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## "In These Last Days"

by DAVID CHILTON

What did the New Testament writers mean when they used the expression *the Last Days*? **Three** general positions on this question have been taken. First, there is the common "futurist" view that the "**Last** Days" are the closing days of the present age—the period just prior to the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the world (or, as some would have it, the beginning of the Millennium). Proponents of this view often feel that we are currently in the Last Days, or that the Last Days will begin at any moment (based on the notion that the "signs of the times" indicate that the Second Coming is near). This position is generally held by premillennialist. The most serious objection to this view—an objection that cannot be successfully answered by the futurists—is that *the apostles uniformly claimed that they were living in the Last Days*. If the Last Days are still future (or if they began in, say, 1948 or 1970 or 1981 — futurist estimates vary), how could the New Testament

writers have been living in the Last Days during the **first** century? Yet that is what they said:

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, *in these last days* has spoken to us in His Son. . . . (**Heb. 1:1-2**)

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. . . . It is *in the last days* that you have stored up your treasure! ( **Jas. 5:1-3**)

For He [Christ] was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared *in these last times* for the sake of you who **through** Him are believers **in** God. . . . (1 Pet. **2:20**)

**Children, it is the last hour;** and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that *it is the last hour*. (1 John **2:18**)

There is no question about it: If we are going to be faithful to the New Testament, we must acknowledge that the period called "the Last Days" (also "the last times" and "the last hour") was not regarded by the apostles as some far-off era in the space age. They understood that they were already living in the Last Days. Recognizing this, some interpreters have **put** forth a second interpretation: that "the Last Days" refers to the entire period of the Gospel Age, from the Advent of Christ until the final end of the physical world. According to this view, the Last Days began with Christ's ministry, and have continued for almost two thousand years. While this view does attempt to do justice to the clear teaching of the New Testament, it is based on a serious error: the failure to understand the nature of the apostolic age, and its crucial **eschatological** significance.

The greatest mistake has been the failure to see the apostolic period as a time of transition. It has been erroneously assumed that the Old Covenant age simply came to an abrupt halt with the death **and** resurrection of Christ. While it is true that *Christ's redemptive work brought in the New Covenant* and the new age of the Kingdom, it is not

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true that the Old Covenant era was simply wiped out in one fell swoop. The Old Covenant period did not come to a final end until the destruction of the Old Covenant Temple in **A.D. 70**. The writer to the Hebrews spoke of the Old Covenant as “*becoming* obsolete,” “*growing* old,” and ready to disappear” (**Heb. 8:13**). Thus, while the New Covenant was brought in by Christ’s perfect sacrifice, resurrection, and ascension on our behalf, the Old Covenant system was still in existence for about forty years, **until** the **Temple** was finally destroyed in God’s judgment. Only with that event did the end of the age finally come.

This was made clear by our Lord in the **Olivet Discourse**, when His disciples asked Him when the “end of the age” would come. **Jesus** explained that the end of the **Old** Covenant age would come within that generation, coinciding with the “abomination of desolation” and the destruction of the Temple (see Matthew 24). The background for Jesus’ message was the prophecy of Daniel **9:24-27**, which speaks of the end of the Old Covenant era in terms of an entire complex of events, from the sac-

rifice of Christ to the fall of Jerusalem. These events would signal the closing days - the **last** days - of the Old Covenant age, the Old Testament dispensation. At this point the period known **in** the New Testament as “the age to come” (**Heb. 2:5; 6:5**) would be fully ushered in.

Thus, the Biblical data regarding the Last Days cannot **properly** refer to the entire New Covenant era. Rather, the Last Days were the last days of the Old Covenant age, the closing forty years of the Jewish dispensation, when the Old Covenant was being superseded and rendered obsolete by the New Covenant, when the **scaffolding** of the Temple was being dismantled to reveal the new Temple of God in the Body of Christ. As we shall see in further studies, the Last Days are not in our future. They are behind us. We have no reason for despair as we contemplate the prospects of the Gospel’s progress throughout the world. Its triumph is inevitable. The Old Covenant has been done away with, and we are in the New Covenant age, the era of the Kingdom of Christ, the new heavens and earth, in which righteousness dwells.

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

by **JAMES MICHAEL PETERS**

When the average American thinks of Vietnam certain images usually come to mind; almost all of which were acquired through the medium of television. From 1%<sup>1</sup>, when ground troops were formally committed as combatants in **Vietnam**, to 1975, when Saigon **fell** to communist forces, the American public lived on a steady diet of prime time war direct from Indochina. Keep in mind that since the coming of the commercial use of television as a medium of gathering “newsworthy” information, the American public reads less than ever, and depends more and more on the magic of television. “After tall, seeing is believing,” goes the **old** Missouri adage; but in the case of Vietnam, as with most television coverage, an image maybe worth a thousand words only because it can support dozens of equally valid interpretations, of which only one will be accurate and true.

With the angle of the camera one can create the illusion of South Vietnamese brutality and at the same time evoke sympathy for a poor Vietcong prisoner in the notorious Tiger Cage. Upon first seeing the famous picture, it appeared as if the cage was sunk into the ground with only steel bars for a roof. In actual fact the cages were above ground with a metal roof two feet above the top of the cage, the purpose of which was to provide ample ventilation and at the same time, keep the sun off of the prisoners. **In** order to get the picture a cameraman had to climb up on top of the cage and squeeze underneath the roof. You might ask, “why

bother?” My answer to that would be simple; **THEATER** man, **THEATER**! It sells the drama of life in a more dramatic way, **and** that’s always good for those who hawk the news for a living from a particular point of view. In this case as with so much of the visual coverage of the Vietnam war the reporters were creating an illusion. It makes **little** difference that several times in passing it was later pointed out by others **in** the media that the tiger cage shots were not what they seemed to be. The more dramatic the image, the more tenaciously it sticks in the mind’s eye, and the American people were fed the Vietnam drama via the television for fourteen years.

Nguyen Van Thanh, alias Ly Thuy, alias Nguyen Ai **Quoc**, better known to the American public as Ho Chi **Minh**; a character with the video image of a fragile old man that liked to be known as Uncle Ho. He was touted by western journalists as a gentleman that admired Thomas Jefferson and always shown on television surrounded by children. Of course all this was courtesy of the North Vietnamese ministry of propaganda; but it was an image that the anchormen of American media never tried to unmask. In actual fact Uncle Ho was the founder of the French communist party in 1920, he was trained as a professional revolutionary in Moscow in 1924, and was then placed in charge of the Asian branch of the **Comintern** (the international revolutionary arm of the Soviet Union). Uncle **Ho** used his considerable linguistic **skills** — he

could speak Russian and seven other languages fluently - to organize communist cells throughout Indochina. This apparently docile old man consolidated his political power in the Northern provinces of Vietnam with quiet blood purges not unlike the technique that **Stalin** used. The Vietnam conflict was not a civil war, but an invasion of a dedicated, well organized communist force into the South. **Truong** Nhu Tang, one of the original founders of the National Liberation Front (the Vietcong, or NLF as they called themselves) is now in Paris having escaped further purges by the Vietnamese Politburo in 1982. **Truong** admits that the NVA used the Vietcong on the pretext of liberating the south from French domination and American intervention; a promise they never intended to keep.

The systematic purges and brutality committed by the North Vietnamese should not be surprising to anyone, least of all **Truong**. In the city of Hue during the Tet offensive, communist forces executed 5000 South Vietnamese soldiers (**ARVN**) in a school yard; over 3000 civilians were also executed, including all of the Vietnamese Roman Catholics in the city, many of whom were buried alive. Of course Americans were too busy watching a stream of isolated incidents of brutality committed by the forces of freedom. The real systematic reign of terror perpetrated by the NVA was largely ignored by American reporters or simply lost in the endless coverage given to the My **Lei** massacre, in which 100 civilians were killed by a few American soldiers.

But the image of Tet offensive atrocity that was burned into America's memory was General Nguyen Ngoc Loan shooting a "suspected" Vietcong in the head with his pistol. For more than ten years reporters let this image stand as a graphic video symbol of what was typical of South Vietnamese injustices. No one seemed to peruse the real story until the tenth anniversary of the fall of Saigon. Now we are told by our dedicated news team from ABC, that the General, then the commander of Saigon security forces, summarily executed a Vietcong terrorist that had been taken in the act of murdering a police officer's entire family.

Finally, let's put the loss of Americans lives in proper perspective. For fourteen years there was a daily body count of American soldiers killed in action. It just seemed never to end. Every day we saw the stack of aluminum **coffins** being loaded on

military transport planes. The image conjured an impression of an endless military failure that was decimating an entire generation of our young men. On the other hand, the South Vietnamese losses were never presented in the same graphic manner. As a consequence the Americans began to believe that the ARVN forces did not even want to fight for their own freedom. Both impressions were totally false. Every year we were in Vietnam, except during the Tet of 1968, we lost more young people from violent deaths on American highways than we did in Vietnam. In contrast to this the South Vietnamese forces, which were almost always taking the brunt of the offensive **fighting**, lost 93,000 men from 1966 to 1979. The South Vietnamese were generally **effective** fighters when given proper material support; as the North Vietnamese losses demonstrate. Conservative estimates vary from 900,000 to well over 1,000,000 killed in action.

America was shocked at how quickly the South Vietnamese forces collapsed after we withdrew our support; but several important facts were missing from the media event. We saw the South Vietnamese soldiers running like cowards before the enemy, desperately clinging to the skids of American helicopters - that's gratitude for you, after all we did for them! What we as a viewing public were not graphically told about was the inevitable **effect** that Congress had on the ARVN forces when it cut appropriations to resupply diminished munitions. You see, or more accurately, you did not see that the South Vietnamese were simply running out of bullets; and on top of that the forces of the North Vietnamese were pushing towards Saigon with a combined military operation that was larger than the forces that America committed to the Normandy invasion during World **War II**.

All of these things were not invisible to our dedicated American reporters. They just simply did not believe that such things as I have been describing here were "newsworthy items." So they made their dramatic selections, created pseudo events, and distorted our general impression of the Vietnam War. And yet the journalist remains more or less invisible to the critical eye of the American public. American perceptions of political and military failure persist, but reporters are nowhere to be found when dealing out the responsibility for handing over an entire people to a communist slaughterhouse, politely called "the Vietnam era."

### CHRISTIAN PIETY: DEFORMED & REFORMED

The first issue of *The Geneva Papers (New Series)* has been mailed to subscribers. The author is James B. Jordan, and the paper is titled "Christian Piety: Deformed and Reformed." Mr. Jordan discusses the three poles of Biblical piety: liturgical, domestic, and practical, and then draws from Alexander **Schmemmann** and Louis **Bouyer** to note its deformation into the **mysteriological** piety of the post-Constantinian church and the sentimental piety of the late Middle Ages and modern era. Jordan's **essay closes with a** discussion of the spirituality of John Calvin as a model for the reformation of piety. The price to non-subscribers is \$4.00 postpaid. The first set of twelve *Geneva Papers* can be subscribed for \$25.00. Payment should be made to Geneva Ministries, and sent to Box 8376, Tyler, TX 75711.

# Studies in Genesis One: The Structure of Genesis

by JAMES B. JORDAN

The book of Genesis is broken into sections that are identified by the phrase "these are the generations of." The Hebrew word translated "generations" is *toledhoth*. It contains the Hebrew root *yld*, which has to do with bearing or giving birth. P. J. Wiseman, however, pointed out that *toledhoth* can easily be translated as "history, family records, narrative, or genealogical record," and in this he has been followed by R. K. Harrison. See Wiseman, *Clues to Creation in Genesis* (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott; 1977) and Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), pp. 543ff.

According to this school of thought, the phrase "these are the generations of" is the title of a section, but not usually the section following it but the one preceding it. The title of a clay tablet was usually found at the end of it, not at the beginning. If Genesis were originally a set of family records later transcribed onto scrolls by Moses, it would make sense for the titles of sections to come at their ends, indicating the conclusion points of various tablet records.

Wiseman, Harrison, and others also point out that in each case, the title probably indicates the latest record-keeper in the series. Thus, "The History [*toledhoth*] of Isaac" (25:19a) gives the life of Abraham, while "The History of Jacob" (37:2a) gives the life of Isaac and most of Jacob's life. That is, the life of Abraham was written by Isaac, and those of Isaac and Jacob by Jacob.

This hypothesis has been criticized by calling attention to Genesis 25:12 and 36:1. Derek Kidner writes in his commentary on Genesis (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1977), "To make the phrase an ending instead of an opening gives us the anomaly, if it is strictly applied, of having the whole story of Abraham preserved by Ishmael (11:27b - 25:12), while Isaac keeps Ishmael's archives (25: 13-19a), Esau those of Jacob (25: 19b - 36:1) and Jacob those of Esau - a situation of almost operatic complexity . . ." (p. 24). This caveat, however, is insensitive to the nature of the argument. The History of Ishmael (25:12-16) was simply incorporated into the larger literary work written up by Isaac and called The History of Isaac (11:27b - 25:19a).

The hypothesis receives strength from a comparison of Genesis 1:1 with 2:4b and 5:1b:

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

"In the day God made earth and heaven. . . ."

"In the day God created Adam. . . ."

In Hebrew, the structure is:

1:1: **b + reshith** (in beginning)  
verb God heavens & earth

2:4b **b + ha + yom** (in the day)  
verb God earth & heavens

5:1b **b + yom** (in day)  
verb God man & woman (5:2)

This structure is followed in the next verses. In 1:2, a break in Hebrew (no *vav*, "and") introduces the thought that the earth is formless and void, but that the Spirit and the Word ("let there be") will work together to make it a proper habitation. In 2:5, the same break in Hebrew (no *vav*) introduces the thought that the earth is barren of vegetation, but that water (symbol of Spirit) and man (image of the Word) will work together to make it a proper habitation. In 5:1b, the same Hebrew break introduces man and woman as co-laborers who should work to bring the world to fruition. These literary parallels indicate that the beginning of the second section of Genesis is 2:4b, not 2:4a; and similarly that the third section begins with 5:1b, not 5:1a.

I might note here that the first section ends with God enthroned in sabbath rest. The second section moves to a negative sabbath, as man is driven from the source of Spiritual water and the earth brings forth "thorns," evil men, leading to a climax in the seventh generation from Adam: Lamech. The third section also moves to a negative sabbath, as man and woman become corrupt and fail to bring the earth to fruition, and God announces sabbath judgment, the end of the world (6:1-9a). Hope for redemption, however, is announced at the very end of sections two and three (4:25 f., 6:8).

These parallels are, obviously, not accidental. In my opinion, they serve to substantiate the Wiseman hypothesis, indicating that each of the first three sections of Genesis is written according to the same theological pattern, and each begins with the same Hebrew construction. In these studies in Genesis One, I shall be dealing with the first *toledhoth* of the book, which begins in 1:1 and goes to 2:4a. In the next installment in this series, we shall look at an outline of this *toledhoth*. For now, I should like to close this essay with an overview of the Book of Genesis as a whole.

## Genesis Outline

### I. *Toledhoth* Sections:

1. The History of the Heavens and Earth (1:1 - 2:4a)  
Author: Either God Himself or Adam
2. The History of Adam (2:4a - 5:1a)  
Author: Adam

3. The History of Noah (5:1b - 6:9a)  
Author/compiler: Noah
4. The History of Shem (6:9b - 11:10a)  
- includes The Records of the Sons of Noah (10:1-32)  
Author/compiler: Shem
5. The History of Terah (11:10b-27a)  
Author/compiler: Terah
6. The History of Isaac (11:17b - 25:19a)  
- includes The History of Ishmael (25:12-16)  
Author/compiler: Isaac

7. The History of Jacob (25:19b - 37:2a)  
- includes The History of Esau (36: 1-9)  
Author/compiler: Jacob
- II. The Joseph Story (37:2a - end).

This gives us ten *toledhoth* sections grouped in seven larger literary units each with its own structure, followed by the story of Joseph. Interestingly, this mixture of seven and ten is also found in the literary structure of the **first toledhoth**, Genesis One. We shall examine this in the next essay in this series.

## Manipulative Architecture

by GEORGE GRANT

In a **complex** cultural maze where the overriding **consensus** for values is secular humanism, it is not surprising to see a pervasive attack on Biblical morality. Art, music, and ideas in Western society have, since the Enlightenment, formed a united front against righteousness. The fact is that every popular and practical art form carries with it a philosophical message. For the 20th-century artist, that message is distinctly man-centered, anti-Christian, and humanistic.

In most forms of artistic expression, "**world-viewishness**" is not difficult to ascertain. One look at a Picasso print, a Miro sculpture, a Christo environment, or a **Spielberg** film, and you know that what they are selling is not Christian ethics. But some art forms are not nearly so decipherable. Take, for example, architecture.

Most of us are fairly oblivious to the forces at play in our artificial ecologies. To us, a building is a functional shell designed to do little more than protect us from the elements and facilitate appropriate commercial colloquy. The fact is that the designers of our habitats have in mind something of far greater cogeny.

Robert DiLeonardo is a case in point. **DiLeonardo** is an interior designer from Rhode Island currently remodeling the 3-year-old Caesar's Boardwalk Regency Casino in Atlantic City's gambling mecca. He says the mission of his seven million dollar "**rehab**" is to "create an environment that relaxes the morality of people." The bottom line is that, by varying subtle twists of architectural manipulation, **DiLeonardo** hopes to induce **immorality** on the part of Caesar's patrons.

Achieving that end, it seems, is like a science fiction **nightmare**. **DiLeonardo** does not stoop to flashy, fleshy crassness; instead, he utilizes a vast array of high-tech punctilios to invoke subliminal responses. Interior designers don't just pick out pretty colors or toy with fabric swatches anymore; they are in the business of ideas. In fact, on **DiLeonardo's** staff, right along side of the color coordinators and the wallpaper experts, is an environmental psychologist.

Environmental psychologists are a relatively

new breed of experts in subliminal likes and dislikes. "They're the **ones**," according to the *Wall Street Journal*, "who put uncomfortable plastic seats in fast-food joints to cut down on lingering." **DiLeonardo's** environmental psychologist will aid him in creating an appropriately immoral atmosphere at Caesar's.

So, how do they do it? Well, at Caesar's, **DiLeonardo** will replace all the windows with sheets of creamy Italian marble so that "people won't be able to relate to time. Once they step inside, **they'll** be in an adult Disneyland." **He'll** use materials that enhance noise for the casino because, he says, "noise creates excitement." Lighting for the blackjack tables will extend far enough to envelop the player, but not far enough to include spectators, who "may interrupt his sense of security." Even the hotel suites get a taste of environmental psychology. Mr. **DiLeonardo** says, "They **will** be done in bold contrasting colors with lighting so bright and noise enhanced to such high levels that the occupants will practically run to the roulette wheels."

Incredible as this architectural manipulation may sound, it is by no means an isolated case. Michael Graves claims his controversial Portland Municipal Building is a "**bold** statement of modern humanism." I. M. Pei has said of his most recent work that "**post-industrial** architecture must aim at the conversion of souls to a new order of humanistic sensitivity." Philip Johnson's AT&T headquarters has been **described** by the architect as "**a tool** to change, to transform, and to catalyze the new society." No longer is a building just a place to live or work. Architects want to shape the way you think and act. Architects very often act as moral manipulators.

To be ignorant of these powerful cultural forces whirling about us is tantamount to being willing, capitulating, placid, and compliant victims . . . God forbid!

(George Grant is one of the pastors of Believer's Fellowship Reformed Bible Church, Humble, Texas. This essay is a transcript from Rev. Grant's daily radio broadcast, "The Christian **Worldview**." For information concerning this program and how you might get it broadcast in your area, write to the Christian **Worldview**, 410 South Ave. D, Humble, TX 77338.)

# Don't Call Me Bwana

by RAY R. SUTTON

**Ignatius said**, "The Church is the Bishop." Calvin and the reformers understood the Church in terms of "word, sacrament, and discipline."

Quite a difference isn't there? To one the Church is the man, or his office. To the other, the Church is Christ's revelation and its application. Even more simply put, one view sees the Church according to man and the other according to Christ.

In all fairness to the early Church father, however, the Church is a "priesthood" of all believers. Since the office of bishop is an extension of the **Melchizedekal** priesthood, the bishop is a special manifestation of the corporate body. He is an extension of the Church. In other words, the bishop is the Church in that the whole "body" is a priesthood.

So, I have no real problem with this thinking as long as the Church is not reduced to the office or person of the bishop. I call this view the "**Bwana**" approach, because the bishops end up being a "super church" above the rest of the Church. Since they embody the Church, no real accountability exists outside their circle. They are the only ones under discipline. And, without a check and balance, they can and usually do create a moderate discipline to accommodate almost any sin. Such was the case by the time of the Reformation.

And, such is the case in modern **evangelicalism**. It surfaces in the "anti-church membership" mentality. It is very popular among "Bible" and "community" churches not to have church membership. So, no one really ever gets disciplined except in terms of "social ostracism." It doesn't amount to much because the "social **outcast**" just goes down the street to another "Bible" or "community" church.

The officers, however, face a different situation. They have real accountability because everyone expects them to "play by the rules." If they don't, much more pressure comes to bear. They can and often do get disciplined by the pastor or other officers. Many times, it happens in an official way.

I remember a "Bible" church where the youth minister was fornicating with several women. When he was found out, his sin was announced to the whole church. Their approach surprised me because other "laymen" had been caught in a similar situation, but nothing had been announced to the church.

Why? The failure to have a disciplined membership roll and lay accountability reduces the Church to those who are **really** accountable, the pastor and officers. The result is that the Church is reduced to the bishop. Another way of looking at it is the officers and/or pastor become a "super"

church above the rest.

So, I think Calvin's grid is more Biblical. The Ark of the covenant contained three items: a **copy** of the Ten Commandments, manna, and Aaron's rod. There was the Word of God, sacrament, and a symbol of discipline. These items were at the heart of the community. They defined it. Without them, there was no community. In fact, the history of Israel's collapse reveals how the Biblical community died when word, sacrament, and discipline faded.

Traditionally, "reformed" churches have followed Calvin's interpretation. But I'm afraid that they too often fall into the **Bwana** approach. Although they define the Church in terms of the threefold grid, a three-office view of the leadership allows the "preacher" to sit in judgment on everything.

The preacher is above the sacraments. Check out the furniture in most reformed churches. The **pulpit** is usually above the sacrament table, and the baptismal font is stuck in a corner until a baptism. Think of the effect this arrangement must have on the life of a congregation. First of all, it only receives the sacrament about once or four times a year. And, when it is served, the preacher still predominates. He is the only one who can "set the elements apart." He is the ultimate overseer of the Table. He is more visible than the visible manifestation of the Word.

The preacher is above the Word of God. Again, the centrality of the pulpit equates "preaching" with the read Word. Don't misunderstand. I'm not against preaching. I think it is necessary and important to the nurture of the Church. But, I don't think it is equal to the Word of God. I know the old saw, "preaching is the Word of God insofar as it is Biblically correct."

Do we really want to argue this way? Man's words are never the same as God's, but to be distinguished. I think we should always maintain a Creator/creature distinction, even in the preached word. The ancient Church expressed this emphasis by reading from a separate podium, the lectern. In our church, we read the Bible from the sacrament Table in the center. Both approaches distinguish preaching from God's Words.

The preacher is above local church discipline. In almost all reformed and even many evangelical churches, the pastor is not a member of the **local** congregation. He is a member of the association or presbytery. Ultimately he is accountable only to the presbytery.

This situation is the opposite of the non-membership church I referred to earlier. Here we have churches that believe in local membership, but exclude the pastor. In one sense, he's under **dis-**

cipline, but in another, "local" discipline, he's not.

He is so powerful that he can sort of choose to accept and/or reject other churches' discipline. Their jurisdictions often mean nothing to him. Someone from another church can call and ask for counsel anytime. It makes no difference to him whether the officers of the **counselee's** church are informed. His gifts of wisdom are too important. And maybe, if the pay is right and the situation looks good enough, he might even consider taking a call to

a church in which some of the members have been excommunicated from other fellowships.

**Hmmm!** Sounds a whole lot like a perverted interpretation of "the Church is the bishop." SO, what we have in modern **Protestantism** is almost the same as the Roman Church.

The reformed Church **is** right. The Church is not equivalent to the pastor. It is bigger than the bishop's office. It is the body of **Christ**. So, don't call me "**Bwana**."

## Extending the Stakes: Alexander Schmemmann

by JAMES B. JORDAN

I had heard the name Alexander **Schmemmann** many times of the past several years, but I had never **ploughed** into any of his writings until fairly recently. The word on **Schmemmann** was that here was a Russian Orthodox priest and theologian whose writings were so Biblical, so orthodox, so catholic, and so compelling that no Bible-believing **Calvinistic** protestant could afford not to read them. That was the rumor. But after all, what Calvinist is ready to believe that a Russian Orthodox seminary professor could possibly have so much good stuff to say to us?

But its true.

I finally got a copy of **Schmemmann's** classic study, *For the Life of the World* and read it. Immediately I had Geneva Ministries order ten copies for everyone around here to read. Since then I have given copies to a number of other people.

Is it really that good? Read it and see. You can order a copy from Geneva Ministries for \$6.95, and if you are not happy with it, we'll refund your money.

What is this book? Basically, it is about the finest simple introduction to basic Christian **world-view** I have ever read. Schmemmann eliminates the nature/grace dichotomy that has plagued the Western church, both catholic and protestant (e.g., **Kuyper's** dichotomy of common and special grace), and discusses the Kingdom as centrally manifest in heaven, and as extending itself to earth. He uses worship as his key. Worship takes place in heaven, but we are then sent out to carry Kingdom light and power to the fallen world.

**Schmemmann** uses the term "sacrament" to describe the communication of Kingdom life. Protestants generally restrict the English term "sacrament" to the two particular signs and seals of the New Covenant: Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. To understand how **Schmemmann** uses the word, it is important to understand that he conceives of "sacrament" in two ways. The *special*

sacraments are baptism and communion. God, however, communicates the life and power of the New Covenant to us in many other ways also, and these other ways are also each signs (revelations) of the Covenant. The oil of healing, for instance, displays the grace of God, as does marriage.

Of course, as a protestant I cannot agree with every single sentence in *For the Life of the World*. The lack of a well developed juridical theology in the East comes through, for instance, in the chapter on baptism. For that reason, Geneva Ministries sends along a brief study guide with each copy of the book we sell. All the same, the remarkable insights that appear on virtually every page of this book make it worth its weight in gold.

**Schmemmann's** other books are not of such general interest, but anyone desiring to encounter the best of Eastern Orthodoxy today should obtain them. **Schmemmann** is the most "protestant" and Bible-oriented Orthodox theologian I have encountered, and his books contain many striking insights that we should incorporate into our theology. *Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy* is a simple Church history, **focussing** attention on the East. *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* is a technical study of the development of worship in the first centuries of the Church, and I have interacted with it in my essay for *The Geneva Papers*, "Biblical Piety: Deformed and Reformed." *Church, World, Mission* is a collection of essays; in most of them **Schmemmann** addresses his fellow Orthodox and challenges them to shape up in various ways. *Great Lent* is a discussion of Lent and of fasting as it is viewed within Orthodoxy. Finally, *Of Water and the Spirit* is a detailed examination of the meaning of baptism as the ancient Church and the Orthodox Churches today see it. Again, in this book **Schmemmann** does not see as clearly as he might the juridical dimensions of baptism, but what he does say provides much food for thought in other areas.



# The Doctrine of the Word of God

(No. 4)

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.")

## OUTLINE FOR COURSE

	Lordship Attribute:	Control	Authority	Presence
I.	Concept	Powerful	Meaningful	Self-expression
II.	Creation-function	Decree	Address	Presence
III.	Media	Events	Words	Persons
IV.	Message	History	Law	Sanctions
V.	Response	Belief	Obedience	Participation
VI.-VIII.	"Attributes"	Power	Authority	clarity
IX.	Necessity (of VI-VIII)			
X.	Sufficiency (of VI-VIII)			
	Cf. "Naming"	Control	Characterize	Locate
	"Perspectives"	Situational	Normative	Existential

### I. *The Concept of the Word of God:* The Word is God's powerful, meaningful self-expression.

#### A. **Powerful:** Ps. 33:3-6, 46:6, 148:5-8, 29:3-9, Rem. 1:16.

1. The **power** of the word is the **omnipotence** of God himself, Isa. 55:11, Gen. 18:14 (Luke 1:37). It **is** therefore never void, never weak.
2. To study the word (in seminary or anywhere **else**) is to encounter something explosive, something that inevitably changes you - either for **the** better or for the worse (Isa. 6:9-10, N.T. parallels).

#### B. **Meaningful**

1. **Power** is what the word does; meaning is what it says.
2. Therefore, meaning can be regarded as an aspect of power: "saying," or "meaning" is one of the many things which the word **does**.
3. On the other hand, it is also important to point out that God's word is never a "blind force" or "raw power." It is a power which expresses his wisdom, and therefore is a **meaningful** power. God's word, in fact, is never devoid of meaning. It always **says** something.
  - a. Creation: Gen. 1:5, 8, 10, 17, 22, 25 (*qara'*), 27f. (the definition of man), Ps. 147:4, Isa. 40:26.
  - b. Providence: the word determines the

**nature** of things throughout history. The course of nature and history is determined by God's **wisdom**, Ps. 104:24, Jer. 51:15, etc.

- c. Judgment: The word categorizes, **classifies** men as sinners, pronounces sentence. Imputation of sin is by divine declaration (Rem. 5:12-21) in contrast with human self-interpretation (**Matt. 7:21-27, 25:31-46**).

- d. Grace: The word categorizes, classifies God's people as righteous through Christ.
  - i. God "names" his people, Isa. 43:7, 44:5, Num. 6:27, Hos. 1:9-2:1, Isa. 43:1, 49:1, 62:2, 65:15f, I John 3:1, Rev. 13:16.

- ii. Imputation of righteousness by divine declaration, Rem. 5:12-21; vs. self-interpretation, I John 3:20.

4. Therefore it is wrong to define the word **narrowly** as a kind of "**power**" while relegating **its meaning-functions** (i.e. its linguistic character) to a subordinate status (e.g. as a temporal-cultural manifestation of the power). Barth, **Bultmann**, the "new **hermeneutic**," and the **Amsterdam Philosophy** ("Toronto") **are guilty** of this error in some degree. The word **is** "**powerful**," that needs to be said. But "power" is not the only, or the most important way of characterizing the word.

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