant adjusting and repairing, tweaking, if you will, until we reach maximum operating capacity. Only a mechanic of the highest skill could accomplish such a feat on a car, so whom does Paul ask to perfect the disaster in our souls? The God of Peace.

### The God of Peace

But why the God of Peace? Why not just God or Jehovah or the Mighty One? On the few occasions I have seen flashing lights in my rearview mirror before being graced with a visit at my car window from a police officer, I have always tried to address the officers in a particular fashion, namely politely. “Yes, sir. Officer, sir. What can I do for you, Officer?” My admittedly groveling address shows two things. First, I want something from him — grace. Second, I recognize his unique authority to grant my desire. Paul’s approach seems similar. He calls specifically on God as the God of Peace because he wants something from Him — perfecting — but also because only the God of Peace can grant his request.

The God of Peace can answer Paul’s plea for one reason: He alone quali-

fies. He alone brought up Jesus from the dead. Note that Paul’s emphasis is not that Jesus arose from the dead but that the Father was the active agent in Christ’s resurrection. Paul’s Greek verb (*anagaagon*) translated “brought up” means that the Father led Him up or brought Him out, by the hand, as it were, in a formal presentation. Luke presents a similar scenario when he says that the Jews “led” Christ into the council (Lk. 22:66) and again when Peter was to be led out before the people by the magistrates (Ac. 12:4). Paul cites the same truth in Romans where he again emphasizes that “God has raised him [Christ]” from the dead (Rom. 10:9). We might imagine a ship being christened and put to sea for the first time. First, the bottle is broken on the bow; then the tugs lead her out to sea in a formal presentation of the new creation. The idea is the same here — but without the broken bottle.

What Paul seems to be emphasizing by stressing this qualification is that God the Father, the Just Judge of all men, led out Jesus from the grave and formally presented Him to the world as evidence of a debt paid in full. As Jonathan Edwards opined, “God, as a testimony and seal of his acceptance of what [Christ] had done as the condition of life, raised [Christ] from the dead... .”<sup>1</sup> Paul’s emphasis then is on God’s legal discharging of Christ from prison. If we follow the sequence of Isaiah 53, our sins were laid on Christ (v. 6). The Father declared Him officially guilty though personally innocent. He was cast into punishment where “it pleased the LORD to bruise him.” (v. 10) But when it was over, God’s justice was satisfied (v. 11). His sheep were reconciled to God through Christ, our great Shepherd. At that point the Father could do nothing but what He alone could do. Lead Jesus out of captivity and take upon Himself the title of the God who has been

reconciled with sinful man — the God of Peace.

Consequently, the wondrous power of the resurrection is not simply that God raised Jesus from the dead physically, but that the Just Judge of all men brought out Jesus from the dead legally. Now that is quite a qualification. Although the blood of the everlasting covenant cleanses us from our dead sin, it is the power of the resurrection that enables us to walk in newness of life. The resurrection is evidence that the blood was accepted, that Christ’s life is our life, as well. Thus, the authority of the Father as the legal Life-giver is what Paul appeals to when he prays for our sanctification. On the basis of the power evidenced in the resurrection, Paul prays that the God of Peace may make us complete. Truly then, “Christ and His finished Work is the ground of all our hopes.”<sup>2</sup>

### God’s Garage

So if we were to stroll into the work area behind God’s eternal showroom, what would this completing process look like?

**The goal.** Porsche. Rolls Royce. Ferrari. In short, a heavenly showroom gleaming with perfectly tuned Christians. His prayer is for arduous adjustment, distinctive detailing, and fine framing. In fact, Paul employs the same word earlier in Hebrews 11:3 when he states that the worlds were “framed” by God. So we may expect the same detailed attention in our lives that God devoted to Creation.

**The purpose.** Why are we being perfected? This one is simple: “to do His will.” The late imagineer Walt Disney often reminded his theme park designers that they had only one purpose — to put smiles on faces.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, the God of Peace is in the single-minded business of reconciling us to His eternal

*continued on page 38*

# A Whole New World<sup>1</sup>

Greg Uttinger



## Renewing Heaven and Earth

God's covenant with His people embraces heaven and earth. It structures our relationship with God and with all of His creation. It shapes our worship, our dominion, and our service. Any restructuring of that covenant must, therefore, involve a restructuring of the whole world and our relationship to it.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the Old Testament God renewed His covenant again and again, each time altering in some measure its outward forms and advancing them in glory.<sup>3</sup> Altar became tabernacle, and tabernacle, temple. A single family gave way to twelve tribes, and those tribes to the Davidic kingdom. Each covenant renewal (or new covenant) produced, in some sense, a renewed heaven and earth. But the forms of these earlier covenants were in many ways typical and temporary: they pointed beyond themselves to Jesus Christ and to the definitively new heaven and earth that God would create through Him.

Jesus Christ is God's covenant made flesh (Is. 42:6; 49:8). He is God's Tabernacle and Temple (Jn. 1:14; 2:19-22). He is High Priest and Sacrifice (Heb. 9:11-28). He is the Last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), our Surety and Mediator (Heb. 7:22; 12:24). In Him the covenant died and rose again, transfigured (Eph. 2:13-22; Col. 2:10-17). In Him the world was reborn.

*For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of the cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven. (Col. 1:19-20)*

*But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. (Eph. 2:13-18)*

The heavens and earth of the older covenants have passed away (Ac. 2:14-21; Rev. 6:12-14).<sup>4</sup> Christ has fulfilled the types, rent the temple veil, and opened a new and living way into the presence of God (Heb. 10:1-22). He has ascended to the throne of heaven and claimed the whole universe as His own (Eph. 1:20-23; Mt. 28:18-20). He has given us His Spirit (Ac. 2:33, 38) and made us heirs of all things (1 Cor. 3:21-22; Rom. 8:17, 28). He is in us, and we are in Him (Eph. 1; Jn. 14-15), and we are enthroned in heavenly places with Christ (Eph. 2:6).

This is exactly what John sees in Revelation 21 and 22. His new heaven and earth are the new creation that is ours in Jesus Christ. Though its fullness lies beyond the Second Coming and the Resurrection (Rom. 8:18-23), its reality is here, now.<sup>5</sup> And so Paul can write,

*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (2 Cor. 5:17)*

*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. (Gal. 6:15-16)*

Paul begins with the new man, John with the new world. But the message is the same; and that message is the gospel.

## The New Jerusalem

At the center of the new world John sees the Holy City, the New Jerusalem. She is "the Bride, the Lamb's Wife" (Rev. 21:9). That is, she is the church of Jesus Christ, that the body of elect people for whom He died (Eph. 5:25). And though the fulness of her glory lies beyond history, she is already a heavenly community and the living temple of God. The writer of Hebrews says much the same thing:

*But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel (Heb. 12:22-24).*

Note the present tense: "Ye are come..." The New Jerusalem is a present reality. Compare Paul's words in Ephesians 2:

*Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (Eph. 2:19-22)*

There is, then, much more to the church than meets the eye. And so we walk by faith.

## Surveying the City

John sees the Holy City descending from heaven (Rev. 21:2). She is born from above, a product of divine grace. In Christ she is already enthroned in heavenly places (Eph. 2:4-7). Thus, Paul calls her the “Jerusalem which is above” (Gal. 4:26).<sup>6</sup> She is God’s tabernacle with men (Rev 21:3). God and the Lamb are within her: They are her Temple (Rev. 21:22). She shines with the glory of God (Rev. 21:11). Because Christ is in her, she is the light of the world (Mt. 5:14-16). God’s people in their witness and works have become the glory cloud, the New Covenant Shekinah (Phil. 2:14-16; Mt. 5:16).

The City is surrounded by massive walls and is immune to the enemy’s assaults. God Himself encamps around her, defending her on every side (Zech. 2:5; Is. 26:1). And yet her gates are always open (Rev. 21:25; Is. 26:2). She calls the nations to enter and drink of the gospel waters, and they respond (Rev. 22:17; cf. Is. 55:1-5). The kings of the earth bring her their tribute and treasure. The nations of the saved walk in her light. By her truth, she guides and illumines the political orders, the societies, and the cultures of the whole world (Rev. 21:24-26; Is. 60).

The City is built upon the foundation of the apostles, upon their doctrine and writings (Rev. 21:14; Eph. 2:19-22). The foundation’s stones are colorful and glorious, like the covenant rainbow, and they correspond roughly to the gems on the high priest’s breastplate (Ex. 28:15ff.). The City is a heavenly and priestly people, God’s new Israel (1 Pet. 2:5-10).

The New Jerusalem is immense, 1500 miles on a side and the same in height (Rev. 21:16).<sup>7</sup> If she were a physical city of stone and steel, one side could stretch from Dallas to New York and her skyscrapers would brush the fringes of space. If every citizen had a cubic

mile all to himself, the City could still hold more than 3 billion people. The point is that God has a lot of people. The number of the elect is astronomical — as many “as the stars in heaven” (Gen. 22:17).

The City is a holy mountain, like Eden (cf. Ezek. 28:13-14), and in its dimensions a perfect cube, a new holy of holies (cf. 1 Kings 6:20). For God is there. The flaming sword and the blood-spattered veil are gone. His servants have open fellowship with Him and free access to His throne (Heb. 4:16; 10:19-22).

From that throne flows a river of life (Rev. 22:1), an image of the Holy Spirit working through the gospel (Jn. 7:37-39; Tit. 3:5-6). The river and the streets of the City are lined with Tree of Life. Its fruit is sustenance; its leaves are medicine (Rev. 22:2). By virtue of Jesus’ cross, God’s people may eat and drink in His presence.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, they are themselves the channel through which Calvary’s healing grace flows to the nations.

Within the Holy City, the curse is gone (Rev. 22:3). Jesus has borne it away (Gal. 3:13-14). We are wholly blessed (Eph. 1:3). Every thorn, every tear, every cross is but another step towards glory (2 Cor. 4:17). All things are for our good (Rom. 8:28-29). Even death is gain (Phil. 1:21). All things are ours (1 Cor. 3:21-23). In Christ, Paradise is truly restored.

## Conclusion

The new creation has come. The old world is passing away (1 Jn. 2:17), and Jesus Christ is presently making all things new (Rev. 21:5). It is a great mistake to limit His transforming power to the human heart, or postpone its cosmic impact to eternity. John saw a new world and a new civilization. We need the same vision. **CR**

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1. Based on ch. 11 and 12 of Greg Uttinger, *A Whole New World, The Gospel According to Revelation* (1995).

2. Such restructuring may lie largely in the invisible and intangible, though it usually includes alterations in the rites and forms of worship. On the other hand, it may involve something as physically dramatic as the expulsion from Paradise, the Noahic Flood, or the Shekinah glory indwelling the Temple.

3. See James B. Jordan, *Through New Eyes* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1988) and O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1980).

4. Commenting on Hebrews 12:26, John Owen writes, “It is therefore the *heavens of Mosaical worship*, and Judaical church-state, with the *earth of their political state* belonging thereunto, that are here intended. These were they that were shaken at the coming of Christ, and so shaken, as shortly after to be removed and taken away, for the introduction of the more heavenly worship of the gospel, and the immovable evangelical church-state. This was the greatest commotion and alteration that God ever made in the heavens and earth.” VII, 366.

5. Calvin writes on Hebrews 2:7: “To make the thing clearer, let us suppose two worlds,—the first the old, corrupted by Adam’s sin; the other, later in time, as renewed by Christ.... It hence now appears that here the world to come is not that which we hope for after the resurrection, but that which began at the beginning of Christ’s kingdom; but it will no doubt have its full accomplishment in our final redemption.”

6. See Luther on Galatians 4:26: “Now this heavenly Jerusalem which is above, is the Church, that is to say, the faithful dispersed throughout the world....”

7. The actual measurements of the City are multiples of 12 and 10. We are to think of her as a new Israel.

8. The cross is called a tree in Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; Gal. 3:13; and 1 Pet. 2:24.

# Biblical Theocracy: Family, Church, and State

*Eugene Clingman*



A deluding spirit is loose within Evangelicalism! It teaches that God's authority extends only as far as piety, the inner life of the believer, and possibly in some measure to the church also. Many within our ranks have drunk deeply of this spirit having never tested it by the Word of God, which alone can deliver from conformity to the world (Rom. 12:1-2; Ps. 119:99-100). As a polluted well and a trampled spring they have acquiesced to the spirit of plurality and compromise (Pr. 25:26).

The Kingdom of Christ is advancing not by a sword thrust into the belly of its enemies, but rather by the Word of God held in the believing heart, spoken in the power of the Spirit of Truth, and faithfully lived out through the saving grace of Christ. R. J. Rushdoony wrote, "God's law is God's program for conquest in His name, where antinomianism in any degree prevails a pessimistic eschatology will likewise prevail, because the heart of biblical eschatology has been denied."<sup>1</sup> For this reason most of Christendom anticipates a future of mounting evil dominion. Yet we believe the future in every area of human life and endeavor will more and more be guided by biblical principles, by God's law word. We believe Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, rules in every area of life, and shall indeed progressively make His enemies a footstool for His feet, until the last enemy, death, is also subdued

(1 Cor. 15:25-26). We believe that to Him shall be the obedience of the peoples in all things (Gen. 49:10; Zech. 14:20-21), for to Christ all authority in Heaven and Earth has been given. Because Christ is the God-Man, His Kingdom is a theocracy. And who but the confused or the ungodly will deny that Christ's rule legitimately extends to family, church, and state?

There is no legitimate human authority except that delegated by God. No man may rightly conclude his authority originates or is derived from himself, his position, status, or office. Whether he is father in the family, pastor or elder in the church, or civil official in any rank of any government, he has no legitimate authority except that delegated by God. God's authority must be exercised in God's prescribed measure and way. As Abraham Kuyper said:

God is present in all life with the influence of His omnipresent and almighty power, and no sphere of human life is conceivable in which religion does not maintain its demands that God shall be praised, that God's ordinances shall be observed, and that every labor shall be permeated with its ora [aura] in fervent and ceaseless prayer. Wherever man may stand, whatever he may do, to whatever he may apply his hand, in agriculture, in commerce, and in industry, or his mind, in the world of art, and science, he is, in whatsoever it may be, constantly standing before the face of his God, he is employed in the service of his God, he has strictly to obey his God, and above all, he has to aim at the glory of his God.<sup>2</sup>

## **The Family**

The creation story clearly reveals the family as basic to all social structure. The family existed before church or state. The family therefore is first to be subject to the theocracy of Christ. Here, as in all realms of human life, authority exercised within the family must be the exercise of God's authority. Fathers (or mothers who are head of a fatherless family) are ambassadors of the Theocracy. Family heads are to do the bidding of their great King and sovereign, raising children in the fear and admonition of the Lord and conducting every household activity to the glory of God (Eph. 6:4; 1 Cor. 10:31).

## **The Church**

In the same way Church leaders are to shepherd the flock "according to God" (1 Pet. 5:2; Ac. 20:28). The natural man and even the misguided, unsanctified Christian mind can suppose authority originates with himself (Hab. 1:7), or with his office (Mt. 23:2-5). The Israelite king was warned against such presumption, and to guard against it, he was commanded to write for himself a copy of the Law of God, to keep with him and to read all the days of his life, "that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left..." (Dt. 7: 20). By this he was to remember that there was a higher King to which he himself must give account and that his authority as king was but an extension of the righteous rule of the Most High. So it

should be within the church — leaders are to subject themselves to the requirements of Christ, and by example, as well as by admonition, lead the people to do the same (Jas. 3:1).

### The State

Here is where the difficulty escalates for much of the evangelical church. Many Christians believe Christ's Kingdom does not extend to the governing of nations. Along with Jehovah's Witnesses they suppose that when Christ said, "My Kingdom is not of this world," He meant He was unconcerned about government and political matters and would have nothing to do with that realm which effects justice and righteousness in society until He brings judgment on the last day. They are wrong! Surely the whole of Scripture teaches God is concerned about the political realm and also holds men accountable for how they rule. William Symington, commenting on the obvious reference to the Messiah in Psalm 2 wrote:

Here, then, we have a most decided, unequivocal proof of the right of dominion over the nations of the earth which is possessed by the Mediator; for, had not such been his right, it is inconceivable that the Spirit of God should have enjoined subjection to him upon all civil rulers without exception, whether supreme or subordinate, whether belonging to Old or to New Testament times. We have here a command of universal and permanent obligation; and, while it retains its place in the Word of God, it will be impossible to deny the dominion which Jesus as Mediator possesses over the nations of the earth and their rulers.<sup>3</sup>

J. H. Bavinck expresses the same principle:

It is striking how frequently the other nations are called upon in the Psalms to recognize and to honor God, and how complete is the witness of the prophets against the nations surrounding Israel.

God does not exempt other nations from the claim of his righteousness; he requires their obedience and holds them responsible for their apostasy and degeneration.<sup>4</sup>

And Dr. Greg Bahnsen wrote:


The cities of Sodom and Nineveh provide adequate proof that nations which have not been corporately selected by God for special care and that have not been granted a special, written transcript of God's law are nevertheless fully responsible to God's standard of holiness as revealed in the law.... Hundreds of years before the constitution of Israel as a nation under the written law of God that same law had ethical authority; if there had been no binding law, there would have been no sin and hence no justified vengeance of God against the Sodomites.<sup>5</sup>

All nations therefore are to rule themselves according to righteousness, according to Christ and His Kingdom, or be judged and condemned by that righteous standard.

### The Difference Between Biblical Theonomy and Other Theocracies Such as Islam

From the time Mohammad and his bands swept across the middle-eastern deserts, Islam has been a theocracy (reputedly so) advanced by the sword. "Convert or die!" has been its mode of operation. The Kingdom of God does not advance by a principle that demands conversion or death, nor by a sword that cuts flesh. Christ's Kingdom is advanced by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself ruling from heaven as He sends forth the sword of His living Word by means of His obedient people, writing His law upon the hearts of His converts so that they in turn carry the righteous demands of His Kingdom into every realm in which they live, work, and play.

Christ rules the nations! He judges those that will not submit to the requirements of His Kingdom, and blesses

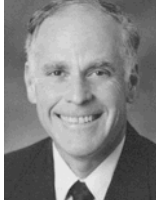
those nations that do. He establishes the obedient who stand in His counsel, and causes the wicked (individuals and nations) to be as chaff swept away by the winds of His providence. This process of sifting will tend to the ever enlarging sway of Christ's Kingdom in every area of life including civil government until that which has been spoken by the prophets is fulfilled: "And foreigners will build up your walls, and their kings will minister to you.... For the nation and the kingdom which will not serve you will perish, and the nations will be utterly ruined" (Is. 60:10-12). 

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1. Greg Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (Nacogdoches, TX: Covenant Media Press, 2002), xiii.
2. William Symington, *Messiah the Prince* (n.p.: National Reform Association, 1999), 129.
3. J. H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*, trans. David Hugh Freeman (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1960), 12-13.
4. Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, [1931] 1999), 53.
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# Paul's Use of the Resurrection On the Mission Field

Jim West



The doctrine of the resurrection was Paul's preeminent tool for effecting change in the mission field of the Roman Empire. Paul majored in preaching the Christ who was "declared to be the Son of God with power...by His resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). Every Sunday school child probably knows that in each sermon in the Book of Acts, the neon light is upon the resurrection. Even the "amateur" sermon by the deacon Stephen in Acts 7, which many have assumed does not emphasize the resurrection and seems to validate the idea that deacons must never preach (!), does precisely the opposite. The reason is at the conclusion of Stephen's sermon he sees Christ standing at God's right hand and then relays his sensory vision to the rabble before him (Ac. 7:56). When he looked at the mob, he saw murderous carnivores. But when he peered into the throne room of God in heaven, he was stunned by the blaze of Christ's resurrected glory. The outlook was bad, but the *uplook* was glorious!

This resurrection-bias that earmarked Paul's preaching was much more than an animating inspiration. We must focus upon Paul's conversion to appreciate the resurrection heart of his cosmopolitan sermons. What was Paul before the Lord met him on the Damascus road? He was a corpse, a cadaver. Had we placed a mirror before Paul's spiritual breath it would have instantly

frosted over with arctic ice. It is significant that the Pharisees were depicted by Christ Himself in Matthew 23 in terms most unflattering. Jesus believed in calling people names; He labeled them not only whitened sepulchers, but sepulchers containing "dead men's bones" (Mt. 23:27). Since Saul of Tarsus was "a Pharisee of the Pharisees" (Phil. 3:8), we can deduce that he was "a dead man of a dead man," or "a corpse of a corpse," which means very, very dead. This is probably the meaning of Jude 18, too, where Jude depicts certain personalities as "twice dead," that is, *really* dead (spiritually). Therefore men who are "dead in their sins and trespasses" need to be quickened (Eph. 2:1).

Now, we all know the story of Saul as he traveled to Damascus. He was confronted by the resurrected Christ, knocked off his stallion, and a hole was put into his Pharisaical drum. Then, the Lord's foeman begged God for mercy, "Lord Jesus, what would you have me to do?" (Ac. 9:6). After this the blind Saul was led like a lamb to Damascus where he received his sight at the hands of Ananias, who had one of the toughest jobs imaginable. Ananias, debriefed about Paul's previous fulminations against the church, was commanded to go to Saul and (endearingly) say, "Brother Saul." That required not only faith, but faith in the resurrection! In short, Saul became a new man on that road, a *resurrected* man. No wonder we find such resurrection fanfare in Paul's evangelism and preaching. Indeed, it

sounds mechanistic to even talk about *how Paul used the resurrection*; a more accurate descriptor is how the *resurrected Paul* was energized to bear witness to the gospel of resurrection.

Let us summarize Paul's resurrection theology, especially as it is demonstrated in the Book of Acts. Our first task is to offer an alternative title for this book. One alternative is *The Acts of Jesus Christ through the Apostles*. This is based on Acts 1:1-2 where Luke compares Jesus' earthly ministry with His post-earthly, resurrection ministry. The former treatise (Luke's Gospel) recorded only what "Jesus began to teach and do." Now, in Acts we see the continuation of Jesus' teaching and doing. Thus the Acts of the Apostles are really the acts of the resurrected Jesus *through* the Apostles. Or, perhaps more accurately in terms of Paul's other writings, the Acts of the *Spirit* of the Resurrected Christ. On the Day of Pentecost the Spirit of the resurrected Christ was poured out on the Church (Jn. 7:37ff.). This was not only the birthday of the New Covenant Church, but the birthday of the "new heavens and the new earth," a spiritual concept. In our time the choices invariably are reduced to either change by revolution or change by resurrection. We must not confuse these. For example, when the French Revolution occurred, S. T. Coleridge stated that a new golden age had arrived, "seeming born again." But the golden age had not arrived. The French Revolution was not the hour of gold, but the hour of lead.

The Resurrection alone is the hour of gold for the cosmos.

A second nuance of the resurrection pertains to how Paul presented the gospel. Paul never presented the gospel by asking the pietistic question, "If you were to die today, would your soul go to heaven?" Instead, he preached the "hope of the resurrection" (Ac. 23:1ff.; Ac. 26). Salvation is not an insurance policy, or a method that God uses to rapture his people from their responsibilities in this world (*helicopter* Christianity!). Salvation is remaining in this world as salt and light; it is about subduing all things spiritual and *physical* to Christ resurrected. Whenever Paul gave his testimony (as he did to Agrippa and Festus), he testified to the resurrected Christ. Thus, in our witness to the world today we must do the same. We preach the resurrection because the gospel is irreducibly incarnational. Therefore the world is important to God. This includes kings and body politics, too (Ps. 2:10-12; Ac. 9:15).

A third feature of Paul's ministry pertains to his own new character. He was a new creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). More pointedly, he was a resurrected man. The early Church had a popular name for it: The Christians were called *anastasians*. This is from the Greek word *anastasia*, our word for resurrection. This means we are not just people who have placed our faith in the resurrection of Christ; rather, we are resurrected men who have trusted in Christ. Salvation is not mascara on rotting corpses, or gouty legs "cured" by silk stockings. Nor is it about dead men believing in Jesus; it is about resurrected men trusting Christ's blood. In fact, the resurrection is so central that it is theologically incorrect to allow the "born again" metaphor to become kingpin in our thinking. In the Bible the term "born again" is a metaphor *for* the resurrection. Because the resurrection is

the central salvific theme of the Word of God, *all* the other metaphors describing conversion are symbolic of it. For example, the terms "born again," "new birth," "new creation," "circumcision made without hands," "second genesis," etc., are descriptive of the great change that the Bible calls "the first resurrection" (Jn. 5:24). (Had Billy Graham realized this, he would have not beggared one of his books with the self-help title, *How to Be Born Again*).

### The Resurrection Branded as an Apologetical Weapon

A fourth feature of Paul's resurrection theology pertains to apologetics. Many in the church today argue that Paul attempted to prove the resurrection in two ways. First, he appealed to the Scriptures as his authority. This was his so-called "religious" argument of the Apostle that requires faith. But his second approach, it is claimed, appealed to history; it is said that he presented the resurrection of Christ as a neutered history that is verifiable just as *any other* historical occurrence is verifiable. Thus, on the basis of the second of these methods, many evangelicals argue the likelihood of the resurrection from raw, historical data. Instead of challenging the worldling's unbelief and autonomy, an attempt is made to "win" him by plausible historical arguments that culminate in the hypothesis that Christ really did rise on the third day. This method is considered less confrontational and academically respectable. It is a strategy championed by such men as Josh McDowell and his disciples, who speak of the evidence of the resurrection as demanding "a verdict." But this not how the resurrection is presented in Scripture. In the New Testament, the verdict is already in! The best that the evangelical apologist can do is theorize that in all likelihood Christ rose from the dead. For example, Christian socialist Ronald Sider argues the "the evidence

for Jesus' resurrection" is "...surprisingly strong" so that "Jesus was probably alive on the third day." This is as ludicrous as making Paul preach that Christ was "probably buried," that He probably rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was "probably seen by Cephas," then "probably by the twelve," "probably seen by over five hundred brethren at once," and "last of all probably seen by me also" (that is, Paul)!

Another fallacy about the evangelical approach pertains to exactly what would be proved to the unbeliever, even if Jesus' resurrection could be demonstrated. If the resurrection is mainly an historical question instead of a question of faith, then what would we really prove? Dr. Cornelius Van Til has handled this brilliantly by reminding us that even if we validated Christ's resurrection on purely historical considerations, what would we accomplish? Did Christ rise from the dead? If yes, then who raised Him? Jupiter? Zeus? Jannes and Jambres? Harry Houdini? And, what would it all mean anyway? Even pagans acknowledge monstrosities in this world. There are many things that occur in the cosmos that are so bizarre that there has yet to be an adequate scientific or philosophical explanation. Such monstrosities need not surprise us since our knowledge of the terrestrial is always finite, resulting inevitably in mystery. Did Christ arise? Maybe. Perhaps even "probably." But if He did arise, according to this method there would be no infallible reason to conclude that He was attested to be the Son of God with power or that He was raised to justify us. Let us underscore that the resurrection, from cellar-to-dome, is a theological issue. This is so because the Bible does not sever historical facts from their meanings. God tells us that a fact and its meaning are identical. To say that a fact is brute or "just there," without

meaning, is to assert nonsense. Thus the resurrection would be nonsense apart from its meaning. This is why the resurrection is not merely a brute, historical question. While it is true that Christianity is doctrine, life, and history, this does not mean that these three are not intertwined.

This leads to another self-destructive effect of sandpapering the dogmatic edges of the resurrection. If Paul had argued that the resurrection probably happened, then we may deduce that it *possibly* did not happen. And if it possibly did not happen, we are no longer left with “the hope of the resurrection” (Ac. 23:6; 26:6; 28:20). Let us be clear as to the meaning of the word *hope* in Paul’s preaching. *Hope* is never presented as iffy proposition or uncertain expectation. The Second Coming of Christ is not the “Blessed Hope-so,” but the “Blessed Hope” (Tit. 2:14). The message of the gospel is not that sinners should cross their fingers, close their eyes, and then hope that Christianity is true. On the contrary, the word *hope* conjures absolute certainty and confidence. Hope is a confident expectation that is founded upon the bedrock of the promises of God (Rom. 5:20–21). For a Christian to argue for the resurrection of Christ on the basis of historical probabilities is to undermine the certainty of the resurrection. We would be guilty of fighting Goliath in Saul’s armor, or abandoning Scripture in order to fight from a styrofoam “fortress.”

### The Resurrection Preached to the Athenian Snobs

Paul’s use of the doctrine of the resurrection was also prominent when he preached to the Athenian intellectuals on Mars Hill. His emphasis on the resurrection was so pronounced that the Athenians wrongly deduced that Paul was a polytheist, that is, that he preached two gods, “Jesus and the

Anastasia” (Ac. 17:18). It is not difficult to understand such a misunderstanding, especially in the light of Jesus’ own self-defining words, “I am the resurrection and the life” (Jn. 11:24). On Mars Hill, Paul’s doctrine challenged two pet-ideas of the Greeks. First, that God (or the gods) does not care about matter. The Greeks were anti-materialists, believing that the soul or spirit of man is the essence of a man’s being. The body was viewed as merely “the prison of the soul.” A more colloquial way of stating it was that the Greeks thought the body was a dispensable appendage to man, or a piece of trash. Death was coveted because when the body was dead, the soul was finally emancipated from this dumpster or human Leavenworth. But the resurrection challenges the anti-creational views of pagans. It tells us that matter *matters*. It also explains why the Greeks mocked Paul’s preaching (Ac. 17:32). It was not so much that it was impossible for God to raise the dead, but why would He want to? The Greek view is very similar to many today who discount the importance of a bodily resurrection. They may argue that at death our spirits go to heaven where they immediately receive a new body, or that at the last day that God will leave our skeletons in the grave and clothe us with entirely new bodies. This type of thinking is “evangelical” gnosticism. If these sentiments are true, we would be without a resurrection! All we have to do is ask, “What is a resurrection?” By definition a resurrection means that our old bodies are quickened so that we are raised-up.

The second area where the Greeks needed instruction concerned the eschatology of the resurrection. The resurrection must not be limited to eschatology! The resurrection is suffused with a judicial meaning and was appropriately preached in the Areopagus setting. Its judicial features are two-fold: The first

is that Christ was raised-up to justify us (Rom. 4:23). The purpose of the resurrection was to clothe us guilty sinners with the judicial wardrobe of the Lord Jesus Christ. This means that the resurrection is most fittingly preached when we emphasize that man is a criminal in God’s universe and that to escape God’s wrath he must be judicially clothed with Christ’s perfect righteousness. The purpose of the resurrection is not to justify us *in* our sins; it is to justify us *from* our sins. Thus the resurrection viewed *only* as an eschatological event does not per se guarantee a suite in the heavenly Hilton for criminal vermin and moral monsters.

The second judicial feature of the resurrection pertains to our assurance. We know that Christ was crucified because the Jews concluded that He was a blasphemous lawbreaker. Yet Paul assured the Athenians that this Jesus will one day sit as Judge of the whole cosmos. The ground of his confidence was Christ’s resurrection. He preached, “Because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all *by raising Him from the dead*” (Ac. 17:31). What makes the Judgment inevitable is not an abstract decree or a blind belief in poetic justice, but Christ’s resurrection on the third day. The resurrection vindicated His ministry; it was God’s reward for a job well done (Phil. 2:8–11). The resurrection guarantees “a payday, someday.”

### The Resurrection and Your Work

Finally, a most telling implication about the impact of the resurrection pertains to work. Not only does Paul’s teaching about the resurrection reassure us that matter *matters*, but that our daily work matters! Work itself matters because what is work but the output of energy in order to gain property (mat-



ter) for God's glory?

At the conclusion of 1 Corinthians 15, Paul applies the resurrection to our work. He says, "Therefore, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (verse 58). The verse begins with "therefore." An old principle of Bible interpretation goes something like this, "Whenever you see a 'therefore,' you know there is a reason it is *there for*." What might the "therefore" be *there for*? Although Paul wants us to take comfort from the future resurrection of our bodies, he does not want us to lose sight of our callings. After we bury our dead and meditate on the resurrection, we must return to our work. Therefore, verse 58 is God's trumpet of work! Because of Christ's resurrection (and ours), our work not only has meaning, but it shall not be in vain!

For many years Christians have spoken about the Protestant work ethic. The term is famous and distinguishes the Protestant view of work from the Roman Catholic, in which holy work is restricted (just as the term "saints" is restricted to those who are canonized) to the priests and hierarchy of the Church. Thus, while the priests do holy work, all others do *secular* work. But for Protestants work is itself an ethic. Work is not something that we have to do, or something that is extraneous to our being. As an ethic that God calls us to obey, instead of a necessary evil, we are motivated to be productive for God.

A number of years ago I was teaching through 1 Corinthians 15 and argued for all work as an ethic. A visitor in the congregation raised his hand and argued that when Paul enjoined work on the Corinthians and us, he was talking about missions, evangelism, and witnessing. He rejected my explanation, just as I rejected his as being pietistic and anti-Dominion. It astounded him

that I would apply 1 Corinthians 15: 58 to all the work of all Christians. Over the years I have rehearsed our little donnybrook in my mind and have not budged one whit from my original interpretation. Paul is not just speaking to the missionaries in Corinth, or to the preachers and deacons: he tells the whole church that its work (whatever it might be) is not in vain because its work *is* "the work of the Lord!"

How then can our work not be in vain? The answer is that because Christ is raised-up, we shall be raised-up. This guarantees that all our labor will be rewarded. Our work is not only the Protestant work ethic, but also the *resurrection work ethic*.

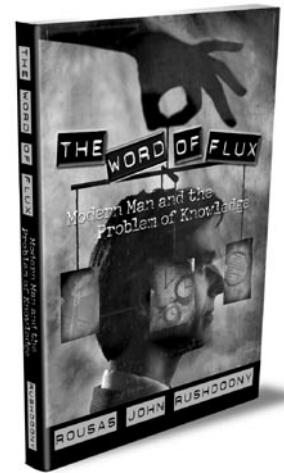
The Apostle Paul was the personification of work. We not only see him preaching about the resurrection, but about resurrecting people and about himself being resurrected (Ac. 14:20, 20:9ff.). Christ's resurrection power is evidenced in Paul's preaching, teaching, and mending tents. Paul was so wired that he reported that he outworked *all* the other apostles put together (1 Cor. 15:10)! Only the resurrection energy of Jesus Christ in him explains his incredible productivity.

All in all, God's people are galvanized only when the resurrection is presented in its true, Pauline wrappings. If it is not, the church may grow toadstools and dandelions, but it will never grow the "trees of the Lord." Every true Christian is a "lively stone" in the edifice of Christ's church because of the resurrection (1 Pet. 2:4). Every Christian should long "to know the power of His resurrection" (Phil. 3:10). The only hope of a world that loves death and lives in death is resurrected men and women who obey "the heavenly vision" of Christ's resurrection (Ac. 26:19). **CR**

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# The “Cosmic Context” of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Forrest W. Schultz



## The Conventional Teaching of the Resurrection: True but Incomplete

The first kind of discussion on the resurrection I heard as a new Christian placed a great deal of stress upon the fact that Christ was (truly, physically) raised from the dead and that the evidence supported this fact and refuted the various theories proposed in its stead (*e.g.*, the swoon theory, the body-theft theory, etc.). There was also a strong emphasis placed upon the fact that we Christians do not worship a dead martyr but a living Savior, who is now seated at the right hand of God where He serves as our Mediator with God and as the Head of His church, which is in vital union with Him. I am grateful for having received this faithful teaching. However there was something very important omitted from it, namely what we may call the “cosmic context” of the resurrection of Christ.

## The Resurrection of the Cosmos

The first factor in this cosmic context we shall discuss is the resurrection of the entire creation into its glorified, final state: the new heavens and the new earth. Dr. John Murray, one of the best New Testament theologians of the 20th century, writes:

One of the heresies which has afflicted the Christian church and has been successful in polluting the stream of Christian thought from the first century of our era to the present day is the her-

esy of regarding matter, that is material substance, as the source of evil. It has appeared in various forms.... John, for example, had to combat it in the peculiarly aggravated form of denying the reality of Christ's body as one of flesh (I Jn. 4: 1-3).... In reference to that heresy the test of orthodoxy was to confess the flesh of Jesus, that is to say that he came with a material, fleshly body.

Another form in which this heresy appeared is to regard salvation as consisting of the emancipation of the soul or spirit of man from the impediments and entanglements of the body. Salvation and sanctification progress to the extent to which the immaterial soul overcomes the degrading influence emanating from the material and the fleshly.... This heresy has appeared in a very subtle form in connection with the subject of glorification. The direction it has taken in this case is to play on the chord of the immortality of the soul.... The Biblical doctrine of ‘immortality’, if we may use that term, is the doctrine of *glorification*. And glorification is resurrection. Without resurrection of the body from the grave and the restoration of human nature to its completeness after the pattern of Christ's resurrection... there is no glorification.... In like manner, the Christian's hope is not indifferent to the material universe around us, the cosmos of God's creation. It was subjected to vanity, not willingly; it was cursed for man's sin; it was marred by human apostasy. But it is going to be delivered from the bondage of corruption; and its deliverance will be coincident with the consummation of God's people's redemption. The two are not only

coincident events but they are correlative in hope. Glorification has cosmic proportions...<sup>1</sup> (Emphasis in original.)

So we see that, just as Christ's destiny was to die and be resurrected by His Father, so the destiny of the cosmos is to die and be resurrected by God. In light of the fact that the cosmos is destined for resurrection, this means that Christ's resurrection should not be regarded as an oddity — as something that does not fit into the scheme of things. Since the Christian worldview expects the resurrection of the cosmos, it therefore regards resurrection as something *normal*, not something abnormal. The humanist considers the idea of the resurrection of Christ as paranormal because it does not fit into the humanist's worldview. Therefore he regards the notion of resurrection as an oddity.

## Present Day Resurrections

John Calvin illustrates in *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* that just as the cosmos will be resurrected in its entirety at the end of history, so we see glimpses of its being resurrected presently in nature. Calvin argues, “... Paul by setting forth a proof from nature confutes the folly of those who deny the resurrection. ‘You foolish man,’ he says, ‘what you sow does not come to life unless it dies,’ etc. (1 Cor. 15: 36). In sowing, he tells us, we discern an image of the resurrection, for out of corruption springs up grain. And this fact would not be so hard to believe if we paid proper attention to the miracles thrust before our eyes throughout all the

regions of the world.”<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately we have become so accustomed to these phenomena that we forget that the creation of new life is indeed a miracle. Just because it is not rare does not mean it isn't a miracle. The resurrection of the dead will clearly be a miracle in spite of the fact that it will happen to all men, and thus will not be a rarity.

Clement of Rome, writing in 96 A.D., reminds us of the power of this ongoing resurrection:

My friends, look how regularly there are processes of resurrection going on at this very moment...take the fruits of the earth; how, and in what way, does a crop come into being? When the sower goes out and drops each seed into the ground, it falls to the earth shriveled and bare, and decays; but presently the power of the Lord's providence raises it from decay, and from that single grain a host of others spring up and yield their fruit...need we find it such a great wonder that He has a resurrection in store for those of us who have served Him in holiness and in the confidence of a sound faith? For in Scripture we read, You will raise me up, and I will praise you;...Job too, says, You will raise up this flesh of mine which has had all these trials to endure.... So let us rekindle the ardour of our belief in Him, and also remind ourselves that there is nothing in the world with which He is not in close touch. With the word of His greatness has He assembled all that exists, and with a word His is able to overturn it again; for who can say to him, What have you done? or who shall withstand the power of his might? He will act at all times as, and when, He chooses; and not one of His decrees shall fail.<sup>3</sup>

Biology and theology – the natural world and the God who creates and governs it – are closely related. Humanists refuse to see this profound connection; instead they set up a dichotomy between biology and theology.

### Resurrection In The Drama Of History


Christians recognize that there is a close relationship between man and nature. Nature is not just the stage on which the drama of human salvation is enacted. Rather nature is intimately involved in human history and human salvation. R. J. Rushdoony noted:

The destiny of covenant keeping man is to be God's vicegerent in Christ, to be God's priest, prophet, and king over creation, to rule, interpret, and dedicate the world to Christ, unto God the Father. Man is not passive in regard to nature; rather nature is passive in regard to man. Nature was passive in receiving the consequences of man's Fall and nature is passive today as man's sin lays nature waste. Nature will be passive again in receiving her Sabbath rest from man's hands and it will finally share passively in man's glorification (Rom 8: 19-22).<sup>4</sup>

This is the historical perspective we need to properly understand the significance of the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection belongs in history because it is a key plot element in the drama of history, of which God is the Playwright. However, the humanist does not want to accept God's drama, but instead wants to write his own. In this humanistic drama there is no place for resurrecting by God just as there is no place for creating by God.

Although the humanist often may appear to allow Jesus to play a role, that role is restricted to being a teacher of ethics (of the humanist) and perhaps an exemplar (of the humanist's life style). But the humanist will not allow Christ to be the Word of God through whom the world was created, nor the principle of unification in whom all things consist, nor the Resurrector of the dead or the Judge of the world. Yet the humanists' dramas are pure fiction because their dogmas are false.

### Conclusion: The Resurrection and the Clash of Worldviews

It is clear that we must proclaim the resurrection of Christ in the context of the total Christian world-and-life view and we must exhort all men to repent and to straighten out their thinking. It is not enough to try to get people to accept the historical fact of the resurrection. They need to change their minds about their philosophy of life. They need to forsake their false worldview and adopt the Christian worldview. After all, repentance (*metanoia*) means change of mind. The resurrection is an integral feature of the Christian worldview and only makes sense in terms of that worldview. In the humanists' worldviews it is paranormal. In God's view it is normal because He designed, planned, and carried it out for His purposes. Amen! 

Forrest W. Schultz has a B.S. in Chemical Engineering from Drexel University and a Th.M. in Systematic Theology from Westminster Theological Seminary.

1. John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 179 – 181.
2. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III: XXV: 4, Ed. by John T. McNeill, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 993. Concerning the word “miracles”, I feel obliged, in all fairness, to point out that Beveridge's translation uses the term “wonders” instead. Whether this is justified by the Latin or whether Beveridge is recoiling in personal distaste from the word “miracles” I do not know.
3. This letter is found in the standard reference work *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.) under the heading *The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*, the quoted material being found in sections 24, 26, & 27. However, what I quoted comes not from this translation but the one made by Maxwell Staniforth, which is found in *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers* (N.Y.: Harper, 1968) on

*continued on page 39*

# The Place of God's Law in the New Testament

Ian Hodge



The place of God's law in the New Testament is an area of considerable debate among Christians today. There are three views about the law and its Old-New Testament relationship that exist at present. They are:

1. The law in the New Testament is the same as in the Old which we receive through Biblical revelation. Any changes to Old Testament law will be found in the New Testament canon.
2. The law in the New Testament is the same as the Old which we receive through prayer and other possible forms of revelation. But it is not accepted because it is written in the Old or New Testaments. It is accepted because the Spirit confirms inwardly to us the way we should live.
3. The law in the New Testament is not the same as the Old, which means we do not need the Old Testament to teach us how to live.

Each of these views presents problems for Christians today.

*First*, the view that the New Testament canon does not eliminate the Old Testament creates a problem because most of the Old Testament law is discarded by today's Christians. It is just not *kosher* to accept Old Testament law as valid. Whether it refers to dietary laws, penal sanctions, business laws (just

weights and measures), or inheritance regulations, by and large the Old Testament is ignored today. If it is still applicable, the major problem to overcome is the willingness of the people to adopt Old Testament laws and apply them.

There is another underlying issue with this first view. Who determines what is Scripture? Since the Reformation the answer would be along the lines that Scripture determines what is Scripture. Now if Scripture determines what is Scripture, the idea that the New Testament determines what is carried through in the Old becomes a problem. The Old Testament, being the Scriptures at the time, must be used to determine what is NT canon. On this basis the New Testament cannot change the Old, for if it does not agree with the Old it should be rejected.

*Second*, if the law in the Old and New Testaments is valid, not because it is taught in Scripture, but because the Spirit somehow tells us how we should now live, then the debate over revelation is just beginning to warm up. The first view above confines revelation to the books of the Old and New Testament. But this second view opens up revelation to an ongoing process that is no longer governed by the Scriptures. In this view, the Spirit can speak to the individual and tell him things that are in addition to the Bible, *e.g.* who to marry, what career to pursue, who to work for. Some even claim to get divine inspiration on polling day and God allegedly tells them who to vote for.

*Third*, this view virtually eliminates

the necessity of the Old Testament in answering moral questions. The Old Testament may carry stories that help us in the Christian life. From Noah or Abraham we can learn a lot about trusting God, but all the laws pertaining to Israel are abandoned under this view *unless* the laws are repeated in the New Testament. Those laws that are no longer repeated in the New mean that this view has a difficult time in responding to issues in contemporary culture, such as bestiality, condemned in the Old but not explicitly in the New.

It is easy to see why Christianity is in such disarray today. And it is easy to see why our culture is becoming non-Christian in many aspects. Christians expect to change the world and we think we can do this without an agreed agenda. But there is no agreed agenda because there is no agreed method of reading the Bible. Each of the views listed above is prominent today in some circles of Christianity. None of the views is universally agreed upon. But unlike the Trinitarian debate of the fourth century, there is no church council to declare what the Bible teaches. Denominations may have their own view represented in their various confessions, but there is no overall council that declares which view is orthodox and which view is heretical.

Now if we are going to get serious about transforming lives and therefore culture, it seems we must have an agenda that represents man's best attempts at declaring just what is the Christian view. Arians past and present

can quote Scripture to support their views, but the orthodox have accepted a particular method of interpretation that declares Arianism to be wrong and Trinitarianism to be correct. While a church council made the declaration, this did not eliminate the early Arians who continued to work against Athanasius. It has been argued there were more Christians killed over this debate at the time than were killed by the Romans. This may be true, but it only indicates that while the Church may declare what is true doctrine, the battle for the Faith will continue because there are those — inside and outside the Church — who do not accept what the Church declares to be true. Does this mean the Church should stop making declarations? No. It means it should continue to make them so the followers of the Faith know what beliefs are true.

Is the divine revelation confined to the books of the Old and New Testaments, confirmed by the Spirit to the heart of the believer, and declared to be true by the church through the ages? If

not, then the doorway to continuing revelations is opened — and we wonder why Islam, Mormonism, and the Watchtower organizations have flourished.

The third view has done nothing but reduce the Christian church to irrelevancy. Unable to get from the New Testament alone a comprehensive social agenda, it leaves the cultural field to the devil and his followers who know nothing about God's standards of right and wrong.

It's on the historical record that Alfred the Great wrote Exodus chapters 21-24 into the law of England. There is hardly any support today for the view that Old Testament laws are valid in the New Testament in the way Alfred understood the Old Testament. But it just so happens that his view helped change the culture of the day. And if we really want to understand the origins of Western civilization we cannot do so without an appreciation of the older view that kept intact both Old and New Testaments. No other view has trans-

formed culture. It was Old Testament law that transformed Israel when she was faithful. It was Old Testament law, combined with the New Testament, that transformed nations in the first thousand years of Christianity.

The issue over the New Testament's view of the Old Testament law, then, is crucial to solving Christianity's future at the human level. While Christianity's future is assured at the divine level, there is work to be done by the troops on earth who are serious when they pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." **CR**

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# Life's Second Most Important Question

Tom Rose



## A Barnyard Encounter

One beautiful fall day in November, 2003, I was mucking out our feeder barn when I sensed someone entering. I looked up to discover a State Highway patrolman. As he approached, he raised his hands and held them up, palms outward, and almost apologetically said, "This is not an official visit!" He explained that he was a bow-and-arrow hunter and wanted permission to hunt on our property. I assented and thanked him for his courtesy in requesting instead of hunting without permission.

As a second thought I added, "I don't hunt anymore because I don't accept the state's contention that wild game belongs to the state instead of to the landowner on whose land the game feeds" This led to an interesting discussion.

He said, "You noticed how carefully I entered the barn? I've been a State patrolman for 18 years. It used to be that people looked upon police officers as friends, but not anymore. My job is to uphold the law, but these days people seem to resent our law enforcement efforts."

I replied, "I have no doubt that you were instructed as a recruit to uphold the law. In one way this is true, but in truth it is not. If you remember when you were sworn into office, the oath went something like this, 'I swear to uphold the Constitution of the United States of America, and of the State of

Pennsylvania, and protect them against all enemies, both foreign and domestic.' You see, your *real* job is to protect citizens by upholding the Constitutions of both our national and State governments"

I explained, "I was brought up as a child to regard policemen as friends, but, over the years, things have changed. It used to be that laws were few and easy to understand. But, today, there are so many laws on the books that no one can know them all, and some laws are hidden so that law-abiding citizens do not learn of them until they are arrested. The result is that today it is almost impossible for ordinary people to live one single day without unknowingly breaking some law or other. Therefore everyone becomes a law-breaker in the eyes of law enforcement people. More citizens are coming to understand how some laws make them unintentional lawbreakers and subject to fines and punishment, and they see you as the gun-toting enforcer. I think this largely explains why many people today regard police officers as enemies instead of protector-friends."

## What Is the Proper Role of Civil Government?

How people answer the question "What is the proper role of civil government in society?" will largely determine whether they, while sojourning on this earth, live as slaves to the State, or as free and self-responsible individuals before a loving God.<sup>1</sup>

The failure of the American people to come up with a solid Biblical and

constitutional answer to the question "What is the proper role of civil government?" has led, over the last 100 years, to what we see today: the development of freedom-threatening political/economic fascism<sup>2</sup> domestically and to the development of a fearsome American Empire internationally — both which serve to undermine our constitutionally protected liberties and have turned our once-decentralized American Republic into a centrally controlled police state.

R. J. Rushdoony writes:

The modern state has a moral foundation, but it is not a Christian one. Rather, it is emphatically humanistic.... [T]he modern state sees itself in messianic terms and as man's savior. State planning is the substitute for God's predestination; state welfare programs have worked to displace Christian charity, and the state sees itself as the new agency of providence, replacing God.

In Scripture, the state has a specific ministry, the ministry of justice (Rom. 13:1). Its place in the plan of God is a real if limited one. The state must be the servant of the Messiah; the modern state has made itself the messiah....

...Rome became the triumph of the oppressive tax-collector. A barbarian raid and a visit from the tax-gatherer came to rank equally as disasters, until finally the tax-man came to be the greater evil, and none found Rome worth defending....Rome waned from a great metropolis to a town because it was bankrupt....The modern state, pursuing the same messianic course, faces the same fate.<sup>3</sup>

### What Does Scripture Say?

A practical question arises today for Christians to consider: What should be our attitude toward civil government, and especially toward the growing political and economic tyranny of civil governments during this age? In their rebellion against God they increasingly hold God in derision (Psalm 2). Let us see if we can answer this question.

Scripture teaches us that man has a *right* to stand (humbly) before God as a free and self-responsible individual because God created him in His very image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-28). Man also has a *duty* to preserve his God-given freedom so that he *can* be self-responsible to God.

But Satan, that great deceiver, tempted Eve, “Yea, hath God said...?” The subsequent rebellion of Adam allowed man to be controlled by Satan. So evil filled the earth (Gen. 6:5). God flooded the earth and saved a remnant through godly Noah (Gen. 6:6-9:29). But evil still abounded. The first ruler to seek worldwide tyranny was Nimrod, who built the Tower of Babel (Gen. 10:8-10).

What did God do? He confounded the language and dispersed the people into small political/economic social units. This shows us God’s method of reining in the evil outworking of man’s sinful heart in society by destroying centralized government and replacing it with decentralized forms of political rule and economic exchange. Thus, civil power was carefully decentralized so that free economic exchange could take place between individuals whose duty to stand as free and self-responsible persons before their Creator would not be negated by tyrannical rulers (Gen. 11:5-9). This is the political/economic guideline for God’s people to use in the Old and New Testaments.

God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees and covenanted with him

(Gen. 12-17) to bless the world by his seed through Isaac (Gen. 17:9). Only those who trust in Christ as Savior are counted as Abraham’s spiritual seed. Note that Abraham provided his own army to rescue his nephew Lot and family, who had been abducted by invading kings (Gen. 14). Abraham’s ability to protect his family is a perfect example of decentralized civil government.

God’s people went to pagan Egypt during a long drought, were welcomed there (Gen. 45-50), but were finally enslaved by a king who “knew not Joseph” (Ex. 1:8). God then raised up Moses to deliver His people from slavery in Egypt so that they could serve our Lord in freedom (Ex. 8:1). As the Israelites journeyed to the Promised Land, God used Jethro to instruct Moses in the Biblical ideal of decentralized republican civil government (Ex. 18) with God’s Word as their constitution (Ex. 20). Later God instructed His people regarding the Biblical ideal of limited power for civil rulers. Rulers are not to exceed Biblical guidelines in exerting power (Dt. 17:14-20). Compare this with Rom 13:1-10, especially with verses 3 and 4; also with 1 Timothy 2:1-2.

Civil rulers serve under God’s law for the good of those who are ruled. The delegated power they wield (to punish wrongdoers) is carefully limited by the Bible. Power wielded beyond that results in tyranny, and people have no moral duty to obey edicts that go beyond God’s Word or the governing political constitution (Acts 5:29). But a caveat is warranted here: citizens must use prudence in deciding to disobey because — right or wrong — the ruler is the one who wields the sword!

When Israel rebelled spiritually and asked for a “king like other nations,” God warned them of the tyranny that would result (1 Sam. 8). And tyranny wasn’t long in coming! Within two years Saul arrogated priestly power to

himself (1 Sam. 13:9-14). Later Samuel feared that Saul would murder him (1 Sam. 16:2), and still later in his reign Saul actually murdered the Lord’s priests (1 Sam. 22:14-23).

The road to political and economic tyranny was followed by most kings in the Old Testament, even by so-called “good kings.” King David adulterously consorted with the wife of one of his soldiers (Uriah) and then had him murdered (2 Sam. 11). Later, David sinned by numbering the people (2 Sam. 24:1-10). King Solomon multiplied wealth, horses and women to himself and burdened the people with excessive taxes (I Kings 11 & 12). This pattern of civil rulers imposing political and economic tyranny on the people has continued without interruption from Nimrod up to the present time. It is the natural outworking of man’s sinful nature in society.

Satan constantly works by inducing civil rulers (who, like all men, suffer from a fallen nature (Jer. 17:9) to conspire against God (Ps. 2). Thus, rulers cannot safely be trusted to wield power. This is why we are repeatedly admonished not to put our trust in civil rulers (Ps. 118:9, 146:3-10; Ez. 45:9). The nature of civil government is such that it always works by coercion. Even men of good heart — much less evil men who are attracted to positions of political power — can hardly resist the seductive call to “do good” through the use of force. Thus, Christians are called by God to measure all social institutions and to reconstruct them according to Biblical precepts (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

Again, according to R. J. Rushdoony :

The direction of history is twofold in its historical manifestation. Apostate man moves towards establishing a radically humanistic social order, in which God is abolished and man is his own law and lawgiver. Apostate man works to create

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# Reconstructing the Post-Modern Church:

## The need for Evangelical and Reformed Preaching

Roger Schultz



Dressed in old jeans and a worn tee shirt, the pastor strolled to the front of the rented school auditorium. We were already deafened from the grunge-style band that had played warm-up songs for the service. “And now,” the scruffy pastor said, “I’d like to share some reflections on *God-stuff*.” Welcome to the new evangelical church.

Much about my brother’s “new generation” church in suburban Minneapolis surprised me during that 2001 visit. The music was mind-numbing. The congregation was very casual. (“You could go in your bathrobe and nobody would care,” my sister-in-law reassured me when I worried about forgetting my necktie.) It was also very large — and something of a church growth success story.

The sermon itself wasn’t bad. The pastor eventually used the Bible and the message was orthodox and practical. What struck me, however, was that instead of a sermon we got “reflections on God-stuff.” In trying to reach the post-modern culture in a non-threatening way, the pastor was reduced to sharing his feelings and personal thoughts. There was no formal reading of Scripture, followed by a deliberate exposition of the Word and an emphatic “thus saith the Lord.” And what our generation needs now, more than ever, is the faithful proclamation of God’s authoritative Word.

### Drifting Evangelicalism

There is a revolution in contemporary evangelical worship and preaching.<sup>1</sup> Church growth gurus preach new techniques of attracting crowds and growing churches. While their motives may be good, their approach to worship and preaching is a dramatic departure from what is genuinely Biblical. While my criticisms don’t apply to all churches, they are true of many of the largest churches and are, I’m afraid, indicative of the direction of modern evangelicalism.

For modern evangelicals, worship is often only a sanctified entertainment. Performers and professionals entertain a largely passive congregation. The Reformation emphasis on participatory corporate worship is vanishing. Some congregational singing remains, but worship styles vary, from campfire songs and sentimental ditties to jazzy numbers led with Las Vegas style showmanship. Frequently the music is loud. High decibel productions may be a way of pandering to the youth and generating excitement, but there may also be more manipulative motivations.<sup>2</sup>

New worship styles have even infected Reformed churches. Many have adopted contemporary or blended worship, or have employed drama and dancing. A Baptist colleague recently visited his son’s modern PCA church, and I braced myself for the worst, since my elderly friend doesn’t like any funny stuff. “They had dancing during the worship,” he reported, “ballet dancing

— but I couldn’t say much because my granddaughter was the ballerina!” We commiserated about the direction of evangelicalism, and agreed that churches shouldn’t stage dance performances (unless, as in this case, the little ballerinas happened to be exceptionally cute).

Even worse is what has happened to evangelical preaching. “Seeker friendly” churches avoid being confrontational and eschew preaching God’s law, sin and judgment, and the need for repentance. Sermons are to be short and cheerful. “Short sermons —spicy slogans” could easily have been the motto of one church growth guru I recently heard. (People don’t like long messages, his argument went, but they do like and remember catchy slogans.) He said nothing about exegesis and doctrine, but stressed using alliteration and acrostics. Because they are market driven and numbers oriented, church growth pioneers invariably pitch worship and preaching to the lowest common denominator, at the expense of Biblical exposition.

When sin and judgment are preached, it is in special venues. At our home Bible study in October, a Baptist visitor requested prayer for the success of “Scaremare.” Scaremare is a Halloween season production that emphasizes the Last Judgment to bring youngsters under conviction. It is designed to scare the socks off pagans — doing for them what *A Thief in the Night* did for my generation. But the “Halloween gospel” is tame compared to other, historic



attempts at illustrating everlasting torment. Historian Paul Johnson notes that one early Franciscan missionary to the American Indians “taught the doctrine of hell by throwing dogs and cats into an oven, and lighting a fire under it: the howls of the animals terrified the Indians.”<sup>3</sup>

Technique-driven approaches have been used in churches before. In *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism, 1750-1858*, Ian Murray describes what happened in the Second Great Awakening. “Revival,” he argues, refers to a genuine Spirit-guided religious awakening, focusing on gospel preaching, the conviction of sin, and true conversion. “Revivalism,” on the other hand, refers to the manipulation of people through human techniques: the “adoption of means—to promote emotion” or, in the words Charles G. Finney (the architect of these “new measures”), to “raise an excitement.”<sup>4</sup>

Ann Douglas has described the enormous shift in Protestant churches in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Until 1820, she argues, Calvinism was the chief theological tradition and it was the “vehicle of intellectual and cultural life in America.” Evangelical Christians were gradually transformed by the influence of Victorianism, mass culture, consumerism, sentimentality, and the Sunday school — “with its saccharine simplification of dogma.” By 1875, American Protestants simply stressed family morals and civic duties, and churches “shifted their emphasis from a primary concern with doctrinal beliefs of their members to a preoccupation with numbers.” What she describes is strikingly similar to what we see now: “In ecclesiastical and religious circles, attendance came to account for more than genuine adherence.”<sup>5</sup>

### Recovering Biblical Preaching

The Protestant Reformation once brought a new emphasis on the Word

of God and preaching. The Reformation, Dabney notes, “was emphatically a revival of gospel preaching.”<sup>6</sup> Zwingli was a good example of the centrality of the Word, abandoning “the traditional lectionary in favor of a verse-by-verse exposition of the Scripture.” As Timothy George points out, “Protestant worship centered around the pulpit and open Bible with the preacher facing the congregation, not around an altar with a priest performing a semi-secret ritual.”<sup>7</sup>

The 17<sup>th</sup> century Westminster *Directory for the Public Worship of God* is an excellent example of the primacy of the Word in worship, and its section on “the Preaching of the Word” offers excellent advice on the construction of sermons. Sermons are serious business, because preaching is “the power of God unto salvation.” Sermons must be expository — tied directly to a specific passage of scripture. Sermons must be analytical — dividing the passage into chief points.<sup>8</sup> Sermons must be doctrinal — “pointing at the chief heads or grounds of doctrine.” They must be comparative, referring to “parallel places of scripture.” They must be hermeneutically clear, so that “the hearers may discern how God teacheth [the doctrine] from it.” And sermons must be applicatory and practical, so that it will result in the edification of the congregation. The *Directory* is a superlative, concise homiletical guide, still worthy of careful study.<sup>9</sup>

Robert Dabney’s *Evangelical Eloquence* provides an excellent 19<sup>th</sup> century case for the importance of preaching. Since preachers gain their authority from the Word of God, sermons must be expository. They must be faithful to the text, laboring to explain precisely what the Spirit of God intended. Preachers must be both doctrinal and practical: “It was a golden maxim of the Protestant Fathers, that ‘doctrines must be preached practically and du-

ties doctrinally.’” And Dabney insists that preaching, by applying the Word of God to the hearts of the listeners, should move people. “If the [sermon] does not bring their wills under the direct grasp of a ‘thus saith the Lord’ it is not a sermon; it has degenerated into a speech.”<sup>10</sup>

Likewise, in *The Imperative of Preaching: A Rhetoric of Sacred Theology*, John Carrick argued for this vigorous and practical hortatory element of preaching.<sup>11</sup> For Carrick, true Biblical preaching has an indicative-imperative construction. The *indicative* is the statement of propositional truth from the Scriptures, and the *imperative* is an exhortation to hear and respond to the truth of Christ. “[P]reaching has two great purposes,” William Baikie once observed, “to instruct and to persuade. Of instructive preachers there is no lack, but how seldom one [finds] any who have skill to persuade.” The imperative or persuasive function is, for Baikie, “[T]he power that gets to close quarters with men, that touches their springs of action, that lays bare their poor aims and motives till they are ashamed, and that strives to turn them from the power of Satan unto God.”<sup>12</sup>

What the Reformers and Reformed theologians have emphasized is clearly the Biblical model for proclaiming the Word. Paul’s rhetorical question in Romans 10:14 (“How shall they hear without a preacher?”) underscores the divine sanction for preaching. Paul’s advice in 1 Timothy 4:16 (“Pay close attention to yourself and your teaching... to insure salvation for yourself and those who would hear you”) underscores the vital, eternal importance of preaching. Preaching may seem “foolish” and old-fashioned, but it is the means God has ordained to bring people to Christ (1 Cor. 1:21). And Paul’s exhortation to Timothy is a great challenge to the

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# W. E. Hatcher and the Power of the Resurrection

R.G. "Rick" Williams, Jr.

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection..." *Philippians 3:10a*



On a misty morning in the shadows of the Blue Ridge Mountains, two heart-broken, teary-eyed young boys, ages four<sup>1</sup> and seven, stand by their dying mother's bedside. The disinterested world at large, far removed from that quiet farm in Old Virginia, took little notice of the events that were about to unfold, but Heaven stood at rapt attention. As the godly Presbyterian mother's soul prepared to take its heavenly flight, she sent up a petition to the God of her fathers that would affect not only her two young sons, but thousands yet unborn as well. The younger son would later write:

THOUGH FAINTLY REMEMBERING IT...  
THEY TOLD MY BROTHER  
AND MYSELF THAT SHE USED MUCH  
OF HER DYING BREATH IN PRAYING THAT  
WE MIGHT BE MINISTERS AND  
IN THAT WAY IT SEEMS SHE ENTERED  
AS A SILENT FACTOR AMONG  
THE FORCES WHICH SET FOR US THE  
COURSE OF LIFE.

God graciously answered the dying mother's request — both boys converted at an early age and went on to become preachers of the gospel. The youngest was destined to become one of the most popular and influential Southern Baptists of the 19th century. William Eldridge Hatcher (1834-1912) would be a testimony to the power of Christ's resurrection to impact culture and alter the courses of men's lives.



John Jasper  
Pastor, Sixth  
Mount Zion  
Baptist Church



W.E. Hatcher  
Pastor, Grace  
Street Baptist  
Church

## A Mother's Living Faith

Though the mother had been buried deep in the rich Virginia soil, her faith in the power of Christ's resurrection was manifest in a multitude of ways that will only be fully known in eternity. God had blessed the Hatchers with a multi-generational vision, and the influence the family<sup>2</sup> had on Virginia is a little known yet fascinating tale of how Christ's power and glory can impact a society and "set the course of life." The story provides inspiration and confirmation that 21st century Christians need to take the "long view" regarding our progress towards influencing our society.

W. E. Hatcher's grandfather, Jeremiah Hatcher, had pastored in nearby Chesterfield County and was a "man of considerable means." Jeremiah Hatcher's passion was preaching — a passion that

William inherited. The elder Hatcher eventually constructed a church building at his own expense in Bedford County. This structure became known as "Hatcher's Meeting House." His labor in that part of Virginia "wrought a signal transformation in that portion of the country."

Jeremiah was blessed with three grandsons who also became ministers of the gospel. Besides William, God called his older brother, Harvey, and a cousin, Jeremiah B. Jeter,<sup>3</sup> to the ministry. But it was William Hatcher's life that yielded the most lasting impact. Converted to Christ at the age of fourteen, Hatcher later wrote that his "soul cried out for the ministry." From 1854-1858, Hatcher studied for the ministry at Richmond College. While at the school, Hatcher influenced the spiritual lives of many of his fellow students:

He set his heart upon having a great revival of religion among the students... His prayers and efforts were rewarded and a revival broke out among the students... nearly every student was brought to Christ.<sup>4</sup>

One observer of this outpouring of the Spirit testified: "The memories of that revival would fill a book and rarely do they ever come back without opening the fountains of my soul." One of Hatcher's contemporaries took note that Hatcher "had the brightest mind of any man I ever knew" and, "That young man will make his mark."

Hatcher accepted his first pastorate at Manchester, just across the James

River from Richmond College. While serving as pastor in Manchester,<sup>5</sup> Hatcher witnessed the fall of Richmond as the Confederate government collapsed in the spring of 1865. “Pregnant and historic years” Hatcher wrote of those tumultuous times.

### His Mature Ministry

Hatcher also pastored in Baltimore and Petersburg, but it was at Grace Street Baptist in Richmond that Hatcher’s ministry laid roots and bore the most fruit, or in Hatcher’s words, “the maturest and most experienced part of my life... nothing else on earth attracted me.” Hatcher pastored at Grace for twenty-six years, from 1875-1901.

Hatcher went on to serve as editor of *The Religious Herald*, preach scores of revival meetings, write hundreds of articles and several books, establish a military school for boys,<sup>6</sup> and even preach in London at Spurgeon’s request. But perhaps the most interesting, and the most important, of Hatcher’s work, was his discipling and mentoring the renowned black preacher, John Jasper. His biography of Jasper introduced millions to one of God’s choice servants.

Jasper was born in 1812, the 24th child of slave parents. He was almost a quarter century older than Hatcher. Converted at the age of 27 in a tobacco warehouse under the prayerful care of his master, Jasper has been called one of the greatest orators Virginia ever produced. But it was Hatcher who succored Jasper as they spent many quiet afternoons discussing the church, doctrine, and the goodness of God.

Hatcher described his first encounter with Jasper:

The writer of this book heard that there was a marvel of a man “over in Africa,” — a not too savory portion of Richmond, Virginia — and one Sunday afternoon in company with a Scotch-Irishman, who was a scholar and critic with a strong leaning towards ridicule,

he went to hear him preach. Shades of our Anglo-Saxon fathers! Did mortal lips ever gush with such torrents of horrible English! Hardly a word came out clothed in its right mind. And gestures! He circled around the pulpit with his ankle in his hand, and laughed and sang and shouted and acted about a dozen characters within the space of three minutes. Meanwhile, in spite of these things, he was pouring out a gospel sermon, red-hot, full of love, full of invective, full of tenderness, full of bitterness, full of tears, full of every passion that ever flamed in the human heart.<sup>7</sup>



Rick Williams with Jasper marker sponsors

Hatcher continued to visit Jasper’s church, Sixth Mount Zion Baptist, for twenty years. Jasper founded the church in an abandoned Confederate horse stable in 1867 with nine members. At the time of his death, in 1901, Sixth Mount Zion boasted over one-thousand members housed in a beautiful brick edifice. The church is still a vibrant ministry and influence in Richmond’s African-American community today.<sup>8</sup>

### Co-Laborers and Dear Brothers

Though Jasper’s success as a preacher and pastor was due to God’s calling and unction upon his life, much credit must be given to Hatcher’s doctrinal tu-

telage of Jasper. The two had a deep and abiding respect for each other, though it is difficult to say which one had more impact on the other.

Hatcher got his heart warmed at Jasper’s Sunday afternoon services, and Jasper’s head as a student was held level by frequent visits to Hatcher’s study. The love between the two ministers seemed unlimited.<sup>9</sup>

Hatcher’s son wrote of his father’s acceptance and promotion of Jasper, even though Virginia society at that time did not readily embrace the qualifications of a black preacher:

...underneath Jasper’s eccentricities and oddities Dr. Hatcher saw a jewel of purest ray and he picked it up, rubbed off the dirt and held it for the world’s gaze and verily there are those who say that the light will never go out.<sup>10</sup>

I would be one of those who say that light still. As Hatcher lay dying at his home in Fork Union, Virginia in 1912, those gathered around his bed heard the old preacher whisper, “John Jasper, we’re brothers now, and we’ll live forever round the throne of God.” -- And ‘round the risen Christ. **CR**

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1. William Hatcher’s mother died on his fourth birthday.
2. William’s progenitor, also named William, was the first Hatcher to set foot on American soil and served in Virginia’s House of Burgesses. He once shouted down the Speaker of the House by crying out, “The mouth of this house is an atheist, a blasphemous and a devil!”
3. Jeter was, for many years, pastor of one of Richmond’s most influential churches, Grace Street Baptist (Hatcher also later

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# Preaching to the Choir

Lee Duigon



Although Americans profess to be Christians, most of our sociopolitical institutions seem bent on an actively anti-Christian course. How can this be?

Our public schools teach moral relativism to the Christians' children, "values clarification," and the joys of sex in every imaginable context but marriage. Our universities are even worse. Our courts hammer us with anti-Christian rulings—abolishing school prayer, creating a "constitutional right" to abortion, deleting "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance, and establishing additional "rights" to sodomy and homosexual marriage.

Our municipalities crusade against Christmas, and our entertainment (if that's the word for it) media crusade against all decency. Even our corporations, in an endless quest for political correctness, pander to feminists and gay activists while going out of their way to insult Christians. Have you looked at an Abercrombie and Fitch catalog lately?

Obviously, if this goes on for too much longer, America will become a spiritual wilderness.

Why do we, the majority, allow this to happen?

Despite our numbers, we have not made our presence felt in the public debate. Those few Christians who try—Judge Roy Moore, to name one—are so ferociously demonized, so heaped with abuse and mockery, that the rest of us can't help but think it is wiser to keep our mouths shut.

Thanks to our silence, there is no public debate. We've pulled our heads

into our shells, leaving the Irreligious Left to dominate the airwaves, the press, the schools and colleges, and political campaigns. You'll find hardly a trace of a Christian presence in any of those venues.

We have our own magazines, websites, radio stations, and bookstores. We think we're speaking out, but we're really only preaching to the choir. Mainstream America doesn't hear us.

Wait a minute! *We're* mainstream America.

No—we only should be. But we have yielded the mainstream to those whose fondest dream is to erase from public view every vestige of Christianity.

## What Are We Afraid Of?

It's a good thing that we talk among ourselves, and we certainly shouldn't stop. It's how we clarify our ideas. It's how we learn to express them cogently.

The problem is that most of us stop there, when we need to take the next step. We need to be heard, loud and clear, by the public at large.

I know several Christians who have chosen not to display Ten Commandments flyers on their cars because, they say, they're afraid their cars might be vandalized. None of them live in a neighborhood where vandalism is a problem. None has ever been threatened by an atheist. Yet they're afraid.

Of what?

Of being made fun of by their neighbors, that's what. Of being called "fundamentalists" or "Christian Taliban" or worse, by liberals. Of seeing people roll their eyes and whisper about them having gone off the religious deep end.

We're bold enough when we're talk-

ing to each other. But when was the last time you spoke up when your friends or coworkers were enthusing over the latest "Will and Grace" episode? I'll bet you didn't. They would have thought you were uncool.

None of this is to say we ought to turn into public scolds. No one ever got nagged into godliness. If we come across as Pharisees and killjoys, all we can do is drive people farther into the liberals' camp. It may give us a nice feeling of self-righteousness that's difficult to resist, but it is not serving God.

Do you complain to other Christians and let it go at that when your school board forbids Christmas displays but promotes Kwanzaa? What would you do if your town decided to hold a Gay Pride parade? What do you say when your 12-year-old complains that he's the only one in his class who isn't allowed to watch "The Sopranos"?

It never was easy to stand up for Jesus—and our inaction over the last fifty years has made it harder. If we continue to sit on our hands, it'll get harder still. Today they're consecrating a homosexual bishop. Tomorrow they might be revoking the tax-exempt status of churches that refuse to perform homosexual "marriages."

But how do we stand up for Jesus? How do we resist America's slide into godlessness?

## A Few Suggestions

Scripture tells us how. If we want to know what to do and how to do it, we have to study the Bible.

Space does not permit a list of all the applicable scriptural references. It would be a very long list. We can, how-

ever, hit a few highlights.

\* First, get your own act together. “The key to social renewal is individual regeneration,” Chalcedon founder, R. J. Rushdoony, wrote.<sup>1</sup> And Jesus said in Matthew 7:5, “[F]irst cast out the beam out of thine own eye: and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.”

We must wear, as St. Paul advised, “[T]he breastplate of righteousness” (Eph. 6:14), otherwise whatever we say won’t be worth much. Remember what happened to Newt Gingrich as a promoter of family values when he became known as a repeat adulterer and to William Bennett when his gambling habits became public knowledge. Oh, how the lefties love it when Christians are revealed as hypocrites!

We are called to be the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world” (Mt. 5:13, 14), to live our own lives in a way that sets a positive example. Hear St. Peter’s advice, “Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God ...” (1 Pet. 2:12).

The purpose of salt is to season food, not to gag the eater. The use of light is to illuminate, not to strike blind. When you do speak up, don’t nag, browbeat, taunt, or insult the person you’re trying to persuade. It doesn’t serve God.

\*If you stand up for Jesus in this world, expect trouble. Be thankful you’re not living in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, when speaking up for Christ could get you killed. You ought to be able to handle a bit of eye-rolling, name-calling, or a cold shoulder.

The late Malcolm Muggeridge often spoke of the reaction of his friends and fellow journalists to his conversion to Christ. Some dropped him, some sincerely thought he’d lost his mind,

and others just pretended not to hear him. But he wasn’t thrown to the lions; he accepted all the lesser hardships for Jesus’ sake, and a great many people did hear him.

\*Be firm, be serious, but don’t lose your temper. An angry person can easily be made to look like a fool. Don’t say to someone, “You’re going to roast in hell for watching ‘Access Hollywood.’” Atheists love it when Christians do that.

\*Finally, make sure *you’ve* got the message before you try to pass it on to someone else. If you really know God’s Word and understand it, you’ll know what to say when you have to say something. The Holy Spirit will speak through you as Jesus promises in Mark 13:11, “[T]ake no heed of thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.”

Many profess to be Christians, who don’t read the Bible, don’t know what it says, and drift around thinking that maybe movies and TV are supposed to be morally bankrupt, schools are supposed to proselytize for secular humanism, and judges are supposed to legislate from the bench against Christianity. They, in their millions, are the meat which must be seasoned.

Before you try to season them, get your own life in order; be a positive force in other people’s lives; brace yourself for trouble and refuse to duck it; keep a cool head on your shoulders; and marinate your own mind and your own heart in the message of the gospel.

Then let her rip. **CR**

Lee Duigon is a Christian free-lance writer from New Jersey. He has been a newspaper editor and reporter and a published novelist. He and his wife, Patricia, have been married for 26 years.

1. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (The Craig Press, 1973), 122.

*Rushdoony, New Creation... cont. from page 5*

ethereal or abstract. Holiness involves our relationship to God, to others, and to His world because God’s purpose in time and eternity involves all of His creation. Our role, awaiting the final consummation of history, is faithfulness to the law of the Creator and Sustainer of all things.

Each Sunday we celebrate Christ’s resurrection from the dead. We rest in God’s care for us and in the finished work of Jesus Christ. That work, though finished in the sense that it is accomplished, has yet to be fully revealed, except in the Word of God to those who read and understand (Rev. 1:3).

In sum, all the creation and its creatures are God’s. Sin shall be judged and hell is everlasting, but God will reclaim and restore the creation and His elect and we shall be with Him, as he revealed to John, where “there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful” (Rev. 21:4b-5). **CR**

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Godawa, Passion... cont. from page 11

1. See Brian Godawa, Appendix: "Sex, Violence, and Profanity in the Bible," *Hollywood Worldviews: Watching Films with Wisdom and Discernment*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 187-208.
2. "Docetism" was an early Christian heresy which denied the reality of the incarnation, claiming Jesus' humanity was merely an "appearance."
3. We will leave for another time a discussion of whether Jesus' divinity can be adequately portrayed artistically, and whether that is a theological or aesthetic problem or not.
4. I document this in more detail in my article, "Jesus in the Movies," on my website: [www.godawa.com](http://www.godawa.com) > Hollywood Worldviews: Unpublished Chapters > Jesus in the Movies.
5. Another question that deserves further exploration, and one which Francis Schaeffer and Hans Rookmaaker have addressed in their writings, is the relationship of Christian art as art to evangelism. Does Christian art, including film, need a justification outside itself?

Gentry, Commission... cont. from page 15

Dr. Gentry is the author of thirteen books and a contributor to eight others, from publishers such as Zondervan, Baker, Kregel, P & R, and American Vision. He is the editor of a new title from Ross House Books: *Thine Is the Kingdom: A Summary of the Postmillennial Hope*. He has spoken at conferences and on radio across the nation and runs a website for Reformed educational materials: [www.kennethgentry.com](http://www.kennethgentry.com).

1. Robert Young, *Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, rep. n.d. [1898]), New Testament, 23.
2. The Greek for "given" is *edothē*, which is the aorist passive indicative of *didomi*. The word "aorist" is made up of two Greek words: *a* ("no") and *horizo* ("horizon"), which means "unlimited." Normally, therefore, an aorist tense has no temporal connotation. In the indicative tense, however, it carries the connotation of a past action conceived as in a point of time.
3. Incidentally, Psalm 110:1 is in the New Testament the most frequently cited and

- alluded to passage from the entire Old Testament. Quotations include: Matthew 22:44; 26:64; Mark 12:36; 14:62; Luke 20:42-43; 22:69; Acts 2:34-35; Hebrews 1:13. Allusions may be found in: 1 Corinthians 15:24; Ephesians 1:20-22; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12, 13; 1 Peter 3:22; Revelation 3:21.
4. This is also a recurring theme in Scripture: Exodus 9:29; 19:5; Leviticus 25:23; Deuteronomy 10:14; 1 Samuel 2:8; 1 Chronicles 29:11, 14; Job 41:11; Psalm 24:1; 50:12; 89:11; 104:24; 1 Corinthians 10:26, 28.
  5. For my rebuttal of the claim that amillennialism fully understands the Great Commission, see Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., ed., *Thine Is the Kingdom: Studies in the Postmillennial Hope* (Vallecito, Calif.: Chalcedon, 2003), 135-37.
  6. See: B. B. Warfield, "Christ the Propitiation of the Sins of the World," in Gentry, ed., *Thine Is the Kingdom*.

Blankschaen, Toyota... cont. from page 17

of reconciling us to His eternal plan. Consequently, He tinkers with us to make us beautiful in His showroom, not ours. This truth should comfort us, especially when we feel scattered across the repair yard; the most important thing we need do at those times is simply to endure (Heb. 10:36).

**The method.** His ways are not our ways. Don't forget, our ways lead to head-on collisions with Hummers. We can be confident that He is working in us when we see adversity. As in any construction zone, we may expect inconveniences. "Pardon My Dust" signs abound when God is working. But God can do a lot with dust. Leadership guru John Maxwell observes, "The people's ability to achieve is determined by their leader's ability to empower."<sup>4</sup> If that is true, then Christians may achieve anything for our God empowers us infinitely.

**The result.** When the God of Peace is at work, Paul assures us that when the

dust settles in eternity, we will be "well-pleasing in His sight." Fully agreeable to God, we will hear that He finds us acceptable in His sight. Thus, we may be confident that though our mangled lives often show no more promise to our eyes than a dilapidated dumpster, "He who began the good work will be faithful to complete it." (Phil. 1:6) He has to. He already said he would do it by bringing Christ out of the grave, declaring to the entire world that He has been reconciled to man through Christ. Christ came that we might have abundant life, and the God of Peace is the only one qualified and eternally bound to provide it.

Perhaps Walt Disney may again help us acquire the biblical perspective on the perfecting process. On many occasions, Walt set new employees straight when it came to who got the credit. "The only name you need to worry about is Walt Disney. If you're here to make a name for yourself, you're in the wrong place." Disney recognized the importance of his name to his company. Likewise, there is only one name that we need to worry about. The divine mechanic whom the Father brought out from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep who specializes in reconditioning lives wrecked by sin. If, by His grace, the God of Peace has assigned Jesus to work on you to the praise and glory of His name, be assured that you will one day roll into the eternal showroom to see the Father's beaming face and hear him speak in awe at His Son's perfecting work. **CR**

William Blankschaen has been blessed with a beautiful wife and three children. He is a teacher and administrator at Cornerstone Christian Academy near Cleveland, OH, and a writer of challenging essays and Christ-honoring fiction.

1. Jonathan Edwards, *The Complete Works of Jonathan Edwards, Vol. II* (n. p.: Banner of Truth, 1997), 597.
2. A.W. Pink, *The Seven Sayings of the Savior on the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002).

3. Bob Thomas, *Walt Disney: An American Original* (n. p.: Disney Editions, 1994), 264.

4. John Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1998), 126.

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*F. Schultz, Cosmic...cont. from page 27*

pages 36 & 37.

4. Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Biblical Philosophy of History*, (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed Pub. Co., 1969), 3, 14.

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*Rose, Question...cont. from page 31*

a paradise on earth without God, law, or morality. The morality of humanism is that man is his own law, and that no moral law beyond man can govern man. On the other hand, regenerate man works to re-establish the law order of God among men, to establish church, state, and society in terms of the word of God, and to manifest the kingdom of God in its every meaning.<sup>4</sup>

Those who refuse to participate in the worship of man, those who refuse to surrender to man's complacent satisfaction with man and man's society, are increasingly branded as aliens. All who do not have the mark of the beast, all who do not surrender to the humanistic social order, are refused permission to buy and sell, that is, they are the objects of social, political, and economic ostracism. Every kind of subtle and direct pressure is employed to force the true believer into conformity with the City of Man and the creed of Cain.<sup>5</sup>

### How Then Shall We Live?

I present this brief survey of what the Bible has to say about God's ideal for the political/economic system because some well-meaning Christians wrongly think that the advent of Christ's death and resurrection calls for a different approach in the New Testament. Careful study of the Bible clearly shows that the real problem with civil government and its controlling influence

in the area of economics lies in man's sinful heart. This same problem existed in the Old Testament just as it exists in the New Testament. The solution is common to both eras: We are to heed God's Word and strictly limit power vested in civil rulers (Ex. 18; Deut. 17; Ps. 146:3), and we should always keep in mind how God solved the problem of Nimrod's centralized tyranny at the Tower of Babel by dispersing the people into small political/economic social units. The United States of America was on the right track for a Biblically oriented, decentralized economy under the Articles of Confederation, which Patrick Henry extolled with the cry, "How I love those requisitions!" As long as our central government lacked power to tax citizens directly, it was impossible to impose a centralized political/economic state on the people. Let us take Bible in hand and study both the Old and New Testaments to discern their harmony; then let us set about the challenging task of reforming our political/economic system according to Biblical precepts (2 Cor. 10:3-5). CR

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1. Sometimes someone asks, "What, then, is the first-most-important question in life?" The answer is clear and straightforward: "What will you do with Jesus Christ? Will you accept Him as your Savior, or not?" How a person answers this question will determine whether he or she will live eternally, either in heaven as a free person in the presence of Christ, or as a slave in hell under the dictatorial control of Satan. The second-most-important question is answered collectively by citizens, while the first-most-important question is answered individually.

2. For a thorough discussion of fascism and socialism, see Chapter 5, "The Isms," in Tom Rose, *Economics: The American Economy*, p. 115-146. In short, fascism is control of individuals and business firms through agencies such as the FDA, ICC, SEC, DEA, FCC, FTC, FDIC, BATF, etc. One of the newest unconstitutional arms of the federal government is "Homeland Security." Today there are almost 100 such agencies at the federal level, and many more at the state level. Each agency purportedly "protects" citizens against alleged domestic or international threats to their freedom or well-being. But most fascistic control agencies end up protecting and enhancing the goals of special-interest groups. The fascistic control found in America today is a more sophisticated form of mercantilism that was practiced by statist European nations three- or four-hundred years ago.

3. R. J. Rushdoony, *Christianity and the State* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1986), 33-34.

4. R. J. Rushdoony, *Thy Kingdom Come: Studies in Daniel and Revelation* (Fairfax, VA: Thoburn Press, 1978), 172.

5. *Ibid.*, 175-176.

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*R. Schultz, Reconstruct...cont. from page 33*

modern church: "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" (2 Tim. 4:2).

Many modern evangelical churches have become technique-driven and numbers-conscious. Their great goal is to fill churches, and no doubt some good comes of the techniques employed. But the real reform of the church will come through the Spirit of God, working through the faithful preaching of the Word. Preachers are not called to share "reflections on God-stuff." They are called to formally proclaim the inerrant and infallible Word, God's instrument to bring lost men to salvation. CR

Dr. Schultz is Chairman of the History Department at Liberty University, teaches

*continued on next page*

Church History at Christ College, and is the homeschooling father of nine children.

1. The revolution isn't limited to American evangelicalism. About five years ago, while visiting in predominately Catholic Bavaria, I was delighted to find a German Evangelical Church in downtown Munich. When the service started, the youth group came out to perform a couple of folk songs, and the guitar-strumming song leader was a girl dressed in bib overalls. Apparently the sloppy clothes and bad music of modern evangelicalism transcends the boundaries of place and culture and language.

2. I once complained about the loud and repetitive music of mega-churches to a friend who pastored a charismatic church, and he startled me by explaining the theory behind it. Noise and repetition were designed to break down internal barriers and reservations, and consequently render a person more receptive to the message. Praise music, then, did not have as its primary end the worship of God. Rather it had a subjective and utilitarian goal, designed to produce a change in the participating soul. It is one more example of Finneyistic behaviorism: developing new mechanisms to manipulate the person and his will.

3. Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), 403.

4. Ian Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism, 1750-1858* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 243-246.

5. Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Avon, 1977), 3-6. Douglas further argues that the churches and clergy were emasculated during the period, as vigorous Calvinistic doctrine was replaced by a generic Unitarian sentimentality and domesticity.

6. Robert Lewis Dabney, *Evangelical Eloquence: A Course of Lectures on Preaching* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, [1870] 1999), 26. Dabney distinguishes between the evangelical preaching of the Reformation, and the heavy technical and polemical preaching of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and the moralistic preaching of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Moderates.

7. Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1988), 91, 127, 185.

8. Sometimes, in the guise of exposition, a preacher will read a passage and then drift to whatever topics pop into mind. (Samuel Davies once commented on the sermon of a Methodist minister, that it was a "mere huddle of pathetic confusion.") The faithful pastor must stick to the Word, carefully developing, explaining and applying the meaning of the passage. An old homiletics professor used to give good advice to us preacher-boys: "Keep your finger in the text!"

9. *The Directory for the Public Worship of God* is included in the edition of the Westminster Standards published by the Free Church of Scotland, and is also readily available online (<http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html>)

10. Dabney, *Evangelical Eloquence*, 34, 52-58, 76, 159, 178f.

11. John Carrick, *The Imperative of Preaching: A Theology of Sacred Rhetoric* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2002).

12. William Baikie, *The Preachers of Scotland* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2001), 321.

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*Williams, Hatcher...cont. from page 35*

served as pastor of Grace) and was greatly admired for his untiring work among

Confederate soldiers. Tradition has it that upon hearing that a Yankee ironclad was steaming up the James River toward Richmond, Jeter grabbed his shotgun from his mantle and marched indignantly down to the river's edge to confront the intruder alone. Fortunately, for Jeter, it was a false alarm.

4. Eldridge B. Hatcher, *William E. Hatcher, D.D., LL. D., L.H.D. — A Biography*. (Richmond, VA: W.C. Hill Printing Co., 1915), 20.

5. Manchester is part of Richmond today.

6. Fork Union Military Academy is still in operation today as a private, all male, military high school. It has continued to hold to its Christian heritage: "The Christian principles that guide cadet life remain true to the Academy's spiritual heritage." [www.fuma.org](http://www.fuma.org)

7. William E. Hatcher, *John Jasper — The Unmatched Negro Philosopher and Preacher* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1908), 9.

8. It was my privilege to accept an invitation and step into the pulpit to "bring greetings" two years ago at Sixth Mount Zion's 135th anniversary.

9. Richard Ellsworth Day, *Rhapsody in Black — The Life Story of John Jasper* (Stuarts Draft, VA: Virginia Gentleman Books, (Reprint) 2000), 114.

10. Eldridge B. Hatcher, 563.

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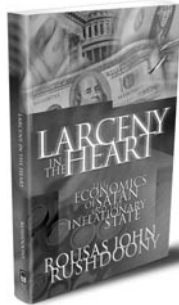
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recent releases

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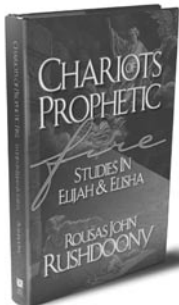
By R.J. Rushdoony. In this study, first published under the title *Roots of Inflation*, the reader sees why envy often causes the most successful and advanced members of society to be deemed criminals. The reader is shown how envious man finds any superiority in others intolerable and how this leads to a desire for a leveling. The author uncovers the larceny in the heart of man and its results. See how class warfare and a social order based on conflict lead to disaster. This book is essential reading for an understanding of the moral crisis of modern economics and the only certain long-term cure.



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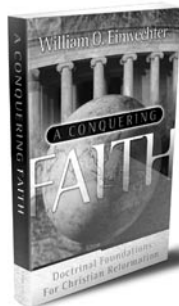
By R. J. Rushdoony. See how close Israel's religious failure resembles our own! Read this to see how the modern Christian is again guilty of Baal worship, of how inflation-fed prosperity caused a loosening of morals, syncretism and a decline in educational performance. As in the days of Elijah and Elisha, it is once again said to be a virtue to tolerate evil and condemn those who do not. This book will challenge you to resist compromise and the temptation of expediency. It will help you take a stand by faith for God's truth in a culture of falsehoods.



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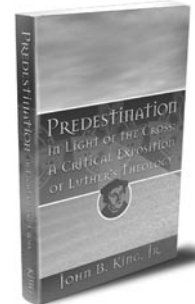
By R.J. Rushdoony. Modern man has a problem with knowledge. He cannot accept God's Word about the world or anything else, so anything which points to God must be called into question. Man, once he makes himself ultimate, is unable to know anything but himself. Because of this impasse, modern thinking has become progressively pragmatic. This book will lead the reader to understand that this problem of knowledge underlies the isolation and self-torment of modern man. Can you know anything if you reject God and His revelation? This book takes the reader into the heart of modern man's intellectual dilemma.



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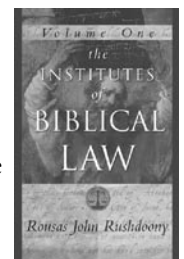
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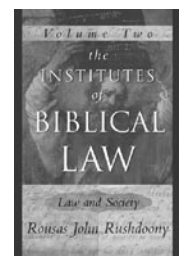
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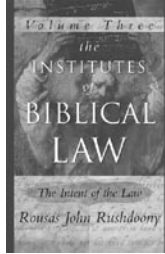
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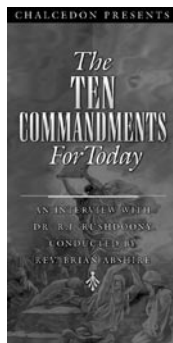
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*eschatology*

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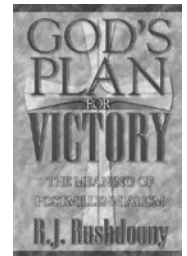
By R.J. Rushdoony. First published in 1970, this book helped spur the modern rise of postmillennialism. Revelation’s details are often perplexing, even baffling, and yet its main meaning is clear—it is a book about victory. It tells us that our faith can only result in victory. “This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4). This is why knowing Revelation is so important. It assures us of our victory and celebrates it. Genesis 3 tells us of the fall of man into sin and death. Revelation gives us man’s victory in Christ over sin and death. The vast and total victory, in time and eternity, set forth by John in Revelation is too important to bypass. This victory is celebrated in Daniel and elsewhere, in the entire Bible. We are not given a Messiah who is a loser. These eschatological texts make clear that the essential good news of the entire Bible is victory, total victory.



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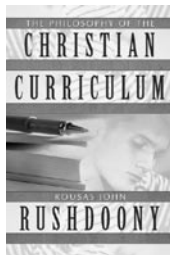
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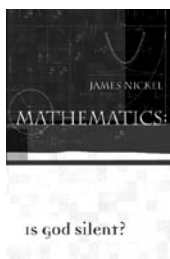
By R.J. Rushdoony. When this brilliant and prophetic book was first published in 1961, the Christian homeschool movement was years away and even Christian day schools were hardly considered a viable educational alternative. But this book and the author's later *Messianic Character of American Education* were a resolute call to arms for Christians to get their children out of the pagan public schools and provide them with a genuine Christian education. Dr. Rushdoony had predicted that the humanist system, based on anti-Christian premises of the Enlightenment, could only get worse. Rushdoony was indeed a prophet. He knew that education divorced from God and from all transcendental standards would produce the educational disaster and moral barbarism we have today. The title of this book is particularly significant in that Dr. Rushdoony was able to identify the basic contradiction that pervades a secular society that rejects God's sovereignty but still needs law and order, justice, science, and meaning to life. As Dr. Rushdoony writes, "[T]here is no law, no society, no justice, no structure, no design, no meaning apart from God." And so, modern man has become schizophrenic because of his rebellion against God.



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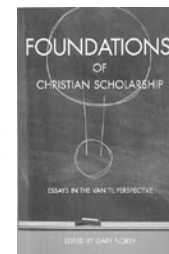
By R.J. Rushdoony. What exactly has public education been trying to accomplish? Before the 1830s and Horace Mann, no schools in the U.S. were state supported or state controlled. They were local, parent-teacher enterprises, supported without taxes, and taking care of all children. They were remarkably high in standard and were Christian. From Mann to the present, the state has used education to socialize the child. The school's basic purpose, according to its own philosophers, is not education in the traditional sense of the 3 R's. Instead, it is to promote "democracy" and "equality," not in their legal or civic sense, but in terms of the engineering of a socialized citizenry. Public education became the means of creating a social order of the educator's design. Such men saw themselves and the school in messianic terms. This book was instrumental in launching the Christian school and homeschool movements.



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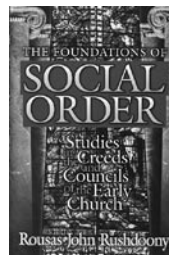


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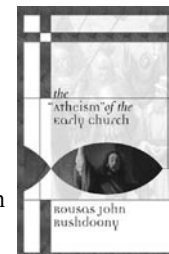
By R.J. Rushdoony. Every social order rests on a creed, on a concept of life and law, and represents a religion in action. Now the creeds and councils of the early church, in hammering out definitions of doctrines, were also laying down the foundations of Christendom with them. Because of its indifference to its creedal basis in Biblical Christianity, western civilization is today facing death and is in a life and death struggle with humanism.



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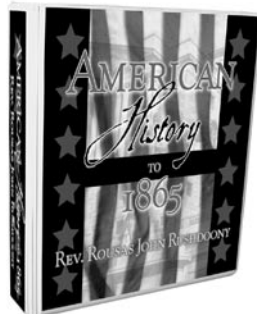
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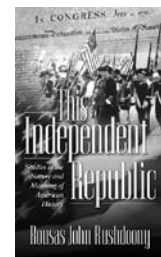
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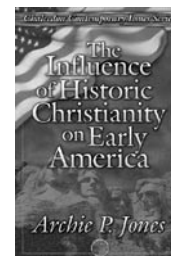
By R.J. Rushdoony. Originally published in 1965, these essays were a continuation of the author's previous work, *This Independent Republic*, and examine the interpretations and concepts which have attempted to remake and rewrite America's past and present. "The writing of history then, because man is neither autonomous, objective nor ultimately creative, is always in terms of a framework, a philosophical and ultimately religious framework in the mind of the historian. . . . To the orthodox Christian, the shabby incarnations of the reigning historiographies are both absurd and offensive. They are idols, and he is forbidden to bow down to them and must indeed wage war against them."



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In this volume, Dr. Rushdoony clearly enunciates each major philosopher's position and its implications, identifies the intellectual and moral consequences of each school of thought, and traces the dead-end to which each naturally leads. There is only one foundation. Without Christ, meaning and morality are anchored to shifting sand, and a counsel of despair prevails. This penetrating yet brief volume provides clear guidance, even for laymen unfamiliar with philosophy.

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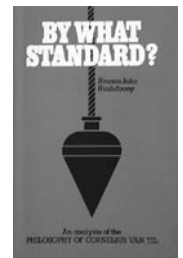
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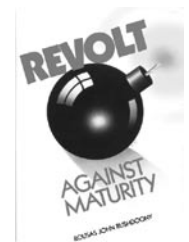
By R.J. Rushdoony. From the foreword by Steve Schlissel: "Rushdoony sounds the clarion call of liberty for all who remain oppressed by Christian leaders who wrongfully lord it over the souls of God's righteous ones. . . . I pray that the entire book will not only instruct you in the method and content of a Biblical worldview, but actually bring you further into the glorious freedom of the children of God. Those who walk in wisdom's ways become immune to the politics of guilt and pity."



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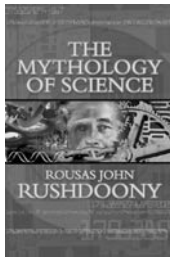
By Dr. Magnus Verbrugge, M.D. This study is of major importance as a critique of scientific theory, evolution, and contemporary nihilism in scientific thought. Dr. Verbrugge, son-in-law of the late Dr. H. Dooyeweerd and head of the Dooyeweerd Foundation, applies the insights of Dooyeweerd’s thinking to the realm of science. Animism and humanism in scientific theory are brilliantly discussed.

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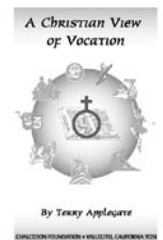
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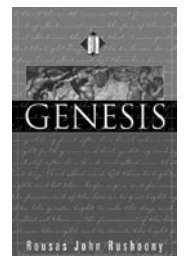


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