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The Rule of Christ Studies In the Kingdom of God

Peter J. Leithart

The kingdom of God is a hot topic these days. In academic circles, it has been a topic of debate since the last century. Recently, however, it has become a major source of discussion among normal Christians. In the charismatic movement, we have seen the rise of "Kingdom Now" theology. The liberation theologians would bring in the kingdom through revolution and structural social change. Others in reaction have declared that the kingdom is confined to heaven. Thus, if we hope to make our way through the current theological and polemical jungle, we have to reequipped to cutaway the vines and find a solid path. And this means getting acquainted with the biblical teaching on the kingdom of God.

For several reasons, the doctrine of the kingdom is an enormously complicated affair. First, it is never defined precisely, as, for example, sin is defined in 1 John 3:4. Moreover, there is little discussion of the kingdom of God among the great theologians of past ages. The Church Fathers and Reformers generally equate the kingdom of God with the church. This equation has its merits, as I hope to show in a later essay, but it can hardly be considered the usage of Scripture itself. Clearly, Jesus did not come preaching the gospel of the church!

More significantly, the doctrine of the kingdom is complicated by the wealth of biblical data that is grouped under this heading. Jesus described the whole of His ministry in terms of the coming of the kingdom. Like the covenant, the kingdom relates in one way or another to every doctrine of Scripture. It is explicitly associated with the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 18:21-35), repentance and faith (Matt. 4:17), righteousness and obedience to the commands of Christ (Matt. 4:3, 17-20), and the new birth (John 3:5). The kingdom and its righteousness should be our highest priority (Matt. 6:33). Our final destiny is to inherit the kingdom in resurrected bodies (Matt. 25:34). Needless to say, these are not marginal issues in biblical theology.

Another difficulty in studying the doctrine of the kingdom is the odd concentration of teaching. The phrases "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven" do

not occur in the Old Testament, which has led some scholars to search for the origins of Jesus' teaching in some inter-testamental source. In the synoptic gospels, the kingdom is by far the dominant theme; Matthew alone uses one or the other of these phrases over 50 times. But John's gospel uses the phrase only three times, and in all of Paul's letters, the phrase is used only 14 times (17 if you count Hebrews as Pauline). On the surface at least, it would appear that we need to concentrate on the synoptics to learn about the kingdom of God.

The importance of this odd concentration of usage should not, however, be overestimated. A basic hermeneutical distinction will help here: the word/concept distinction. Briefly, the absence of a word does not mean the absence of the concept. Thus, though the Old Testament never uses the phrase "kingdom of God," the concept is undoubtedly present. After all, Jesus claimed to be fulfilling Old Testament prophecy, and He claimed to be establishing the kingdom; thus, He must have been

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Is Rome a True Church or No?...

Dear Michael,

In order to better understand where you are coming from with your theology, I need to know what your position is concerning the Roman Catholic Church and its history. That is to say, do you consider it to be a true church of God or not? If not, was it wrong right from the start? Was it O.K. until the 2nd or 3rd century and then go wrong? Did it only go wrong at the time of Luther? Etc., etc.

B.S.
Hubbardston, MI

This question has plagued Protestants since the time of the Reformation. At that time, most protestants would have answered negatively. The Westminster Confession of Faith of 1649 calls the Pope "that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God" (XXV:6). If the head is all that, then the Roman Church must have so degenerated as to become no church of Christ, but a synagogue of Satan (XXV: S).

Today, however, most Protestants would not go that far. Nevertheless, among many groups the question of whether the Roman Catholic Church is a true church is left unanswered. The response one often gets is that there are true Christians within the Roman Church, but there is hesitation in calling the Roman Church a true Church.

To frame a brief answer to your question is fraught with problems. One could write a book on the subject, but briefly stated I believe the Roman Church is part of the true Church (notice I have dropped the description "catholic" or universal from her title). She has all that is necessary to the being of a Church: Jesus Christ is worshiped and presented through the spoken word and the visible word (the sacraments).

Referring once again to the Westminster Confession, I must add that the Roman Church is a mixture of error. On a scale of

purity it would be less pure rather than more pure. Nevertheless it is still a Church.

I find it helpful to think of the Roman Church as analogous to the Church of Sardis (Rev. 3). The Lord describes her as having a name that is alive, but she is in reality dead. Nevertheless, He admonishes her to watch and strengthen the things which remain. She must repent or He will come upon her (in judgement) as a thief. This process may even be taking place. Since Vatican II, there has been a great deal more "protestant" activity in the Roman Church.

Never does God say Sardis is no longer a Church. He judges her for her sin, but she is still a Church.

Mission of Christianity...

Dear Michael,

What do you see as the mission of Christianity and its role in the world today?

R.G.
Bartlesville, OK

That's a great question! If you will allow me to define Christianity as all those throughout the whole world who profess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (including children) making up what is commonly known as the universal Church of Christ, I'll attempt an answer.

I believe our duty is "so to present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, that men and women shall come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as their Savior, and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His Church" (that statement was formulated by a group of Anglican Archbishops in 1918). Cf. Matt. 28: 18ff.

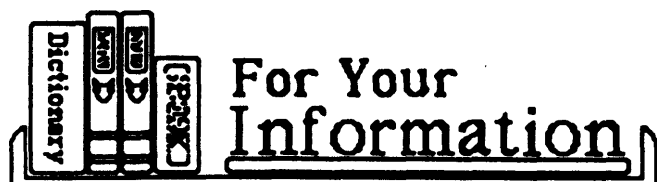
This statement really says it all. If you think about it creatively or laterally, it encompasses everything we Christians should be doing in the world.

First, we present the person of Jesus Christ. He makes Himself visible to us (in Word and Sacrament) because He loves and cares for us. Through His presence He strengthens us and gives us grace and refreshment. We then leave His presence to bring the message of hope and healing found only in Him.

As Christians, we establish an analogous presence in a community through our ministry activities. Through our service to others (our presence), we present Christ. An aspect of presence is to reach out to those outside the faith through good works and deeds of mercy (i.e., Food pantry, soup kitchen, Unwed Mother's Home, orphanages, etc.). Another aspect might be a Christian school in an area.

But it is not enough simply to do deeds of mercy. We must verbalize the gospel as well. We must endeavor to make known to our world the good news of Jesus Christ in such a way that they will not only hear it, but understand it. Even that's not enough, however.

Our mission cannot be considered complete until we actually make disciples. Jesus must be presented that men and women put their trust... accept... serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His Church.



Confidential Member Survey

Total Number of Reader's: 2,654
Total Number of Responses: 334

PERSONAL DATA:

Marital Status:

Single: 12%
Married: 88%

Children:

Yes: 80%
No: 20%

Children's Education:

Too Young: 18%
Christian School: 27%
Home School: 18%
Public School: 17%
College Age: 10%
Completed Education: 12%

Age of Reader:

Under 18 years: 0%
18 to 24 years: 1%
25 to 34 years: 28%
35 to 44 years: 39%
45 to 54 years: 18%
55 to 64 years: 10%
65 years+: 40%

Education Level Completed:

Grade School: 1%
High School: 23%
College: 27%
Some Grad Studies: 14%
Post-Graduate Degree: 35%

INTERESTS AND PREFERENCES:

Amount of *Geneva Review* Read Monthly:

Very little: 3%
About half: 25%
All of it: 72%

Have purchased **Premium Tape Package**:

Yes: 24%
No: 72%

If you've purchased a Premium Tape Package, would you purchase another?:

Yes: 99%
No: 1%

Do you consider yourself a **Christian Reconstructionist**?:

Yes: 86%
No: 1%
Unsure: 13%

Are you Interested In a national, dominion theology conference?:

Yes: 59%
No: 20%
Undecided: 21%

Subject Interests and Preferences:

[The following list is based on a composite score arrived at on the basis of the survey responses. Quite honestly, there wasn't that much differentiation. Our readership is interested in all the categories!]

1. Christian Worldview
2. Biblical Law
3. Bible Studies
4. (tie) Church & Worship
Family & Children
5. Education
6. Eschatology

Geneva Ministries wishes to express our deepest appreciation for the overwhelming cooperation of our readers in the recent survey. Over 10% of you responded! In the world of direct mail that's a minor miracle! Thank you so much.

Additionally, I know there were several respondents who were mildly (and a couple not so mildly) upset with the question regarding salary ranges. I must admit I put that question in with a great deal of trepidation, but I felt it important enough to include, so I did. If you were offended, please accept our apology. The last thing we wished to do is offend you. The reason it was included was to help us get a better 'picture' of our readers. I hope you understand.

Once again, thank you very much for your cooperation. This survey will undoubtedly help us better serve you in the future.

Fish and Fowl

Studies In Genesis One

James 6. Jordan

And God said, "Let the waters swarm with the swarming thing of living soul (the animated, swarming thing), and let the flying creature fly about upon the earth upon the face of the firmament of the heavens." (Genesis 1:20)

We come now to the fifth day. The cosmos as it came from the hand of God was formless, empty, and dark. On the first **three** days, God took care of the "problem" of formlessness. On the **third** day, He **also** filled the earth with plants. On the last **three** days God filled the earth with "light-beams," simultaneously taking **care** of the "problems" of emptiness and darkness. God had made light on the first day, of course, but He distributed it to light-beams on days **4-6**. We have seen in previous studies that rulers are considered light-bearers. Thus, the rulers of-sky and time, made on the fourth day, are literally lights. Now we come to the rulers of sea, sky, and land, figurative light-bearers.

Two categories of **creature** were made hereon the **fifth** day: fish and fowl. The word for fish (**dag** or **dagah**) is not here used (though it **appears** in vv. 26 and 28). Instead, the **waters are** said to swarm with swarming things. The same language is used for the flying **creatures**: They fly about, back and forth, hither and thither. In both cases, the animals in question are enjoined to move without restriction in their sphere.

Let us look **first** at the **fish**. Why is the word for fish not used here? One possibility is that the Hebrew word **dag** or **dagah** refers only to aquatic creatures with **fins** and scales. This might receive some support from Leviticus 11:9-12, **which** like Genesis One only speaks of living things that swarm in the water. The same is true of Deuteronomy 14:9-10. Thus, perhaps **dag** or **dagah** is simply too narrow a term to use for **all** animated aquatic life.

This hypothesis cannot stand, however. The **summary** list of Genesis 1:26 gives the "fish of the sea" along with the birds of the sky, the cattle, and the crawling things. Similarly, in Genesis 9:2, the fear of man is put on the "fish of the sea" along with birds, beasts, and crawlers. Also, we are told that Solomon spoke of "**animals** and birds and creeping things and fish" (1 Kings 4:33). Thus, the term "fish" is completely generic and refers to **all** water animals.

The reason for bypassing the **term** "fish" and **speaking** of "living souls **that swarm in the waters**" must, **then**, **be related** to the purpose of Genesis 1:20. **That** purpose

seems to **be** to **call** attention to the animated motion of these creatures. The use of **nephesh** for the fish also points to this, in that **nephesh** usually means "breath," but has a wider meaning of the living self with **all** its drives, intentions, emotions, and activities. These new creatures are not just "alive" in a static sense. In away that plants might be said to be. They are **alive** with purpose and **motion**. In terms of the progression of development in Genesis One, plants have reproduction (Vv. 11-12 — notice **stress** on "seed"), and living creatures have locomotion. Plants mot in one place, while animated creatures move about.

Our suggestion **receives** strength when we look at the flying creatures. These are **more** than just birds, for the Hebrew word for **bird** proper (**tsippor**) is not used here. The word that is used, '**of**, means flying creature, and embraces winged insects as **well** as birds and bats. As with the fish, the emphasis here is on locomotion, in this case flying. Moreover, as with the **swarming** fish, the birds fly about, to and fro. Boundaries **are** not a consideration for them.

The water **swarmers** and flying creatures fill two of the three environments of the "**three-decker**" world established in Genesis One. On the second day, the rising of the firmament **served** to separate the waters above from those below, creating an atmospheric heavens in between. On the third day, the **recession** of the waters permitted the mound of dry land to appear. Thus, within the common sense horizon of human life, there are **three** zones: the heavens above, the earth beneath, and the waters below the earth (cf. Ex. 20:4).

The sea, since it is below the earth, comes to have a symbolic association with the Deep, the place of death. The sea, then, becomes a symbol for the world of the gentiles, outside the "land" of Israel. Fish in the Bible sometimes symbolize gentile peoples, clean fish being converted gentiles, and unclean fish being apostates (For **helpful** insights into the association of the sea and the Deep with gentiles, see David **Chilton**, Days **of Vengeance**.)

Similarly, the firmament heaven is a visible sign of the highest heaven, which is why both **are** called by the same name in Genesis One. The atmosphere between earth and firmament (**blue** sky) is where the birds fly (though they multiply on the earth). Our verse says they fly "upon" the **earth** and "upon" the face (surface) of the heavens. Since one cannot fly attached to something else — particularly attached to two things separated by a **great** distance — "upon" **here** means "above." They fly "**above** the earth and "in front of" the blue sky. The **overall** effect is to say they fly between **earth** and heaven.

To man's view, they **are located** in the firmament of

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The Theology of Lawn Maintenance

Peter J. Leithart

My wife and I recently moved into our first home, in suburban Atlanta. I have never had much interest in suburban life and its peculiar responsibilities and interests, and I'm still a less than enthusiastic suburbanite. I still don't know the difference between **bermuda** and **fescue**, and I have no intention of learning. Still, I have to admit that something odd has happened to me since buying a small plot of land and a house. I've begun to do chores around the house, and occasionally I even catch myself enjoying them. We've repainted the den, and put in a book shelf. We've **dutifully** set upswing set for the kids. I've taken a special interest in getting our terribly neglected lawn into shape. It was this last project that made me reflect on the deeper meaning of those tedious suburban social duties.

I guess my reflection started with the odd feeling that there's some kind of cosmic significance to simple household activities, like lawn mowing and tree-trimming and making improvements on the house. I don't think that's accidental, of course. After all, Adam was given charge of a garden, to "**dress** and keep." There is something profoundly human and profoundly satisfying about working to beautify one's environment. Something deeply entwined in the human constitution is aroused when you successfully repaint a room or deliver a portion of the yard from a weed invasion.

Thinking about lawn maintenance has also given me a greater appreciation for the forms of Western social order that have developed over the millennia. In **fact**, it's hard to imagine "suburbia," for all its obvious **superficialities** and flaws, outside the West. I think this is true for several **reasons**.

First, suburbia requires an economic system based on private ownership of land, as opposed to state or **"community" ownership**. Everyone mows and cares for his own property, unless they're wealthy enough to hire **someone** else to do it. In any case, the suburbanite is responsible for the maintenance of his own land, rather than having a share in the maintenance of a communal property. This contrasts not only with the land **distribution** systems found in modern socialist regimes, but also with many "traditional" systems that dominate much of the "**Third World**," in which land tends to be held tribally, **rather** than familiarly.

Second, **regular** lawn maintenance presumes a **certain level** of material **prosperity that is possible only in industrialized nations**. If someone **has time to** mow his

lawn, clearly **he has** moved beyond simple subsistence living. He has a surplus of time and energy to spend in purely or largely aesthetic pursuits. Again in this respect, Western **social** patterns stand in sharp contrast both to socialistic systems and subsistence systems of much of Africa and parts of Asia. It is unthinkable that many of the **world's poor would** have time **or energy to be** worried about crabgrass.

Third, it presupposes certain attitudes **toward** work and responsibility and cleanliness. Rather than looking to a higher authority to care for one's property, there is an atmosphere of personal discipline and concern for one's own property. Moreover, some value is placed on the rudiments of hygiene. By contrast, many **people** around the world live literally surrounded by **filth of all** kinds, partly because cleanliness is not as highly valued as in the West and partly because some parts of the world lack the necessary waste-disposal technologies.

In fact, the attitudes and structures that permit lawn maintenance are almost unthinkable **apart from** the influence of Christianity. Christianity, in **combination** with leftovers of early Roman law, has provided the West with the economic structure based on private and **family-owned** property. Because the West has rested under the blessing of God, it has enjoyed an unimaginable abundance of basic necessities, and thereby has set men free to "dress and keep" their gardens.

The prophets frequently describe the results of Christ's redeeming work as a restoration of the conditions that existed in Eden. As the gospel permeates the world, the prophets foretell, it will act like water on a dry **desert**, transforming the desert into a garden. Isaiah, for example, prophesied that "The wilderness and the desert will be glad, and the Arabah will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will blossom **profusely** and rejoice with rejoicing and shout for joy" (Isa. 35: 1-2a).

Am I saying that taking care of my lawn is a fulfillment of prophecy? That, of course, sounds foolish. But prophecies are often fulfilled in foolish ways. Is it any more foolish than saying that the birth of a child in a manger is a **fulfillment** of prophecy? Is it any more foolish than to imagine that prophecy could be **fulfilled** by the common death of a man on a cross?

One of the **perennial** charges against the postmillennial interpretation of prophecy is that it proposes an idealized Utopia, which **can** in fact never exist. Imagine! The world returned to **Edenic** conditions! In fact of **all** prophecy this **may be** the one that has been fulfilled in the most obvious, verifiable, empirical manner. If you have trouble **visualizing a** "Christianized" world, you'll not **be far** off if **you imagine a world** in which everyone mows his own lawn.

Restoring the Classical Christian Curriculum



Overview of the Restored Curriculum: Part Two

Gary Hafer

In reviewing the curriculum model presented last month, you **will** recall that **there** were two irreducible components of the **structure** presented: the **x** axis and the **y** axis. The former, horizontal constituent **represents** creative thinking, or the rhetorical arts, that have been briefly outlined in this series. This richness in thinking — the kind of creative insight **often** depicted as “hard work” — becomes the means for exploring the subject disciplines” (**Quadrivium**). The **arrow** indicates that the movement is always toward comprehensive creativeness in all of the **Quadrivium** (note that the **Quadrivium** “touches” the rhetorical arts in Figure 2).

The latter, vertical constituent emphasizes the ethical and orthodox thinking that only Theology can **provide**. Dorothy Sayers metaphorically **refers** to it as the “mistress **science**,” a title reminiscent of the British female schoolmaster who taught all subjects; in a sense, she “controlled” them for she understood *them as one body-canon* of knowledge. In a **very** strict sense, Theology uniquely controls the **Quadrivium** because it alone is qualified to understand the other subjects in terms of **itself**; it is the only subject that legitimately transcends the **rest**.

Moreover, only Theology can inform the other disciplines as to their scope, merits, limitations, and biases, and still provide **fruitful ethical** perspectives on issues within each discipline. Humanistic education “borrows capital” (in Van **Til’s** phrase) — mimics the Christian model — by exalting other subjects of the **Quadrivium** unto a hierarchal governing position over still other subjects. As a result, we have **historicism** (from history), social **darwinism** (from biological sciences) — all positing error of presupposition and practice. Theology “**points**” upward to the “**high calling**”: greater and greater obedience to the truth.

Therefore, the two ways of thinking, vertical and horizontal, form a bond of “two witnesses” to the truth. Vertical thinking **carves and shapes** all subjects through orthodoxy, and when interacting **with** horizontal think-

ing, produces rich contours of creativity. Indeed, **this** is the world-and-life view that has **concrete** representation: thinking **along the lines** of an **historical orthodoxy** that are applied in **rich**, new contexts. In short, **creativity flourishes with right thinking**.

An **subject** can then be plotted, as on a graph:

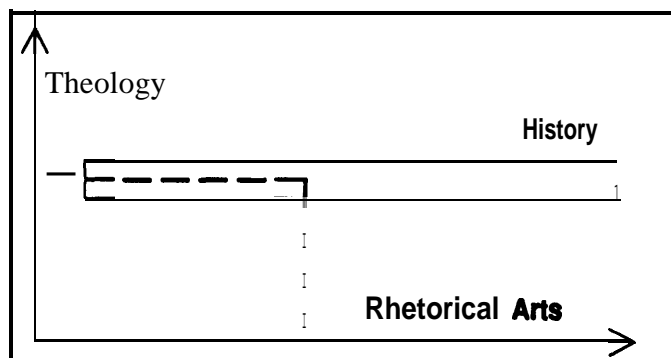


Figure One

The **teacher motivates** the student to **move “upward”** and “onward”: to the peak of the **subject** ethically (vertical thinking) and creatively (horizontal thinking). These two sides of the **rectangular paradigm** represent the most basic **facets** of the curriculum, and so every **subject has both a theological presupposition and a creative impetus**.

The top two sides of the **curriculum** rectangle **are** mirror images, in the sense that they communicate ethical and creative thinking **from** different perspectives. The Trivium displays the stages of learning, progression **from** the simplest (grammar) through an intermediate (dialectic) to cognitive synthesis (rhetoric); these three aspects bear a strong **resemblance** to the particle, wave, and field perspectives from the rhetorical arts (this was discussed in a previous installment).

Usually, the American and British curriculum systems have **correlated** the Trivium stages with age developments **in** the student, although there is certainly no mathematical precision to such estimations. The only requirement is that the stages be sequentially passed; Dorothy L. Sayers expected a student to be **finished** with the rhetoric stage **at** age 16 and thus ready for the university !

The final side is the **Quadrivium**. Its title is taken from the Latin, “where four roads meet,” and indeed, there are four “reads” meeting in the individual subjects being surrounded by a rectangle of educational processes. The **Quadrivium** originally applied to the higher of the seven liberal arts subjects: geometry, astronomy, arithmetic, and music. With the expansion of knowledge (and the Kingdom), the **Quadrivium** was expanded into what we today **call subjects** or **disciplines**. (Theology is a mirror image of **the** whole **Quadrivium**, and so is contained within it, as **a** specific subject, and **also** is

outside it: an ethical manager of other subjects, keeping them under proper authority.)

History is represented in **figure 2**, with some possible specific subject specializations noted:

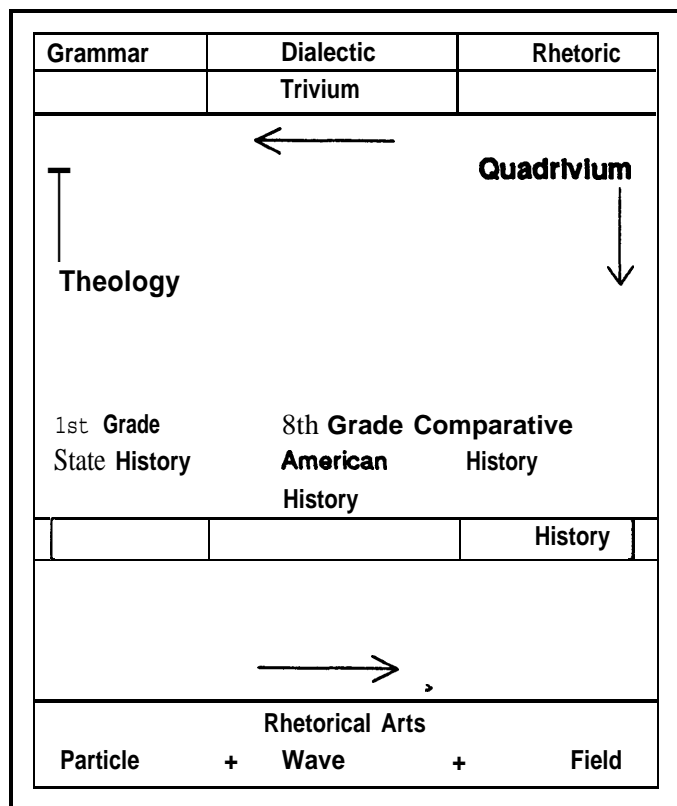


Figure Two

Therefore, in summary, every subject taught has both an ethical component (Theology) and a heuristic one (Rhetorical Arts). In **addition**, that same subject is **measured** for complexity by the Trivium and separated for specific discipline study by the **Quadrivium**. A whole curriculum could then be built into a Curriculum rectangle.

Next time, I'll be focusing on the **Quadrivium**. Here, I will examine a specialized subject — English grammar — to show how the rectangle **works**.

Leithart, continued from page 1

fulfilling Old Testament prophecy when He established the kingdom. Similarly, though Paul **rarely** uses the phrase, the kingdom of God bulks large in His thinking. At key points, moreover, Paul is said to **be** preaching about the kingdom of God (Acts 20:21, 25; 28:31).

In academic circles, one of the debates about the kingdom of God concerns whether it should **be understood** in an "abstract" or a "concrete" sense. **If** it is

understood abstractly, it **would mean something** like "role" or "**reign**." **If concrete**, it would mean "**realm**." The majority of scholars opt for the "abstract" definition, thus defining the kingdom **as** "saving rule." This does seem to be the primary meaning of the Greek word, but the writers of the New Testament also use the phrase in a concrete sense, as a sphere that one must "enter" (John 3:5). I will use the following definition of the kingdom: The kingdom is Christ's saving rule, which produces a sphere of blessing, privilege, and responsibility.

Once we have defined the kingdom as Christ's saving rule, we are faced with the irksome task of making distinctions, for Christ may be said to reign in several related senses. **First**, as the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son has eternally shared the kingly glory with the Father and the Spirit (John 17:5). This is obviously, however, not the meaning of "kingdom" in most of the New **Testament**; otherwise, there would be no logic in talking about the kingdom "coming" or "growing." Theologians thus distinguish this eternal rule **from** Christ's **mediatorial** reign, which He exercises as the God-Man.

The **mediatorial** reign of the God-Man can be **further** subdivided. As God-Man, Christ rules overall **things** for the good of His people (Eph. 1:1%23), and in a special sense, Christ rules **over His people** (Col. 1:13). When the New Testament speaks of the "kingdom," it usually has this latter, particular sense in view. In this sense, to **be** in the kingdom is to be eternally saved, to be delivered from sin and Satan, **and** to receive the blessings of forgiveness and life.

In the next essay, we will discuss the relationship of Christ's particular and general rule.

Jordan, continued from page 4

heaven, just as **are** the heavenly lights (sun, moon, and stars, Gen. 1:14, 16). Thus, they are the living creatures of the heavenly environment. As noted, this environment is associated symbolically with the highest heavens, with angelic (and demonic) **powers**. Such beings **are** also "flying **creatures**."

Moreover, in **the** context of Genesis One itself, we have seen darkness hovering "upon the face of" the deep, and the Spirit of God also **hovering** "upon the face of" the waters (1:2). That initial non-moral contest of Spirit and darkness takes on an added dimension once sin enters the world. **The** contest of righteousness and evil is likened to a contest of light **and** darkness. In Biblical symbolism, then, **clean** birds are associated with the Spirit of God (**es-****pecially** the dove), **and** unclean birds with unclean spirits (Rev. 18:2).

BOOKS

Understanding Dispensationalists by Vern S. Poythress. (Zondervan, 1987). 137 pages, bibliography. \$9.95 (pb). Reviewed by Michael R. Gilstrap.

Vern Poythress is professor of New Testament Interpretation at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, and in my opinion, one of the brightest lights in the current resurgence of interest in formulating better ways to interpret the Bible (hermeneutics). Author of two other important books (*Philosophy, Science, and the Sovereignty of God and Symphonic Theology: The Validity of Multiple Perspectives in Theology*), Poythress has demonstrated over and over the invaluable insights jam-packed into his books. Hence, I looked forward with great anticipation to diving into this book.

I wasn't disappointed! Poythress has written a brilliant book. Even if you have no interest in dispensationalism, you'll want to pick this one up—it's that good.

As the title indicates, this book is not one more pedantic treatment refuting dispensationalism. Poythress takes great pains to understand the system. For that reason, it contains one of the best summaries of dispensationalism I've read, particularly in terms of the hermeneutics of dispensationalism, the heart of the system.

Building on his judicious examination of the dispensationalist's system, Poythress proceeds graciously to lay argument after argument at the dispensationalist's doorstep. He begins with an examination of the Last Trumpet (1 Cor. 15:51-53) and the problems this passage presents for the pretribulationist: Is this trumpet really the last trumpet? How do we reconcile this trumpet with Matthew 24:31? Through his examination, he uncovers that "slushy" concept dispensationalists never tire of appealing to: the literal or plain interpretation of the text.

In chapters 8 through the end of the book, Poythress devastates the dispensational position with his reasoning and exegesis. Exposing the slipperiness of the term "literal," he shows how untenable this hermeneutic is when applied to so many passages. Beyond that, he asks the question even dispensationalists have a difficult time answering: "What is the definition of 'literal'?" His discussion of the various ways dispensational writers use the term "literal" is extremely helpful in understanding the system.

He ends the book with a discussion of how the interpretive principles he has outlined maybe applied to a specific passage in an effort to help dispensationalists understand some of the weaknesses of their system.

I said earlier that this book will be of interest to you even if you have no interest in dispensationalism. In conclusion, let me briefly tell you why.

First, this book might very easily have been subtitled "Communicating with Dispensationalists." Poythress provides his readers with a very practical course in effectively communicating with persons they disagree with. *Understanding Dispensationalists* is a classic example of disagreeing without being disagreeable. Poythress is not only gracious, but he shows his opponents respect. Throughout the book he constantly is giving one dispensationalist writer or another the benefit of the doubt. Poythress's approach is something all of us can learn from, but particularly we Reconstructionists, who, in our zeal for truth are at times guilty of following the dictum "Ready.. FIRE!.. Aim."

Second, in examining dispensationalist hermeneutics, Poythress reveals many profound insights into his own understanding of hermeneutics. His analysis is an excellent example of using a triadic perspective in theology (see *Symphonic Theology*). Even if you aren't interested in the subject, this book merits your attention.

Understanding Dispensationalists is not a lightweight book. Although not very long, it is filled with content. Don't let that dissuade you, however. Poythress is understandable. It simply takes a little effort to extract the jewels from this mine.

Money Matters for Parents and their Kids by Ron and Judy Blue. (Oliver-Nelson, 1988). 192 pages, charts, graphs, worksheets. \$12.95 (cloth). Reviewed by Michael R. Gilstrap.

I have been looking for a book like this for a long time, and if you're like me, you've been looking for it too. Ron Blue (author of *Master Your Money*) and his wife Judy have written a practical handbook for parents who want to train their children to be financially mature.

Money Matters for Parents and Their Kids focuses on four key areas: budgeting, purchasing, decision making, and goal setting. Each of these skills are built upon biblical principles because, as the Blues note, "the truth of financial maturity is also the truth of spiritual maturity."

Understandable, practical, and very much needed. We highly recommend *Money Matters for Parents and Their Kids*.

Inside Out by Larry Crabb. (NavPress, 1988). 223 pages. \$12.95 (cloth). Reviewed by Michael R. Gilstrap.

This book is about being a Christian. To be sure, there's a great deal tied up in that little phrase "being a Christian," and that's why Dr. Crabb has written this timely book.

In a day of shallow Christianity, Crabb points the way to a virile, courageous faith unafraid to confront one's own internal problems and weaknesses by assimilating biblical principles into daily life. *Inside Out* shows the reader how to develop a vital sense of our union with God, richer relationships with others, and a deeper sense of personal wholeness.

Inside Out is a manual on practical Christianity and lasting, Spiritual change by one of the leading Christian counselors.