



A Presuppositional Approach to Worship

by PETER LEITHART

The following presuppositions are accepted by Cornelius Van Til's disciples everywhere. No attempt is made here to defend them exegetically. Instead, I merely state the presupposition and draw several implications concerning worship. It is my contention that the best instincts of Presbyterian thinking concerning worship are in the direction of liturgy. (I am using "liturgy" in the broadest sense of a form of worship that is structured both in its language and in its broad pattern or "shape.") Liturgy was abandoned in Reformed churches only under the influence of **baptistic** and **semi-baptistic** thought. I am concentrating my attention on corporate public worship, not individual private worship.

1. **Worship is God-centered.** This follows from the basic Reformed contention that **all** man's activity is directed to the glory of God. The **theocentric** nature of life comes to a focus in worship because here we approach God directly. The implications of this are revolutionary for our understanding of what we are doing in worship. First, it qualifies the primacy of preaching in the worship service. Formal worship is not intended primarily for instruc-

tion or individual edification. It is paying homage to God; it is offering ourselves to Him; it is a sacrifice of praise. Even the sermon is not intended primarily to instruct, but to lead us to worship. Second, this presupposition shifts the focus of worship from experience to act. Worship is an act that we perform before our Lord. Certainly, we experience joy and peace and excitement in the midst of the act, but the experience is not primary.

2. **Man is a unified being.** Man is not a duality of spirit and body. Matter is not evil, as it is in the **Manichaeon** view. Instead, man as man is good; and man as man is to offer himself entire to his Lord. Thus, physical action is an essential part of worship. To worship "in Spirit" does not mean to eschew any physical activity. If this were our Lord's meaning, we would have to eliminate singing, for it involves the use of the tongue. On the contrary, every act of corporate worship described in Scripture included some form of physical action, whether singing, praying, speaking, standing, kneeling, lifting of the hands, clapping, or dancing. Unfortunately, Presbyterian worship usually involves as little physical activity as possible, thereby reinforcing a gnostic and Corinthian view that the actions of the body are indifferent.

An emphasis on the unity of man also undercuts the intellectualistic tendency of much Presbyterian worship. Presbyterian worship is so centered around language that other means of communication are excluded. Symbols, lighting, architecture, gestures (or the lack of these), all carry meaning that goes beyond the ability of rational language to convey. Scripture itself makes abundant use of symbols, and they can communicate more effectively than abstract theologizing. Thus, Scripture says that God is a Sun, a Shield, a Fortress, a *Rock, etc.* All places of worship carry symbolic meaning; the Presbyterian tradition of a centrally located pulpit is an obvious example. Because symbols are inevitable and highly meaningful, it seems appropriate to use them self-consciously. Bad symbols, like bad teaching, can be destructive of the faith.

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3. *Worship is an act of the Church.* The Church is Christ's body and reflects the equal ultimacy of the one and many found in the Trinity. Thus, worship is an act of a corporate entity, not simply of a collection of individuals. Thus, at least some physical acts in worship should be done corporately; for instance, all the participants kneel and **all** raise their hands. Each individual has special functions in worship; the elders for example have a special role (cf. Rev. 4-5). The Body of Christ is not made up solely of eyes or of tongues or of feet. But each individual's special task becomes meaningful in the corporate context. Moreover, this implies that corporate prayers are entirely appropriate. The plural pronouns of the Lord's Prayer indicate that prayer is meant to be a corporate act. In short, this presupposition implies that the members of the church participate in public worship. They are to worship, not to watch. This presupposition also undercuts any man-centered primacy of the pastor.

4. *There is no conflict between form and freedom.* The same argument from the Trinity applies here. Form sets the context for freedom. When is singing most free? when everyone sings whatever song he wishes, or when everyone follows the same verbal and musical form? The same is true in prayer. It is passing strange that Presbyterians, who rightly emphasize the need for discipline and order in every area of life, often argue in favor of spontaneity and self-expression in worship (at least on the part of the pastor).

5. *God is One and Three; He is both* Unity and Diversity; we might say He is both **simple** and complex. (I am not denying the doctrine of God's simplicity, which asserts that He is without parts or components. But God is not simple in the sense of "undifferentiated.") Complexity is built into creation because it characterizes God's essence. Thus, simple worship is not necessarily good worship. There is a simplicity to worship, to be sure: It is Christocentric. But there is also complexity at the very center because it is worship of the Triune God, who is Three and One. Either simplicity or complexity as a standard of worship is misguided. A bare-bones simplicity in worship is an implicit denial of the Trinity; but so also an incoherently complex worship service is an implicit **tritheism**, a denial of the unity of the Godhead.

Finally, I believe that *liturgy is inescapable.* Even the most unstructured churches have a broad pattern for worship. Even the most unstructured churches follow fairly strict patterns of language in prayer. The question, as R. J. Rushdoony so often has said concerning other areas, is not **whether** there is liturgy, but **which** liturgy. The issue is not liturgy or no liturgy, but good or bad liturgy.

(Peter **Leithart** is currently studying at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. He is the author of an important historical study, "Revivalism and American Protestantism," included in James Jordan, ed., ***The Reconstruction of the Church***, published by Geneva Ministries, \$12.95.)

Julian the Apostate

by GEORGE GRANT

When **Flavius Claudius Julianus** came to the Roman imperial throne in November 361 at the age of 31, the monkish philosopher-turned-statesman was instantly dubbed Julian "the Apostate."

As the nephew to Constantine, he was as a child instructed in theology, under the tutelage of **Nicomedia's** renowned Bishop **Eusebius**, and in classical philosophy, under the tutelage of **Edesius, Maximus**, and **Chrysanthius**. The intention was of course to train up the young **caesar** in a fully-orbed Christian academic environment as befitted a member of the royal family, raised in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord.

But sadly, because heresy had crept in virtually unchecked, Julian was **not** taught Christianity by Eusebius, for the Bishop himself was an **antinomian** and **unitarian Arian**. Nor was he taught orthodoxy by **Edesius, Maximus**, and **Chrysanthius**, for these philosophers were themselves **Elensians** or **Mithraists**. So, the Christianity that Julian was taught as a child, the church in which he was cate-

chized, was anything but representative of the Biblical faith.

By the time he had reached adulthood, Julian utterly rejected this false version of Christianity. Unfortunately, because it was the **only** version of Christianity that he knew, he embraced paganism as the **only** appropriate alternative. He reinstated the pagan rituals, reopened the pagan temples, and sponsored many a pagan enterprise. Thus his regal moniker: "Julian the Apostate."

Since he fondly thought of himself as the heir to the Hellenist philosophers, Julian prided himself in his writing and his logic. Thus, in his essay, "Against the **Galileans**," he carefully outlined and systematized his reasons for abandoning Christianity. First, he criticized the antinomianism of the church of his day. "Why do you not accept the law which God gave . . . ?," he asked. "You assert that the earlier law . . . was limited in time and place. But I could quote to you from the books of Moses, not merely ten, but ten thousand passages where he

says the law is for all time." The **standardless**, lawless, **anticeedalism** of Arian Christianity, which turned the grace of God into licentiousness, seemed to him to be utter hypocrisy. Little did he know that the Bible too has no patience with such **antinomianism**. Thus was Christ rejected, because of a **Christless** Christianity.

Second, Julian criticized the nominalism of the church of his day. He wrote, "No religion can hope to win and move the common soul unless it clothes its moral doctrine in a splendor of marvel, devotion, and ritual, thus the necessity of sensory symbolism to convey spiritual ideas." Because **Arianism** was anti-liturgical and anti-clerical in its essence, Julian could easily see its bankruptcy. Again though, little did he know that here too, the Bible took the side of **ecclesiasticalism** over the **extemporaneity** of Arianism. Once again, his rejection of Christ came over an issue caused by a Christless

Christianity.

The greatest tragedy in this whole historical episode is not simply that one man, a brilliant man, a powerful man, apostatized, but that the error has been repeated again and again, even into our own time. The fact is that modern manipulators of the truth are, like **Eusebius, Edesius, Maximus, and Chrysanthius**, attempting to pass off an **antinomian** extemporaneous imitation of Christianity as the real thing. And, all our New Age **Julians** are rejecting Christ, all for the sake of a Christless Christianity.

(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 "Rapture" and the Ascension

by DAVID CHILTON

After these things I looked, and behold, a door open in heaven, and the first Voice that I had heard, like a trumpet speaking with me, said: "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things." Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a Throne was standing in heaven. . . . (Rev. 4:1-2)

The Dispensationalist school of interpretation generally appeals to this as a proof-text for the "Rapture" Theory, arguing that after St. John's "rapture" into heaven the word **church** does not occur again in Revelation until after the Second Coming (usually placed in Revelation 19:11). This is taken to mean that the Church itself is absent from all the exciting events of Revelation, having been "raptured" with St. John. Now, this is a curious principle of interpretation; on the basis of such a hermeneutic we could say with assurance that Revelation doesn't tell us anything about Jesus either until chapter 12, because the name **Jesus** does not occur until then – thus "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" and "the Lamb that was slain" (Rev. 5:5-6) must be terms for someone else. (This principle can be fruitfully **applied** elsewhere in Scripture as **well**. For example, the word **love** does not appear anywhere in the Book of Ruth; thus her story turns out not to be, after all, one of the greatest romances in the Bible, for Boaz and Ruth did not love each other. Again, the word God does not appear in the book of Esther; on these principles, He must not have been involved with those events, and the book must not tell us anything about Him. In addition, the first fifteen chapters of **Paul's** letter to the Romans do not concern the Church, for the word

Church doesn't appear there **either!**)

Of course, this method of interpretation involves even more problems for the **Dispensationalist**: for *the word "Church" never again appears in the entire Book of Revelation at all!* This interpretation of the words *Come up here* does not, therefore, support the **pretribulation rapture** of the Church; it possibly even teaches the **pretribulation annihilation** of the Church. After the last verse in Revelation 3, the Church simply disappears, and is never heard from again.

Obviously, this is not true. The Church is known by numerous names and descriptions throughout the Bible (about 96 in the New Testament alone), and the mere fact that the single **term** "Church" does not appear is no indication that the **concept** of the Church is not present. Those who see in this verse some "rapture" of the Church are importing it into the text. The only one "raptured" is St. John himself.

Nevertheless, we must also recognize that St. John does ascend to a worship service on the Lord's Day; and this is a clear image of the **weekly** Ascension of the Church into heaven every Lord's Day where she joins in the communion of saints and angels "in festal array" (**Heb. 12:22-23**) for the heavenly liturgy. The Church acts out St. John's experience every Sunday at the **Sursum Cords**, when the **officiant** (reflecting Christ's words *Come up here!*) cries out, *Lift up your hearts!*, and the congregation sings in response, *We lift them up to the Lord!*

"The Church is an earthly heaven," wrote St. **Germanus** of Constantinople: "The souls of Christians are **called** together to assemble with the prophets, **apostles**, and **hierarchs** in order to recline

with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the mystical banquet of the Kingdom of Christ. Thereby having come into the unity of faith and communion of the Spirit through the dispensation of the One who died for us and is sitting at the right hand of the Father, we are no longer on earth but standing by the royal Throne of God in heaven, where Christ is, just as He Himself says: 'Righteous Father, sanctify in Your name those whom You gave me, so that where I am, they may be with Me' (cf. John 17)" (*On the Divine Liturgy*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, p. 101). John Calvin agreed: "In order that pious souls may duly apprehend Christ in the Supper, they must be raised up to heaven. . . . And for the same reason it was established of old that before consecration the people should be told in a loud voice to lift up their hearts" (*Institutes*, 4:17:36).

St. John tells us also that he was *in the Spirit*. This is a technical prophetic expression, referring not to his own subjective feelings but to his objective experience as an inspired receiver of divine revelation. Being "in the Spirit" was the special privilege of the Biblical prophets. Summarizing his extensive research on this point, Meredith Kline writes: "Adam's creation as image-reflector of the glory of the Creator-Spirit was recapitulated in the history of the prophets. The critical event in the formation of a prophet was a transforming encounter with the Glory-Spirit from which the prophet emerged as a man reflecting the divine Glory. . . . To be caught up in the Spirit was to be received into the divine assembly, the heavenly reality within the theophanic Glory-Spirit. The hall-

mark of the true prophet **was** that he had stood before the Lord of Glory in the midst of this deliberative council of angels" (*Images of the Spirit*, Baker, 1980, pp. 57f.).

But, with the coming of the New Covenant, what was once the special prerogative of the prophetic class within the covenant community has become the privilege of all. The desire of Moses—"Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit on **them!**" (**Num. 11:29**)—has been fulfilled in the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:17-21**). Just as Moses (the prophet *par excellence* of the Old Covenant) was uniquely privileged to speak with God face to face (**Num. 12:6-8**), partaking of His glory (**Ex. 34:33-35**), so now "we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (**2 Cor. 3:18**). Every believer has received the prophetic anointing (**1 John 2:20, 27**); and every week we ascend in the Spirit into the heavenly assembly.

In part, therefore, the "Rapture" Theory is based on a misunderstanding of the Christian doctrine of the Ascension of the Church. The *definitive* Ascension took place *positionally* with Jesus Christ, in whom we are seated in the heavenlies (**Eph. 1:20; 2:6**); the *progressive* (experiential) Ascension takes place *liturgically* with Jesus Christ every week, in the celebration of the Eucharist (**Heb. 12:22-24**); and the *final* (culminative) Ascension takes place *eschatologically* with Christ a) spiritually, at death (**Rev. 20:4**), and b) bodily, at the end of history (**1 Cor. 15:50-55; 1 Thess. 4:17**).

Jesus and Divorce: The Problem with the Evangelical Consensus

reviewed by RAY R. SUTTON

The authors are William Heth, instructor at Dallas Theological Seminary, and Gordon J. Wenham, teacher at St. Paul and St. Mary in Cheltenham, England.

The most recent, and most thorough-going to date, treatment of the "divorce and remarriage" issue is *Jesus and Divorce*. From the subtitle, the book is polemical in tone. These authors, although Gordon Wenham did not write the book (only "edited and amplified" [Preface]), are concerned to offset the evangelical "consensus."

What is this "consensus"? From their point of view, it is the widespread approval of *divorce and remarriage*. Heth and Wenham believe in *divorce* for adultery and desertion, but not in *remarriage* for any reason except the physical *death* of the spouse.

The purpose of the book is threefold: (1) to

present the various interpretations of Jesus's comments on divorce; (2) to critique and refute the "Erasmian" interpretation of Jesus's statements, "originating in the sixteenth century" (p. 16), and popularized in this century by John Murray, *Divorce* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972); and (3) to present the authors' own personal view, which they believe is the solution to the "rising problems of divorce and remarriage among evangelical Christians" (p. 17).

Strengths

1. *The Summary of Views*. The greatest value of the book is its summary of some of the basic positions taken regarding divorce and remarriage. Six basic views are sketched.

The first is the *Early Church View*. Several Apostolic and Church Fathers are cited to make the

case that the **early Church** and Church councils believed in **no remarriage**. I have some reservations, presented later, about **Heth's** handling of the early Fathers.

Second is the **Erasmian View**. Heth argues, and [I think fairly accurately at this point, that Erasmus and the other Reformers interpreted Jesus's use of **porneia** (fornication) in Matthew 5:32 to include adultery and even desertion as just causes for not only divorce, but remarriage as well. **Heth's** basic criticism is that Jesus's "exception clause" applies **only** to the matter of divorce, and not to remarriage.

Third is the **Unlawful Marriage View**. Although there are a couple of variations, this position **basically** argues that **porneia** means "incest" (1 Cor. 5:1). Therefore, **Jesus** is referring to marriages that violate the Old Testament laws of "consanguinity and affinity" (**Lev. 18:6-18**). In other words, Jesus is not providing an exception clause for divorce, but a marriage that was **unlawful** from the beginning. Heth properly criticizes the definition of **porneia** as being too narrow. As Greg **Bahnsen** has pointed out, the word can refer to any number of "shameful sexual practices," incest being included (**Theonomy In Christian Ethics** [Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1977], pp. 104ff., 131n).

Fourth is the **Betrothal View**. This position argues that the exception clause of Matthew 5:32 refers to the "betrothal period." Basic support is the context of Matthew, specifically Matthew 1:18-25, where Joseph was willing to "put away" Mary, but did not have her put to death. The argument is that if **porneia** meant adultery, then Old Testament law would have required the death penalty. Joseph was a "just" man, willing to divorce his wife, but he did not have her tried and put to death. Conclusion: The divorce in question would have been "betrothal," not marital divorce. Again, the problem here is that a lexical study of **porneia** does not support this theory.

Fifth is the **Preteritive View**. Most students of the subject are not familiar with this position. It says that the exception clause of Matthew 5:32 begins with a particle that is basically a euphemism meaning, "no comment." In fact the view is sometimes called the "no comment" view. So, Jesus would be saying in this verse, "I say to you everyone who divorces his wife, no comment on fornication, makes her commit adultery." The problem is that there is insufficient **grammatical** support for this interpretation.

Sixth is the **Traditio-Historical View** which says the exception clause was added by Matthew (or some other redactor) to deal with contemporary problems in the early church, and not part of Jesus's original comments. Not much time is spent on this view because the evidence is spurious and basically conjectural.

2. **Bibliography**. The second strength of the

book is its bibliography. **Anyone wishing** to work through the issue will find the basic sources, ancient and modern, that need to be consulted.

Weaknesses

1. **Treatment of the Early Church**. I think **Heth's** interpretation of the early Fathers is too superficial. He too quickly writes off the history of Roman Catholic Canon Law, and other factors that blur what he thinks is a crystal-clear interpretation of the early Fathers. In other words, the Fathers' "interpretation" of divorce and remarriage is a highly debated matter of interpretation. For example, Heth even draws attention to the fact that Erasmus maintained that **Origen**, one whom Heth interpreted to be against remarriage, believed in remarriage (p. 77). Erasmus should be weighed heavily against other interpreters of the Fathers, because he was not only closer to the early church period, but also he was one of the greatest scholars of classical literature. Furthermore, Erasmus was a member of a Church that strongly held to the "indissolubility" of "sacramental marriage."

Here is another problem with **Heth's** understanding of the Fathers. He gives no treatment of the Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox views. Considering the fact that these bodies **were essentially the Church** for 1500 years, one would think that a book which purports to summarize views of divorce would at least tell us something about their positions. Rome, for example, does not believe a true marriage has been formed unless it is between two Catholics, baptized and communicated in the Roman Catholic Church. This leaves open many loopholes.

Also, Heth fails to consider the "civil context" of the early church. Erasmus's and the Reformers' position was that if the civil magistrate put to death all those who committed homosexuality, witchcraft, bestiality, adultery, etc., then there would virtually be no such thing as divorce per se. Anyone married to such an offender would be able to remarry after his (or her) spouse had been put to death. Indeed, this was basically the "civil context" of the early church. But when the magistrate becomes lax, Erasmus and the Reformers believed **allowances** should be made by the Church.

2. **Theological Criticism**. First of all, any book that approaches this subject from the point of view of "Jesus and divorce" has virtually tipped its theological hand. Since Heth is a Dispensationalist, I'm not surprised, but I think this greatly weakened his study. **Jesus** says in the same sermon where He addresses divorce, "I did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets" (Matt. 5:19). Therefore, any study on Jesus's comments should seriously consider the Old Testament theological presuppositions that **Jesus was operating under!** Heth didn't.

Furthermore, the bottom-line of **Heth's** presupposition is that the marriage bond is "indissoluble" on the basis of Jesus's comment, "What God has

joined together, **let no man separate**" (Matt. 19:3-8). This is a serious misapplication of Jesus' words. First of all, unless someone believes marriage is eternal, he does not believe marriage is "indissoluble." Second, the verse does not say man "cannot" separate the marriage bond, but that he "shouldn't." The difference is crucial. So, man can kill the marriage **union**. The important question becomes, therefore, "What kills the marriage bond?"

Furthermore, to argue "indissolubility" mandates philosophical **realism**, in that such a line of reasoning would have to maintain that physical union of a marriage creates a bond that can only be **physically** broken through physical death. I've yet to see a "protestant" interpreter consider this difficult theological problem.

Indeed, in a recent work, Theodore Mackin, *Divorce and Remarriage: Marriage in the Catholic Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), the author says, the "indissolubility doctrine is a 12th century invention," subsequent to the appearance of the doctrine of (realist) transubstantiation in the Western Church.

3. **Stylistic Criticism.** The book is well researched, but poorly written. It has the feel of John Murray, himself a great theologian but horrible writer. Also, nowhere in the book is there a clear summary of the authors' view. This severely damages the overall presentation.

4. **Exegetical Problems.** Genesis 2:24: This is the "leave, cleave, one flesh" verse. I found the exegesis here very unsatisfactory. Heth argues that the "one flesh" is **covenantal** (I agree), and therefore more than "physical" (pp. 101R.). Yet, he wants to argue for indissolubility until "physical death" dissolves the union. See the problem? If the original union is more than just physical, and it is indissoluble, then even physical death cannot dissolve the marriage. There is marriage in heaven. The doctrine of indissolubility always runs aground at this point. How does one, in other words, allow for dissolubility by physical death and still maintain strict indissolubility?

Deuteronomy 24:1-4: This is the passage **concerning** whether a remarried person can marry his former partner. Heth accurately raises the real issue, namely, "why can't the remarried person go back to the original partner?" Good question, and

there is a good summary, I should say, of the various attempts to answer the question (pp. 107 ff.). But Heth borrows from **Wenham** at this point. **Wenham's** view is that marriage creates a kind of "blood relationship" with the marriage partner. His basis is found in the language against incest (Lev. 18), which by the way is the same used in Deuteronomy 24. So, **Wenham** believes remarriage to the original partner is forbidden because it would be incestuous. If **Wenham** is right, then why wouldn't the first marriage have been incestuous? Again, I think one sees the problems associated with basing relationships on "physical or blood" union. This was precisely the nature of objections made by the Reformers, and why they collided at every point with philosophical realism.

Matthew 5:32: Heth tries to prove that the conditional clause, "except for the cause of fornication," can only refer to divorce, the first part of the verse, and not what follows. I believe that Murray has proven that there is a double **protasis**, meaning the exception clause applies to divorce as well as remarriage, the first as well as the end of the verse.

My comments about exegetical problems can only be cursory at this point. I will reserve additional detailed exegetical criticisms of Heth and **Wenham** for my own book on this subject: *Death Did Us Part: A Defense of the Innocent Partner*.

Finally, Heth and **Wenham** failed to interact with the important exegetical contributions of Dr. Greg **Bahnsen**, in *Theonomy*, and R. J. **Rushdoony**, *Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973), scholars of particular note in American evangelical circles for well over a decade (in Rushdoony's case, two decades). I consider this a major oversight on the authors' part, one that places their exegesis "behind the times."

In conclusion, I have confined my review to general criticisms. I think, however, the book will contribute to the "Divorce and remarriage debate." Definitely, pastors should read it, and maybe well-read laymen.

I regret that Gordon **Wenham's** name is on the book. Although it may represent his view, which I will respect, I think he should have stuck with his own work, which is concise, thorough, more carefully exegetical, and cogent.

Studies in Genesis One: Angels and Men

by JAMES B. JORDAN

A hymn of the Eastern churches, sung at the beginning of the communion liturgy, says, "Let us, the Cherubim mystically representing, and unto the Life-giving Trinity the thrice-holy chant intoning, all cares terrestrial now lay aside, that we may raise on high the King of all, like Conqueror on shield and spears, by the angelic hosts invisibly upborne. Alleluia." This hymn asserts that believers in the New Covenant are like the angels who guard the throne of God. When Adam rebelled and was cast from Eden, cherubic guardians were appointed in his place; but with the coming of the Son of Man, the keys of the kingdom are returned to human guardians.

We have seen that heaven is a model for the earth. Since angels are the original host of heaven, it is reasonable to infer that angels are, in some senses, models for humanity. To help us come to grips with this, it is useful to reflect on the creation and purpose of angels.

When were angels created? Because angels are associated with stars throughout the Bible (Job 38:7; Is. 14:13; Rev. 12:4), it might seem that angels were created on the fourth day, along with the stars. In the New Covenant, however, men are also associated with stars (Phil. 2:15; Rev. 1:20 — that the stars are men here is proved by the fact that the same right hand that upholds the stars also upholds the man John, Rev. 1:16, 17). Men were created the sixth day, not the same day as stars. Thus, the fact that angels are associated with stars does not serve to indicate which day they were created.

It is most likely that they were created in Genesis 1:1, right along with the heavens and earth, in one act. This is indicated by what God says to Job in Job 38:4-8. In verse 4, God refers to the actual creation of the earth itself: "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth!" He goes on in verses 5 and 6 to refer to the work of six days, the work of shaping and structuring: "Who set its measurements, since you know? Or who stretched the line on it? On what were its bases sunk?" Finally, referring to the angels, God says: "Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (verses 6b and 7). The cornerstone is the first part of the foundation, so that by returning to the cornerstone at the end of His list, God returns to the initial act of creating the earth. The angels were present to praise at that moment.

From this we can reasonably *guess* (without being dogmatic about it, obviously) that God created heaven and the angels instantly, and then created the primordial earth. Thus, Genesis 1:1 says, "heaven and earth," not vice versa, indicating not only that heaven is a model for the earth, but that it

was made first.

Angels were created a host, but not a race. Angels do not marry, and new angels do not emerge as time goes along. All the angels were created mature at one instant of time. Thus, angels did not emerge from formlessness, emptiness, and darkness.

It is quite otherwise with man. Being of the earth, earth y (1 Cor. 15:47), man is built up over time. The womb is empty until it is filled with a new man. During the nine months of pregnancy, the new man is in darkness, and is moving from (relative) formlessness to form, as Psalm 139 says, "Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb. . . . My bones were not hidden from Thee, when I was made in secret, skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth. Thine eyes have seen mine unformed substance" (vv. 13-16). While the Hebrew words used in Psalm 139 are not the same as those used in Genesis 1:2, the general idea is the same.

Yet it is the destiny of this *race* of men to mature into a holy *host*. Thus, the armies of God are spoken of as His host, and enlistment into that host at the age of 20 (Numbers 1) is an indication that a certain stage of maturity has been reached. Moreover, the fact that men are to mature from glory to glory, becoming ever more glorious in time, while the angels were created glorious at the outset, again indicates that the angelic host forms a picture of the goal of human maturation: from foetal "formlessness" to "angelic" glory. Thus, Jesus affirms that men, in their transfigured glory, are "like the angels in heaven," and "neither marry nor are given in marriage" (Matt. 22:30). Note that men are not said to *become* angels (contrary to popular mystical presentations, such as the film *It's a Wonderful Life*). Rather, men become *like* the angels.

Thus, the original creation purpose of the earth was to grow into heaven-likeness, and for man was to grow into angel-likeness. This natural process of growth and development, built into the Old Creation, was forever wrecked by the rebellion of man. As a result, the process of maturation led the world in the direction of wilderness degradation, and man into the likeness of beasts and creeping things.

In the New Creation, inaugurated at the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the world and humanity are restored to their original programme. The developmental processes of the Old Creation are reestablished in the Spirit, on the basis of the heaven-attainment of Christ.

This strikes at two errors in theology and practice. The first is to assume that the natural powers and processes of the Old Creation still lead in a

heavenly direction. This is the error of all nature/grace thinking, and of “classical” apologetics. The second error is to assume that the work of Christ was not to save this world at all, but simply to transfer men to the “angelic” state immediately. This way of thinking leads to such practices as vows of celibacy and extreme monasticism. It also leads to the rejection of infant baptism and **paedo**-communion; that is, the rejection of the notion that the natural processes of the Old Creation are transformed and revived in the New. Any attempt to move into the “angelic” state prematurely involves a rejection of the God-ordained design of history, and ultimately denies that the work of Christ is salvation (rescue of the world) at all.

It is true that in the New Creation, natural processes are replaced by Spiritual processes. The

“**monastic/anabaptist**” tendency, however, fails to see that these **Spiritual** processes run along the same tracks as the original but now invalidated natural processes. Stages of **Spiritual** growth ‘and nurture are to **parallel**, undergird, and transform the now-fallen stages of natural growth and nurture. Our children are not to be excluded from this. Nor are we to drop out of this **world** and form small “heaven-model communities” in the wilderness, whether monastic or anabaptist. Rather, we are to labor to bring **this world, in its whole** fabric and totality, into the Kingdom, that **all** creation may mature to its culmination, and heaven and earth be one.

Christ has not **replaced** the human race with a human host; rather He has **saved** the race, which now must mature into a heavenly host. The distinction is vital.

The Doctrine of the Word of God

(No. 10)

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.”)

III. *The Media of the Word*

A. All of God’s words to creatures are **mediated**; i.e., they come by way of means. In fact, revelation to creatures always involves **created** means of some sort. In that sense, there is no “direct” revelation.

1. Even when God spoke **most** directly, as to the people at Mt. Sinai, he utilized human language, the natural processes for the transmission of sound, the human brains of the hearers, etc.
2. Even inspired writers of Scripture often get information by “natural” means (Luke 1:1-4). Revelation does not even **exclude** such means.
3. At some point, of course, there is “direct” involvement between the divine energy and some natural process. But that point is long before the point at which we become conscious of the word.
4. Van Til sometimes speaks of “direct revelation in history” (over against Barth) meaning that God’s word in history is “clear,” “unambiguous,” “unquestionable.” In that sense, of course, I would agree that direct revelation exists.

B. *The Humanity of God’s Address to Mankind*

1. When God addresses human beings, he uses human language. Therefore, even the most “direct” revelation (like that on Mt. Sinai) has a human side, a human nature, a human aspect to it. In his more normal procedure, he brings his address to us by means of human authors, and that adds an even greater “human element.”
2. Is the humanity of the revelation a liability?
 - a. No, it is a perfection! The very goal of revelation is for God to express himself clearly in **human** language so as to communicate with us.
 - b. Does humanity entail fallibility?
 - i. John Murray: If so, then there is no infallible revelation at all. But if God can overcome fallibility at one point, surely he can do it at **all** points. So humanity does not necessarily imply fallibility.
 - ii. Humanity entails limit, **finitude**, and therefore ignorance. But ignorance and error are not **the** same. One who is ignorant, yet perfectly aware of the extent of his ignorance and sinlessly honest might never make a false assertion.
 - iii. Christ was fully human, yet not fallible.
 - iv. [If God cannot correct the mistakes of human authors, he is not the God of Scripture.
 - v. [Is human *language* inherently **incapable** of referring to God? See Frame, “God and Biblical **Language**,” in Montgomery, ed., *God’s Inerrant Word*.