



THE GENEVA REVIEW

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF GENEVA MINISTRIES

No. 21

AUGUST, 1985

The Transformation of Culture

by GARY DEMAR

Our understanding of "culture" has taken on a narrow definition. Culture conjures up visions of refinement and particular tastes in the fine arts, humanities, and broad aspects of science, as distinguished from vocational and technical skills. The Biblical definition of culture is as broad as the world, however. Adam and Eve were commanded to "**cultivate**" the garden and all creation (Genesis 1:28; 2:10-15; 9:7; Psalm 8; and Hebrews 2), i.e., to bring forth the potentialities of the garden (cf. Hebrews 6:7). We can cultivate family, business, church, and social relationships.

Henry Van Til gives us a comprehensive definition of culture with these words: "It denotes the labor bestowed upon the earth to prepare it for seeding (Gen. 2:15). Man was to belabor the good earth so that under the blessing of God it might bring forth its fruit. This was called **agriculture**. We also speak of the tending of bees as **api-culture**, that of birds as **avi-culture** and of horses **equi-culture**. This list could be extended indefinitely, in-

asmuch as man has brought the world of created things under cultivation and exploitation. Today we use the word "culture" of any human labor bestowed on God's creation in its widest sense, including man himself (voice culture, physical culture, etc.), by which it receives historical forms and is refined to a higher level of productivity for the enjoyment of man. Culture, then, is any and all human effort and labor expended upon the cosmos, to unearth its treasures and its riches and bring them into the service of man for the enrichment of human existence unto the glory of God" (*The Calvinistic Concept of Culture*, p. 29f.).

Of course, it must be recognized that **all** culture, like everything else in the world, has been affected by sin (Genesis 3:17, 18; Romans 8:20-22). "Hence, irrespective of whether [culture] is practiced by dedicated Christians or by absolute infidels, all art, all poetry, all science, all philosophy (and, let us hasten to add, all theology too) displays the disfiguring marks of sin to a greater or lesser extent. Even the very **ploughing** of the wicked is evil (Prov. 21:4); whatsoever is not of faith, is sin (Rom. 14:23); and even all the righteousness of the people of God are but filthy rags! (Isa. 64:6)" (Francis Nigel Lee, *The Central Significance of Culture*, p. 7).

When the word of God confronts culture in its fallen state, either the traditions that brought about the present culture must give way to Scripture or Scripture must conform to culture. Of course, all cultural enterprises **must** give way to the absolutes of God's Word. Culture, then, is "religion externalized." Religion is not a **part** of culture or just one aspect of culture. Rather, religion gives rise to culture. Religion — man's fundamental world and life view — **produces** culture. The particulars of cultural expression can be traced back to the religious ideas giving culture its meaning. "[Religion] does not so much consummate culture as give culture its foundation, and serves as the presupposition of every culture. Even when faith and religious root are openly denied, it is nevertheless tacitly operative as in atheistic Communism. A truly secular [non-religious] culture has

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Transformation of Culture by Gary DeMar	1
Studies in Genesis One: God's Rite for Life by James B. Jordan	3
On the Road to Rome Again? by Ray R. Sutton	4
Media-Made Vietnam: Putting it in Proper Perspective (Part I) by James Michael Peters	5
Studies in the Last Days, No. 1: The Literal Interruption of the Bible by David Chilton	6
The Doctrine of the Word of God (No. 3) by John M. Frame	7

never been found, and it is doubtful whether American Materialism can be called secular. Even Communism, like Nazism, has its gods and devils, its sin and salvation, its priests and its liturgies, its paradise of the stateless society of the future. For religious faith always transcends culture and is the integrating principle and power of man's cultural striving" (Van Til, p. 39). The study of any culture will disclose the religion that spawned that culture. The authoritative Word of God must evaluate all that a culture is and if necessary turn it upside down (cf. Acts 17:6); i.e., empty it of the pagan religious first principles (presuppositions) that brought it into being.

The Secular View

A secularist will want to make religion a *part* of culture, like music, art, and literature. The British anthropologist Sir Edward Taylor states that culture is "that complex **whole** which includes **knowledge**, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of **society**" (*Primitive Culture*, p. 1). Belief - religion - is not apart of culture, however, but the basis of knowledge, arts, morals, law, custom; etc.: the **basis and source** of culture. Why does a member of society choose the things he chooses to create a culture? What foundational principles are utilized in his evaluative process? Religion is at the root of it all.

When the Bible confronts a non-Christian culture it is confronting another religion, another authority. Of course, there are some cultural traditions that do not clash with biblical authority. For example, in England driving is restricted to the left side of roads while in the **United States** automobile travel is reserved for the right side. If a culture had no such law and driving rules were left up to individual motorists then that culture would have to change its system **to** conform with Scriptural principles relating to safety. "Britons may indeed drive to the left and Americans to the right, but what underlies each statute is not whim or happenstance, but the principle of the value of human life and property. There is no love for neighbor or regard for **the** life and property if one drives on all sides of the road or down the middle" (Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, VI:442f.) The case laws of Exodus 21-23 instruct **us** to respect the property of others and live in such a way as to ensure their safety (e.g., Exodus 21:33-36). The idea

that order and consistency must prevail is an absolute found in God's Word.

The following statement shows how Biblical authority is jettisoned and the prevailing culture is made absolute: "The Scriptures teach respect for the property of others (**Exod. 20:15, 17; Mark 10: 19; Rem. 2:21; Eph. 4:28**) **but do not prescribe what things are or are not to be considered private property. This is left up to each culture**" (Stephen A. **Grunlan**, "Biblical Authority and Cultural Relativity," in *Christian Perspectives on Sociology*, p. 59. Emphasis mine.). On the contrary, the Bible both teaches respect for property and prescribes what constitutes private property. This is why there are laws concerning the theft of oxen, sheep, and the misuse of borrowed property (Exodus 22:1-15). No culture **can** arbitrarily determine what is or is not property, just as no culture can define what constitutes order. If a culture could arbitrarily determine or redefine what constitutes private property, then it could arbitrarily define that which is **not** private property, and no property would be safe; the economic security and freedom of the **people would** collapse.

History is full of examples where all-powerful central governments arbitrarily make the determination about what constitutes private property. For example, in **I Kings 21**, Ahab wanted **Naboth's** vineyard. The law stated that it was **Naboth's** to do with **as** the law of God stipulated. On **Grunlan's** principles, Ahab and Jezebel had a legitimate case against Naboth. **Naboth** was stubborn and should have sold his property. (In fact, he probably should have given it away, since culture supposedly determines what constitutes property.) On the contrary, however, individuals, families, churches, businesses, and the state may not arbitrarily establish what is real property. The Bible must be our guide.

Adam and Eve took property that belonged to God even though they were given control of the Garden. They were to be the builders of culture on God's terms. God's Word, however, is the determiner of what culture *ought* to be. When Israel entered the promised land, it was Scripture that was to be their guide, not the Canaanite culture or cultures of the land they were entering: "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success" (Joshua 1:8).

Studies in Genesis One: God's Rite for Life

by JAMES B JORDAN

Genesis 1:26 tells us that man is made the very image of God. Theologians have debated what it means for man to be the image of God, but we can side-step that debate (without in the least despising the importance of the historic discussions) by noting this much at least: By seeing what God does as He makes the world, we have an idea of what man is to image. God makes things; man makes things. God names things; man names things. Etc.

The actions of God in Genesis 1 fall into a very interesting and significant pattern. This pattern is used by God not because He had to use it, but as a pattern for man, His image, to follow. This pattern is God's rite or ritual, which man imitates either rightly or perversely.

In the beginning, God created the world out of nothing. After doing this unique work, God then enters into labor according to a "ritual pattern." God's rite is a sequence of five fundamental actions.

First, on each day God takes hold of the creation, or of some part of it. In God's case, this "taking hold" is designated by the phrase "let there be" and its equivalents. God's powerful active Word is the equivalent of His hands.

Second, on the first three days God separates parts of His creation, dividing **night** from day, **waters** above from waters below, and **land** and sea; and thus God restructures the world by means of breaking it down and reworking it. In the latter part of the week this same thing occurs when God forms plants from the earth, as well as animals and men.

Third, God distributes and apportions His creation. This is done in the first part of the week by God's act of naming ("God called the light Day"), and in the second part of the week by God's assigning different parts of the **world** to various creatures.

Fourth, God evaluates the work. He looks at it ("and God saw") thus bearing witness and gathering the data on which to form a judgment ("and it was good").

Fifth, finally God enjoys His work by resting in it.

Now, this is what Adam would do. He too would take hold of the creation, break it down and restructure it, distribute it to others by means of giving or barter, evaluate what he and others had done, and enjoy it. He **would** dig in the ground, take ore and melt it down to separate off the gold and then make jewelry, give or trade it to others who would evaluate it and enjoy it. He **would** take vegetables, cook them (break down and restructure into a casserole), put some on each person's plate, taste and evaluate it, and then eat and enjoy it. This pattern is seen in anything man does.

Adam, however, tried to go through this pattern as if he were God, rather than God's image. He refused to act as an image at two points. First, he failed to give thanks, as Remans 1:21 says, describing the fall, "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give

thanks." Thanksgiving **is** an admission (confession) that the raw materials of the world are given by Someone else. Thus, while thanksgiving should have pervaded all Adam did, the important place in the ritual of life for a special act of thanksgiving is immediately after a man has laid **hold** of the raw material. This means that man's rite is supposed to be a six-fold action: take, thank, break down, distribute, evaluate, enjoy.

The second thing Adam refused to do was rest in God's prior and foundational judgments before making his own. Just as Adam refused to thank God for the world He had made for man, so Adam refused to hearken to the judgments God had already passed. He had to taste the forbidden fruit to make up his own mind. There were plenty of things for Adam to taste and evaluate; but he insisted on seizing the right to evaluate autonomously something God had already judged.

It is important to note that Adam's disobedience was a consequence of his ungratefulness, not vice versa. Adam did not trust, and that is why he did not obey. Lawkeeping follows faith. Indeed, describing the fall, Remans 1:21-23 sees everything proceeding from unthankfulness: "they became futile in their speculations and their foolish heart was darkened [so that they decided to disobey]. Professing to be wise [seeking the wisdom offered by the serpent], they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures [taking the serpent as their standard rather than God] ."

With this information in mind we can understand now the fundamental ritual of the Christian faith. Jesus Christ, the second Adam, does what Adam failed to do. He goes through the ritual properly, giving thanks throughout. By so doing, He reestablishes us in the right rite. When we perform this rite on the Lord's Day, we are becoming readjusted, **rehabilitated**, retrained in the right way to use the world. For Jesus Christ, on the night of His betrayal, (1) took bread and wine, (2) *gave /hunks*, (3) broke the bread, (4) distributed the bread and wine, naming it His body and blood; then the disciples (5) tasted and evaluated it, eleven approving of it, and one rejecting it; and finally (6) the faithful rested and enjoyed it.

It is because the act of thanksgiving is the central difference between the Christian and the non-Christian that the liturgy of the Christian churches is called "Holy Eucharist." Eucharist means Thanksgiving. It is the restoration of true worship (thanksgiving) that restores the work of man (the six-fold action in all of life). This explains why the restoration of true worship takes primacy over cultural endeavors (cf. my discussion of this in Jordan, *The Law of the Covenant* [Tyler: Institute for Christian Economics, 1984], pp. 10f., -1 It's 217f.).

On the Road to Rome Again?

by RAY R. SUTTON

Over a decade ago, a friend of mine became a Roman Catholic priest. The shift was sudden and unexpected. One day he was Reformed. The next, he was a Romanist.

I was shocked. It didn't make sense to me. Good Presbyterian ministerial candidates just didn't do this sort of thing. After all, wasn't this issue what the Reformation was all about? I **couldn't** help but look into the matter. When I did, his reasons were quite unsettling.

For discussion's sake, I'll call him Thomas. He argued that Luther's **hermeneutic** destroyed the authority of the Church. How so? Roman Catholicism taught that the Church is the "depository of truth." The Bible is given to it to interpret, and the consensus of its interpretations is infallible. The Spirit would not fail to lead the Church into all truth. So, when the Church pronounces on a matter, it is absolute. To deny this authority to the Church is to remove its ability to "bind and loose" (**Matt. 16:16ff.**).

And, here is the bottom line: One cannot have an authoritative Church if the Church does not "contain the truth." In my friend's mind (and in the mind of the Roman Church), one ultimately loses the doctrine of the Church if he rejects the Catholic hermeneutic. So, his solution might be best expressed by adjusting the title of Willie Nelson's song, "On the Road to Rome Again." In other words, Luther and the Reformers were wrong, and we **all** need to collapse into Rome.

Before I react to his solution, let's get Luther's (and the other Reformers') view clear in our minds. Luther said that the **Bible is** the "depository of truth," and not the Church. He observed correctly that to make the Church the "depository" would **absolutize** a human institution. It makes humanity "infallible." Luther maintained that nothing, not even the Church, can speak, reason, or act infallibly. All "human" authority is judicial and **covenantal**. It "represents" God. It is not the same as God. It speaks for God. Its words are to be distinguished from the Creator's words, the Bible. In other words, its authority is declarative so that when it "binds and looses," the act is legal. For example, when the Church excommunicates, it only "declares" the excommunication. It maybe that the person is not guilty of his charge. So, only God can truly expel.

My friend would say, "This view opens a can of worms. If the Church cannot interpret and adjudicate infallibly, we have the worst sort of epistemological crisis. . . . The Church can never be certain about anything."

Is he right? No. The only infallible word the Church has is Scripture. The apparent tension be-

tween "Scripture and correct interpretation" is progressively worked out in history. This development of dogma necessitates faith and faithfulness to the end. It involves conflict, confrontation, reconsideration, diversity, and yes, even exile.

Thomas would probably agree to most of these points, but he would want to see them **all in the context of the Roman Catholic Church**. Sure there will be problems, but they are not to be settled "outside" the Church. It is the Roman Church that stands in succession to the Apostles (What about the Eastern Church?), and it is she that has been made the "depository of the truth."

Now we come to the question of whether protestants should have ever split from the Roman Church, and whether they should go back today? Or, maybe some might want to ask some of the *Geneva Review* authors if they're headed back to Rome. Surely that's the direction we're moving with all this talk about liturgy and vestments. Isn't it?

No. Although, I grant that Thomas's response – "Just go back to Rome" – sounds neat and simple. But he's wrong for two reasons.

One, the concept of **exile**. In the Old Testament, the Word of God in the person of the prophets was forced out of the land when the **sacrifices were cut off**. Consider Elijah's day for example. The priests had become **Baalists**. The sacrifices stopped. Elijah was driven into the desert and even the perimeter of the Biblical world, **Zarephath** (1 Kgs. 17). He was fed by unclean birds, ravens. **Why?** Because the sacrament had been cut off.

When the Western Church succumbed to Greek thought, the doctrine of "transubstantiation" entered the Church. Ultimately, this doctrine cut the sacrament off from the people. First, the children were excluded from the Table. Their clumsiness tends to spill the "real" blood of Jesus on the ground. Then, the sacrament was taken from the layman for similar reasons.

The result was that "full family communion" was abolished. Family life in general degenerated. Even the Church's attempt to recover marriage by **sacralizing** it failed.

The **Anabaptist** movement evolved out of the transubstantiation controversy. This monastic group simply applied the same general thinking to the sacrament of baptism.

And, the Reformers were forced into exile.

The Reformers saw where the real problem lay. It was the issue of **transubstantiation**. Granted they did not all make the connection to **paedocommunion**, though the **Hussites** and a few others did. But the reformers **chose** to fight the issue on rational or doctrinal grounds. For this effort, they **were** excommunicated. The sacrament was cut off, and like

the prophets of old, they went to another “land” to receive God’s food.

It’s been that way ever since. When will it change? I don’t know. At present, the Roman Catholic Church still embraces a doctrine that destroys full family communion (**paedocommunion**). And, although the Protestant Church does not by and large believe in transubstantiation, full family communion is still destroyed by its rejection of **paedocommunion**. So, as long as the sacrament is cut off from God’s people, they will be scattered.

Is this “diversification” altogether bad? We come to a second argument.

Two, the concept of diversity. I think the Church moves along both unity and diversity lines. Ecumenism is the expression of unity and **denom**-**in**ationalism is the outworking of diversity. I think both have proven beneficial to the Church. Both express the image of God who is Himself one and many. Yet, most of the time, it is assumed that **diversity** is bad. But, is this really the case?

I think denominational diversity has certainly had its negative **effects**, but I also think it has facilitated broader and deeper expansion of the Church. Also, I think it is naive to assume that the Church would get along better and/or function better if it were **all** under the same “governmental” roof. Maybe Christians would fight more if they were all in the same Church.

So, I don’t think we need to repeat the Oxford Movement of the last century and get “On the road to Rome again.” Where does this leave us, and where are we going? I’m sure **these** questions were asked the Reformers. After all, Presbyterianism, **Lutheranism**, and Anglicanism had not yet been born when Luther debated and Calvin preached. I think the Reformers had no idea how their theology would **re-shape** and **re-structure** the Church. All they could and were impelled to do was revive the “historic” faith. But I’m certain that they believed the Sovereign God of Scripture would use their exile to advance and implement *One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church*.

Media-Made Vietnam: Putting it in Proper Perspective (Part 1)

by JAMES MICHAEL PETERS

Whether it is the old guilt-ridden image of Jane Fonda in a film like *Coming Home*, or the newer, heroic hallucinations of Sylvester Stallone in *Rambo: First Blood II*, America’s “Vietnam experience” seems to move from a flood of news media distortions to the deeper waters of popular movie **mythos** without ever coming up for **air**. Of course, one cannot straighten out such an interpretive mess in one thousand words or less, but at least I know the way to the surface. Having fought North Vietnamese Regulars (**NVA**) in the central highlands during 1968 (the year of the **Tet** offensive), and having pondered the historical context of the war, not only as a veteran but as a Christian redeemed from the traps of “guilty-pity” and blind flag waving; I would like to present some information that will enable us at least to swim to the surface for a breath of fresh air.

It is most instructive that the real bad guy in the movie *Rambo* is a bureaucrat without a real identity; whose sole mission in life is to protect an equally anonymous Washington establishment from further political embarrassment. And if that means ensuring the failure of Rambo’s heroic effort to save MIAs still being held captive in Vietnam — so be it. One might ask, who is Washington really afraid of? After all, what we are dealing with here is not truth and justice, but perception of national image.

Speaking of which, where in **Stallone’s** film are the real creators of that image of failure that *Rambo* is so desperately trying to expiate? Where is the press corps, and the ubiquitous television “journalist?” Where are all those reporters that spent so much of their time during the Vietnam war at the Carousel Bar in Saigon, sucking up drinks and vis-

iting prostitutes while weaving all those powerful images of political and military failure that flooded the minds of Americans for more than a decade?

The problem seems to be that no one reports on reporters except reporters, and they always show one another in the best possible light. Reporters are seldom to be found even as characters in such movie catharsis as “*Rambo Wins It For Us After All*,” and the few times they are, one never finds them portrayed as bigger than life bad guys whose distorted journalism had devastating consequences in handing an entire people over to communist slaughter. In the film *The Killing Fields*, the journalist is portrayed as a sensitive American whose search for the truth seems to be the only check on our incompetent military establishment, an army portrayed as a mindless machine that seems to always be killing innocent Cambodian **peasants**. Such was never the real case in Cambodia or Vietnam, but that is the image we are always left with by our dedicated journalists.

As a soldier in the 4th infantry division my own impression of the Tet Offensive was one of justified confidence in our ability to overwhelm the communist forces. I didn’t need an official intelligence report to realize that the supposed great enemy offensive was quickly crushed by American and South Vietnamese forces and was nothing more than a military debacle on the enemy’s part. It was a defeat in which the Vietcong ceased to exist as an effective fighting force in South Vietnam, while the NVA in the Central Highland retreated in disarray. America’s technological capabilities on the battlefield were of such a superior and effective

nature that in every significant engagement the enemy was quickly defeated and sent running back across the borders of Cambodia and Laos. By August of 1968 things had gotten very quiet in the Central Highlands, and I distinctly remember many days of running the rivers in rafts for fun. Small groups of NVA moved carefully at night but did not dare come out **in** force during the day. They also had many Soviet tanks and heavy artillery, but did not dare bring such equipment across the South Vietnamese borders.

Upon returning home in late January of 1969 I was assaulted by a totally different interpretation of the Tet Offensive via the media, and was surprised to hear talk of inevitable American defeat. I was constantly asked questions by friends and relatives, questions based on television impressions of corruption, South Vietnamese atrocities, and American military failure. In fact, the image of failure was so pervasive that it was not long after I returned home that I began to doubt my own experience of the war, as did the political leaders of this country. After all, **I** thought, the media is covering the bigger picture. But in fact, liberal journalists and intellectuals at large were driving a

dark wedge of doubt and guilt between Americans at home and the military leaders **in** South Vietnam.

After the Tet Offensive, no amount of positive intelligence reports were ever taken at face value. **If** the bottom line was encouraging it had to have been altered somewhere along the line to give the reverse impression. Although the Tet offensive was a military defeat for the Communist forces, the American press turned it into a propaganda victory from which policy makers were never to recover. From then on the American military was on permanent defense against a contrived image that they could not possibly overcome. Every moral infraction or tactical error, whether it was real or simply a journalistic fabrication, was piled on the military doorstep to feed a public hungry for news. More importantly, these **aberrated** bits of media information were not presented as tragic isolated incidents but as being somehow an expression of military policy itself. In the end, South Vietnam was defeated, not on the battlefield, but in the living rooms of middle class America; and ten years after the fall of Saigon the imagination of the American people is still being held captive to some very powerful distortions of a media made Vietnam.

Studies in the Last Days, No. 1: The Literal Interruption of the Bible!

by DAVID CHILTON

I received a letter the other day from a lady who sternly took issue with the so-called **"preterist"** interpretation of the "Last Days" advocated in my book *Paradise Restored*—the view that what the New Testament says about an imminent, cataclysmic event that would destroy the world and usher in a new age of righteousness must be understood in terms of the destruction of Jerusalem and the desolation of the Temple in **A.D. 70**. "You think the Great Tribulation has already happened. Well, just you wait!" she warned ominously. In explanation of her "futurist" position, she wrote a sentence that has all the earmarks of becoming an unintended classic: "I **believe in the literal interruption of the Bible!**" Of course, what she meant to say was something quite different. But, like the high priest in John 11:49-52, she spoke more intelligently than she knew. **For** that is exactly what the **non-preterist** approach to New Testament prophecy does — it **interrupts** the Bible.

What do I mean by this? Well, just consider how we interpret the New Testament as a whole. No one approaches the letters to the **Galatians** or the **Colossians**, for example, as if their primary reference were to personalities and events in some future age, just before the thermonuclear annihilation of the solar system. We assume, and rightly,

that the New Testament was written with its original readers in mind. There is nothing strange or outlandish in such an assumption. What would you think of your pastor if, out of the clear blue, he began an exposition of 1 Corinthians by informing his congregation that the epistle has nothing whatever to do with conditions in the first-century Church, claiming instead that it was written in terms of either a "Church historical" or "futurist" **hermeneutic**? Wouldn't you question his judgment (if not his sanity)? Why, then, **should** we consider it normal for a preacher to interpret Jesus' prophecy of the Fall of Jerusalem, or John's prophecies **in** the Book of Revelation, as referring to events thousands of years in the future?

Jesus stated, again and again, that the Great Tribulation would come upon "this generation" — the wicked generation of apostate Israelites living at that time (**Matt. 12:38-45; 16:1-4; 23:29-36; 24:34**). John emphatically informed his **first-century** readers that the events foretold in his prophecy were about to take place "shortly," and that the time of their fulfillment was "at hand" (**Rev. 1:1, 3; 22:6, 10**). Throughout the Book of Revelation, Jesus Himself warned repeatedly that He was "coming **quickly**" (**Rev. 2:5, 16, 25; 3:3, 11; 16: 15; 22:7, 12, 20**). Could words be plainer? **Clearly,**

Revelation gives the distinct impression that its prophecies are on the verge of fulfillment: It is set entirely in terms of "shortly," "soon," and "quickly." I will say this much: I wouldn't send any **non-preterist** interpreter of those verses out for hot sandwiches.

The Bible does teach that there **will** be a Second Coming of Christ, at the end of history. But the Bible is also emphatic about the accomplishments of **His First** Coming (by "First Coming," I mean the complex of events that includes Christ's incarnation, His earthly ministry, His death, resurrection, ascension, and enthronement, His outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church, and His outpouring of wrath upon apostate Israel in **A.D. 70**). The New **Testament** tells us much about the purpose of Christ's First Coming. We find that He came as the Second Adam, the divine-human Priest-King, sent to undo the damage wrought by the First Adam, to destroy the works of the devil, to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, and to bring to fruition God's original plan for His world and His image (see, e.g., Matt. **16:18**, 28; John **3:16-17**; **12:31-32**; Rem. **5:12-21**; 1 Cor. **15:45**; Eph. **1:20-22**; **4:24**; 1 John **3:8**; Rev. **1:5-6**).

The "futurist" might agree with this, in some abstract sense. But then he posits a sudden interruption - he might call it a "postponement," or sug-

gest that we are living in some sort of "parenthesis" in history. Christ came, he says, but He failed to accomplish what He set out to do. Like the first Adam, His plan was foiled by the devil, whose grasp on the world is now firmer than ever. The historical movement of redemption has been interrupted. The prophecies of the coming Kingdom have been thrown into neutral, and cannot be put in gear again until history is **re-interrupted** at the Second Coming.

But this was not the view of Christ and the apostles. **Jesus** Himself announced, at the outset of His ministry: "The **time is fulfilled**, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel!" (Mark **1:15**). Christ came to accomplish the fulfillment of God's redemptive work, not an interruption of it. With a unified voice, the inspired writers of the New Testament all proclaim that the Kingdom of Christ was inaugurated at His First Advent. St. Peter declared not only that Christ had **fulfilled** what Moses had prophesied of His work, but that indeed "**all** the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days" (Acts **3:24**). Christ did not rise from the dead only to have His Kingdom interrupted; He came not to postpone, but to fulfill.

The Doctrine of the Word of God

(No. 3)

by JOHN M. FRAME

(Professor Frame teaches at Westminster Theological Seminary in California. These outlines are from his course on the Doctrine of the Word of God. Prof. Frame has graciously consented to our making these notes available to a wider audience through *The Geneva Review*. They are not to be regarded as a published work, but as notes on a "work in progress.")

(INTRODUCTION, continued)

{ C. The Reformed Faith holds to the Comprehensiveness of God's covenant Lordship.

1. Centrality of Lordship in Scripture: "Lord" (Yahweh, **Adonai**, **Kurios**) is the basic covenant name of God, Ex. **3:13-15**, **6:1-8**; cf. John **8:59**, Rem. **14:9**.
 - a. Use in confessions of faith: **Deut. 6:4ff**; cf. Rem. **10:9**, 1 Cor. **12:3**, Phil. **2:11**.
 - b. God performs his mighty acts "that they might know that I am the Lord," Ex. **14:18**, 1 Kings **8:43**, Ps. **9:10**, etc.
 - c. "I am Lord, I am he," Isa. **41:4**, **43:10-13**, etc.
2. Lordship is a *covenantal* concept.

- a. "Covenant": relation between the Lord and a people whom he has sovereignly consecrated to himself. He rules over them by the sanctions of his law and fulfills in and through them the purposes of his grace.
 - b. Lordship is a *relation*. Where you have a Lord, you have servants, *i.e.* a people over whom the Lord rules. "Lord" names God as head of the covenant relationship. The centrality of lordship implies the centrality of covenant, and vice versa.
- ### 3. The Attributes of Lordship.

The following three concepts seem to be particularly prominent in biblical descriptions of divine Lordship.

- a. **Control** (kingly office)
 - i. Though God's lordship **is** a covenant relation, his existence *precedes* the covenant, and his power brings the covenant servant (with the whole world !) into existence, Isa. **41:4**, **43:10-13**, **44:6**, **48:12f**. The covenant, therefore, is not a relation of mutual dependence, even though "Lord" denotes a relation. The Lord is in control, and the servant is

- dependent upon him.
- ii. Emphasis on divine control *within* the covenant structure: Ex. 3:8,20,24 (cf. 33:19, 34:6, Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 129-134), Ex. 20:2.
 - b. *Authority* (prophetic office) (= right to be obeyed): Ex. 3:13-18, 20:2, Lev. 18:2-5, 30, 19:37, Deut. 6:4-9, Luke 6:46ff.
 - i. He cannot be questioned, Rem. 4:18-20, Heb. 11, Job 40:1f, Rem. 9:20
 - ii. His covenant transcends all other loyalties, Ex. 20:3, Deut. 6:4f, Matt. 8:9-22, 10:34-38, Phil. 3:8.
 - iii. His authority covers **all** areas of life, Ex.-Deut., I Cor. 10:31, Rem. 14:23, II Cor. 10:5, Col. 3:17, 23.
 - c. *Presence, or Covenant Solidarity* (priestly office)
 - i. 'I will be *with you*,' Gen. 26:3,28:15, 31:3,46:4, Ex. 3:12,33:14, Deut. 31:6, 8,23, Judg. 6:16, Jer. 31:33, Isa. 7:14, I Cor. 3:16ff, John 17:25, Matt. 28:20, Rev. 21:22.
 - ii. The nearness of the covenant Lord, Jer. 31:33, Deut. 4:7, 30:11-14, Rem. 10:6-8, Lev. 10:3, Ps. 148:14, Eph. 2:17, Jonah 2:7, Col. 1:27.
 - iii. Involvement with people in blessing and cursing (notice how this seems almost to **define** "lordship" [Yahweh] in the passages cited), Ex. 3:7-14, 6:1-8, 20:5, 7, 12, Ps. 135:13f, Isa. 26:4-8, Hos. 12:4-9, 13:4ff, Mal. 3:6, John 8:31-59.
 - d. Each attribute presupposes the other two. Each presents the whole idea of Lordship from a different "perspective."
 - i. Control involves authority, for God controls even the structure of truth and rightness.
 - ii. Control involves presence, for God's power is so pervasive it brings us face to face with him in every experience.
 - iii. Authority **involves** control, for God's commands presuppose his full ability to bless obedience and curse disobedience.
 - iv. Authority involves presence, for God's commands are clearly revealed.
 - v. Presence involves control, for nothing in heaven and earth can keep us from God or God from us (John 10, Rem. 8).
 - vi. presence **involves** authority, for the presence of God is always a presence in the word, Deut. 30:11ff.
4. *Lordship, Creation, and Providence*,
 - a. *Control*: Gen. 1:3, Ps. 33:6,9,148:5, John 1:3, 10, Heb. 11:3, II Pet. 3:5-7, Heb. 1-2, Gen. 8:21f, Ps. 145:15f, 119:89-91, 148:8, Eph. 1:11.
 - b. *Authority*: Gen. 1:5, 8, 10 (*qara*'), 1:26ff, 2:17, etc. Note the prominence of God's *word* in the passages describing divine control - the model of the king speaking and being obeyed.
 - c. *Presence*: Gen. 1:2, Isa. 66:1, Matt. 5:35, Acts 7:49ff, I Kings 8:27ff (note covenant context). Ps. 139.
 5. *Lordship and Salvation* ("Salvation is of the Lord," Jonah 2:9), Ex. 3:7-14, 20:2, 33:19, Jer. 33:31-34, Rem. 5, 10:9f, 'the Kingdom of God,' "the covenant."
 - a. *Control*: Ex. 3:19-22, 6:6, Isa. 52:7, 59:15-20, John 6:37, 44, 65, Rem. 8:28-39, 9:11-24, Eph. 1:3-14, 2:8f.
 - b. *Authority*: Isa. 43:1-7, Matt. 9:1-9, Luke 7:1-10, Rem. 10:9f, I Cor. 2:6-16.
 - c. *Presence*: Num. 6:23-27, Deut. 27:12ff, II Cor. 16:9ff, Ps. 1, 139, I Cor. 10:16, 11:27-32, Rev. 1:20, 2:1ff.
 6. *Summary*: In the Reformed faith, the sovereignty of God involves not only God's control, but also his authority and **covenantal** presence. It involves authority: The reformed faith is much more interested in being Scriptural than in achieving consistency with an abstract idea of divine control. It involves presence: One of the most precious things in reformed literature is the emphasis on living *coram deo*, *living every* moment in the presence of God, confronted by him in every fact, in every event, in every person. Because of this **covenantal** lordship, *all* of life must be brought under God's dominion (I Cor. 10:31, etc.) Nothing is neutral, nothing may be left as is. (Calvin's slogan: "My heart I give thee, promptly and sincerely.")
It is, then, the **comprehensiveness** of God's covenant Lordship which is more precious to reformed people. Salvation is not merely a way of escaping divine judgment, but a re-orientation of all of life, and, ultimately, of **all** human society, of the earth itself.

Introducing: MID-AMERICA JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

Mid-America Reformed Seminary has begun the publication of a theological journal. The Seminary was established in 1980 to minister to the orthodox party in the Christian Reformed Church (though of course they welcome students from other backgrounds), and is committed to the absolute inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures, and to historic Calvinism. We wish to call attention to their new *Journal*, because it appears most promising, and the first issue will certainly be of interest and value to readers of *The Geneva Review*.

The lead article by Mark D. Vander Hart is a valuable introductory discussion of the Biblical world model, "Creation as God's Temple." Readers of David Chilton's *Paradise Restored* will find themselves at home here. An essay against modern universalist follows, authored by Nelson D. Kloosterman. The third essay is a very practical study (55 pages long!) of Calvin's pastoral practice by Peter Y. De Jong. The last article, by Timothy M. Monsma, is on poverty and its cure. In his useful and well balanced essay, Professor Monsma interacts with modern sociologists and anthropologists, particularly Oscar Lewis and Anthony Wallace, pointing out that the root of poverty is religious, and so is its cure. This first issue also contains five book reviews.

The Journal can be obtained from: Mid-America Reformed Seminary, P.O. Box 163, Orange City, IA 51041.

The Journal is published twice a year, and the rates are as follows: U.S. & Canada \$10.00 (U.S. funds), International \$13.00 (U.S. funds), Student \$7.00