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EDUCATING THE SONS OF ISSACHAR

An Interview with James B. Jordan, of Geneva Divinity School

One of the most encouraging developments in these years of the crisis of Western Civilization is the return of many Christians to first principles. It is both heartening and exciting to see more and more Christians turning to the Bible—the whole Bible—to find the answers to all of life's, and society's, problems. Make no mistake about it: the answers are there; they've been there all along. But the Humanists have told us that the Bible is a human invention, a creation of imagination, unenlightened understanding, and time, an out-moded or baneful record of the combined superstition and spiritual or poetic insight of past thinkers and generations. The Humanists' kissin' cousins—or Siamese twins?—the theological Liberals, the Modernist, the "Neo-orthodox," have told us that the Bible is either what the Humanists say it is, or contains (somewhere in its hundreds of pages) the word of God without being itself the infallibly inspired, divinely revealed word of the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of the universe and man.

Meanwhile, under the onslaught of heresy and Humanism in church, state and school, Bible-believing Christians have retreated from the full-orbed teachings of all of Holy Scripture. Retreated into pietistic monasticism, shrinking the duties of the Church of Jesus Christ to Sabbath worship, foreign missions, the family, and personal holiness. Nothing is wrong with this except that it neglects the fulness of the Lord's dominion mandate (Gen. 1:26-28; 9:1-17; Luke 19:13, etc.), the fact that civil government is a ministry of God, established by God, to punish the evil and protect the good (Rom. 13), in terms of His law (Deut. 28; Matt. 5:17-19; John 14:15), the comprehensiveness of the inspiration and authority of Scripture (II Tim. 3:16), and the fulness of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). With such crucial negligence by the Church, Christ's enemies have been handed victory after important cultural, economic, educational and political victory. The result has been defeat after defeat for the Kingdom of God, in these spheres, even while victories continue to be won on other fronts.

How sweet it is, then, to see various individual Christians coming to the realization that God's word speaks to all areas of life: and speaks authoritatively! How great it is to see Christians coming together to apply scriptural teachings to all areas of life! How exciting to see Bible-believing folks developing specialized institutions to spread the educational and practical word that God's word is not a partial or impotent word, but an authoritative, conquering word! And how wonderful to see that Christian educational institutions, at all levels, are being established to teach Christian children and adults the fulness of God's word and the practice that it requires.

One of the most interesting of such Christian educational enterprises is the new Geneva Divinity School, of Tyler, Texas. Dedicated

to the proposition that God's revealed word is an infallibly inspired unity; that His word is fully authoritative, that it speaks to all of life, to both theory and practice, to every area of human activity, a group of young Reformed men, working with and through the congregation of Tyler's Westminister Presbyterian Church, have put their mutual faith to work in establishing the nation's newest, and perhaps most interesting seminary.

The Geneva Divinity School is currently operating out of, and under the direction of, a local church; it is not removed from lay oversight and control. Its course of instruction emphasizes study of the whole Bible, a careful reading of the Church's great theologians, a biblical critique of Humanistic and non-biblical thought and practice, careful instruction in Greek, Hebrew and other basic Bible study tools, and a dominion world-view, together with education in a local church setting. An additional feature is its extensive tape library, which will be supplemented by an unrivalled videotape library, composed of videotaped series or courses by leading Reformed theologians, church historians and other specialists, on a diversity of subjects. Thus, Geneva Divinity School's students will be able to avail themselves of the knowledge of the leading specialists in the various fields of biblical and biblically-related study without having to travel extensively or attend the numerous different schools at which these men now teach. Few other seminaries will be able to command the faculty resources of this new, little divinity school, and fewer still will educate their students as well. By God's grace, it will grow and prosper, producing fully and potently armed soldiers for the Lord, soldiers who are both valiant and wise, being true "sons of Issachar," who "knew their times, and knew what Israel ought to do" (I Chronicles 12:32).

James B. Jordan, Th.M., Administrator and Instructor in Theology at Geneva Divinity School, a young man tremendously learned in the Old Testament, answers OCCUPY's inquiries:

QUESTION: Why another seminary?

ANSWER: Well, I might answer that by saying that there is always room for more theological training. Our forefathers in the Reformation churches believed that pastoral training was best conducted by the local churches, by an apprenticeship method. Then, under the influence of the German (liberal) university system, the older method gave way to the university or seminary method. The system of training men for the ministry by sending them off to school for several years of booklearning, however, has not worked very well. There is a need to get back to a more pastoral type of training.

Our goal at Geneva Divinity School is to package all our courses and make them available to local pastors, so that they can train young men locally under their oversight. Our training here in Tyler, Texas, is under the supervision of the local church and its elders. We intend to teach as much intellectual content as any other school, but to teach in the context of the church instead of the context of the ivory tower.

QUESTION: Does your theological position differ significantly from those of other existing theological seminaries?

ANSWER: Yes and no. Our position is that of historic Christianity, as it came to expression in the Reformation and in the Puritan fathers of this nation. We are committed wholeheartedly to the inerrancy and full authority of the Bible. We do emphasize, however, some aspects of this historic faith which have been neglected in recent years by most other schools. We believe, with our forefathers, that all of society must come under the rule of Christ, and we are working for that goal. We have a choice between a Christian civilization and a Satanic one; there is no neutral ground. As the humanists are attacking the churches and the Christian schools of America ever more vociferously, we are in a real crisis today.

QUESTION: What is the nature of the crisis we face?

ANSWER: It is the clash of the two ultimate religions of the world. There is the religion of Abel, who confessed his sinfulness before God and leaned on the sacrifice of a Substitute (ultimately, Jesus Christ) for his sins. Then there is the religion of Cain, who did not see himself a sinner, and tried to bribe God by his works. Cain was angry when God would not acknowledge him, and in his anger killed his Christian brother, Abel. You can read about this in Genesis chapter 4. At any rate, there you have the two basic religions of man, and reading on in Genesis we can see the two cultures that flow from those two basic religions.

Cain went out and built his own city, and gave it the name of his son. That which Cain created, since Cain saw himself as a little god, he gave the same name to. Meanwhile, the Christians were not exalting their own names, but called on the name of the Lord. As we read further in Genesis, we see that the Cainites were so corrupt that God destroyed them. Then, after the great Flood, the anti-Christ principle continued at work. Men sought to build up themselves and establish a name for themselves at the tower of Babel. Here is the first great expression of Statism, the belief that man can save himself through the power of politics. God confounded this attempt, but man has not ceased to make the attempt for all that. At the same time, however, in Genesis chapter 12, God promised Abraham that He would give him a name. Thus, there are those who humbly receive a new name from God, like Abraham; and there are those like the Babylonians, who seek to make their own name, their own power, established on the earth, in defiance of God.

Well, in America today we see the same thing. The Cainites are attempting through the length and breadth of this land to close down Christian schools. This is not a surprise, because the humanists have for generations viewed the public (state) schools as their principal tool in the reshaping of humanity. They see the secular school as the best way to build a Babelic future. By tearing the child from his parents, the secular school separates him or her from the Christian heritage, and exposes him to the perversity of modernity. Now that the Christian school movement is becoming stronger every day, the secular humanists have no choice but to attempt to crush us or be overcome themselves. They will not stand idly by and let their evil dream be destroyed.

QUESTION: Then what has the Bible, and Christianity, to say to us in

this crisis?

ANSWER: Well, let me go on to say that the attack on Christian schools is but one manifestation of the crisis. God's demand on man is total, because God is the sole Creator of man, and man is wholly His property. Thus, man's rebellion against God manifests itself in all areas of life, and salvation through Jesus Christ undoes that rebellion in all areas of life. Therefore, the battlefield encompasses all areas of life, the whole fabric of human existence.

The Bible has much to say about politics, economics, art, diet, family life, child rearing, gardening, and every other place of common life. We at Geneva Divinity School are actively exploring what the Bible has to say on these points, and our students are actively engaged in the same study.

There are two aspects of the curriculum of Geneva Divinity School, by the way, which make it unique. **First**, our course in civilization begins with the study of the ancient world and continues right down to the present day, with special emphasis on American civilization. Thus, our students will be well aware of the context in which they must prophesy the Word. They will know what the problems are.

Second, our Bible course puts the student through a study of every single book of the Bible. I know of no other seminary which does this. Our motto is taken from I Chronicles 12:32, which speaks of the sons of Issachar as men who "knew their times, and knew what Israel ought to do." They understood their civilization, and they knew their Bibles; therefore, they were able to give sound advice to the king. We need such men today.

QUESTION: What can individual pastors and laymen do in the face of this crisis?

ANSWER: The main thing I would recommend would be study and prayer. Before we can do anything, we need to know what is to be done. There are, however, Christian groups that are becoming socially and politically active. Politics by itself is no salvation, but as Christians we ought to be running this country, not being run into the ground by it. The books published by the Chalcedon Foundation (Box 158, Vallecito, CA 95251), by the Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts (Box 1, Oak Brook, Illinois), and by other groups are necessary reading. There are also a lot of left-wing "evangelical" Christians publishing material on politics, but this is largely trash and to be avoided. We at Geneva Divinity School would be glad to advise anyone writing for it. Our address is 708 Hamvassy, Tyler, TX 75701.

QUESTION: Why aren't other seminaries concerned about this crisis, as you are?

ANSWER: The answer to that question has to remain in the providence of God. I find that many Christians are simply blind to the horrible situation our country has gotten itself into. All too often, it is "business as usual" in the churches and seminaries. Also, some seminaries are so busy fighting theological liberalism that they ignore the more fundamental enemy, which is Satanic secular humanism. After all, theological liberalism is only a baptized and bastardized secularism. We at Geneva Divinity School are not the judges of our fellow Christians; but we see these problems, and we must be about the Lord's work in trying to correct them.

QUESTION: One final question: How are you supported financially?

ANSWER: Through gifts, primarily. Giving to Geneva Divinity School is tax-deductable, and can be sent to the address I gave you earlier.

EARTHQUAKES and POLITICS

Physics and Politics, Part I

by Archie P. Jones

There are few things so profoundly frightening, so profoundly unsettling to man as earthquakes. The terror of earthquakes arises precisely from the fact that an earthquake shakes the very ground upon which man stands, works, lives, rests, and has his being, the very physical foundation upon which the memory of his past, the consciousness of his present, and the hopes, desires and dreams of his future are grounded. The terror of earthquakes arises not simply from the fact that an earthquake faces man with the possibility of injury and death to himself and his loved ones, together with the damage or loss of his property, but also from the assault of the earthquake on the seemingly comfortable uniformity of nature, of the physical world in which man lives.

Earthquakes are frightening because they forcefully remind man of the contingency of his existence, of the cosmic insignificance of his existence, labors, accomplishments, buildings and dreams in a world beyond his finite control. They shake his constructions to the foundation—and often to pieces—and shake the very foundation of his constructions. Indeed, they shake the very foundation of his assumption of stability, order, and significant human action. Whether or not he believes in the Bible's inspiration and veracity, earthquakes force man to an awareness of a truth vividly expressed in Psalm 8:

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? (vs. 3, 4)

Earthquakes are irrefutable assaults on the pretended autonomy of man.

Earthquakes and Rationality

The basic question facing man is whether or not God exists. If there is no true, sovereign God, no such God as is spoken of in Scripture, no such all-powerful, all-knowing Sovereign who reveals himself in the Bible, then the "universe" must contain a fundamental irrationality, and earthquakes may be seen as products and proof of this irrationality. Either the universe is related to a sovereign God or it is not. If there is no such sovereign Lord of His creation, such as is spoken of in the Bible, then there must be one god, or a number of gods, or no gods at all. If there are no gods, then there can be no reason, no rationality, to anything. If there are a number of gods, then either they agree or they disagree with each other. If they disagree with each other, then we have, with the Greeks, a fundamentally irrational universe, in which man can find no absolutes and no sure standards of life and action. If, however, they agree with each other but are not any greater gods than limited, finite gods, then they do not have full control of things, nor, therefore, full authority over things. They thus cannot exercise full control over the "universe" and world, for the nature of things is such that there is at least one factor beyond their control. This factor man likes to call "chance." But chance is irrational, by definition: it is totally unpredictable, beyond the ken of man. Even if there is only one finite god, he still cannot speak authoritatively to man concerning the nature of the world and things, for he is not in control of all things. No matter how many or how few finite gods you have, they cannot possibly speak truly, authoritatively, about things if they are not in control of all things. And they cannot be in control of all things if there is an element of

chance abroad in the "cosmos." Because with no sovereign God and the existence of chance there can be no true cosmos, no fundamental order to things, no enduring rationality to the world and life, and not even a temporary rationality to nature and things. If the biblical God does not exist, then everything is fundamentally irrational, and earthquakes occur as a result of this fundamental irrationality, not as a result of the obedience of creation to the sovereign command of its Creator and Sustainer.

Whether or not pagans and inconsistent Christians recognize the fact, we live in a universe in which everything is related to everything else. We live in a universe, not a multiverse, a cosmos, not a chaos; we live in a rational cosmic environment, not an irrational flux of meaningless events. The universe is a rational, orderly, meaningful entity because it is God's universe. It is His universe because it and all its contents are His creation (Gen. 1:1-31). It is rational because God is rational, orderly because He is orderly. Moreover, the universe is **totally God's universe**, because He created it **ex nihilo**, from nothing. He did not, after the fashion of Greek gods, "create" order out of a pre-existing, primeval and eternal chaos of matter. Nor did the universe simply "happen," after the fashion of ancient and modern mythological fancies, from the chance concatenations of primeval matter or energy. God created, from no pre-existing substance, the totality of the universe and all its visible and invisible beings. God is the Potter, and the universe and man are the clay: it is God who created the fundamental order and every particular detail of nature, of the creatures, and of man, and not they themselves (Isa. 45:7-12). He is the one "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things" (Heb. 2:10). The nature of nature is dependent, not autonomous. The nature of nature, the nature of things, is not that which man, the clay, seeks to assign it, but that which its Creator assigned it in His eternal plan and by His omnipotent word.

Furthermore, not only is God the Creator of the universe and all its contents (as if that were a small achievement!), but also its Sovereign Sustainer, Ruler and Judge (Acts 17:24-31). He is not the deistic "watchmaker-god" imagined by humanistic Newtonian science, a god who created the universe as a giant, self-sustaining mechanism. The universe is not self-sustaining. It is upheld by the word of the power of the Triune God, even Jesus Christ, who upholds **all things by the word of His power** (Heb. 1:3). He is **before all things**, and by Him all things consist (Col. 1:17). Since these things are so, it is necessarily the case that in Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). There is not one galaxy, not one star or planet, not one sub-atomic particle in the universe that is not totally dependent for its original and continued existence upon the word, grace, plan, providence and law of the Sovereign, Triune Creator and Sustainer of the universe and all its contents (Acts 17:25). The universe and all its contents are neither self-originating nor self-sustaining. No created thing is or can be autonomous. Rationality exists in the universe not because the universe is self-sufficient, but rather precisely because it is upheld, both in its totality and in its most minute detail, by God's providential word of power.

Because all things are created and sustained by God, it follows that all things are related by His sovereign plan and purpose, and by His providential actions, in accordance with His purpose and plan for the universe, men and things. God controls both every sub-atomic particle of the universe and every physical and historical event in the universe (see Gordon H. Clark, *Biblical Predestination*, available from

The Trinity Foundation, P. O. Box 169, Jefferson, Maryland 21755; \$1 + 50¢ postage). God, not the autonomous or chance workings of nature, causes earthquakes, because it is He who upholds all things, by whom all things consist, who orders every particle of the universe according to His plan and providence. Man does not live by bread alone, nor does he live on firm ground, nor exist for even an instant, autonomously. Rather, man must live by every word which proceeds from the mouth of the Lord (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4). It is the first temptation of Satan to presuppose otherwise (Gen. 3:5; Matt. 4:1-4).

Man is individually and collectively saved from earthquakes only by the grace and mercy of God, for God holds every part of the physical universe together. It is in God alone, not of itself, that the universe, that physical nature, consists and has its being. It is His sustaining word alone that holds the physical universe together (Heb. 1:3), that prevents the destruction of the universe and man. Man's every breath is contingent upon the will and providence of God.

Does that shake you up? It should.

The Biblical Doctrine of Earthquakes

If earthquakes are the result of the remote or immediate workings of chance in the universe, then the universe is fundamentally irrational, and hence meaningless and standardless. If the universe is meaningless and standardless, then man can see himself as autonomous. But he must also then see his situation as irrational and standardless, and because standardless hopeless, individually and socially. Socially and politically, as Francis Schaeffer and other biblical scholars are fond of reminding us, if there are no absolutes then man and society become absolute, and all manner of individual and social and political evils ensue. For the politics of autonomy and irrationalism (and, as Cornelius Van Til has repeatedly shown, the two are correlatives) is, and must be, a politics of deceit and force, a politics of anarchy and totalitarianism, a disgusting spectacle of the continual veering from lawlessness to tyranny, upon the basis of naivete, pride, treachery and force, leaving untold individual and social suffering in its wake. If there are no God-given moral standards, if there are no Providential historical or eschatological judgments on men and nations, then the standard of individual conduct and politics becomes the desires of the individual or the group, and the rule for action not the law of God, but what works for men to gratify their desires. If the universe is irrational, then there is no moral standard and no judgment, no law and no ultimate punishment for sin, and the sickening spectacle of life and politics becomes "anything goes." In such circumstances, the individual can only make the best accommodation that he desires to the situation: hopeless, fearful, retreat, positive aggression or deceit, or suicide. As for the individual, so also for the society and culture: the best one can do is do one's utmost to secure one's desires, knowing all the while, as the great and infamous Machiavelli implicitly argued in a closing chapter (XXV) of *The Prince*, that even the best that one can do is continually threatened by "fortune," by the operation of chance in an irrational world. Thus, earthquakes become a forceful reminder

that even the greatest accomplishments of would-be-autonomous men may at any moment be obliterated from memory and significance by the irrational workings of an "autonomous" nature.

How delightfully different is the biblical teaching on earthquakes. Every earthquake spoken of in Scripture is attributed to the sovereign power and will of YHWH, the Creator, Sustainer, Ruler and Judge of the universe, men and things. Every earthquake recorded or prophesied in Scripture is intimately connected with the eternal plan and Providential action of the Lord of the universe. These passages also make it clear that God, not chance, is the author of thunder, storm, tempest, and the flame of devouring fire (Isa. 29:6). Nor do earthquakes occur for arbitrary reasons. The Lord of the universe sends earthquakes as **His judgments on covenant-breaking nations**, whether those nations are the nations of His enemies (Babylon, Damascus; Amos 1:1; Rev. 16:18) or His chosen people (Israel; I Kings 19:11, 12; Zech. 14:5; Matt. 24:7f; 13:8). He sends earthquakes for **eschatological judgment and tribulation** (Matt. 24:7f; Rev. 8:5; 11:13). God sends earthquakes as both **a means and a sign of His eschatological victory over His enemies in history, over the totalitarian humanism which is symbolized by Babylon** (Rev. 16:18). He also, however, sends earthquakes **to purify the Holy City, the Church, to bring it eschatological victory over the great spiritual city of autonomous rebellion which is called Sodom and Egypt, and to give the remnant the fear of God which is the spiritual basis of their giving glory to Him** (Rev. 11:1-13).

Earthquakes, moreover, accompanied **the Resurrection** of Jesus Christ from the grave (Matt. 28:2), and the resurrection of many of the saints at our Lord's Resurrection (Matt. 27:54), and the sight of these manifestations of God's sovereign power led the centurion and the company that was watching over Jesus to greatly fear, and to say "Truly this was the Son of God." Like rainbows, then, earthquakes are both reminders of the sovereign power of God to judge and punish individuals and societies who reject Him and His law, and reminders to the Christian of the Resurrection, deity and lordship of the Messiah.

Earthquakes do not occur because people live over geological faults which, from time to time, chance to shift. They occur because sinful men would ground their individual and collective actions on the manifold false gods of their own would-be-autonomous imaginings. They occur because would-be-autonomous man tries to live apart from faith in God and obedience to His law. They occur because the Sovereign God of the universe, who sustains and controls all of the universe, ordains and plans that they must occur. Their occurrence is destruction to the enemies of the Lord, historically and eschatologically. To the Church, earthquakes are witnesses to God's sovereign power unto salvation and judgment, reminders of the resurrections of the Savior and His seed, and signs of our hope through tribulation and in ultimate victory over Christ's foes. As such, they are signs of the true rationality of the universe and reminders of the unchanging duty of Christians to go into all the world and preach, teaching men of all nations to be both hearers and doers of God's saving and sustaining word, and of His sanctifying and blessing law.

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