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## Authority and Its Enemies

by GARY DEMAR

Authority is not neutral. The claims to authority rest upon religious presuppositions (presupposed ideas about the fundamental nature of reality). When a clash ensues among competing authorities, the battle is always along religious lines, because competing authorities "say" contradictory things about the fundamental nature of reality. Those who seek to overthrow existing authority structures do so in the name of morality, goodness, and right. These purveyors of the new order **fight** their battle with religious zeal and contrast the evil old order with the righteous new. The old order is assumed to be despotic, tyrannical, and repressive, while the new order will **bring** about liberty, freedom, fairness, and equality.

The religious and political rulers of Jesus' day understood the religious character of authority. When Jesus came on the scene, and in effect put the religious leaders on notice that their authority was **suspect**, they knew the essence of the battle: "By

what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?" (Matthew **21:23**). When Jesus identified His authority with that of His Father, "the Jews took up stones again to stone Him" (John **10:31**). The reason for their hostility was that Jesus claimed divine sanction for His actions: "**You**, being a man, make Yourself God" (John 10:33). Jesus based His authority on **His** Father's authority, and on Himself as God in human flesh (cf. Mark **2:1-12**). The religious and political rulers of His time based their authority on their own man-made traditions.

**Pontius** Pilate also understood the religious character of authority. Rome had established itself as the voice of the gods. Pilate, therefore, spoke on behalf of the gods, or so he thought: "Do you not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?" (John **19:10**) Jesus made it clear that Pilate's appeal to authority was groundless: "**You** would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above" (John **19:11**). Pilate's appeal to authority was hostile to the rightful authority that Jesus possessed and that God delegates to earthly institutions and rulers. The early church **also** understood the religious character of authority and put it into practice when Christians obeyed God rather than men (Acts 4:19; 5:29). Neutrality is not an option in the ongoing battles among authorities claiming **ultimacy**.

### Shifts in Authority

The religious and political leaders of Jesus' day were in positions of authority because the people had wanted what they claimed they had to offer. While there had been the promise of liberty in previous times, tyranny was the present effect of their feeble promises. God-ordained authority was rejected for a supposed liberating authority that would free both church and state. The shift from one authority to another was not an overnight happening, however. There were degrees of change. For most people these changes were imperceptible. There is, however, always one common denominator when change occurs – authority always shifts

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from the absolute of God's word to some standard based upon the fallen character of man. Man **himself** becomes the **final** authority. The belief is that by rejecting the absolute authority of God and His word one can be liberated from its demands.

The shift begins by equating the word of God with some other authority, putting both on an equal footing. For example, throughout the history of the church "Nature" or "Natural Law" was considered normative. In fact, we are told, it is almost identical with Scripture. The laws found in the natural realm can be used by Christians and non-Christians to develop, say, a just political order. In time, however, we **find** the appeal to "Natural" law rather than Biblical law because unbelievers can better identify with a "neutral" law system that does not rest on "religious" presuppositions. This, we are told, is less offensive to the unconverted.

Scripture was once used to **interpret** nature because the created order is fallen. While creation speaks of the glory of God (Psalm 19:1-3) it cannot give us the particulars-especially the **moral** absolutes and laws-necessary for law, business, politics, education, art, technology, etc. Again, we are told, it is much easier to address the unbeliever through reason than through special revelation, the Bible. **These** two major shifts, Nature is equal to Scripture and the mind can replace **Scripture** as an interpreting standard, set the scene for a multiplicity of competing authorities to arise, all vying for **ultimacy**. With multiple authorities competing with one another, public opinion, history, elite opinion, feelings generated by desire or guilt, tradition, and circumstances call for an ultimate single standard of authority to clear up the confusion. Rarely is Scripture appealed to. As public opinion shifts and the confusion of competing authorities increases, there is an appeal for some central power to settle the authority question. Those able to convince the masses that they hold the expertise and wield the greatest power will determine what authority will once again be ultimate.

### The Elite

We trust those who claim to be "in the know." History shows us that many political leaders sought the advice of an elitist class to establish authority for their revolutionary ideas. If the people can be convinced that the "experts" have the answers and the power to implement their "solutions: they will give up nearly everything to be saved from **author-**ity confusion. For example, Lenin's

entire life was spent among the members of his own sub-class, the bourgeois intelligentsia, which he saw as a uniquely privileged priesthood, endowed with a special **gnosis** [knowledge] and chosen by History for a decisive role. Socialism, he wrote quoting Karl **Kautsky**, was the produce of 'profound scientific knowledge. . . . The vehicle of [this] science

is not the proletariat **but** the bourgeois intelligentsia: contemporary socialism **was** born in the heads of individual members of this class" (**Paul Johnson, *Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Eighties*, p. S2).**

In time, Lenin was able to capture the nation by concentrating authority in himself and convincing the masses that the "new" authority was "better." He was so sure of his position that he named those who followed his authoritative expertise, the "majority" (**Bolsheviks**). The old regime was overthrown. The new authority, based on "a special knowledge," would bring in a new era. How can the uninformed expect to compete with such specialized knowledge? The impression one gets is that if you are not part of the "guild" then your ability to add anything relevant is questioned or denied.

Prior to the Reformation of the 16th century the ability to know was reserved to an elitist religious class. The church was the reservoir of knowledge and thus the **final** authority and dispenser of truth. The people were dependent upon the church for specialized theological wisdom. Even the Bible was reserved for the church and not translated into the language of the people. It remained in Latin until some dared to translate it. Some lost their lives **in** the attempt.

Of course, there are experts **in** a number of fields and we should look to them for their expertise when appropriate but only when it squares with biblical absolutes. But theirs is not the final word. The elitist despises the majority. It is only the privileged few who are gifted enough to determine the way we ought to go. The majority is to follow blindly.

The danger in warning about elitism is to go too far in the other direction, to raise the majority to the position of ethical decision making as the replacement for the arbitrary decisions of the elite. The egalitarian wishes to level authority to the group. To him all opinions are equal. Rushdoony writes:

Now Scripture gives no justification for an **equalitarian** order, and it also gives no ground whatsoever for an elitist order. Only a godly order, established in terms of Biblical law, **is** tenable in terms of Scripture. Elitism and **equalitarianism** are alike humanistic; they move in terms of man and man's hopes. The Bible is heedless of either philosophy. **Scripture** requires a God-centered society, one in which God's law militates against **equalitarian** and elitist goals. Both **equalitarianism** and elitism are in essence contemptuous of man in the name of man. The elitist despises the majority of man, and the **equalitarian** despises all able and independent men, but, in essence, both despise all men as men and love rather their *idea* of men, not man himself in the singular (***Institutes of Biblical Law*, p. 179).**

Neither the opinions of the majority nor those of the elite few can rightly replace the word of God. There are some, however, who look to experts as the **final** authority on various ethical issues. Such thinking places the finite character of man, no matter how skilled, on the same level as the word of God.

They are like the Pharisees who taught that God gave Moses not only a written law but also an oral one, handed down through the generations to only the privileged few. This was the key to the power of the pharisees: they had the knowledge to unlock the meaning of the **Pentateuch**, to be recipients of wisdom had by no others. Not possessing esoteric knowledge, the masses have no choice but to turn their lives over to the elite to be managed (Herbert **Schlossberg**, *Idols for Destruction*, p. 195).

The will of the individual, the group, a skilled elite or a political body must submit to the unchanging authority of Scripture. If the individual claims to be the ultimate authority a nation heads toward anarchism. When the group clamors for **ultimacy** statism is the result. Neither the individual nor the group can claim to be the only authority.

#### conclusion

There are a number of authorities that compete for our allegiance. In each case, the result is to move us away from the **benchmark** of Scripture. The problem in identifying these **counterfeit** ultimate authorities is that they **often seem** to be reliable. If we fail to identify the only true ultimate and unchanging authority then we open ourselves up to the persuasiveness of other seemingly viable authorities. The topic of authority is unquestionably religious in nature; it deals with ultimate values and claims total allegiance; it is the god of that system claiming **ultimacy**; it is the law-giver.

## Slough, Great Thou Art

by **GEORGE GRANT**

During one episode in John Bunyan's classic *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Christian seems* to be hopelessly mired in "the slough of Despond." No amount of effort seems **sufficient** to redeem him from such a perilous plight, so Christian resigns himself to a sad, sedentary demise. Suddenly though, out of nowhere, a fellow pilgrim named Help comes to the rescue. With a single reach of the hand and a hearty tug, Help pulls Christian out of the slough and onto safe ground once again. In short order, both pilgrims are off and on their way, their destination now one trial closer than before.

If for no other reason than for clarity's sake, it is a good thing Bunyan set this scene in the early 17th-century. Had he written it in contemporary America, the scenario would have to have been substantially more complex. Help would not have been able to just walk right up to the edge of the slough and yank Christian out. Oh, my, no!

Instead, Help would probably have been required to submit an environmental impact statement on pilgrim removal. In triplicate, of course.

Upon receipt of EPA approval, Help then would have been required to conduct a sectional opinion survey or, perhaps, call for a **community-wide** referendum, thus securing permission from the citizenry to undertake such a bold course of action.

Next, he would have had to add to his retainer a lawyer, to protect him from criminal and/or civil liabilities, a press secretary, to schedule all future media appearances, and a literary agent, to find the best market for his "life story," tentatively entitled *Slough, Great Thou Art*.

Finally, since he was a devout man, he would

have had to return to his prayer closet in order rightfully to ascertain "God's **will**" in the matter.

Meanwhile, of course, Christian would have expired in the slough, thus writing a premature and an entirely unsatisfactory ending to the tale.

Somehow, we have complicated even the simplest of human **transactions**. **Deals** are no longer sealed with a handshake; they are dependent upon clause after clause of legalese. Marriages are no longer bound by vows, they are consummated by hi-lateral property contracts. Helping is no longer a matter of neighborly concern, it is stipulated, conditioned, and administrated by legislation and litigation.

Humanism's grand scheme has backfired and, as a result, our society is less human than ever before.

Biblical social action acts as an immutable humanizing force in the midst of such modern inhumanity. Biblical social action reaches across all barriers and defies all odds to rescue, without any delay, those caught in the sloughs of despond and deprivation. Biblical social action extends a steady, ready hand in times of need.

Now is one of those times. Need grips our land. Our culture is mired in a slough and **we** are its only Hope.

(George Grant is one of the pastors of Believers 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.)

# The Doctrine of the Word of God

(No. S)

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.")

## (L *The Concept of the Word of God:*

A. *Powerful*B. *Meaningful*C. *Self-Expression*

1. Parallel with human language: when we speak, even deceptively, we reveal something of what we are.

a. Man's first activities are linguistic, Gen. 1:28ff, 2:16ff.

b. Centrality of language in human life, Prov. 12:18, 13:3, 18:20f, 21:23, Matt. 12:34ff, Jas. 3:1-12

c. Prominence of linguistic sins: Jas. 3:1-12, Prov. 12:17-19, 10:19, Ps. 12, Rem. 3:13f, Gen. 11:6, Isa. 6, 29:13, Ezek. 33:31, Jer. 9:8, Ps. 57:4, 64:3, 140:3.

d. Redemption of the tongues, Isa. 6, Ps. 51:15, Isa. 35:6, 43:21, 45:23, 49:2, 65:19, Zeph. 3:9ff, Rem. 19:9f, I Pet. 2:9, Jas. 5:16.

e. Consummation, Rev. 14:5, 21:27, 22:15, Prov. 12:19.

f. Cf. emphasis on language in biblical teaching on devils, angels:

i. The Devil is "slanderer," "accuser," "liar" (John 8:44). Note also emphasis on the mouth in the serpent figure.

ii. Angels are *messengers (mal'ak, aggelos)*, Acts 7:38, 53, Gal. 3:19, Heb. 2:2.

2. Similarly, God's word is crucial to his nature and is always an expression of himself, in at least the following senses:

a. The word *reveals God*; we know him through his word, II Tim. 3:15, Deut. 4:5-8, etc.

b. God is always *present with the* word; where God is, the word is, and vice versa. Note biblical correlations between word and spirit, Gen. 1:2, Ps. 33:6, Isa. 34:16, 59:21, John 6:63, I Thess. 1:5, 11 Thess. 2:2, II Tim. 3:16, II Pet. 1:21, Acts 2:1-4, John 16:13. So in Israel, the nearness of God was the

nearness of the word, Deut. 4:5-8, 30:11-14, Rem. 10:6-8.

c. All divine acts are performed by speech.

i. His eternal plan (eternal inter-trinitarian communication): Gen. 1:26, Ps. 2:7-9, 110, 45:6-8, Matt. 11:25-27, John 5:20, 17:1-26, Acts 2:33-36, John 4:34, 6:38f.

ii. Creation: Gen. 1:3, Ps. 33:6, 9, 148:5, Prov. 8:22f, John 1:3, 10, Heb. 11:3, 11 Pet. 3:5-7, Heb. 1:2.

iii Providence: Gen. 1:9, 11, 22, 8:21f, Ps. 145:15f, 119:89-91, 148:8, Job 37:12, 33:11f, Ps. 18:15, 28:3-9, Matt. 8:27, Heb. 1:3, II Pet. 3.

iv. Judgment: Gen. 3:17f, 6:7, 11:6f, Ps. 46:6, Isa. 66:6, Ezek. 1:1, 3:22, Hos. 6:5, Isa. 30:30.

v. Grace: Luke 7:1-10, Rem. 1:16, Phil. 2:16, I John 1:1, 11 Tim. 1:10, Isa. 43:1, 62:2, 65:15, "effectual calling."

d. God is distinguished from all other gods because he is the God who *speaks*, Hab. 2:18-20, I Kings 18:24, 26, 29, 36, Ps. 115:5ff, 135:15ff, I Cor. 12:2.

e. The persons of the trinity are distinguished from one another in Scripture according to their role in the divine speech. This is not the *only* scriptural way of representing the Trinitarian distinctions, but it is one *significant way*.

i. The Father exerts *his lordship* through speech, Ps. 29, 147:4, Isa. 40:26, 43:1, 62:2, 65:15, Eph. 3:14; cf. above, c.

ii. The Son is the word spoken, John 1:1, Rev. 19:13, I John 1:1-3, Heb. 1:1-3, Rev. 3:14, 11 Cor. 1:20, Rem. 10:6-8, (cf. Deut. 30).

iii The Spirit is the *powerful* breath that drives the word along to accomplish its purpose. Cf. b above.

f. The speech of God has divine attributes:

righteousness (Ps. 119:7),  
faithfulness (Ps. 119:86),  
wonderfulness (119:129),  
uprightness (119:137),  
purity (119:140),  
truth (119:142) (cf. John 17:17),  
eternity (119:89, 160),  
omnipotence (Gen. 18:14, Luke

- 1:37, Isa. 55:11),  
perfection (Ps. 19:7ff).  
& The word of **God** is an object of worship, Ps. 119:120, 161f, 34:3, 9:2, 68:4, 138:2, 56:4, 10, Isa. 66:5.  
h. The word is God, John 1:1 (cf. Rev. 19:13, I John 1:1-3, Heb. 1:1-3, Rev. 3:14, 11 Cor. 1:20, Rem. 10:6-8, Deut.

30:11ff.

- i. Christ is the creative word of **Genesis** 1.
- ii. Christ is God, and so is the creative word.
- iii. John 1:1, therefore, **correlates** God, Christ, creative word **as** equally divine.

## Studies in Genesis One: Outline & Structure

by JAMBS B. JORDAN

We have noted that the book of Genesis consists of two parts: the *toledhoth* sections and the Joseph narrative. We have noted also that there are ten *toledhoth* sections groups in seven larger literary units. This combination of seven and ten is also a feature of the first *toledhoth*, *Genesis* One. There are ten paragraphs, not counting the heading at the beginning and the title at the end, and these ten paragraphs embrace a work of seven days.

### Genesis One Outline

	1:1	Heading
¶1.	1:2	Introduction
¶2.	1:3-5	Day 1
¶3.	1:6-8	Day 2
¶4.	1:9-10	Day 3a
¶5.	1:11-13	Day 3b
¶6.	1:14-19	Day 4
¶7.	1:20-23	Day 5
¶8.	1:24-25	Day 6a
¶9.	1:26-31	Day 6b
¶10.	2:1-3	Day 7
	2:4a	Title of Section

Paragraphs 2-9 each have basically the same structure. Where there is variation in this structure, it is for a specific reason that we shall have to attempt to uncover when we get to the details of exegesis. For the present, let us look at the basic structure.

1. Each paragraph (2-9) begins with an introduction, phrased "**And** God said." This, as we have noted, is the Word of God (the Second **Person**) taking hold of the creation.

2. Next comes a statement of fiat: "Let there be" or its equivalent. This shows the Word of God working with the creation.

3. Then comes a statement of **fulfillment**. This varies from paragraph to paragraph, but always shows the completion of the work done by the Word. For instance, ¶2 says "and there was light." ¶3 says "and God made. . . ." ¶4 simply says, "and it was so."

4. Six out of the eight paragraphs have a statement **affirming** that God's work was continually established: "And it was so [And it was established]."

Sometimes, as noted, this phrase doubles as the statement of fulfillment. Its absence from ¶2 may mean that the separation of day and night was not really established until the creation of the sun and moon in ¶6— which separation will end **eschatologically** when the sun and moon give way to the **perpetual** light of the Sun of Righteousness. Similarly, its absence from ¶7 may mean that the animal system was not completed until the land animals of ¶8 were made.

5. The first three paragraphs include an act of naming. God gives names to day, night, heaven, earth, and seas. The contents of these five zones of the world are named by man.

6. Every paragraph except ¶3 has an evaluation: "And God saw that it was good." We shall explore **possible** reasons why the separation of waters was not called good when we get to the detailed exegesis of ¶3.

7. The paragraphs that end the days have an **eschatological** marker: "**And** there was evening and there was morning." Night moves to day. Day is called "good" (v. 4), while night (by comparison) is less good. We shall discuss the movement from night to day later.

Finally, let us look at the parallelism of the Days. The introduction (v. 2) says that the primeval earth was formless, empty, and "darkness was over the face of the waters." This three-fold problem is resolved in the work of six days. First, the works of Days 1, 2, and 3a take care of the formlessness of the earth by three acts of separation. Then the problem of the emptiness of the earth is taken care of, initially, by the creation of plants on Day 3b.

Now it is true that stars, fish, birds, **animals**, and men also take care of the problem of **emptiness**; but the Bible, explicitly or implicitly (w. 16, 26), associates these groups with rulers. I believe, and I shall try to show later, that the establishment of these rulers is the answer to the problem of "darkness over the face of the deep." The creation of daylight takes care of darkness as such, but the picture of darkness hovering over the water is symbolically parallel to the hovering of the Spirit over the water, Jesus' walking on the water, the **Ark**-kingdom floating on the water, and in general is a

picture, thus, of dominion (and note v. 20: “let birds fly **above the earth**”). The dark dominion of the **sky** is removed on Day **4** with the sun, moon, and stars; of **air** and sea on Day **5** with birds and fish; ‘of the land on Day 6 with the creation of land animals. The creation of man, ‘sons of light” (**Eph.**

**5:8**, etc.), climaxes the removal of the dominion of darkness.

There is, thus, a real **realm/ruler** parallelism in this passage. The parallelism **is** broken, however, with the creation of man, who **rules** over all, not just over the things set up on Day 3.

Day 1: day and night  
Day 2: heaven and waters  
Day 3a: land and seas  
Day 3b: plants

Day 4: sun, moon, stars  
Day 5: birds and fish  
Day 6a: animals for land  
Day 6b: men and beasts eat plants,  
thus ruling them (w. **29f.**)

## The Mockers in the Last Days

by DAVID CHILTON

As we saw in the previous issue, **the time known** in the Bible as the “last **days**” is very **specifically** referred by the New **Testament** writers to the age in which they lived, the 40-year period between the Ascension of Christ and the **destruction** of Jerusalem (Acts **2:16-17**; Heb. **1:2**; James **5:3**; 1 Pet. **2:20**; 1 John **2:18**). It was an era of transition: As the nations of the earth began to **flow** toward the Mountain of the Lord (Isa. **2:2-4**), the Old Covenant was being phased out to make way for the New (**Heb. 8:13**). The blessing of Abraham had come to the Gentiles, the conversion of the whole world had begun. It was, truly, the best of times.

It was also the worst of times. The conversion of the Gentiles was not the only trend of the last days; there was also a trend toward apostasy and persecution; Christ and the apostles had warned that false prophets and heretics would arise to **afflict** the Church; indeed, their-activity would markedly increase as the age progressed to its climax in the destruction of Jerusalem (see, e.g., Matt. **7:15-23**; **24:5**, 10-12, 24; Acts **20:29-30**; 2 Thess. **2:8-12**; 1 Tim. **4:1-3**; 2 Tim. **3:1-9**; **4:3-4**; 1 John **2:18-26**). The last days would culminate in the most massive spread of apostasy since the days of Noah.

As the end of the age approached, a major task of the apostles was to prevent the Church from sliding away into the clutches of the enemy. The overseers of Christ’s flock were not just facing a minor uprising composed of a few crackpots and discontented office-seekers. This was a fashionable movement, of enormous prestige and power. In some places the heretics outnumbered the Christians. Whole churches were capitulating: St. Paul’s letter to the **Galatians** was written to stop the churches of **an** entire region from deserting Christ in favor of a different gospel; the letter to the Hebrews was directed to another large group of Christians on the edge of apostasy. The job of just holding their ground, to say nothing of extending it, must at times have seemed to the apostles like

trying to fill sieves.

Just before he died, St. Peter penned a letter to the churches, encouraging them to keep the faith, and warning them that “**there will** be false teachers among you who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves” (2 Pet. **2:1**). The passage goes on to describe the character of the heretics, whose rebellious actions would incite the Jewish **War**, bringing on the desolation of the Holy City; ultimately, they themselves would perish in its flames. What made this especially tragic was that these rebels were former Christians: “For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment given to them” (**2:20-21**).

This epistle was written fairly late in the age, just a few years before the end. By this time the heretics seemed to be gaining the upper hand. Many people were listening to them. Christianity was becoming more and more unpopular, while apostate Judaism was enjoying great favor with the Roman government. The Church’s dire predictions appeared incredible to most reasonable people. Was Christ really about to return in wrath upon “this generation,” as He had promised? Could it be possible that Jerusalem would soon experience the greatest tribulation the world had ever seen? The idea was universally ridiculed. Few have ever felt more secure and confident than Israel did in the years just prior to her destruction.

St. Peter, therefore, began his **final** appeal by exhorting his readers to remember that this very outbreak of apostasy had been foretold to them in “the words spoken beforehand by the holy **proph-**

ets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles" (3:2). Peter summarized what the prophets, the apostles, and Christ Himself had said:

Know this **first** of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, "**Where** is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, **all** continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." (3:3-4)

It is important for us to grasp the implications of St. Peter's logic: He is saying that in order to withstand the onslaughts of their contemporary heretics, the early Christians must remember that they had been warned about *the last days*. *Why?* They needed to remember these warnings precisely because *they were living through the last days*. Peter wanted them to understand that things had

not gotten out of control. **What** was happening **all** around **them had been prophesied from the beginning**.

St. Peter told his readers that those who were mocking in these last days "are willfully ignorant" (3:5; note the present **tense**) of God's judgment on Noah's generation. The destruction of the old world in the Flood had not, as the NASV mistranslates it, merely "escaped their notice." Their contempt for God's righteous judgment was no accident. The people of Israel's terminal generation were willful rebels against God's covenant. They had dismissed John the Baptizer's warning of destruction by **fire** and his call for national repentance, they had rejected and crucified Christ the Lord, and were now persecuting the apostles, joining with the Roman Beast in a frenzied attempt to crush the Church altogether. For forty years God had endured this wicked and perverse generation; now He would destroy them in the wilderness, bringing a new nation into the Promised Land of the New Covenant.

## Blood Is Not Thicker Than Water

by RAY R. SUTTON

There is an old saying, "Blood is thicker than water." There are probably many interpretations of its origin, but the one that seems to make the most sense strikes rather close to all of us. It means that the family ("blood") has stronger bonds than the baptismal covenant ("water").

Indeed most of us have been raised with this slogan ringing in our ears. "Family" is more important than anything else. Everything else, including the Church, must be sacrificed at all cost; but the "family" must never be violated.

But Jesus said that blood is **not** thicker than water. One day He was in a house. His immediate family—mother, brothers, etc.—stood outside and sent Him a message. Presumably, they wanted Christ to give them front row seats, or maybe they just wanted Him to stop what He was doing and heed their "call."

When the message arrived, Christ responded, "Who are My mother and My brothers?" And looking about on those who were sitting around Him, He said, 'Behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother' " (Mk. 3:31-35). **Jesus' response** had profound *redemptive*, *judicial*, and *social* implications.

**Redemptive Implications:** In the Old Covenant the "family" had been central to the covenant. The priesthood was generationally verified by the many genealogies present in the Old Testament. But the Adamic "family" failed. How can the point be missed? The Old Testament is basically one constant history of the failure of the family to provide

redemption.

Yet, in the same Old Testament, a "new" covenant is anticipated. One place is the **Abrahamic** covenant. The sign of the anticipated covenant, as well as a sign of the Old in this case, was circumcision. This sign, in an extremely graphic way, "cut" the organ of generation. It symbolically **killed** it. The message: Israel could only be saved by the grace of God, not through procreation, the "family."

Christ fulfilled what circumcision signified and sealed. He established a "new" family, the Church. His method was **covenantal** regeneration, signified and sealed in baptism. This innovation did not destroy the family. It truly pulled it up into the covenant (Acts 16:15, 33), and here is where our Baptist friends fail to take notice. Nevertheless, the human "family" was dependent on the redemptive work of Christ as applied by the "keys of the kingdom" given exclusively to the Church.

**Judicial Implications:** No other institution is given the Word and Sacraments to administer. These keys belong to the Church. Judicially, this means the Church is a **higher court** than the family.

When Christianity entered Europe, it encountered a "Hatfield vs. McCoy" type of clan religion. **Carle Zimmerman** has called this type of family the "trustee" **family** (*Family and Civilization* [New York: Harper and Row, 1947]). The trustee family had "absolute" rights to its members. It could even exact death penalties via some kind of family tribunal.

The Church broke down the trustee family.

How? It argued that man has nothing by "natural" descent, no salvation, no knowledge, no inheritance, and not even property. Whatever man has in this life, therefore, it is by means of special or common grace.

Since redemption is 'judicially' applied by the ministry of the Church, the Church takes part in **giving back to the family** all that it lost in Adam. The Church does not own family property because it gives it back at baptism. But the Church is the "higher court." Unresolved family matters should be appealed to it. Furthermore, the New Testament makes it quite clear that the Church, not the State, is the trustee of the family should there be no remaining heirs. "Widows" and 'orphans" are the special responsibility of the Church.

**Social Implications:** Society is to be structured according to a de-centralized central sanctuary, the Church. Every sphere of society draws its life from the Church because Word and Sacrament are found there. Both family and the State find life **in** this great Sanctuary that reaches up into the "Third Heaven."

This principle, however, does not mean the Church should take to Herself the rightful responsibilities of the other spheres. She should not take

up the sword, and she should not take children and property from parents. History illustrates the sad weakening effect on the Church if she should overstep her boundaries.

Conclusion: I am appalled at the **Mormon** influence in **Evangelicalism** and **Reconstructionism**. Listen to how some of the leaders refer to **the family**. Evangelical writers on the family virtually never refer to the relationship between the Church and the family. It is **as** though the family can make it without the Church.

Then there is "**Reconstructionism**." One "**Reconstructionist**" leader has recently said, "The family is the Church." Such a statement idolizes the family and puts pressure on it that it cannot bear. Divorce, for example, is rampant in Mormonism and on the rise in **evangelicalism** because expectations regarding the family are too high.

Too much weight **is** put on the family today, and I think this explains why most of the teaching on the family is failing. Modern Christianity is still partially operating under the old **Adamic** religion that says, "Mood is thicker than water." The message of Holy Scripture and the historic Church takes issue saying, "Blood is **not** thicker than water!"