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Dominion *from* Our Knees

Michael R. Gilstrap

Matthew records two of our Lord's parables which illustrate the Kingdom's growth.

Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened." (Matthew 13:31-33)

As David Chilton has noted in *Paradise Restored*, Jesus speaks of two different kinds of growth here. The first parable graphically depicts extensive growth. The Kingdom of God was established at Christ's ascension and enthronement (Dan. 7:13-14; Matt. 16:28; Zech. 9:9-10, cf. Matt. 21:5; Acts 2:30-36; Eph. 1:26, 22). Like the mustard seed, however, the Kingdom started out small, but it will grow in time to enormous size filling the earth.

Daniel prophesied similar imagery in interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image of gold, silver, bronze, iron, and clay which represented the four great ancient empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold — the great God has

made known to the king what will come to pass after this. (Daniel 2:44-45)

Like the mustard seed, the stone became a mountain and filled the whole earth. The Kingdom's growth is, therefore, extensive. The knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:9). All areas of our world, our "cosmos," will be transformed. Christian civilization is not only possible, but it is assured. The basic Christian confession is that "Jesus is Lord" (Rom. 10:9-10). He is Lord of all things both in heaven and on earth. He is to be glorified in all areas of life. "For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to Whom be glory forever. Amen" (Rom. 11:36). As Christians it is our duty to take action in all spheres in anticipation of the worldwide conquest of Christianity.

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The second type of growth is **illustrated** by the leaven. The Kingdom here is said to grow **intensively**. Like yeast in a ball of dough, the Kingdom will transform the world. Christ has planted the seed in the world, which is His gospel, the power of God unto salvation. Like yeast, it will continue to work until "all is leavened." Once again, there is total conquest, but the conquest is seen to grow out of the seed planted within the created order.

The Weakness of "Dominion" Christians

Dominion Christians (by which I mean those who take seriously the Dominion Mandate – Gen. 1:28) in our day very readily shoulder the cultural transformational activities depicted by the mustard seed filling the whole earth. It is with utter confidence that our modern day dominion men and women march into the world, delivered from their pessimistic **eschatologies** by the glorious **postmillennial** vision of a world under God's rule and law, to do battle in the fields of economics, politics, **journalism**, medicine, literature, the arts, business, and on and on. Fifteen years ago this activity was virtually unheard of. No one worked for the transformation of society because virtually no one believed that society could be transformed. Each of us has come to confess that our civilization will rise or fall in terms of God's **covenantal** judgment upon us. He will bless us in response to our **covenantal** obedience, or curse us because of our disobedience (Deut. 28).

"The worldwide triumph of Christianity will not be realized until we have Dominion Christians on their knees at the feet of Christ laying the groundwork for the faith that will someday embrace the world."

In our zeal for cultural transformation, I am **afraid** some of us have neglected an equally important aspect of Kingdom growth — the **intensive growth** depicted by the leaven. The leaven of the gospel was **first** planted in our hearts (Matt. 12:35; 13:18–23). **Just as the rise or fall of civilization** is based on God's **covenantal** blessings, so also the growth or decline of individual Christians is based on God's **covenantal** blessings. As Dominion

Christians, we do not accept any sort of **progress** as automatic, either culturally or individually.

It is my fear, however, that in our beehive of dominion activity, we often neglect the more personal and individual aspects of personal piety. Just as we cannot stop eating and exercising and expect to prosper physically, so we cannot neglect prayer, Bible reading, personal obedience, and attendance upon God in worship, and expect to grow **@ritually**.

As a matter of fact, it is impossible to work toward true cultural transformation if we are not being continuously transformed as individuals. John points out this important principle in his first letter, "And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith" (1 John 5:4). In writing this, John was echoing our **Lord's** own teaching:

You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matt. 5:13–16)

Jesus commands us to live in such a way that **others** will see our light, that they will see our good works, and as a result **glorify** our Father in heaven. Just as Moses' face shown **after** meeting with God at Mount Sinai (Ex. 34:29), so we must "shine" before men. The only way for us to achieve this, however, is to commune weekly with the Lord in special worship with the rest of His people, and to meet daily with Him in prayer, Bible reading, and meditation. **Apart from** these personal exercises in piety, all of our culture transforming activities will **be** "good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men."

I was privileged to speak at a **prolife** rally this past week. The pastor of one of the sponsoring churches, a Dominion Christian in every sense of the word, made a profound observation to me. He said that he had discovered that there was really no good reason for any of the local townspeople to come to his small Presbyterian church. He does not perceive himself to be a great preacher (although he probably is). The church does not have elaborate

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The Poor in Spirit (First Beatitude)

Ray R. Sutton

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3)

The key to this beatitude is the phrase "poor in spirit." What does it mean? The best way to interpret anything in the Bible is to allow the **Bible** to interpret itself. The Bible's own interpretation of the poor is that they are to be *gleaners*. Moses says, "You shall not **reap** the comers of your field, neither shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest... You shall leave them for the needy and the stranger" (**Lev. 19:9-10**). Remember that a Jew sitting there and listening to Jesus would have made the **connection** between the Master's comments and the ancient Mosaic laws of **gleaning**; the common people would have been especially familiar with these laws. So given the Biblical background, *a willingness to glean is the essence of being poor in spirit. This* interpretation allows us to make several observations about the first beatitude.

One, since a gleaner started at the edge, Christians who are poor in spirit should be willing to start at the edge and work to the center, or start at the bottom and work to the top. They should serve. They should work hard. They should work quietly. They should wait for God to exalt them. Genuine Christians are not supposed to "demand" their way through life; they are supposed to **serve** their way to positions of leadership.

Starting at the edge means an *apprentice approach to life*. The apprentice is willing to learn from the master. He realizes that learning to do something well takes time. Just as learning a trade or skill takes time, so the skill of living, wisdom, takes generations. The maturation process of the **Bible** is not only **linear** as opposed to spontaneous, but it is generational. The wisdom that Solomon spoke of takes several generations. Godly families **do not** happen overnight. The leading Christian families of the Church have often been seventh generation families — Charles Spurgeon, Jonathan Edwards, Matthew Henry, etc. The same concept of starting at the edge also can be applied socially. One makes friends in the **Church** by starting **at the fringe**. He should not barge into the center of things, nor should he expect people to pull him in. Again it must **be** stressed that he works **the edges**, **does the dirty work**, and serves his way to the top of influence. The gleaning principle, or servant's attitude, is the number one requirement for becom-



Geneva Ministries has a new home! As some of you may know, up to this point, Geneva Ministries has been a ministry of a local church, Westminster Presbyterian Church in Tyler, Texas. Although GM has never received financial support from Westminster, we have had our offices in the church's facilities. **That all changed as of March 7!**

On March 7 we moved into our new office space. Our phone number is the same, and our post office box number hasn't changed. Our new street address is:

Geneva Ministries
2737 South Broadway, Suite 202
Tyler, Texas 75701

Geneva Ministries is also in the process of separating itself **officially** from Westminster Presbyterian Church. We have begun the process of incorporating and forming a completely separate organization. We believe this move and reorganization will help us better serve you, as well as make us a more efficient tool in the Lord's hand. I'll have a lot more details to share with you next month, but in the mean time, if you have any questions, please call me at (214)5924620. I'd love to chat with you.

— Michael R. Gilstrap

ing a deacon or elder.

Two, **gleaning involved doing something a second time**. A gleaner would go over the same **area** that **had** been harvested, looking for what had been left behind on the comers. The idea of "doing something a second time" conveys the principle of repetition. **If** God is willing to do something a second time for man, namely create and recreate him in His own image, then man should be willing to repeat what God has commanded him to do.

This **idea** appears in wisdom literature. Time and again the way of wisdom is portrayed as a *path*. A path is something that is travelled several times and thus worn into a rut. One of the frustrations of becoming good at anything is that a person develops by doing the same thing over and

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Lawsuits Among Believers Part Three of Three

John F. Southworth, Jr.

(The first two articles in this series looked at Paul's argument concerning litigation by believers in I Cor. 6:1-11.)

In this article, I want to suggest an application of Paul's argument to a decision about whether to sue. Given the objective and subjective elements in Paul's teaching about litigation, both aspects should be considered. The following two test questions, it is believed, bring these considerations into focus.

A. Is there any forum other than a secular court for resolving the dispute?

This should be the first question in any decision about whether to sue. How this question is answered shows much about whether litigation is permissible. Since this answer is objective (that is, the motivation of the litigant does not enter into it), it is easier to determine than the second question. Therefore, it seems wise to consider it first. Also, it should settle many cases with a decision against litigation. Thus, the thrust of Paul's position will be upheld, and the more difficult test will be restricted in its scope.

As far as a believer contemplating litigation against another believer, this test would deny the right of litigation, at least until the procedures of the Church courts are exhausted (Matt. 18:15-17). When these procedures are exhausted in favor of the potential plaintiff, but without submission by the potential defendant to the judgment of the Church courts, this test has been met. (However, a potential plaintiff should still remember that the other test has to be considered before litigating.)

As far as a believer contemplating litigation against an unbeliever, the option of Church resolution is unavailable. The Church has no jurisdiction over an unbeliever. However, this should not be seen as license to sue immediately. The Biblical principles of reconciliation and love of enemies require that any reasonable effort toward an amicable settlement of a dispute should be attempted before litigation is begun.

While this first test would prohibit litigation in a number of situations, it would also distinguish several situations in which litigation would be proper (other considerations being in favor of it). First, when brought into court as a defendant, a

believer should be able to defend himself (Acts 24:10). He would also be able to take advantage of available affirmative procedures to secure justice in his cause (Acts 25:10-11). When one is brought into court, there is no longer any other forum where the dispute can be resolved. The forum is no longer in the control of the believer, as contemplated as a precondition of I Cor. 6 and Matt. 18.

Secondly, this test would eliminate cases in which entities other than people (the state, corporations, insurance companies, etc.) are involved as parties. These types of opponents are not under the control of the Church authorities. (A possible exception to this is the case of a closely held corporation owned by believers.) Therefore, again assuming the meeting of the other test, these types of lawsuits would not be prohibited.

Finally, there are cases — sometimes characterized as "friendly lawsuits" — in which the exclusive remedy is through a secular court, even if all concerned are agreeable to a given result. A settlement by an insurance company to a minor injured in a car wreck or the collection of money owed by a person after their death are examples of these types of lawsuits. Even if all involved are believers, the lack of another forum would permit the resolution of these cases by a secular court.

B. Will the lawsuit impair the attitude of love and forgiveness in the one bringing the litigation?

Once it is established that a particular lawsuit is permitted by the objective standard of the first test, one must then analyze the motivation of the potential plaintiff. Calvin, in his *Institutes* (IV:XX:18) lays great stress upon this element in deciding whether to litigate. Even if the lawsuit "passes" the first test, it must be avoided if motivated by revenge, hatred, greed, envy, or an otherwise impure motive.

For example, assume a believer brings a dispute with another believer before the Church courts, the Church decides in favor of the "plaintiff," and the "defendant" refuses to submit to that judgment. According to Matt. 18:17, a lawsuit can now be brought before a secular court. However, if the suit can not be conducted in a spirit of brotherly love, it may not be brought. Justice must only be sought from God (either directly or indirectly) by His methods. Human revenge (or other impure motives) must not be allowed to control.

Of course, purity of motivation is a rare

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The Separated Waters Studies in Genesis One

James B. Jordan

Then God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And God made the firmament, and separated the waters that were below the firmament from the waters that were above the firmament; and it was established. And God called the firmament Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day (Genesis 1:6-8).

We saw in the previous essay that the firmament or expanse created on the second day forms a symbolic boundary between earth and heaven. It is the blue sky, and when men are permitted to see through this sky, they see into heaven. Thus, the sky or **firmament** acts as a lens, at times, to reveal heaven to men. Since this is so, the firmament can be seen to picture heaven to men on earth, and so is called by the same name: heaven.

Originally the earth was shrouded in water, the "deep" of Genesis 1:2. Into this "deep" God inserted the firmament, so that it separated the waters into two oceans. One ocean remained on the earth, while the other was lifted above the firmament. Note that the second ocean is placed above the **firmament**; it is not the same as the firmament. The firmament is called "heaven," so the second ocean is actually above this heaven.

If the **firmament** is a heaven, then what is above it? In terms of Biblical symbolism, it would be the highest heaven, the heaven created in Genesis 1:1. Thus, the ocean that is removed from the earth and lifted *above the firmament-heaven* is located, it would seem, in the highest heaven. As we noted in the previous essay, the Book of Revelation shows us a "sea of glass" in heaven. Is this the same ocean removed from the earth in Genesis 1:6-8?

Many Biblical scholars today believe that the second ocean was actually positioned around the earth as a water canopy, and that rained down on the earth in the Noahic Flood. The best argument for and defense of this position is Joseph C. Dillow, *The Waters Move: Earth's Pre-Flood Vapor Canopy* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981); and rather than go into it in detail, let me just refer the reader to that book.

If it weren't for the Biblical evidence that in some sense the highest heaven is positioned right over the firmament, and the heavenly sea is still in

existence there, the canopy interpretation would be easy to accept. The evidence we looked at in the previous essay, however, makes it more difficult.

I suggest that it might be proper to allow the text to move in both directions at once. In terms of Biblical symbolism, the firmament-heaven separates the highest heaven from the earth. In terms of that symbolism, there is a heavenly sea resting on the blue **firmament**. This reality is seen by men from time to time as God sees fit to reveal it.

At the same time, it is reasonable to suppose that the blue sky once formed a visual boundary between the atmosphere and a water vapor canopy of some sort, that rained down in the Flood. This canopy would be a *type* of the heavenly ocean, and its collapse would be a prophetic type of the day of judgment, when God will visit earth with heavenly judgments. The judgment of the last day is fiery, however, and so the heavenly ocean is pictured as mixed with **fire** in Revelation 15:2.

At any rate, in the economy of Biblical interpretation, we ought to avoid pitting the literal or physical meaning of a text against its symbolic or **typological** dimensions (where present). Genesis 1:6-8 seems to work in both areas simultaneously, and it seems to me best to allow both to stand.

One final note on these verses is that this is the only event concerning which God does not "see" that it is good. Why is this lone event not called good? Some have suggested that the separation of the oceans was not good, and would be undone in the Flood. Another suggestion is that the **firmament**-boundary between heaven and earth is not good in the fullest sense, and so is not called good here. Both of these suggestions fall to the ground because Genesis 1:31 tells us that by the end of the week, all was very **good**.

We are pushed back to the traditional view, then, that the work begun on the second day was not completed until the third. God was not finished working with the ocean until He had pushed it back and made room for dry land. Only then was the situation "good.*" The goal was to make a place for man, and God chose not to be satisfied until He had reached that goal. ■

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commodity, particularly in litigants. Also, it is finally impossible for anyone other than the potential plaintiff to assess his own motivation. However, although difficult, this test is not impossible, within limits, to apply. Further, it serves as a check on a "wooden" application of the first test. Therefore, it is a helpful addition. ■

Life, Literature, and Liturgy

Gary R. Hafer

In the opening of his *For the Life of the World*, Alexander **Schmemmann** identifies man as a "hungry" creature, one who is ultimately dependent on the communion which God alone provides. **Schmemmann** then demonstrates that this communion consists not only of food, but also of the world itself.

In a very real sense, all men hunger for what God has already provided; we see that clearly depicted in the story of redemption and acted out in each celebration of the Lord's Supper. But how man responds to his inner hunger is bound up in his own spiritual condition: Those whom God has proportioned faith respond in belief, while those outside the covenant respond in unbelief.

Yet, the fact that all men have this hunger automatically ensures that all men must *respond* to what God has provided. The godly man, who *accepts the gift* of God in Christ, acts in submission to God's call and *satisfies his hunger*; the ungodly man, who *rejects God's* gracious offer, acts in disobedience and thereby *represses his hunger*. Nevertheless, both still *respond*.

Have you ever picked up a "classic" piece of literature — perhaps William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, or William Faulkner — and wondered why it has been considered as Literature (with a big 'L')? Or perhaps you have read one of the "classics" — such as Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* or Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* — and recognized that there was *something that made it great*, even though you couldn't quite identify it? On the other hand, perhaps you've had no real exposure to literature, other than the dime-store counterfeit, and you really don't understand what could be so "classic" about a novel written in a different age or a different country from your own.

From a Christian point of view, the whole idea of a great body of literature clusters around the concept of spiritual hunger and its accompanying response. The great writer, like all men, is inescapably responsive to the call of the Gospel and the glory-witness of the Godhead in all creation. The writer "believes," in a figurative sense, that his response is directed toward satiating his hunger. Moreover, the writer attempts to universalize the experience of all men, as he presupposes that world to be, by intensifying man's response — recording it in prose or poetry — so that the writer assumes the position of a spokesman: the respondent to God's revelation.

This is what separates great literature from the dime-store romance. The former is **essentially liturgical**: It responds to the revelation of **God and His** world (either in faith or unbelief) and it does so for all men. Great literature responds directly and indirectly to the questions (and the answers) that God provides, by restructuring and evaluating them either in godliness or in ungodliness.

Consider, for example, **Flannery O'Connor's** Christian novel, *Wise Blood*. The central protagonist in this novel is Hazel Motes, who is **returning** to his rural Southern homeland in order to set up his Church Without Christ. His grandfather was a Saturday night preacher who used to bring the toddler Motes to hear the elder's orations on the city square. In rebellion to his godly upbringing, Motes mimics his grandfather, though he preaches "another Gospel"; that is, that there is no Christ. After a series of hysterical misadventures, Motes finds that, despite his sermons to the contrary, he has unconsciously reinforced his previous belief in Christ, because he cannot actively deny God without assuming that He first exists. In his **confrontation** with the "false prophet," a kind of false preacher of Motes's false message, he withdraws from his self-appointed mission and finds peace with God at the end of his life.

Contrast **O'Connor's** work with the "great" novel of **unbelief**: **Herman Melville's** *Moby Dick*. **Seaman Ishmael** recounts the obsessive quest of Ahab for the great white whale, a symbol not only of Melville's conception of God but of God's character. The leviathan lives in the midst of the sea, or chaos. Captain Ahab attempts to harpoon his own man-centered "meaning" into the center of the pale whale. This novel is filled with propositions on God and His creation, evidenced at the outset when **shipmate Queequeg's** cannibalism is said to be preferable to Christian civilization.

Now, notice what ties these two novels together: the *intensity* and the *universality* (i.e., *speaking for all men*) of the response. In *essence*, both novelists follow a *liturgy*; they *reply* to God and his Law, as O'Connor does, in a life-giving faith, or as Melville does, in nihilism and despair. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to discuss what exactly constitutes a "Christian" novel and a non-Christian one (thereby suggesting a distinction of "great-bad" and "great-good"), it is helpful to compare the two, as above, in order to see how man inescapably responds to God's unified creation and law as he seeks to alleviate his "hunger." That unity, which makes great literature possible, should be enough for man to fall down on his knees in praise of Almighty God. ☐

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programs for each age group. The townspeople are certainly not naturally attracted to Reformed theology ! But one thing he has learned and **communicated** to his congregation is the absolute necessity for personal holiness. He has led them in weekly worship and daily exercises of piety, and they have seen steady, albeit incremental, growth. They are not perfect Christians, but more than anything else, their lives have been used to draw other townspeople to their congregation.

Their culture transforming activities have been quite successful too. Their city enjoys one of the most vibrant and effective **prolife** organizations I have seen. They can truthfully say that they have driven every pro-death abortionist in their town either out of the business of abortions, or forced him to go underground to ply his evil trade. As in this small town, so also in the rest of the world. The worldwide triumph of Christianity will not be realized until we have the "world" of Dominion Christians on their knees at the feet of Christ laying the groundwork for the faith that will someday embrace the world. ☐

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over again. Think of the cliches in our culture. "Repetition is the mother of learning." And then there is a well worn phrase "practice makes perfect." I have noticed that writing is hard because to become good, one has to write, and write, and rewrite. Yet, writing is no different from anything else. If a person wants to become accomplished at something, he must be willing to practice and practice and practice.

Three, gleaners were dependent on *reapers*. A reaper first went through the fields with his sickle, cutting down the harvest and leaving the comers for the poor. A **reaper** had the job and **he** had the tools to execute his work. The gleaner had neither tools nor job. This meant that he could not carry out his job until the reaper had come.

Applied to Israel at the time of Christ, judgment was necessary before there could be any possibilities for gleaning. A reaper had to come in order for there to be any place for gleaners. And there was no place for the poor. They were outcasts, and the provisions of

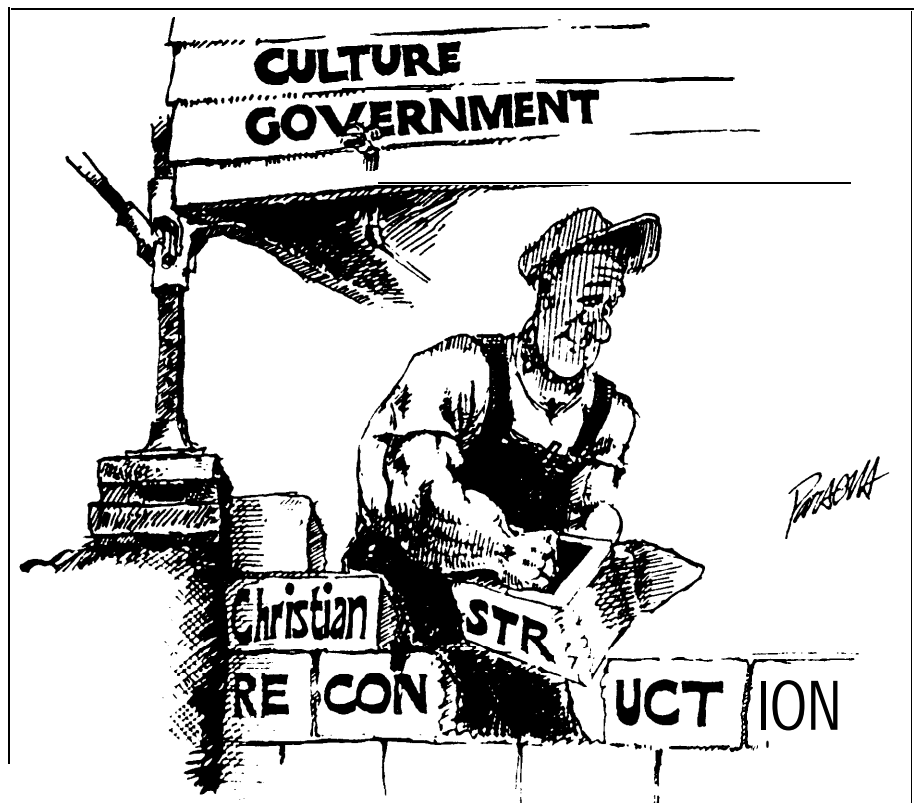
"The temptation grows to think that the fulcrum of history is not in the gospel of Christ but in the visible power of business, politics, or force."

— Gordon MacDonald

Biblical law were being neglected because the law itself was being ignored. **They** could not glean, and so Jesus could not glean **them**. Israel had rejected the poor and they had rejected the archetype of being poor in spirit, Jesus Christ. Judgment was needed. The grim reaper of the Cross had to occur before the harvest of the world could begin at Pentecost.

"The grim reaper of the Cross had to occur before the harvest of the world could begin at Pentecost."

Applied to the Christian walk, judgment should be met in Jesus Christ before there can be any work. Gleaning in this regard is the grace that results from the reaping of judgment. If a person tries to glean before he meets the judgment of God in Jesus Christ, he will come up empty handed. He will end up being reaped himself! ☐



BOOKS

ordering Your *Private World* by Gordon MacDonald. (Oliver-Nelson, 1985) 228 pages, paperback, study guide included. \$7.95.

"There's just not enough time in the day!" "I'm so disorganized!" "I can't get my act together!" "My inner life is a mess!" "It may look like I get a lot done, but my private life is a mess!"

How many times have you heard these or similar comments? The comment doesn't always come from individuals whose lives are in chaos, either. In many instances a comment like one of the above comes from what appears to be a very successful, highly productive, strongly motivated man or woman. Why is this the case?

Our nation was founded upon a Christian work ethic. Planted deep within our culture is the idea that hard work, self-discipline, efficiency, and the wise use of capital resources will result in prosperity. Although this ethic has been largely gutted of its Christian underlinings, nevertheless, it remains a factor in our society.

If we were to scan through the business section of a local bookstore, we would find title after title of books to help us organize our work, our calendars, our time, our production schedules, our studies, or our careers. I know. I've looked. I've had a problem in these areas and have had to force myself to become a virtual fanatic about organization and time management.

There is a very large hole in this plethora of material, however. Very little of it addresses the problem of internal or spiritual organization. And as Christians, we know that is where the problem is most acute. Gordon MacDonald's *Ordering Your Private World* fills that hole. I have not read a book that has been as uniformly helpful to me in a long time. It is a great book.

MacDonald deals with an area that most Protestants tend to find uncomfortable: the mystical. He explores an area that as outwardly-oriented, objectively-justified Christians, we tend to run — not walk — away from. He deals with the private life, the inner world, that part of us where basic decisions

about motives, values, and commitments are formed. He wrestles with the profound sense of what it means to "abide in Christ." In fact, he bases his entire treatment of "order in one's private world" on the principle of the indwelling Christ." (p.9).

An illustration from the book will best explain what MacDonald means by "private world." There are places where some pretty weird geological phenomena occur. One such phenomenon occurs in Florida. It's called by scientists "the Sinkhole Syndrome."

It seems that on occasion in Florida, citizens awaken to find the ground around them dropping into the earth. Buildings literally collapse. Automobiles, pavement, sidewalks, trees, and all else within the circumference of the sinkhole fall into the earth. Sinkholes occur when underground streams drain away during periods of drought, causing the ground at the surface to lose its underlying support. All of a sudden, everything simply caves in.

"I have not read a book that has been as uniformly helpful to me in a long time."

This natural phenomena is likened to what happens at times to Christians. MacDonald writes, "It is likely that at one time or another many of us have perceived ourselves to be on the verge of a sinkhole-like cave-in.... We feel we are just a moment from collapse that will threaten to sweep our entire world into a bottomless pit. Sometimes there seems to be little that can be done to prevent such a collapse. What is wrong?" (p. 13) He answers his own question later in the paragraph: the neglect of our private world.

MacDonald divides the private world into five sections, which also corresponds to the five divisions in the book: motivation, use of time, wisdom and knowledge, spiritual strength, and restoration. Within each division he lists signals the reader may use to determine if a particular area of his private world is in need of some attention. He then outlines what he perceives to be the dangers in ignoring that particular area of our private world, and offers

practical solutions for ensuring that a sinkhole doesn't develop in our lives. Although I don't have space to mention even a few of the excellent insights found in this book, I do want to highlight the last section on restoration. It contains as good a practical treatise on the Lord's Day as I have read. It is excellent.

Let me close by encouraging you to get this book and read it if you haven't already done so. As I mentioned in another article elsewhere in this newsletter, Dominion Christians (particularly of the Christian Reconstructionist variety) are characteristically weak in these areas of personal piety. Ask us what to do if someone is caught stealing a car, and we will wax eloquent on the merits of restitution and the needs for societal reform. Ask us what needs to be done if our hearts are not right, and much too often, we draw a blank. (Or worse yet, we spit out that ignominious epithet *PIETIST!*) That's not how it should be. MacDonald's book is a much needed corrective in this area. **g**

Restoring Your Spiritual Passion by Gordon MacDonald. (Oliver-Nelson, 1986) 223 pages, cloth, bibliography. \$12.95. Reviewed by Michael R. Gilstrap.

This volume is the sequel to *Ordering Your Private World*. It builds upon what MacDonald sought to do in *Private World*.

This book takes a look at the journey we are on as Christians, and tries to answer the question, "What are the issues and problems that drain off the zeal or passion of my faith, and threaten to leave me with a loss of heart?"

MacDonald uses the word *passion* where others may substitute *joy*, *power*, or *zeal*. What he means is that inner desire (passion) to seize God with all our heart, soul, and mind.

Each of us occasionally goes through periods of unhappiness and disillusionment — times when we feel like giving up. MacDonald points out some of the possible causes, and points out ways to clean up our private world and restore our spiritual passion.

As with *Ordering Your Private World*, a very helpful book. I highly recommend it.