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The Origin of "Evil" (Studies in Genesis One)

James B. Jordan

The first verse of the Bible says "In the beginning God *created*. . . ." The verb "create" here is the Hebrew word *bara'*. It is sometimes asserted that *bara'* means "create out of nothing," in contrast to the word "make" that occurs throughout most of the rest of Genesis 1. *Bara'*, we are told (correctly), is only used with God as its subject. Only God creates out of nothing.

A Wondrous Work

While it is true that in this verse *bara'* implies creation out of nothing, that is not the fullest connotation of this word. Rather, *bara'* is used of any "wondrous work" of God. Thus, God is said to "create" the dinosaurs of Genesis 1:21, as well as man in verse 27. We shall have to postpone a consideration of the wondrous dinosaurs and their place in redemptive history, but here we can note that they were the most splendid part of the sub-human creation, were used by Satan in attacking humanity, symbolize humanity's glory and rebellion against God, and were wiped from the earth as a sign of Christ's triumph over the powers of wickedness—but all that is for a later essay. (For now, see David Chilton, *Paradise Restored*, pp. 40-41.) A glance at a concordance will show that *bara'* is always used of wondrous aspects of creation, or new wondrous acts of God.

The Bible makes it clear that God's original creation was out of nothing, as we say (see Rem. 4:17; Heb. 11:3), and this is clearly implied by the use of *bara'* here. Actually, of course, God did not create out of anything, not even out of nothing. He simply created. This act transcends the ability of the human mind to understand. There was nothing outside of God, and then God made something outside of Himself that was not made of His own Being. That's about as good a description as we can come up with. Only God can do this; thus, man's *imaging* of God does not include it, and for that reason man cannot really grasp it. Yet we cannot help but know that it is true.

The fact that the universe and humanity exist outside of God means that there is no continuity of substance between God and the world. There is no way to become mystically absorbed into God. Moreover, it means that the only kind of interaction God can have with the creation is that of *personal relationship and personal action*. Genesis 1:1 is the death-knell of any and all kinds of impersonal mysticism. God is totally personal, and the only relationship He has with men is personal. God *communicates* with men by means of language (word) and actions (deed).

Mystical heretics of all ages, right down to the heresiarch Karl Barth in recent times, have tried to evade this fact. They want to make an end run around "human" language. They want to "penetrate the veil" of Biblical verbage. They want to "link up" with God in some impersonal way—but that is impossible. (Thus, there is no doctrine of creation in Karl Barth's theology, as we would expect. It was the life's work of Cornelius Van Til to expose the heresy of Barthianism, and it is with horror that

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Psst! Hey you! Come here! I hear you're one of them book lovers. Have I got a hot tip for You!

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we must view the current evangelical fad of Barth-adoration.)

"Evil"

Now, when God made something outside Himself, that something could either be rightly related to Him, or wrongly related. We see this in common life. We can rightly relate to our friends, or we can make enemies of them by wrongly relating to them. We can rightly relate to the creation by shepherding it properly, or we can relate to it wrongly by polluting and destroying it. Thus, the Christian worldview is *exhaustively relational* in character. We call this relationship by the Biblical word *covenant*.

What does this mean for the "problem of evil"?

[It means that evil is not a thing, a substance. Evil is simply a wrong relationship with God. Evil, in the moral sense, is just another word for *sin*, but a word preferred by pagans since it seems to connote impersonality and moves away from human

accountability. "How could a good God permit evil to exist?" they ask. We must challenge the question: "Evil does not exist as a thing," we reply.

In fact, the possibility of "evil" or sin is implicit in the very act of creation itself. By creating something outside Himself, and giving humanity a free choice, God established the possibility that man as captain of creation might choose to become wrongly related to Him—might choose to break the covenant and rebel, in other words.

It is not that man chose evil, for evil is not a thing that exists. Man was not confronted with a choice between God and evil, as two separate entities. Rather, man was confronted with a choice whether to relate to God rightly (faithful obedience) or wrongly (faithless rebellion). We know which choice he made.

"Evil is not a thing, a substance. Evil is simply a wrong relationship with God."

Thus, the purpose of redemption was not to rescue man from "evil." Nor was it to defeat "evil." Rather, the purpose of redemption was to restore man to a right relationship with God, to remove man from God's covenant wrath and restore him to God's covenant blessings.

When Christians do not keep this matter firmly in mind, they fall into one of two errors. The first is to view man's problem as "evil," and God's work as rescuing man from "evil." This error runs in the direction of Gnosticism and manichaeism. As we have seen, this error founders on the fact that "evil" as such does not exist.

The second is a more subtle error. It is to view "evil" as "non-being" and an illusion, and to say that redemption comes when people *realize* that "evil" does not exist. This is the viewpoint of eastern mysticism and of Christian Science. While it is true that "evil" does not exist as a thing, the "problem of evil"—or what that "problem" is getting at—is still very real. Man exists, and so does God. Man is estranged from God, and man must come to grips with his rebellion and seek salvation in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. There is no salvation in ignoring the issue!

Thus, the "problem of evil" is not a problem for the Christian. The possibility of an estranged creation is implicit in Genesis 1. The history of that estrangement is recorded in Genesis 3. And the resolution of that estrangement is set out in the rest of the Bible.

Rightorexia

by George Grant

They are getting a bit hysterical, don't you think? Their once calm, confident visage has gone all frantic and frothing. Trading staid tweeds and flannels for sackcloth and ashes, they've diddled themselves into a drivell dribbling dither.

Last fall, when Democratic National Chairman Paul G. Kirk, Jr. dispatched 50,000 copies of a fundraising letter, it was evident that he had drunk from the well of virulence. But his anti-Christian diatribe was merely symptomatic of the fear-fever epidemically ravaging *all* men of his ilk.

Recent appeals from the poisoned pens of Carl Sagan, Isaac Asimov, Stephen Jay Gould, Richard Lamm, et al., have each been chock-choked with **Christo-phobic hysterionics**. Everywhere you turn, another of the stalwarts is issuing forth bitter bile, desperately trying to rally the forces against the imminent danger posed by the lunatic fringe: us. More dangerous than acid rain, more noxious than the Controdoras, more sinister than even Lyndon LaRouche are the cohorts in the evangelical right: us. The enemy.

Even *literatae's* laureates have been infected with the rabid virus. **Right-orexia** is all the rage, scourging even the sanest of minds.

Three recent works of fiction, to be found adorning any all the chic coffee tables in Soho, Georgetown, and along Rodeo, epitomize this, the trendiest of trends: *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Eclipse*, and *The Tenth Crusade*. Each engages in the hoary horror of hallucinogenic hortatory that the card-carrying phobes seem to so enjoy.

Set in a near future but entirely unrecognizable ecology, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* represents humanistic hysterionics at its best (or worst, whatever the case may be). The story describes life in what was once the United States, now called the Republic of Gilead, a repressive and intolerant rightist theocracy. Where women are reduced to chattel, Jews are flung to the sea as boat people, and other minorities are exiled to entropy and atrophy in desolate and benighted National Homeland Reservations—there according to Atwood, does Puritanism thrive. Interestingly though, Atwood's evangelical Gilead has no room for piety. There is no evidence of chastity, charity, or chivalry. There is no righteousness, revival, or redemption. There is in fact no faith, no

hope, no God. In her vision of theocracy, Atwood has space only for totalitarian terror.

Artistic liberties and all that, don't you know.

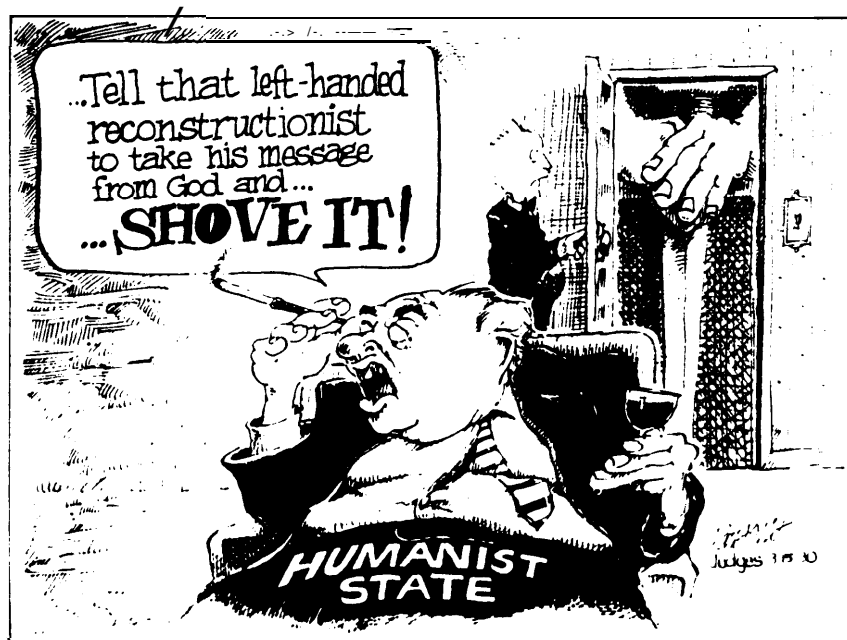
Eclipse, the first volume of John Shirley's new science fiction trilogy, like Atwood's book, has claimed a lion's share of this year's literary accolades. And like Atwood's book, it engages in hysterical blathering over the horridities of evangelical Christianity.

The story takes place in a near future Europe following a devastating limited nuclear exchange between NATO and the Soviet Block. Into the power vacuum left by a decimated West rushes an **SS-like mercenary force** led by an American **tele-evangelist**. This evangelical new-Nazi despot and his band of merry men wreak havoc on the continent's tiny remnant as they attempt to establish their theocracy. Again though, it is odd that Shirley's vision of "theocracy" is all "crass" and no "thee".

Hysterionics again.

Finally, Christopher Hyde's *The Tenth Crusade* rounds out the bunch. Once again we are treated to one dimensional, heartless, soul-less, "born-again fundamentalists," conspiring to the ill of all mankind. It seems that a small fanatical fascist group has infiltrated to the highest levels of government in Washington. With the vast wealth of the **tele-evangelists'** media empires funding their enterprises, and the U.S. military in sinister sympathy with their goals and objectives, the group is unstoppable. But then, in steps a zealous and conscientious young journalist (what else?) to

Continued on page 7



The Lion and the Sealed Book

David Chilton

We have seen in earlier essays how the message of Jerusalem's approaching desolation is central to the concerns of the New Testament. The Book of Revelation is no exception to this. It specifically states, in the very first verse, that its concerns are not with the far distant future and the end of the world, but rather with "the things that must shortly take place." In the third verse its readers are warned that "the time is near" for its prophecies to be fulfilled. Both of these statements are repeated at the end of the book as well (see Rev. 22:6, 10). And its prophecies are clearly—though often in symbolic form—directed against "the Great City.. where the Lord was crucified" (Rev. 11:8; cf. 14:8; 17:18). Like the rest of the New Testament, the Book of Revelation follows Christ's example in foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

As I¹ have explained at length in my forthcoming commentary, *The Days of Vengeance*, St. John wrote Revelation in the standard Biblical form of the "Covenant Lawsuit" delivered by the Hebrew prophets (God's "attorneys for the prosecution") against the disobedient nation of Israel. Through a myriad of symbols adapted from the Old Testament prophecies, St. John set forth two major points: First, Israel had irrevocably broken her Covenant with the Lord; second, by His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ had brought in a new and final Covenant, infallibly guaranteed by His victory over sin and death.

The foundational image of this in the Book of Revelation is shown in the first vision of the Court of heaven (Chapters 4 and 5). St. John saw the Lord sitting on the Throne holding a Book that was "sealed with seven seals" (indicating to his audience that it was some sort of testament) and "written on the front and on the back." Any Christian reader of the first century would immediately have understood the significance of this, for it is based on the description of the Ten Commandments. The two tablets of the Testimony (which were duplicate copies of the Law) were inscribed on both front and back (Ex. 32: 15).

An analogue of [his is found in the suzerainty treaties of the Ancient Near East: A victorious king (the suzerain) would impose a treaty/covenant upon the conquered king (the vassal) and all those under



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the vassal's authority. Two copies of the treaty were drawn up (as in modern contracts), and each party would place his copy of the contract in the house of his god, as a legal document testifying to the transaction. In the case of Israel, of course, the LORD was both Suzerain and God; so both copies of the covenant were placed in the Tabernacle (Ex. 25:16, 21; 40:20; Deut. 10:2).

The idea of *Covenant* is thus central to the message of Revelation. The prophecy is presented from the outset as part of the Canon of Holy Scripture, primarily written to be read in the liturgy (1:3). Tabernacle imagery is used in the opening Doxology ("1:4-5), and the Church is declared to be constituted as the new Kingdom of priests, as Israel had been at Sinai (1:6). The theme of the book, stated in 1:7, is Christ's coming in the Glory-Cloud; then, almost immediately. St. John uses three words that almost always occur throughout the Bible in connection with covenant-making activity: *Spirit*, *Day*, and *Voice* (1:10). The following vision of Christ as the glorious High Priest (1:12-20) combines many images from the Old Testament—the Cloud, the Day of the LORD, the Angel

of the LORD, the Creator and universal Sovereign, the Son of Man/Second Adam, the Conqueror of the nations, the Possessor of the Church—all of which are concerned with the prophecies of the coming of the New Covenant. The vision is followed by Christ's own message to the churches, styled as a recounting of the history of the Covenant (Chapters 2-3). Then, in Chapter 4, St. John sees the Throne, supported by the Cherubim and surrounded by the royal priesthood, all singing God's praises to the accompaniment of Sinai-like lightning and voices and thunder. We should not be surprised to find this magnificent array of covenant-making imagery culminating in the vision of a testament/treaty document, written on front and back, in the hand of Him who sits on the Throne. *The Book is nothing less than the Testament of the resurrected and ascended Christ: the New Covenant.*

But the coming of the New Covenant implies the passing away of the Old Covenant, and the judgment of apostate Israel. As we have briefly noted, the Biblical prophets spoke in terms of the covenantal treaty structure, acting as prosecuting attorneys on behalf of the divine Suzerain, bringing covenant lawsuit against Israel. The imagery of the document inscribed on both sides is also used in the prophecy of Ezekiel, on which St. John has modeled his prophecy. Ezekiel tells of receiving a scroll containing a list of judgments against Israel: "Then He said to me, 'Son of man, I am sending you to the sons of Israel, to a rebellious people who have rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day....' Then I looked, behold, a hand was extended to me; and 10, a Book was in it. When He had spread it out before me, it was written on the front and back; and written on it were lamentations, mourning and woe." (Ezek. 2:3-10)

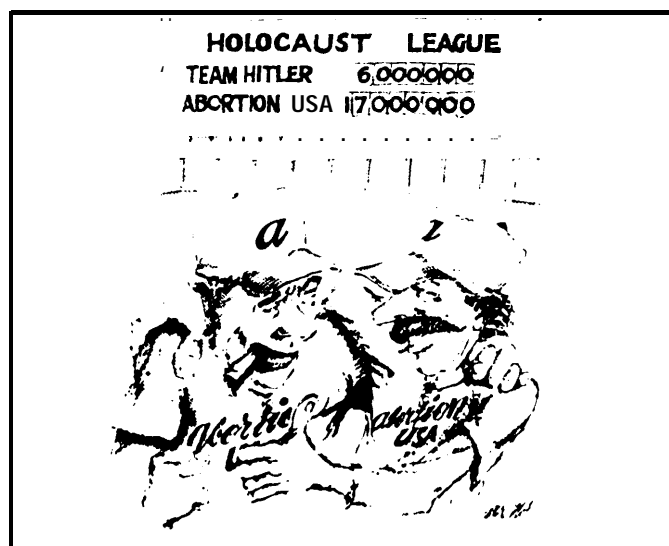
As St. John sees the opening of the New Covenant, therefore, he will also see the curses of the Old Covenant fulfilled on the apostate covenant people. This conclusion becomes clearer as we look at the overall movement of the prophecy. The Seven Seals of the Book are broken in order to reveal the Book's contents; but the breaking of the Seventh Seal initiates the sounding of the Seven Trumpets (8:1-2). The final vision of the Trumpets-section closes with a horrifying scene of a great Vintage, in which human "grapes of wrath" are trampled and the whole Land is flooded with a torrent of blood (1-1: 19-20). This leads directly into the final section of Revelation, in which St. John sees the blood from the Winepress being poured

out from the Seven Chalices of wrath (16:1-21). It would seem, therefore, that we are meant to understand the Seven Chalices as the content of the Seventh Trumpet, "the last Woe" to fall upon the Land (cf. 8:13; 9:12; 11:14-15; 12:12). All of these—Seals, Trumpets, and Chalices—are the contents of the seven-sealed Book, the New Covenant.

But there is a crisis: St. John finds that no one in all of creation—"in heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth"—is able or worthy to open the Book, or to look into it. No one can fulfill the conditions required of the Mediator of the New Covenant. All previous mediators—Adam, Moses, David, and the rest—had ultimately proved inadequate for the task. No one could take away sin and death; for all have sinned, and continually fall short of the Glory of God (Rom. 3:23). The sacrifice of animals could not really take away sins, for such a thing is impossible (Heb. 10:4); and the high priest who offered up the sacrifices was a sinner himself, "beset with weakness" (Heb. 5:1-3; 7:27) and having to be replaced after his death (Heb. 7:23). No one could be found to guarantee a better covenant. With the prophetic yearning and sadness of the Old Covenant Church, St. John began to weep greatly. The New Covenant had been offered by the One sitting on the Throne, but no one was worthy to act on behalf of both God and man to ratify the Covenant. The seven-sealed Book would remain locked.

Immediately, St. John is comforted by an Elder, who says (as it reads literally): "Stop weeping; behold, He has conquered!" The Church thus preaches the Gospel to St. John; and it seems as if the Elder is so excited about his message that he blurts out the climax before he even explains who has conquered. He goes on to describe Christ the Conqueror as *the Lion from the tribe of Judah*, the

continued page 7



A Redemptive Historical View of Theonomy

Part Two

Ray R. Sutton

This is the second of two essays on a redemptive historical view of theonomy. A brief summary of Part I is in order.

Many theonomists have built their case on Matthew 5:17-19. I will not quote the whole passage, but it says that the "jots and tittles" of the law will not pass away "until heaven and earth passes away." At first citing this may seem like an appealing way to convince people that Old Testament law carries into the New Testament. But on second thought, I hope the reader can see how it quickly becomes a trap. Why? This interpretation proves too much. It actually argues that the details of the law are unchanged until the physical universe is annihilated.

Thus, I used John Owen (17th Century Puritan) to propose that the *passing away of heaven and earth* should be understood in a redemptive historical light: Christ's death and resurrection changed history. Hebrews 12:26-29 described this as a "shaking of heaven and earth." Jesus was speaking *covenantally* of the transformation of the Old Covenant into the New, and thus of the Old Creation into the New. Through Christ's death, they were no longer just "heaven and earth," but a "new heavens and earth" under the New *Covenant*.

The total transformation of the Old Covenant law means that the jots and tittles of the Old Covenant "change." Not everything. Some change is not complete change. At the very most, Jesus argues for very small alteration in content. Moreover, a redemptive historical view of Old Testament law allows for a more rigorous application in the New Covenant, specifically in the area of *sanctions*. Not only do Jesus's comments not remove the law; they allow for its intensification. Let us begin with two simple observations about Old Covenant sanctions.

First, Old Covenant sanctions were *restrained* in their judgment effect. After Adam and Eve sinned, God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" . . . So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life"

(Gen. 3:22-24). Why did God prevent the first couple from eating the fruit? To have eaten it would have kept them in perpetual judgment. The text says they would have lived forever had they eaten the fruit, but they would have lived forever in their *fallen state*. God restrained them. The awful judgment of the tree of life was reserved for Christ. Until His death, however, judgment on the world was held back.

"Grace came through the wrath of God...As history moves forward, more and more judgment will be poured out to the end that the world is saved. A time will come when the world will be covered with salvation."

Second, not only were the sanctions restrained, they were not as *potent*. For example, eating the food sacrament of Passover "unlawfully" did not have the power to kill. In the New Testament, however, unfaithful eating of the Eucharist sickens and kills (1 Cor. 11:30). Why the change? Remember, until Christ received the full weight of all the Old Covenant judgment, sanction wrath was not released. After the shift from wrath to grace, the floodgates of judgment were turned loose. Thus, the Crucifixion and Resurrection ushered in the release of judgment and blessing. The full force of judgment came to the earth definitively, progressively, and *culminatively*: without delays, postponements, and "random intrusions." The marvel of the Gospel became "escape" from the wrath of God. Rejection meant greater judgment: hence, the New Covenant sanctions have greater consequences if violated.

Due to the fact that judgment is unleashed in the New Covenant, the sanctions seem to be more rigorous. Consider the death penalty attached to unlawful participation in the Eucharist (I Cor. 11:30). Consider Paul's expanded list of penal sanctions (Rom. 1:28-32). Consider Hebrews 2:2-3: "For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a *just reward*, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him." Thus, Paul sums up the entire rationale for more extensive and intensive New Covenant sanctions. God always gets His "restitution." The Old Covenant man didn't escape, neither does the New Covenant man.

The latter even faces greater condemnation because he lives A.D. and not B.C.

All of these considerations indicate greater judgment in the age of the New Covenant. If Jesus really did come in history, then judgment came because only through judgment can salvation be given to man. Grace came through the wrath of God. So with the intensification of judgment came its counterpart: blessing. As history moves forward, more and more judgment will be poured out to the end that the world is saved. A time will come when the world will therefore be covered with salvation (Heb. 8: 11).

In these two essays I have tried to demonstrate a superior hermeneutic for theonomists to use: one more able to deal with all the Biblical factors. History is not static or level. Christ's coming brings dramatic change in history. As a matter of fact, the hermeneutic I have proposed lays the ground work for understanding why God's sanctions intensify through history. Christ brings a "greater than redemption," but He also eschews a "greater than judgment." With this view, one does not have to apologize for what God has done, is doing, and will do in history.

Chilton, continued from page 5

strong and powerful fulfillment of Jacob's ancient prophecy to his fourth son: "YOU are a lion's cub, O Judah; You return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, Like a lioness—who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until He comes to whom it belongs, And the obedience of the nations is His." (Gen. 49:9-10)

It was King David, the conquering Lion of Judah of the Old Covenant, to whom God revealed both the plan of the Temple (1 Chron. 28:11-19) and the plan of the everlasting covenant, the "Charter for Humanity" by which the coming Priest-King would bring the blessing of Abraham to all nations (2 Sam. 7: 18-29; 23:2-5; 1 Chron. 17: 16-27; Ps. 16; 110; Acts 2:25-36). At last David's greater Son came and conquered, establishing everlasting dominion and opening the Covenant. Embodying and Fulfilling all its promises, He is the One "to whom it belongs."

Grant, continued from p. 3

save the day. As in Atwood's and Shirley's books, Hyde's effort fails to accomplish anything more than to expose his own rightorexically induce hysteria.

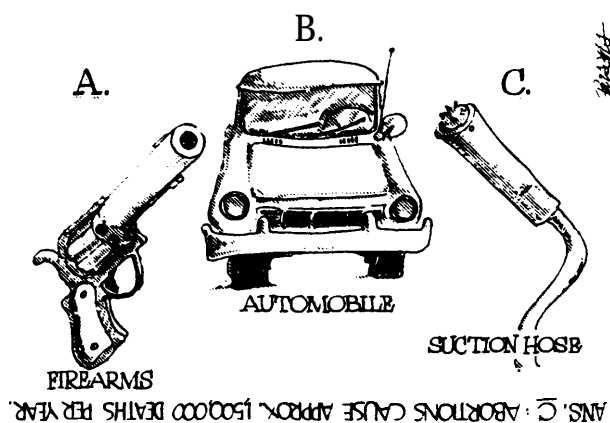
The worst of it is that even if you can somehow

get past the pomposity and ignoble ignoramity of these books, you are still left with an acrid flavor on your palate: no plot, no adventure, no romance, and no literary riposte. But then, that only stands to reason. Books as poorly conceived as these cannot hope to escape the inevitability of poor writing.

Just about the only thing that can be positively asserted about this triad of tripe is that it represents another signpost along the path toward victory. The natives are restless. There is terror in the camp of the enemy.

They are getting a bit hysterical, don't you think?

what Kills More Humans Each Year?



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Robert J. Parsons

We are pleased to introduce to you the newest addition to our Geneva Ministries' family, cartoonist Robert J. Parsons.

Robert has been doing political cartoons for four years. His work has appeared regularly in Signcraft Magazine and publications of the Alaska Right-to-Life organization.

A resident of Anchorage, Alaska, Robert lives there with his wife, Robin, and their three children: Sarah, Stephen, and Justin.

Robert will be a regular contributor to The Geneva Review. The three cartoons which appear in this issue are representative of the fine work he does. We are happy to have him aboard.

The Doctrine of the Word of God (No. 11)

John Frame

(III. *The Media of the Word*)

C. Enumeration of the Media

1. Event-media.

God reveals himself to us through what he **does**, in nature and history. We might be inclined to associate these media with the word as decree, and the other two types of media with address and presence, respectively. In general, that is a legitimate parallelism. But the "event-media" are not the same as the "word as decree." Event-media bring us God's address as well as his decree. There are other non-parallels in the scheme.

a. Nature and General History: Ps. 19,46:8-10,65, 104, Rem. 1-2, **Deut.** 4:26,30:19, 31:28,32:1, Gen. **9:12-17**.

- i. Nature and **history** are not the word, but media through which the word conveys its message to man.
- ii. Through this revelation, the 'invisible power and deity' of God are 'clearly seen' (Rem. 1).
- iii. His 'ordinances' are also revealed, Rem. 1:32, so that God's moral law is known, Hence all are responsible before God.
- iv. Scripture does not teach that nature apart from the message of the gospel can bring anyone to salvation.
(A) Fallen man resists, hinders, perverts therevelation in nature (Rem. 1).
(B) Salvation comes only through the preaching of Christ, Rem. 10:13ff. Unless they hear that message, there **is no hope**. Cf. **Acts 17**.
- v. God did not intend for anyone to study nature in abstraction from his spoken and written **words**.

- vi. The believer discerns in nature the **wisdom** of God's plan, and rejoices therein.
- vii. Nature furnishes information necessary for the application of other revelation. (Adam's eyes told him where the fruit was that God was forbidding.)

b. Redemptive History: **"the mighty acts of God,"** Ex. 14:31,15, **Deut.** 8:11-18, Ps. 66:5-7,135,136, **145:4**, 12, John 2:11, Acts **2:22**, 15, 12, Rem. 1:4, Heb. **2:1-4**, Rev. 15:3f.

- i. Perform all the functions of (a) above
- ii. Indicate God's saving purposes, including the special judgments he performs in delivering his people.

c. Miracle.

- i. Biblical terminology for miracle overlaps with (b) above-the terminology for "mighty acts of **God**."
- ii. Its revelatory function virtually the same as (b), though with more intensity, excitement.
- iii. Definitions of miracle are discussed in courses on the "Doctrine of God." In my view, scriptural usage is somewhat fluid. The **N.T.** terms, **dunamis, semeion, teras**, suggest: (note interesting correspondence with our triadic scheme).
(A) Manifestations of divine power
(B) Giving revelation
(C) Arousing awe, wonder

(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."**)

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