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Tough Talk

by JAMES B. JORDAN

The Protestant Reformers certainly used strong language from time to time in abusing their opponents, **Romanist** and Anabaptist. Should we imitate them in this? From time to time it is certainly tempting to do so, but questions can be raised about the wisdom of doing so. In coming to grips with this issue, there are several things to bear in mind concerning their times and ours.

First, at the time of the Reformation strong language was a literary convention. I doubt if a man would have been taken seriously if he had criticized his opponent in the calm, detached way that we have become accustomed to today. To show that he really meant what he was saying and that the matter was truly important to him, an author was expected to use strong language in criticizing those opposing him. This is not true today; in fact, the use of strong language serves to identify the user as an ignoramus, or as a man with a weak argument that must be bolstered by sheer rhetoric.

Second, we need to keep in mind that the

Reformers lived in fear for their lives. They had seen friends and associates killed for the faith. We should not be surprised if they used strong language against their enemies, and against those who by their folly exposed the Reformation to unnecessary risks (for instance, certain Reformed and Anabaptist radicals). If the church once again enters such a period of persecution, similarly strong language may once again come to be appropriate.

Third, the Reformers were pastorally concerned lest their people be led off by false shepherds, by wolves in sheep's clothing. They rightly felt that no language was too strong to use in denouncing such evil men. We should be more careful today, because people are not accustomed to tough talk; but we face the same problems, and some degree of measured strength in the tone of what we say is needed.

Fourth, just as men today use strong language to cover weak arguments, so did the Reformers. Depending on where we agree or disagree, we may choose to impute this motivation to them. Baptists, for instance, believe that Calvin used strong language against the Anabaptists because he did not have good arguments against them. Personally, I think this was perhaps somewhat true in **Zwingli's** case, but not in Calvin's. I think Calvin recognized the danger posed by the Anabaptists. All the same, Calvin never used the kind of language against them that he used against the anti-Trinitarians and Libertines.

Fifth, and most importantly, the **Reformers** were imitating Scripture and its Godly authors in their use of strong language. It is God Himself, after all, who threatens to fill the mouths of heretics with manure (**Mal. 2:3**), and Paul who counts all things as dung next to the glories of Christ (**Phil. 3:8**). It is Paul again who wishes that heretics would castrate themselves (**Gal. 5:12**). The Bible repeatedly refers to God's enemies as asses, vipers, dogs, swine, and so forth. Moreover, the Psalms, the foundational hymnbook of the faith, are filled with strong language against the enemies of God.

Here we must note, however, that there is a sure and certain appropriateness to God's use of strong

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language, and this contrasts with some today who use such language lightly. We should indeed imitate Scripture in calling a spade a spade, but we must be careful not to degrade the Gospel message **by** doing so without due solemnity. Over the years I have encountered several popular theologians/pastors who seem to delight in introducing gutter talk into their writings/sermons, and in deliberately misconstruing the opinions of other Christians along obscene lines. There is never an excuse for this type of thing, for it

only serves to befoul the gospel of Christ.

In conclusion, if our purpose is to communicate Christ to our times, we must be sensitive to the literary conventions of our day. We cannot afford to imitate the tough talk of the Reformers if we **hòpe** to have a hearing. As Cornelius Van Til always said to his students: *suaviter in modo; fortiter in re*: gentle in manner; resolute in purpose. Let that be our motto, and let us reserve strong language for situations where it is truly appropriate.

Judgment on the Wealthy Oppressors

by DAVID CHILTON

The era known in the Bible as the Last Days – the transitional period between Pentecost (A.D. 30) and Holocaust (A.D. 70) — was a time of intense conflict and trial for the early Church. On the one hand, the New Covenant was being established as the Gospel progressed throughout the earth, converting men from every nation (Matt. 24:14; Col. 1:6, 23). During the same period, however, Old Covenant Israel was being confirmed in its apostasy. The age witnessed increasing opposition by Jewish leaders against the Church, and the Book of Acts records numerous instances of Jewish persecution, including attempts to use the power of pagan imperial authorities to stamp out the Christian faith (4:1-30; 5:17-40; 6:9-15; 7:54-60; 12:1-3; 13:6-11; 14:2-5; 17:5-8; 18:5-6, 12-13; 19:8-9; 21:11, 27-36; 24:1-9; 25:2-3, 7, 15-19, 24).

Secure Apostates

The Jewish leaders felt completely secure in their apostasy. After all, they retained control of the Temple and the priesthood; and, if providence was any guide, God's external blessings seemed to rest upon Judaism, which was prosperous, powerful, and glorious. In marked contrast, the Church was poor, with nothing externally glorious about her. Christians found themselves forced out of the synagogues, excommunicated from the Temple community, deprived of a priestly ministry that could prove its valid succession from Aaron himself.

The argument of the Jewish leaders was very convincing. They held all the cards; faced with such opposition, how could the Church (still undistinguished from Israel) hope to **overcome**? As for the Temple – the place of the presence of God, the very center of true worship, and the sign of Israel's election – how could God ever allow this magnificent structure to be destroyed, as the Christians were prophesying? In his lengthy and detailed description of its beauty, Josephus wrote: "The exterior of the sanctuary did not **lack** anything that could amaze either mind or eye. Overlaid on all sides with massive plates of gold, it reflected in the

first rays of the sun so fierce a flash that those looking at it were forced to look away as from the very rays of the sun. To strangers as they approached it, it seemed in the distance like a mountain clad with snow; for any part not covered with gold was of the purest white" (*The Jewish War*, v.v.6). Surely, the dire warnings of Jesus and the apostles could never come true. In many ways, the Pharisaical argument resembled that of their apostate forbears in the sixth century B. C., shortly before **they** were conquered by the Babylonians. Yet they had also been warned. The prophet Jeremiah had stood at the gate of the Temple and cried:

Hear the words of the LoRD, all you of Judah, who enter by these gates to worship the LORD! Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your deeds and I will let you dwell in this place. **Do** not trust in deceptive words, saying,

This is the Temple of the LORD,
The Temple of the LORD,
The Temple of the LORD!

For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly practice justice between a man and his neighbor, if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, nor walk after other gods to your own ruin, then **I** will let you dwell in this place, in the Land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever. (Jer. 7:2-7).

But the men of Judah did not amend their ways. They continued to trust in their wealth and prestige, they continued to oppress the poor and needy, they continued to violate the covenant. SO, as Jeremiah foretold, Jerusalem was conquered by a heathen power, the Temple was pillaged and destroyed, and the people were led into captivity.

The situation during the Last Days of Israel was much the same. Apostate Judaism was both prosperous and oppressive; it honored false prophets and persecuted the righteous (cf. Luke 6:20-26;

1 Tim. 6:9-10), heedless of Christ's warning that their much-vaunted Temple would be destroyed for their wickedness (Matt. 23-24). As John Calvin explained (with application to the controversies of his own day): "The Lord nowhere recognizes any temple as His save where His Word is heard and scrupulously observed. So, although the glory of God sat between the cherubim in the sanctuary (Ezek. 10:4), and He promised His people that this would be His abiding seat; when the priests corrupt His worship with wicked superstitions, He moves elsewhere and strips the place of holiness. If that Temple, which seemed consecrated as God's everlasting abode, could be abandoned by God and become profane, there is no reason why these men [Romanists] should pretend to us that God is so bound to persons and places, and attached to external observances, that He has to remain among those who have only the title and appearance of the Church (Rem. 9:6)" [Institutes, iv.ii.3].

The Message of James

This was the setting for one of the earliest writings of the New Testament, the epistle of St. James. Writing as a prophet from within Israel around the year 47, he rebuked the priests and Pharisees in language reminiscent of Old Testament prophecies of soon-approaching judgment (cf. Isa. 13:6; Jer. 4:8; 25:34; Ezek. 30:2; Joel 1:5, 11, 13): "Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you! Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire!" (James 5:1-3a). St. James reminded them of the utter folly of placing any hope in their material possessions: "It is in the Last Days that you have stored up your treasure!" (v. 3b). Of all times in history not to trust in wealth, this was it; and, as St. James indicated, it was precisely this sin that led directly to their downfall. Because they disbelieved the prophecies of Christ, and wanted to hang on to their real estate until the last possible moment, they failed to abandon Jerusalem in time. Those who believed in Christ were saved; but by the time the unbelievers tried to leave the doomed city, it was too late.

In addition to all the normal horrors that fell upon the Jews in Jerusalem during the Great Tribulation – the frenzied mobs rushing from house to house ransacking them for food, the throat-slashing terrorists who literally made the streets flow with blood, the unspeakable methods of torture used to discover hidden rations, the heaps of bodies everywhere – Josephus recorded the fate of those who tried to escape with their wealth by deserting to the Romans. In order to avoid discovery, many refugees swallowed their gold coins. But when one man was spotted picking gold coins from his excrement, a rumor spread among the Roman armies that the Jews were literally stuffed with

gold; so instead of welcoming the deserters, the soldiers began catching them and slicing their bellies open in order to search their intestines. Josephus tells us that this atrocity, repeatedly committed over a lengthy period, "was indeed the cruellest calamity that befell the Jews; actually in a single night no fewer than two thousand were ripped up" (The Jewish War, v.xiii.4). This was the wrong time, surely, to put faith in wealth!

St. James continued his denunciation of the wealthy oppressors: "Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived luxuriously on the Land and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous man; he does not resist you" (James 5:4-6; cf. Ezek. 16:49; Jer. 25:34). The rulers of Israel refused to honor those whom the Lord had appointed as harvesters in His field to gather in the elect (Matt. 9:37-38; 24:30-31; Mark 4:26-29; John 4:35-36; Rev. 14: 14-16); instead, they condemned the righteous (cf. James 2:6) and put them to death. Jesus had spoken a series of parables about this very crime, citing it as the reason why the Kingdom would be taken from Israel; and St. Matthew tells us that "when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them" (Matt. 21:45). Yet they stubbornly rejected the warning, revelling in their supposed security from danger, living a life of luxury that only fattened them for the slaughter. The Lord of Sabaoth [Hosts, Armies] was about to bring His legions, heavenly and earthly, against the enemies of His Church.

In the certainty of this approaching judgment, St. James exhorted the oppressed and persecuted believers to persevere in the faith: "Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the Coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until he gets the early and late rains. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the Coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not complain, brethren, against one another, that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door!" (James 5:7-9). Israel's destruction would remove the greatest obstacle to the Church's worldwide victory; the Fall of Jerusalem would signify the redemption of the New Covenant people (Luke 21:28).

First or Final Advent?

While some expositors seek to read this passage in terms of Christ's return at the end of the world, everything in the text argues for a preterist (A. D. 70) interpretation. St. James is not warning the rich persecutors that their wealth will rot away by the year 2000 (or, for that matter, the year Two Million) – any Pharisee worth his tassels could have told

him that much. Nor is he telling the persecuted believers of the first century to be patient for thousands of years. The clear impression **he** gives his readers is that they are to expect *imminent judgment* — bringing imminent wrath for the oppressors and imminent blessing for the Church. Consider his words again:

v. 7 — Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the Coming of the Lord!

v. 8 — The Coming of the Lord is at hand!

v. 9 — The Judge is standing right at the door!

There is no reason to have an end-of-the-world fetish about the word *Coming (parousia)*. It is used throughout the Bible with reference to God's special presence in judgment and salvation (Isa. 13:9; 19:1; 26:21; 63:1; Joel 2:1; Mic. 1:3; Zech. 9:9; 14:1; Mal. 3:2; 4:1, 5; Matt. 26:64; Mark. 14:62). The definitive Coming, of course, was the Ascen-

sion of Christ, when He came before the Ancient of Days to receive His eternal and universal Kingdom (Dan. 7:13-14). It is this Coming toward which all other comings pointed, and of which the destruction of Jerusalem was the revelation (**Matt. 24:30**). The Ascension was the summary, the essence, of the First Advent of Christ. The Holocaust of **A.D. 70** was not the "Second Coming," but the application and fulfillment of the First Coming, the glorious enthronement of the Mediator.

In his epistle, St. James obviously had his own contemporary situation in mind. These were the Last Days, the final years of privation as the Old Covenant faded away in the approaching brilliance of the New Covenant, the age of fulfillment. The early rain of Pentecost had showered the Church with the gifts and blessings of the Spirit; but that was only the beginning. The "late rain," the fullness of the Kingdom, was on the way.

Re-Thinking Discipleship (I)

by RAY R. SUTTON

For several years I have been forced to **re-think** discipleship. The last two months have brought several situations to my attention that indicate a serious problem. One involved the collapse a major "discipleship pyramid," touching "hundreds" of **lives** and leaving many of them wondering, "What's next?" The other surfaced just today, as I was thinking about how I would approach this article.

A pastor friend of mine told me how he had come in contact with the widow of the founder of one of the leading discipleship programs in **Evangelicalism**. Just after my friend graduated from seminary, his first pastorate took him to a town where this widow and her daughter were living. The daughter had just married a full-time staffer with the organization her father created. My fellow pastor had had great respect for this man, and in many ways, he should have. But to his surprise, both mother and daughter were bitter. Why? **The husband had forsaken his family to build disciples.** The wife was so bitter she could not hardly talk about the organization. The daughter's marriage was a wreck.

I could go on and on with stories like these. I have seen, heard of, and dealt with similar situations. This particular organization above is "notorious" for its abused marriages, all in the name of "discipleship."

Am I against discipleship? No! [I think it has a definite **role** in the Church. I believe discipleship programs, and even the **one** mentioned above, have **re-shaped** the Church in many positive respects, converting and training probably millions. So, why am I pulling "skeletons out of the closet," hanging

out someone's dirty laundry?

Discipleship needs to be **re-thought**. There are serious problems that I have observed as a pastor. Although I appreciate the great support-work of the discipleship "menu," someone has to start trying to figure out why, (a) so many marriages are destroyed by present day "high-powered" discipleship, particularly among the leadership, **and** (b) why the big discipleship pyramids inevitably tumble, leaving mountains of spiritual carnage behind. This brief article is an attempt to initiate some of this **re-thinking**.

I've never read anyone who even ventured to attack this Evangelical "sacred cow." Only recently have I begun to hear pastors say, "Perhaps we had better be careful with discipleship . . . Maybe we had better **re-think** . . . I'm not sure the long-term results are as promising as they were cranked up to be." So, I will admit that I am on "virgin soil." Maybe I am completely off base. I hope **not**, but all I want to do is start the "ball rolling." I will begin with the **problem**, and then, in the next article, move to the **solution**.

Problem: Homosexual Model

The most serious flaw in modern discipleship thinking is that, for the most part, it is based on a **Greek**, or Eastern, model. Both are one in the same. What do I mean? The Greek model grows out of a pagan concept of "hero." The pagan hero was "invested with the being of a deity," making him an incarnation of the gods. Originally, the Olympic Games were created to determine the new "heroes," or **gods**. These humanistic gods were

worshiped and even established their own “followings.” This led to a “perverted” relationship, often resulting in homosexuality and lesbianism (in the case of goddesses).

This is precisely what the Apostle Paul says to the Church at Rome. Idolatry and homosexuality have a close relationship. Any time the creation is deified, a perverted affection develops called homosexuality (Rom. 1:18-28). The origin of this perversion goes all the way back to the Fall of mankind. Genesis 3 portrays the sexes at war with one another. Then, when God exposed them, His interrogation “flushed-out” hostility, each blaming the other for his disobedience. From this we should conclude that idolatry causes tension between the sexes!

Here is the relationship between the “Greek-heroic” model and discipleship. Discipleship sometimes subtly builds a relationship on the “deification of the disciple.” I have seen it happen time and again. The “discipler” appears to be like a “spiritual hero.” Now I don’t have anything against true Biblical heroes; I think there are such people in the Bible and Church history. But the discipler often unconsciously allows himself to take the place of God. How?

It is a combination of two things: One, the new convert is prone to worship the creation. After all, he just converted from idolatry. Believing in men instead of God comes naturally. Two, the discipler allows to be perpetuated, or actually perpetuates, an overly dependent relationship. The “one-to-one” approach is almost destined to become too much of a “paternalistic” connection. I agree that this type of relationship is sometimes necessary on a temporary basis, but the great danger is that the discipler becomes a “god,” standing on a pedestal that can only be brought down through the shattering reality that the discipler is only “human.”

Two serious problems chronically emerge.

First, *the family of one or the other is too often shattered*. Discipler and disciple share things in life that ought to be confined to *marriage*. To put it another way, intimate “affections,” although not physical, end up being exchanged. Too tight of a bond develops, threatening each other’s marriage. The spouses of these people in discipleship will eventually become jealous, and so they should. Jealousy is not sinful. What is often translated “jealousy” in the New Testament is really *envy*. The person’s first responsibility to the Lord is to the family, not the disciple. But often this gets twisted around.

Second, discipleship often leaves out the *weak*. When Esau returned to meet Jacob, a great re-

union took place. Esau was so encouraged that he wanted Jacob to *join his band of 400 men*. Jacob’s response is significant. He told Esau, “My lord (Esau) knows that the children are frail and that the flocks and herds which are nursing are a care to me Please let me proceed . . . according to the pace of the children” (Gen. 33-14). It appears to me that discipleship is often like Esau, wanting to charge ahead with the band of 400 strong men, leaving the weak ones behind. Significantly, we see again that it is the children, the family, that gets left behind. Jacob wouldn’t go because of his commitment to his family. Sure he and Esau could have done “great things for God,” conquering new enemies. But he understood that his first loyalty was not to his brother but his family.

I think, in addition, that we can extend this principle to be applied to those who *don’t move at the pace of others*. Often, discipleship programs are like “Standard Achievement” tests, geared for a certain type of person. The fact is, no one can create a discipleship “agenda” that will service even the simple majority of people. The Bible talks in such a way to include all types of people at all different levels. The Christian life is not and cannot be reduced to three, four, five, or even the magical number of “seven” things to do daily or whatever. Discipleship programs tend to specify things that the Bible doesn’t: How much and when to pray, read the Bible, etc. They lean in toward the *reduction* of the Christian life down to elements that are narrower than the Bible’s agenda. The attempt to create “balanced, mature” Christians often does anything but that, excluding many of the unfortunate who just don’t want to play the game according to the discipler’s agenda.

As it turns out in the story of Jacob and Esau, those “children” were the future, the real “strong ones.” So, the ones Esau perceived to be the warriors turned out to be the losers. The same application can be made to discipleship programs that purport to be and try to accomplish too much. Their exclusivity leaves out perceived “weak ones.” Again it must be stressed that the real problem here is the discipler’s taking on decisions that only God can make, namely, setting the agenda for “spirituality.”

This concludes the overview of the *problem*. I know it is negative. I hope the reader will keep in mind that I am not against discipleship, true Biblical heroes, or close friendships. To prove my point, the next article will turn to the positive side. What is the Biblical model of discipleship? How does it work? Who is involved? These are a few of the questions I will answer next time.

Studies in Genesis One: Heaven and Earth

by JAMES B. JORDAN

"In the beginning, God created ~~the~~ heavens and ~~the~~ earth," says Genesis 1:1. The word "heaven" only occurs in the **plural** in Hebrew, and so there is no implication in Genesis 1:1 of more than one heaven at this point. In other words, "the heavens" is the same as "heaven."

This heaven is the "highest" or "third" heaven. In Genesis 1:8, God created the "firmament" within the earth, and called it "heaven." **The stars** were placed in this "firmament heaven," and birds are said to **fly** in it (**Gen. 1:17, 20**). Thus, both the atmospheric heavens and "outer space" were not established until later in the week, and are actually part of the original "earth" of Genesis 1:1.

The heaven created in Genesis 1:1, then, is the special throne house of God. It exists (to use the language of science fiction) in another dimension from earth, infinitely near to us, yet also infinitely far away.

The Bible shows us quite a lot about heaven. In fact, if we do not understand heaven, we cannot do our work here on earth, for we pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." If we do not know what heaven is like, we cannot imitate it on earth. Thus, as Meredith G. Kline has shown at considerable length, the Bible frequently opens heaven to give man a view of what it is like. "Ezekiel's visions of the divine Glory (**Ezk. 1:1ff.; 3:12ff.; 10:1ff.; 11:22ff.; 43:2ff.**) are, of course, a good place to start, but once it is determined that the Glory is a revelational modality of heaven, every biblical unveiling of the scene of the heavenly throne and the divine council becomes a source for our envisaging of the divine presence. . . ."¹

It is when heaven is opened that **the** law of God is revealed. But more than that, the pattern Moses is given on the mountain top includes art, architecture, **worship**, and indeed all of life. The Tabernacle and the Temple were both architectural heaven-models, for **instance**.² Similarly, in the book of Revelation John is shown how worship is conducted in heaven, as a model for earthly worship.³ Thus, heaven is the model or blueprint for earth, though not in a simplistic sense. After all, ~~t~~he Tabernacle and the Temple were not identical. There is unity and diversity in man's imitation of heaven. Man is to labor to take the raw material of the earth and remodel it according to the heavenly

blueprint: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

This explains to us why God would initially create two different environments, rather than just one. Man was created to act as God's agent, His son, in the world. Man was going to be given the delightful task of transfiguring the world from glory to glory according to the heavenly model.

As we shall see in later essays, the "firmament heaven" was established as a kind of "crystalline" lens and boundary of heaven. It separated the "**blue** heavenly sea" (**Ex. 24:10; Ezk. 1:22, 26; Rev. 4:6; 15:2**) from the atmosphere of the earth; but being transparent, it afforded (**symbolically** at least) a glimpse of heaven, and thus is called "heaven" (**Gen. 1:8**).

To see into heaven, man would go to a mountaintop, close to the sky. The Garden of Eden was established as the highest place on earth for just this purpose. Man would go to the top, look at the **heavenly model**, and then descend to the **plain** to get to work. The importance of the "mountain theme" in Scripture can only be seen in the light of the bipolarity of heaven and earth. (Mountain theme: Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, Moses reception of the law; Elijah on Mt. **Carmel**; Sermon on the Mount; etc.)

The relation between heaven and earth is the truth that is perverted in all forms of "Platonism" or idealism. In **Christianity**, the **personal** Triune God is the unchanging source of the pattern or ideal that man is to imitate. It is man's task to labor with the **world** to bring it to its **fulness** — man is the "demiurge," if you will. In Platonism, the heavenly model is made ultimate, and "god" as **well** as man must labor to remake the world according to these impersonal heavenly ideals.

In Platonism, then, the impersonal heavenly ideals are eternal, while in Christianity, heaven is a creation of the eternal and personal God. More than that, heaven itself is a real **environment**, inhabited by angels and the spirits of departed saints. Finally, for Christianity the relationship between heaven and earth is not static but dynamic. With the ascension of Jesus Christ in a transfigured body into heaven, there is a "new heavens and earth." As we shall see, the one thing in Genesis 1 that is not called "good" (because it has not come to its **fulness**) is the "firmament" boundary between heaven and earth. The ultimate issue of history is for that boundary to be dissolved in the **new creation**.⁴

1. Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), p. 17, n. 13. Kline's entire book deals with this matter, one way or another.

2. See Kline, *Images*, especially chapter 2.

3. See James B. Jordan, *The Sociology of the Church* (Tyler, TX: Geneva Ministries, 1986). Coming in Spring.

4. On the history of earth and heaven, try to find a copy of Klaas Schilder, *Heaven What Is It?* (Grand Rapids: Ferdmans, 1950).

The Doctrine of the Word of God

(No. 8)

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.")

H. *The Functions of the Word in and for Creation*

In I, above, we have been talking about God's speech as such, whether uttered purely in reference to himself (*ad intra*, necessary speech) or having some reference to the creation (*ad extra*, free speech). Now we focus particularly on the latter category and ask about the various works that God's word performs in creation and for creation. The three creation-functions will correspond roughly to the triad "meaning, power, self-expression" that we considered in section I above. Since the word is the powerful, meaningful self-expression of God, and since God is related to creation as Lord (cf. Introductory section), the word functions in and for creation as the self-expression of God's *lordship*. The threefold function outlined below, therefore, parallels the "lordship attributes."

A. *The Word as God's Decree*

As Lord, God controls all things, and controls them by his speech. As we have seen (I. C. 2. c), all of God's actions **are performed** by his word, his speech. His "**decretive will**," therefore, by which he controls the whole course of nature and history, is a function of

his word. Everything happens because God has ordered it to happen by his word (**Eph. 1:11**).

B. *The Word as God's Address*

1. God not only controls **all** things, but he also speaks to his creatures. Only in biblical religion does the highest being, the ultimate being, confront us in personal address. Truly all the gods of the nations are "dumb." And those of non-Christian philosophy.
2. The biblical story, from Genesis to Revelation, is a story of God's address to man and man's response to that address, in obedience or disobedience. God calls his people to govern their lives by reference to this address (cf. below, VII on "authority").
3. The norm for man's life **is** not God's decree ("secretive will") but his address "receptive will". This fact is obvious: God wishes us to base our lives upon what he has said to us, not to someone else; and what he has said to us is his **address** to us. Much of the "**decretive will**" is secret (though not all). We do not know precisely how God will govern the world over the next, say, ten years. God does not want us to rely ultimately on our fallible forecasts concerning the future, but upon his commands and promises. E.g., we preach the gospel not because we are sure that God will save this or that person, but because God has commanded us to preach.

Answereth by Orphanages

by GEORGE GRANT

† In 1821, Dr. John **Rippon**, pastor of the New Park Street Chapel in Southwark, London, began a ministry to the homeless poor. A complex of almshouse was erected on a property adjacent to the church and the monumental task of **rehabilitation** was begun. **Rippon** wrote that,

Christian compassion is driven by a holy and zealous compulsion when sight **be** caught of deprived distress. Talk not of mild and **gentle** acts, of soft provisions and hesitant walk. Christian compassion knows only boldness and sacrifice. Lest we strike the Judas bargain and go the way of the goats, let us **invite** the

strangers in. Let us shelter the aliens beneath a covering of charity and **Christlikeness**.

When Charles Haddon Spurgeon succeeded **Rippon** to the pastorate of New Park Street Chapel in 1854, the work with the poor continued unabated. When the church moved to larger facilities in 1861, it was apparent to **Spurgeon** that the almshouse, **too**, would need to **be** moved into **larger** and more up-to-date facilities. Therefore, **he** launched the construction of a new building for them. According to press reports at the **time**, "no greater effort has ever been expended on behalf of the city's destitute."

The new structure consisted of seventeen small homes which, in the manner of the times, were joined together in an unbroken row. There, in **homestyle** fashion, the poor were not only sheltered, but also provided with food, clothing, and other necessities. In succeeding years, a school, an orphanage, and a hospital were added, each an expression of that holy and zealous compulsion: Christian compassion.

Both Rippon and Spurgeon looked upon their work of sheltering the homeless as part and parcel with the rest of their ministry. It was inseparable from their other labors: preaching, writing, praying, and evangelizing. It was inseparable, in fact, from their faith in Christ.

Once a doubter accosted Spurgeon on a London thoroughfare and challenged the authenticity

of his faith. Spurgeon answered the man by pointing out the failure of the secularists in mounting a practical and consistent program to help the needy thousands of the city. **In** contrast, he pointed to the multitudinous works of compassion that had sprung from faith in Christ: Whitefield's mission, Mueller's orphanage, **Bernardo's** shelter. He then closed the conversation by paraphrasing the victorious cry of Elijah, boisterously asserting, "The God who **answereth** by orphanages, LET HIM BE **GOD!**"

(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.)

Fat Christians in an Age of Anorexia

by JAMES B. JORDAN

In a delightful essay, R. J. Rushdoony has boldly spoken the truth about fat:

Fat in Scripture both literally and symbolically usually represented wealth. The pure fat or suet of an animal belonged to God as an offering (**Lev. 3:16, 17**). This requirement applied only to the pure fat (**Lev. 3:3, 9**), not to fat mixed with lean meat, which was to be eaten with pleasure (**Neh. 8:10**). The fat belonging to God was to be burned on the altar as a sweet savor.

Symbolically, fat is almost as important as blood, which is the life of the flesh (**Lev. 17:14**). In Scripture, fat is the sign of healthiness and vigor, of prosperity. In the active, working society of ancient Israel, fat on a person was not normally thought of as a morbid development but a mark of reserve strength and added vitality. Modern medicine gives us a one-sided view of fat. Expressions such as "the fat of the land" (**Gen. 45:18**), "the fat of the mighty," meaning their power and strength (**II Sam. 1:22**), "the fat of the kidneys and wheat" (**Deut. 32:14**), "they shall be fat and flourishing" (**Ps. 92:14**), and other passages (**Prov. 13:4; 15:30**; etc.) attest to the virtue and symbolic nature of fat.

However, morbid fat is referred to in Psalm 17:10: "They are enclosed in their own fat," so that Scripture is aware of both aspects of the matter.

(This essay was originally published in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, 1972, long out of print and unavailable. The publisher is listed as The National Foundation for Christian Education, **Marshallton**, Delaware. If anyone knows where copies of this are to be had, or how to contact the publisher, Geneva Ministries would be grateful for any leads.)

This juicy morsel of *symbolic analysis* has delighted an inner core of **Reconstructionist illuminati** since its initial issuance. Only a select handful of cognoscenti have had access to it — until now. At **last**, however, you, courteous reader, have been given access to these symbolic mysteries.

A couple of more serious points arise from **Rushdoony's** observations. Clearly, the modern ideal of beauty — skin and bones — is out of step with Biblical revelation. More than that, the phenomenon of food-rejection, called anorexia **ner-vosa**, ties in with this. As Alexander Schmemmann has noted, eating is fundamental to man, and a meal is the great sign of communion with God. (And, bread and wine are not exactly **low** in calories, either.) Those who reject God, who **reject** His food, move in the direction of rejecting God's good creation, and all food. Thus, a society moving in a pagan direction not only comes to prize skinniness, but also finds itself plagued with **self-starving** teenagers.

Let there be fat!

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