



# The Geneva Review

A Monthly Publication of Geneva Ministries

No. 56

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March 1989

## Success Through Self-Sacrifice: The Key to instilling Faith **and** Success in *YOUR* Child's Life! (*Christian Parenting - Part Two*)

***The Rev. Michael R. Gilstrap***

*[This article continues Rev. Gilstrap's series on Christian Parenting. In part one (The Geneva Review, February 1989), he discussed both the true and false views of success for our **children**. As highlighted in the article, none of us want our children to end up like J. R. Ewing, slaves to a "this-worldly" orientation. Nor **should** we teach our children to be ascetics, abandoning all notions of success for our children. Both notions accept worldly presuppositions **defining** success in terms in terms of assets gained (or denied). Rather, we must **define** "success" as God **does**: Seeking **first** the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.]*

### Introduction

We saw last month that as Christians we needn't abandon the notion of success for our children. It is true that the potential of temptation and fall is great, but that is no reason to abandon our dreams and expectations for our children. True success is "seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," and our children, therefore, represent vast potential for the honor and glory of God and the work of His Kingdom.

If we see success as God sees it, then we recognize that it is a challenge to disciple our children to be faithful as well as successful, but it is possible! Christian children *can* and *should be* the best they can be at whatever [they do, be it Bible memory or tap dance.

Furthermore, I believe it is the *parents' responsibility* to instill faithfulness and success in each of their children. Our children are given to us as a trust from the Lord (Ps. 127:3). They are given to us to be trained to be "straight arrows" in the army of God. Who makes them straight arrows? Who shapes the shaft.. sharpens the point.. creates the directional rudders on the arrows of our children? Humanly speaking, it is our responsibility as parents! The Lord joins with us to accomplish what we can never do, but it is our responsibility to make "straight w-rows."

And by definition, a straight arrow-is successful. It will hit what it is aimed at — it goes where it is sent. Our calling as Christian parents is, therefore, to train our children to be faithful *and* successful — to be "straight arrows" in the hand of the Lord — to seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness.

In this essay, we are going to see that God has not left us berift of any help in this task of training our children to be "straight arrows." The biblical success principle is embedded in the very fabric of creation. In fact, it is of such value that He sent His only Son to restore the order He originally set up at creation. Furthermore, of all children, we shall see that Christian children should be the *most* successful! Why? Because they have the most going for them.

### Designed for Greatness

Although we don't often think about it in these terms, mankind is designed for greatness. Zig Ziglar puts it this way, "We are designed for accomplishment... engineered for success . . . endowed with the seeds of **greatness!**" By creation we are **all** designed for accomplishment — within each of us lies the potential to make our dreams a reality. The Bible makes this truth **very** clear.

In many ways Adam and Eve were the richest people ever. To these two God gave the whole world (literally!). Most often we think of Adam and Eve only in terms of the Fall. But that misses the point of the first chapter of Genesis.

Man is created in the image of God. To be God's image-bearer carries with it a very great responsibility. Man represents the Creator to the rest of creation. This may not be said about any other part of creation—not the fish or any of the animals. Only men and women are the image-bearers.

On the day God created Adam and Eve, He said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue

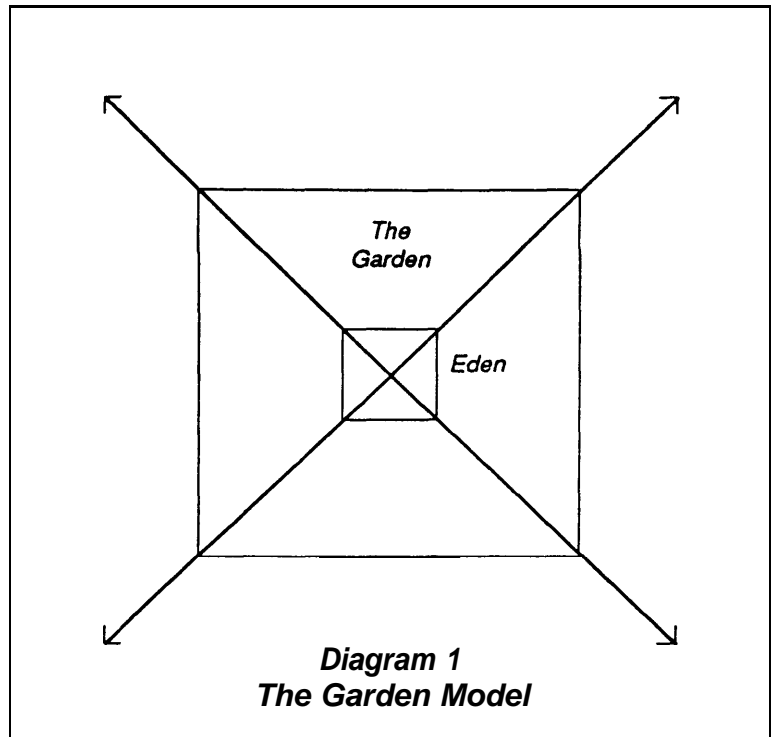
it; have dominion over the fish of the **sea**, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Genesis 1:28). To be God's image-bearer meant man had *dominion* over the rest of creation.

Dominion was never intended to be a license for misuse or abuse of creation, as some have insisted. Adam and Eve were to dress **the garden**, not ravage it. They were to treat God's creatures well, for they represented God on earth. Adam was to care for God's creation, as a steward cares for his maker's property.

To look at it another way, Adam and Eve were to be sources of blessing for the rest of creation. In dressing **the garden**, they were to build upon the life, fertility, and well-being already present; much as a farmer builds on the good land and nutrients in the soil to raise his crops for the blessing of others. As they built, Adam and Eve would enjoy the fruit of their work, accumulating knowledge, wealth, other assets, and influence. After all, as long as they were alive, they would be the bosses!

As humanity grew, the blessings would flow down the rivers that ran out of **the garden** (Gen. 2: 10ff.). [See Diagram 1: *The Garden Model*] When Adam and Eve's children moved **downstream**, they would take with them the successes of **their** parents. Each generation would teach the next what they had learned from the previous generation as well as what they developed in **their** own lifetime. It would take generations, but the time would come when the whole earth was a garden! Everyone would enjoy **the** fruits and benefits of that!

*The original design for all men was to be successful in subduing the creation to the glory of God.* Adam's **original job** was to transform the whole earth as God commanded. [see Diagram 2: *Creation Model*]



It is absolutely true that man was designed for success. Our first job as a race was to remodel the whole world! But that's not the end of the story, is it? Adam and Eve fell into sin, and it was left to the Second Adam to redeem what the First Adam had lost. And it is here, in the story of the gospel, that we Christians find the unavoidable motivation to communicate success to our children.

### The Gospel and Success

Man may be designed for success, but by eating the forbidden fruit he blew out all four tires on his success machine, and now the spare's flat to boot! Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden, and the earth was cursed because of their sin.

One thing did not take place, however. *God never abandoned mankind.* Adam and Eve originally were God's special creation, and they remained so. For ever onward, mankind **would** be divided into the faithful and the unfaithful, but God never abandoned His people. They might not listen to Him, but He would always be patient, lovingly calling His children to Him.

**As a matter of fact**, the one aspect of man's relationship with God that remained relatively unchanged was *communication*. Man was created in the image of God, and God speaks to him directly. Adam's relationship with his Creator was different from any other creature.



## The Geneva Review

**The Geneva Review** (ISSN 0886-0343) is published monthly by Geneva Ministries, and **edited** by Michael R. Gilstrap. It is sent free of charge to all who request it. Those wishing to receive it should address requests to Geneva Ministries, P.O. Box 131300, Tyler, TX 75713. A donation, tax-deductible, is requested. Checks should be made out to **Geneva Ministries**. Permission to reproduce these essays, in whole or in part, is granted, provided the **name and address of The Geneva Review** is included.

By **communicating** with man, God showed the peculiarly intense commitment **He** had to mankind.

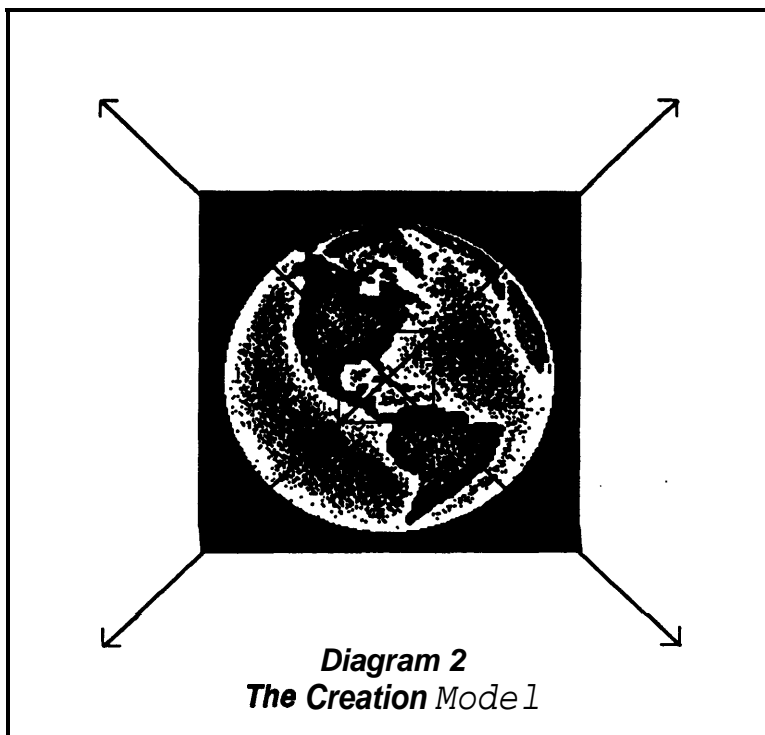
**No** where is this truth more evident than after Adam's sin. After the Fall, God didn't **allow** Adam and Eve to perish in their sin. Instead He clothed them with animal skins (a sacrifice), and restored life and hope to them. He told the serpent in their hearing, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (**Gen. 3:15**).

In the midst of Adam and Eve's fall and betrayal, God **still** loved them, and He continued to communicate that love to His son and daughter. In this case, however, it was a self-sacrificial love that 4000 years later culminated in His Son's death on **the** cross.

Throughout history since the Fall, God the Father has been moved by His love for man to **communicate** that love to us, preeminently through the **death** of **His** son. As Jesus **Himself** said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son. . . ." (**John 3:16**). It is that giving of Himself that makes our lives possible. It was that giving of Himself that is the greatest gift the world has ever known.

### Self-sacrificial Love and Success

You may be asking yourself, "All that is true, but

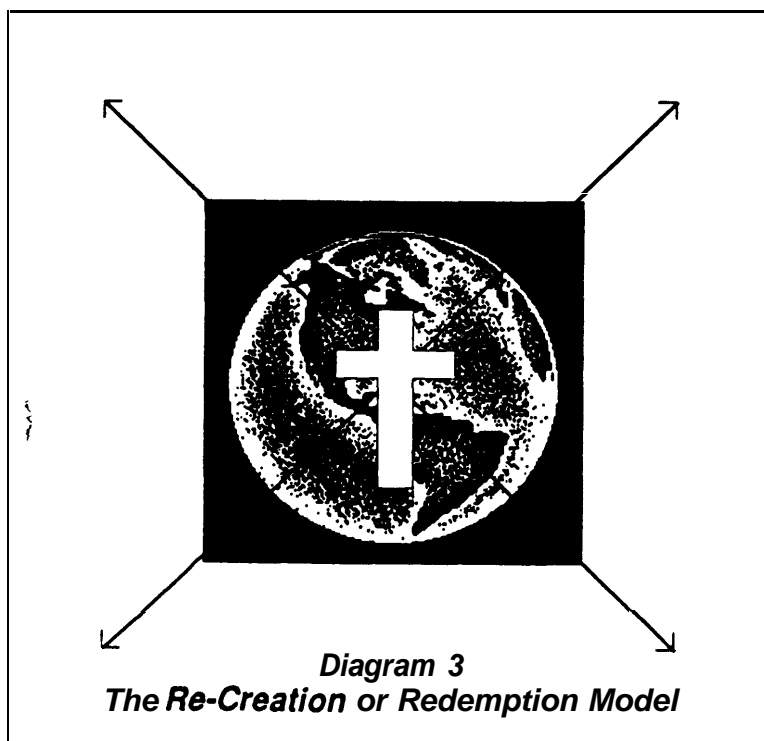


what does it have to do with success?" Let me see if I can answer that question. God communicates to us His **self-sacrificial** love, enabling His children to enjoy the bounty of His creation. We are then commanded to take this blessing to the ends of the **earth** (**Matt. 28:16f**). The blessing of redemption **will** flow to the ends of the earth. The knowledge of the Lord **will** cover the earth as the water covers the sea. [see Diagram 3: **The Re-Creation or Redemption Model**]

Additionally, Christians are told to imitate Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). What does that mean? One thing it means is that we are to imitate His **self-sacrifice**. Paul writes that **Jesus** "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, . . . [and] He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." *His next statement is critical.* "Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name. . . ." (**Phil. 2:7-9**).

Do you see the connection? Christ was exalted **because** He gave Himself for us. Further, the riches of His redemption were transferred to the world as a result of the communication of His self-sacrificial love. For **Jesus**, **true** success (saving the world) **came** through sacrifice. Ever since, the world has enjoyed the bounty of His redemption.

As parents, we communicate **success** to our children **through the** self-sacrificial love we have



for them and others. Our children see us sharing the riches of Christ with others, both spiritual and material, and they learn to imitate us. **It** is through a life of **self-sacrificial** love that true success is achieved, but we must first communicate **that** love to our children.

Our second born, Austin, is an illustration of this truth. When he was five, we discovered he had an eye problem. His **eyes were** not developing properly, and he was having a great deal of trouble in kindergarten. There was some question whether he would ever learn to read well.

Fortunately, one of the top specialists in the country practiced in a city near us. After Austin's **first examination**, she ushered Donna and I into her office. "I have good news and bad news," she **told** us. "The good news is Austin's problem can be corrected without surgery. The bad news is that the therapy program is not only rigorous, but expensive."

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*Our **Rewards** in Life are in Direct Proportion  
to Our **Contribution** or Our Service*

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For the next six months our family literally poured ourselves into Austin's therapy. **It** was a strain financially, but the tremendous time and effort expended was even more of a strain. The **first** three months of therapy were during the summer, but after he started **first** grade, in addition to a six hour day at school, Austin had three to five hours of closely monitored therapy at home. His mother worked with him as only a mother can, giving every ounce of her love and affection to make her little boy well. Three days a week she made a two hour trip to the eye doctor's office for additional therapy. Our entire family's schedule revolved around making Austin **well**.

He reads like champ today. In fact, he amazed his doctor with his rapid progress. Thanks to the prayers of our church family and the blessings of God, Austin recovered in about half the time it ordinarily takes.

But much more than that took place as a result of Austin's therapy. Today that young man is more kind, more gracious, more thoughtful, and more giving than he ever was before. His attitude and outlook on life is the most positive of any of our children. Although Austin is an average young man, he *believes* that with hard work and dedication, he can do anything he wants to. We poured ourselves into him, and that love took root. I have every **confidence** that regardless of what God calls him to do, he will communicate the self-sacrificial love shown to him by his Lord and his parents to his children and others as well. And in so doing, he will be successful.

The great truth is that to the degree we as parents are successful in communicating self-sacrificial love, we

transfer those attitudes, practices, and habits to our children. They, in turn, build upon what we give them. Our children are not only able to communicate their **self-sacrificial** love to their children, but by building upon a solid foundation, they are able to communicate more of God's love to the world. **In** other words, the more success achieved in the form of knowledge, wealth, or influence, the greater demonstration of **self-sacrificial** love to the world is possible—the greater demonstration to the world of the benefits of the gospel. The more successful Christians become, the better place this world will be. What a motivation for success!

### Giving to Get to Give More

Just as Jesus did not grasp for His place as the Son of God (Phil. 2:6), true success does not come by grasping for it—it only comes through **service**. The gospel is God sharing His riches with man. In spreading the benefits of the gospel, we must learn to share our riches with others.

In order to get, we must give. As Earl Nightingale has said on so many occasions, "Our rewards in life will always be equal to our contribution or our service." That's a profound **statement**. To the extent we serve others, to that extent we will be rewarded. If our goal is to teach our children to be successful, then we must teach them to serve others.

In driving down the street, if we see someone living in a large mansion, he is there not because he **stole** that house from someone else or took advantage of the poor. He is there because his level of service to other people is such that others pay him an income which enables him to purchase that house. There are exceptions, but they are just that — exceptions. The general rule is we reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7) — our rewards in life are always equal to our contribution or our service.

**Giving to get to give more.** That is the key to success, and it's one of the primary motivations Christian parents have for instilling success principles in their children. Most Christian parents dream great dreams for their children, but our dreams do not revolve around the accumulation of wealth for wealth's sake. Although many different career paths may be envisioned, and a comfortable lifestyle characterizes all of them, in each our child is important because of the service he or she does for others.

What we have been discussing is nothing more than the dynamic of the gospel—the greatest success **principle** the world has ever known. As Christians in history have achieved success and accumulated wealth, works of compassion and love have always gone hand in hand. Hospitals were established. Orphans cared for. Rescue missions begun. Charitable societies founded.

The history of the Church is a history of the spread of the **benefits** of redemption. Her entire history **since** the cross is marked by extraordinary feats of **self-sacrificial** love.

Bernard of **Clairveaux** (1090-1153) started the greatest monastic movement of **all** time which resulted in an evangelical revival spreading from France throughout the rest of the western world. Additionally, he established a network of charitable houses to care for poor.

John **Wyclif's** (1329-1384) army of preachers not only brought the Scriptures to the common man for the **first** time in several centuries, but they also developed into a grassroots movement of relief workers bringing hope to the poor and oppressed.

George **Whitefield** (1714-1770) was the driving force behind the Great Awakening in America, yet he was also the patron of Georgia's **first** orphanage and organizer of that colony's **first** relief association and hospital.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892), the great Baptist preacher of Victorian England established an estimated 60 different charitable institutions including hospitals, orphanages, and **almshouses**.

D. L. Moody (1837-1899), the itinerant evangelist of late 19th century America was responsible for over 150 street missions, soup kitchens, medical clinics, and rescue outreaches.

The list could go on and on. As my friend George Grant, president of **Christian Worldview in Ft. Worth**, Texas, and a renowned charitable relief advocate remarked, "Obedient believers have always cared for the poor, the helpless, the orphan, and the widow. Believers **wed** word and deed."

Self-sacrificial love is central to the gospel task, and it is through service to others that we achieve success ourselves. Although we shall be looking at all the principles involved in building success into our children's lives, the most fundamental principle is this one: self-sacrificial love. It is the dynamic of the gospel, and it is the dynamic that will give your child the success you dream of.

With the Apostle Paul we must say that though our **children** have desire . . . though they have the best education money can buy... though they are enthusiastic and highly motivated . . . though they set **goals** for achievement . . . though they have been taught to handle money and assets . . . though they have everything else it takes to succeed . . . if they have not love, all their efforts will be as tinkling brass or a clanging symbol ( 1 Cor. 13). But with a deeply communicated sense of **self-sacrificial** love, success will be theirs, and their lives will be a **dream** come true.

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## **Every Parent's Dream Building' Faith, Character, and Success "into. YOUR Child's Life**

*conducted by  
The Rev. Michael R. Gilstrap,  
president of Geneva Ministries*

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## The Goals of Christ's Reign

*Peter J. Leithart, Th.M.*

One of the charges most frequently leveled against what is called "Christian Reconstruction" is that it seeks to setup the kingdom of God on earth by human effort. We have already dealt with this objection from one angle in earlier essays: Christ Himself established the kingdom, and it grows by **the** power of His Spirit, as leaven leavens the whole lump. Christ uses His people to extend His **rule; like** the disciples (Lk. 9-10; cf. 2 Cor. 10:3-6), we are co-combatants in Christ's holy warfare to bring the nations into submission to Him, but it is entirely wrong, and even idolatrous, to say that we want to or can build the kingdom ourselves.

Having said that, the question remains whether the kingdom is in any way relevant to history and human culture. It is therefore of the utmost importance that we examine what the goals of Christ's kingdom are. Does Christ reign **to restore human culture**? Did Christ die, rise again, and ascend to His throne of glory to restore the whole life **of** the human race, or simply his "sacred" or "religious" life? Or, more pointedly, did Christ die and rise again to deliver us from sin, or to deliver us from history? With **these** questions in the back of our minds, let us examine the goals of Christ's rule.

First and foremost, Christ has done all He has done to bring glory to God the Father (Jn. 17:4). This was in part accomplished in His earthly ministry, His death and resurrection, which are a revelation of the justice of God. But Christ continues in His exaltation to glorify the Father. He calls men and women into the kingdom as worshipers of the Father (Jn. 4:23-24). Bringing glory and honor to the Triune God is also the ultimate goal of Christ's continuing conquest of sin and Satan, someday, He will deliver the Kingdom to the Father, so that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:23-28). This is true of Christ, and, as we are co-laborers in God's field (1 Cor. 3:9), it should be true of us. Whatever tools we may use in working for the extension of the rule of Christ throughout the earth — and there are manifold tools — our ultimate purpose is to glorify God and to play a part in bringing **all** men to bow in reverence before the King of kings.

Second, Christ rules for the sake of His elect, to bring them into the life of the kingdom, to perfect them, and finally to bring them into the final kingdom of the perfected heaven and earth. This goal is, in one sense, subordinate to the first, since Christ brings the elect into the kingdom as worshipers of the Father. But in saving **the** elect, He **also** intends to display the riches of the Father's love for His children. To achieve this end,

Christ rules not only over His **people** through His **Spirit**, but **also opens doors for the preaching of** the gospel of the kingdom, **delivers** His people from their enemies, **bestows** blessings on them, and **disciplines** them in love.

Third, **Christ** rules to accomplish several earthly and historical purposes. This is where **things** get **a bit sticky**. Nearly every Christian will agree that Christ **is** reigning to bring glory to the Father, and to perfect the **saints**. **That** is, everyone agrees that Christ's rule accomplishes certain Spiritual ends. But does Christ reign on His throne to achieve a cultural and historical goal? Such a question is based, I believe, on a false anthropology that tends to dichotomize man's Spiritual and cultural life. **If** a man is created as diversity-in-unity, a **liturgico-cultural** being, a priest-king, then the salvation of man can hardly have any other **effect** than a full restoration to Adam's original calling.

This conclusion is supported by many biblical passages. Christ's reign and of His people's **total** devotion to Him bear **fruit** in righteousness and **purification** (Jer. 23:5-6; Ezk. 36:24-26), and the law will be taught to **all** nations (Isa. 2:2-4). In short, the Christ intends to transform ethically the **lives** of His people. Social and political harmony will also **result**, as the nations gather to worship (Isa. 2:4: 65:21-22). Christ's reign will increase the fertility of the earth (Isa. 35:1-2), lead to the taming of wild animals (Isa. 11:6-9), and increase the health of mankind (Isa. 65:20, 22).

This understanding of the historical goal of Christ's reign will meet objections on several sides. The premillennialist will say that this is a description of the millennial kingdom, which will come cataclysmically at Christ's return. (In fact, I drew most of these passages from an article by **dispensationalist** Herman Hoyt.) Others will **object** that I am "literalizing" these symbolic prophecies of Heaven. **I** am **confident**, however, that both of these objections are irrelevant.

Let's suppose that the premillennialist is correct about the timing of the millennium, and that these promises will not be **fulfilled** until some future age. Even on a premillennial basis, it can be maintained that he "coming kingdom gives us a pattern to imitate, a target at which we can take aim. Similarly, let us suppose that the prophecies are "symbolic" of heaven, as the **amillennialist** would argue. Again, this is irrelevant to my argument, for the **final** kingdom remains our pattern for earthly activity even though we will never fully realize it in history.

That this is not a peculiarly **postmillennial** viewpoint is illustrated by a recent statement on war and peace from the National Association of Evangelical, certainly no **postmillennial** organization. The statement said something to the effect **that** the kingdom provides the horizon

of our political efforts. If this is to be **taken** seriously (as opposed to being a bit of rhetoric), we need to ask how we know what **the** final kingdom will look like. Obviously, the only place to look is in the Bible. In short, the National Association of Evangelicals implies that it is our civil duty as Christians to seek to achieve something *resembling the* universal peace and justice described by the prophets. The NAE statement makes the **qualification** that this goal will never be fully achieved, but it insists that this should be our goal. (The Pope's recent encyclical makes the same kind of argument.) What is this but trying to bring the pattern of the heavenly kingdom to the earth? Thus, one's millennial position seems irrelevant to the question of whether Christ's rule has an historical and cultural goal.



### Stand and Deliver

*Stand and Deliver* is a brilliant 1988 release now available from Warner Home Video. It enjoyed mild success during its **theatre** sweep, in itself a quality index for any film that purposely emphasizes substance over titillation (the latter **being** the standard for the **movie-set**). The lead actor even appears out-of-character at the opening to tell you what a quality story this is; the mere fact that the producers felt this was necessary serves, in itself, as a telling indictment for the average moviegoer's **superficiality**. The typical movie buff not only has to be told that there **is** a virtuous theme, but exactly what comprises it! *Geneva Review* readers, however, are anything but typical, and recognize virtuosity at the drop of a hat (you're reading this aren't you?). *Stand and Deliver is*, therefore, a perfect film to recommend to our virtuous and atypical readers !

The film stars Edward James **Olmos** as **Jamie Escalante**, the true story of the courageous computer programmer turned teacher who leads a class of Hispanic high school students from despair and hopelessness to calculus and college. This singular remarkable feat is even more incredible considering the political and ideological inertia **Escalante** must overcome before "his

kids" can reach goals that will lift them out of their congenital poverty and ignorance.

In effect, this film is **really** about **the insanity** of modern educational methodology and how it has ruined urban public high schools. Recently, J&Clark, the **non-doctrinaire** principal who took over the tough Eastside High School (New Jersey) in 1982, found that the **liberal** educational establishment didn't want the kind of reforms he enacted. He said at an Indianapolis gathering that "the **liberal** element could never taint me . . . I'm anti-liberal **because I've seen** what liberalism has done to this country. And limousine liberals really have no stake in anything except to give more to the inner-city kids, more welfare, more promises, and make excuses for their diabolical behavior."

**Escalante** faces similar ideological **chicanery** at Los Angeles' **Garfield** High School. Upon reporting for his **first** day of work, **Escalante** learns from the principal's secretary that he will not be teaching the computer class he was hired to teach, since the school owns no computers. Instead, he has been scheduled to teach basic mathematics to a gang of disinterested sophomores, most of whom are used to getting their way both in the classroom and on the street.

In a particularly moving scene, **Escalante** appears in a meeting with other faculty members to discuss what measures they can take to insure continuation of **their** academic accreditation. The chair of the mathematics department begins with a diatribe on the need to upgrade the economic condition of the community. Another faculty member chooses to diagnose the problem, seeing the students as "illiterates," complete with a "seventh grade education." **Escalante** scoffs at all the banter, claiming laconically, "students will rise to the level of expectation."

And what expectations **Escalante** has for his students! He downplays the need for remedial course work — the current fad in the academy — and launches his "illiterates" into a vigorous trigonometry and mathematics course, which continues to meet right into the hot summer from 7-12 o'clock, Monday through Saturday. **Escalante** pushes and pulls at his students, until amidst their grumbling, they begin to excel and feel the tingle of accomplishment. **Escalante** occasionally gives gentle assurances, yet always showing them that lasting success is still ahead.

How does **Escalante** succeed where others have failed? First, **Escalante** brings mathematics down to a reachable level to the students, without ever minimizing the complexity of learning. For example, on his second day in class, **Escalante** wears a fast-food chef's cap and wields a meat cleaver over apples as a means of teaching fractions. He intimidates the punks in the class and gets

some of them to perform, notably the street-wise Angel, who initially tells **Escalante** that he wants to study but his image won't allow him to carry schoolbooks. **Escalante** turns the labyrinth of math into a clear pathway, accessible only through hard work and determination.

Another quality which factors into **Escalante's** success is his ability to turn around student attitudes. He whispers to students in the class who refuse to cooperate or who give up too easily; he prods them on to try harder, to accomplish more than just what meager goals they have set for themselves. Although it is never stated directly in the film, it is interesting to note how the students dress differently as they gain **confidence** and **begin** to master academics; they begin to act differently, dress differently, and speak differently.

Near the end of the film, **Escalante** has about with the Educational Testing **Service** regarding the success of his students on the Advanced Placement Examination. The ETS officials want to disallow the results, and the ensuing discussion **Escalante** has with ETS officials is revelatory. The Educational Testing Service, by the way, is composed of the chaps who write the SAT's that most colleges require for admission; see this **film** and **find** out where **their** real sympathies **lie**. (I won't give away this "surprise.")

"Stand and Deliver" was the phrase used by the English highwayman who commanded their unwilling subjects to produce their wealth for the highwayman's pilfering. **Escalante** does no stealing, but he does show the wealth of potential that even unwilling "illiterates" can achieve.

### Seventh Sign

The Tri-Star release on video cassette of the *Seventh Sign* is welcome, but perhaps not in the vein that the producers of this film intended. Its subject is the apocalyptic end of the physical world and deals only secondarily with the second coming of Christ.

What makes the film particularly interesting for the discerning Christian is that it portrays so dramatically how akin humanism can be to the gloom-and-doom **eschatology** that has predominated American **Evangelicalism**. There is a curious similarity between the two — almost chilling — that develops through **the** movie and culminates in the lapsed second coming. Of course, I'm sure that such an association was not in the mind of the script editor, yet it is curious how the film makers evidently saw a similarity in purpose between their own humanistic goals and that of pop **premillennialism**; usually postmillennialism is the straw man accused of humanistic optimism.

Dcmi Moore plays the naive Abby Quinn, the wife

of a prominent Venice, California attorney who stumbles upon the "keys" to biblical prophecy that will effect the end of the world. David Banner, their boarder and supposed instructor of ancient languages, turns out to be more than just an absent-minded professor. Interspersed throughout their entangling stories are grim "**fulfillments**" of symbolic prophecies, like a sea turning blood red and a desert plain **being** pelted with snow.

Quinn is pregnant, with her baby being due to be delivered on February 29, all of which is **significant** in the **numerological** scheme of the movie. Soon the mysterious boarder informs her that the souls in heaven are "all used **up**," and that unless she can gain the needed "Hope" to save the world, the baby will be delivered dead. This still-birth will comprise the breaking **of** the last seal and signal the beginning of the end.

In the meantime, every conceivable heresy becomes" part of the belief system that Quinn must grasp in order to gain the elusive Hope. **In** a dream, she sees Christ denied at the Cross and scourged by **a Roman jailer** (okay so far); later, she becomes empowered by the heavenly emissary to save the world through her own actions (humanistic schlock). Even the Christ figure is unable to halt the apocalypse, and so the whole earth depends on some dumb agnostic. What unravels is the humanist's dream: the **friendly** merger of the prophecy conference with new age humanism.

So even though the film flops theologically and **aesthetically**, it still has great pedagogical value. For one, **it is** among one of the few **films** that I know in which non-Christian ideas are subtly blended with Christian ones without the outward disparaging of Christianity in the process. **J.I. Packer's** **identification** of the "hot tub" religion is right there on the screen — modern man's synergism of pop culture and Bible — and how frighteningly similar it sounds to prophetic speculation.

This is the kind of film that could be viewed by mature Christians and discussed later in terms of its departure from and its sometimes agreement with the tenets of historic Christianity. [The triadic guide I developed in *Seeing and Believing* (4 tapes and study guide, available from Geneva Ministries, \$19.95) could be used as a basis for analysis.] Some friends at my church have talked about forming a film group to view and discuss movies, and this film would certainly merit consideration for that kind of context.

Consequently, I recommend the film as an example of how humanism seeks to merge conflicting worldviews, something that occurs in our lives everyday, though seldom available for our inspection via still frame and instant playback. I would place such a film in the "discussion" **category**, not necessarily to be recommended for individual viewing.