

REBELLION, TYRANNY, AND DOMINION IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS

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THE differences between true and false dominion constitute one of the major themes of the book of Genesis. While other books of Scripture, such as the book of Judges, give us similar insights, the book of Genesis is particularly suited to our present situation in America as Christians. We have not (yet) been conquered by outsiders (as in the book of Judges), but the governance of our lives has been given over to anti-Christian tyrants from within, with whom we have to deal. Moreover, with the emergence of the New Christian Right, a temptation is placed before the American Christian community which is analogous to the temptation placed before Adam and Eve by the tempter: the temptation to seize power instead of waiting for God to confer it.

The procedure of this paper is as follows. First we look at several sections of the book of Genesis to learn what it teaches about rebellion, tyranny, resistance, and dominion. Then we suggest some relevant applications to our own time, in both church and state. Some applications will be made along the way, in order to illustrate the points made.

Seizing the Robe from God: Adam

In Genesis 1:1-2:4, we have an account of God's creation of a *place* for man. The Hebrew word is *'erets*, which is translated earth, but which always implies an organized place, a structured environment. It stands in contrast to the word for *ground* used in chapters 2-4, *'adhamah* which means the dirt out of which men and animals are made, and to which they return when they die. In Genesis 6-8, it is the *'erets* which is decreed (or destabilized) back to its initial stage (cf. Gen. 1:2) and then recreated. This restabilizing process constitutes the "establishing" of God's original covenantal order of creation,

an establishing of it *through* Noah (Gen. 6:18; 9:9-16).¹

The world as God originally created it was “formless and empty” (Gen. 1:2). The work of God in the six days of creation was designed to give structure and content to the creation. This giving of structure to the formless and content to the empty consists of a series of “covenant” actions on God’s part. First comes *the covenant word* Let there be (1:3,6,9,14,20,24,26). Following the covenant word comes, second, the *covenant act*, an act either of separating or of filling. Third we find covenant provisions, which consist of naming or describing what has been made, giving to each its place in the covenant order. Fourth and fifth, we find *covenant witness* which forms the basis of *covenant judgments*: And God saw that it was *good* (1:4, 10, 12, 18,21,25,31).

Man is made in the image of God, and we expect from this that man will be, like God, a covenant-acting being. Man’s actions within the covenant will be secondary; he will *image* the covenant-life of God; he will think God’s thoughts after Him, and in a sense live God’s life after Him. Man is created, we may truly say, a *symbol of God*, and his whole life is to be a life of imaging God.

Man has meaning, thus, only as a symbol of God. The meaning of his life is not found within himself, but in his being an image of something else, of God. Man does not have meaning within himself; he does not define himself; he is defined by God.

‘Imaging the life of God, man is not able to speak a covenant word in the same sense as God does (though in magic sinful man would try to do so); but man tracks God’s other covenant actions, acquiring knowledge and wisdom and passing judgment. God’s actions had entailed a prophetic command (let there be), a kingly response of action (and there was), and a final priestly evaluation (and God saw that it was

1. That God’s original creation of the *’erets* was a covenant making activity has been well demonstrated by Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, volume 1 (Wenham, MA: Gordon-Conwell Divinity School Bookstore, 1981), pp. 26ff. On the meaning of “establishing” the covenant, as opposed to “making” it, see Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, part II: *From Noah to Abraham*, trans. by Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, [1949] 1964), p. 67 f.; and Cassuto, *The Documental Hypothesis*, trans. by Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, [1941] 1961), p. 47f.

good). Man was not to be a prophet; he was to get his inceptive word from God.² Man was, however, to engage in a kingly function of action in terms of God's command, and finally he was going to be called upon to make priestly judicial pronouncements.

Man's first day was God's seventh. Man would start in a sabbath, and receive God's prophetic word of command-promise. Then he would work for six days, in faithfulness or disobedience. At the end, at the sabbath of his analogous labors, he would pass judgment. Judgment comes at the end, not at the beginning; after getting wisdom and working, not before it.

God created man to image Him in two primary respects, seen in Genesis 2:15: "Then YHWH God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to serve it and to guard it." The serving function images God's kingly character, and the guarding function images His priestly character. Man's understanding of these two duties was to be progressive. Though made "like God," man was to become more and more like God through a process of growth and maturation in His image. God used the animals to teach man about his basic (kingly) and hieratic (priestly) tasks.

First, he brought animals to the man to see what he would *name* them. Man would *learn* from the animals and acquire *wisdom* from them (as we see later on also from the book of Proverbs). *Acquiring knowledge and wisdom* is the first part of man's kingly function; the second part is his *kingly servant-rule* based on his wisdom. Imaging God's covenant provisions, man named the animals, thinking God's thoughts after Him. From this action, man learned that he was alone, something he learned because God had set up an analogy between the life of man and the life of the animals.³ Now that the man had

² The prophetic function (sometimes called an office, but not in the same sense as priest and king) was given to man after the fall, to speak God's inceptive word of command-promise into the world. The first use of the term 'prophet' in Scripture indicates that it basically means "mediator," one who speaks for two opposed sides (Gen. 20:7).

³ After all, Adam might have reasoned, "Hmmm. Each of these animals has a sexually polar mate. But, that's the way animals are, and since I am not an animal, it has nothing to do with me." Adam did not so reason, however. Both man and animals are made from the *'adhamah* (2:7, 19). It is because of this analogy that animals can serve as symbolic sacrificial substitutes for man, and that dividing animals into two halves can signify a covenantal relationship between man and the *'adhamah* (Gen. 15:9-21).

learned of his need of a mate, God provided her by means of the covenant act of separation (2:21). The Bible also informs us that the covenant act of separation continues each time a man leaves his father's house to marry (2:24). Now that the woman had been made, God gave His basic "cultural mandate" to the man and the woman together, telling them to image His covenant action of filling as well (1:28).

We could say more about all this, but we are now in a position to interpret God's second course of wisdom-instruction, which also used an animal. God would bring an animal to Adam to teach him something about his guarding task. From naming the animals Adam had learned that he needed something. "Well, Lord, you have told me to serve the garden, but I find I cannot do so. There is a problem. I find I have a lack. I need a helper suited to me." So, God provided a passive Adam with something to make up the lack. So also here. From encountering the dragon Adam would learn that he needed something. "Lord, you have told me to guard the garden, but I find I am naked. I lack any robe of judicial authority. I am not empowered to deal with this situation." So, God would provide, when Adam was ready for it, what he needed to deal with the invader. Let us now consider this in more detail.

First we read that Adam and Eve were "both naked and not ashamed." It is a fundamental mistake of interpretation to think that man's nakedness was supposed to be a permanent condition, and that clothing was simply introduced to cover man's sin. Not so. God is clothed in a garb of light, an environment called "glory" in Scripture. The "glory cloud" is seen as a palace, as a temple, as a society of angels and men around Him, and in other forms as well.⁴ The glory cloud is God's garment of regal and priestly office. Man, as God's image, should also have such robes. The robe of office, however, is not something man starts out with, but something he must mature into, by acquiring wisdom based on righteousness. The robe of office is for *elders*, not for young men. Moreover, it is never seized, but is always *bestowed*.

God intended for man to learn about his priestly task, which involves measuring (evaluating, witnessing) as a

4. On this see Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1980).

precondition to the formal passing of judgment.⁵ Thus, God brought an animal to Adam and Eve.⁶ By observing the animal's attack upon his wife, Adam would learn that he must guard her, since she was under his covenant headship. By observing what the animal said, and how it defiled God's garden, Adam and Eve would learn that they lacked something else they needed: a robe of office. This would have been given them by letting them eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

God put two special trees in the garden: the Tree of Life and the Tree of Judgment. God told Adam and Eve that *all* the trees were made for them to eat of (1:29), so that they knew the prohibition on the Tree of Judgment was temporary. Moreover, God had told them that of *every* other tree they might *freely* eat (2:16), so that they were invited to eat of the Tree of Life from the start.⁷ Arriving at the center of the garden, symbolic of God's throne (or the earthly footstool thereof), Adam and Eve were approached by the dragon.

The dragon stated that if Eve ate the fruit her *eyes* would be opened and she would be *like God, knowing good and evil*. What does this mean? Were Adam and Eve blind? Clearly

5. Throughout Scripture the priests are those who measure out the dimensions of the temple of God, the man with the measuring rod of Ezekiel 40ff. being but the most prominent example. Such measuring, like witness-bearing, entails seeing, and is the precondition of *judging*, as we have seen these in God's covenant actions in Genesis 1. The priestly aspect of *measuring* and witnessing can be seen in that it correlates to guarding, because it sets up and establishes boundaries, and bears witness regarding whether or not those boundaries have been observed. We might say that the kingly function has to do with filling, and the priestly with separating, the former with cultivation and the latter with jealousy, propriety, and protection.

6. It is clear from the phrase "with her" in 3:6 that Adam was standing by Eve all the while the serpent tempted them.

7. This is quite clear from the text. Various commentators and theologians have supposed that Adam "knew" he was not to eat of the Tree of Life until he had "passed the test." This is completely wrong. The Tree of Life is not an attainment, but is the foundation of life. It is the Tree of Judgment, of investiture with office, which is eschatological in character. The choice before Adam on that first sabbath day was which of the two trees in the center of the garden he would approach: the one God had prohibited, or the one God had invited him to. For the redeemed man, the Tree of Life is not something given him at the end, but at the beginning of his Christian life, for Jesus Christ is the Tree of Life, and the sacraments are the abiding food-form of that same Tree.

not, for the woman saw that the tree was good for food (correctly, 2:9) and a delight to the eyes (correctly, 2:9), and that it was desirable to make her wise (wrongly). Also, how about being like God? Wasn't man made in the image and likeness of God? How, then, is it a temptation to become like God, if man is already like God? And again, how about knowing good and evil? Were Adam and Eve in a state of moral neutrality at this point? Obviously not, for they were in covenant with God. They were morally good, and they had a knowledge of moral goodness. They knew right from wrong, and especially Adam, as covenant head, was not deceived about what was going on (1 Tim. 2:14).

The matter becomes even more curious when we notice the sequel. We read that their *eyes* were indeed opened (3:7). We hear God soberly state, "Behold, the man has become *like one of Us, knowing good and evil. . . .*" Was the tempter right? Clearly in some sense, the dragon was telling the truth, though he lied in saying that they would not die.

All of these questions are answered when we realize that the opening of the eyes, the maturation in God-likeness, and the knowledge of good and evil, all have to do with investiture with the robe of judicial office. Concerning the eyes: We have already seen in Genesis 1 that God's seeing is part of His passing judgment. We find in Jeremiah 32:18-19 that God's "eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." In Psalm 11:4, the eyes of YHWH "behold, His eyelids try, the children of men." False gods are witnesses, says Isaiah 44:9, which "see not, nor know," and which are "put to shame," all language reminiscent of Genesis 3. Meredith M. Kline summarizes, saying that "the picture is of the eyes of God functioning in the legal sphere to give a conclusive judgment concerning lives of men which have been observed by God."⁸ Thus, God's eyes either spare or do not spare men His judgments (Ezek. 5:11; 7:4; 20:17).

Concerning becoming more like God, we notice in the text itself the statement that man is already like God (morally), and from the text itself we could draw the inference that the temporary prohibition on the Tree of Judgment was designed

⁸ Meredith M. Kline, "The Holy Spirit as Covenant Witness" (Th.M. Thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1972), p. 72. I am indebted to Kline's discussion for the verses cited in this section of my essay.

to cause man to mature in God-likeness. The rest of Scripture confirms this for us, in that when men are invested with special office as *judges*, they are called *gods*: ‘God takes His stand in His own congregation; He judges in the midst of the gods. How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? . . . They do not know nor do they understand; they walk about in *darkness*; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. I on My part said, ‘You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High. Nevertheless, you will die like men’ ” (Psalm 82:1,2,5,6,7a). Jesus cites this passage in John 10:34. The rulers of Israel are called gods in Exodus 21:6; 22:8,28. This language may make us nervous, because we are so used to thinking of man’s making himself into a god as sinful — and rightly so. It is God alone who can invest men properly with the robe of judicial godhood, and it is the essence of original sin for man to seize that robe for himself and seek to make himself into a god (a judge).

What about the phrase “knowing good and evil”? Again, in context, God has been said to pronounce things good, as we have seen. Thus, for man to get knowledge of good and evil would, in context, mean that man has *the privilege of making judicial pronouncements*. Indeed, the rest of Scripture confirms this. Solomon, the first fulfillment of the Davidic Son-covenant and the most splendid type of Christ, prays to be given “an understanding heart to *judge* Thy people, to *discern* between *good and evil*. For who is able to judge this weighty people of Thine?” (1 Kings 3:9). God grants this kingly request (notice that Solomon does not assume that he already possesses this discernment), and immediately we see Solomon exercise His judgment (v. 28). We may also look at what the wise woman said to David in 2 Samuel 14:17: “For as the angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and evil.” In other words, man’s judicial authority is a copy of God’s. The angel of God has wisdom to “know all that is in the earth” (v. 20), and this knowing entails seeing: “My lord the king is like the angel of God, therefore do what is *good* in your *sight*” (2 Sam. 19:27). Infants do not have the wisdom to know good and evil in this judicial sense (Deut. 1:39), and frequently the aged lose this capacity due to senility (2 Sam. 19:35). Thus, it is not *moral* knowledge but *judicial* knowledge that is involved.

Now we can better understand the dragon’s temptation. “True,” he says, “you are already morally like God. But as you

know, you are naked. Your destiny is to be robed with judicial office, passing judgment on good and evil. That's what this tree here is all about. In the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be fully like God, judging good and evil. Why has God forbidden it, then? Didn't He tell you that *every* tree was for you to eat? How long will this prohibition last? How long are you expected to postpone taking up what is your right? How long are you supposed to fast from this privilege? Forty days? ⁹Why wait?

"God says He wants you to acquire wisdom first? *Then*, when you're older, He'll let you take on the vestments of office? I doubt it. Frankly, God knows that if you eat this fruit, it will magically confer wisdom on you. You don't need to learn wisdom through the course of time; you can get it instantly. Look at how God acted. He did not acquire wisdom and then bring things to pass, but He said 'let there be.' He created His wisdom by His prophetic command-word. If you are going to be like God, that is what you also should do. Make your own wisdom. Say how it's going to be, and then force your will upon everything else. God wants you to image Him, to be His copy and symbol; don't do it. Become gods yourselves; that's what it truly means to be godlike.

"Oh, God said you would die? If you seize office prematurely it will unravel the entire covenantal order? You'll return to the *'adhamah*, and so will everything else? All will be de-stabilized? I doubt it. You won't die. Believe me. If you are really sons of God, and gods yourselves, being His image and likeness, then act like it! (Matt. 4:3,6). Would God wait for permission? Why should you? After all, what does it mean to be an image and likeness of God? Clearly it means to be the same as God, right? God does things on His own, and therefore so should you. You are like God, and so you have life in yourself. You don't need to go to that Tree of Life and pray to God and beg Him to give you life, so you don't die! No, no; you are like God, right? And so you are self-sustaining, right? So you don't need that Tree of Life, right? ¹⁰

9. Forty days is a standard period of waiting or testing in Scripture; also forty years. We shall see that the period between creation and Noah's investiture was a "forty" period. See footnote 13 below

10. Satan's denial that man need fear death presupposes that man is on a continuum with God, that he has being in common with God, and thus does not need to get life from God. This is the origin of the basic pagan "scale of

“So don’t worry about a thing, my dear. Assert yourself. See, Adam’s not objecting, so don’t bother to ask him for permission. Take and eat.”

And so, hearkening to the dragon’s word, man decided that he did not need to depend on God for life. He adopted the philosophy of the scale of being. Being a part of God, he thought, he reasoned that he had life in himself, and could not perish. Confident that God’s threats meant nothing, Adam seized the garment of judicial office, and made himself a god.

God chose to honor man’s decision. Immediately, Adam and Eve found out that the devil had lied about wisdom. They had the office, but they lacked the psychological heaviness to bear it. They were embarrassed. What they had expected to be robes of office now had to do double duty as a means of concealing their inadequacy. With a sinking feeling in their bellies, they realized they had gotten themselves into a position they could not handle. They did not have wisdom, but now they had to judge. They hoped the moment would not come.

But come it did, and right away. God called on them to exercise their new office by evaluating their own actions. “Judge righteous judgment,” said God. Did they do so? No, they called evil good and good evil (Isaiah 5:20). They did not each blame himself or herself, but they tried to pin the blame on each other and on God. They showed themselves unfit to guard the garden, and they were expelled; new cherubic guardians were appointed, until the coming of the Son of Man would replace them with New Covenant human guardians.

God clothed them in animal skins, showing that they should have awaited His investiture of them rather than seizing the robe of office. Perhaps the animal skins were a token of their new bestial status; seeking to become gods, they became less than men.¹¹ Certainly evil rulers are likened to beasts

being” philosophy, which is well discussed throughout the works of Cornelius Van Til and Rousas J. Rushdoony. Adam’s sin consisted of seizing the robe of judicial authority prematurely, but in order to do this he had to shift his presuppositions to believe that he was equal with God ontologically, and that his mind was equally able to evaluate data epistemologically. Adam took upon himself the right to decide, which it was not his place to do.

11. Not in some scale of being sense, obviously, but in the sense that animals are not the dominators but the dominated. Man had hearkened to the animal, and thus had become subjected, in a sense, to the animal.

often enough in the rest of Scripture, thinking only for the moment of the beasts in Daniel and in Revelation. But we may also see in the clothing with animal skins another meaning as well, which is that God intends to establish His covenant and to bring man eventually to a place of true office, but now only on the basis of a blood sacrifice. The clothing with animal skins was a token to Adam and Eve that someday a man would be given the robe of office, on the basis of the death of a substitute.

Noah, the second Adam, was that person.

*Seizing the Robe from Human Authority:
The Example of Ham*

Before the Flood, God did not give to His people the right to exercise judicial office. Sinful men, having seized the robe, did not hesitate to use it in terms of their own perverted standards. Thus Cain, unwilling to judge himself for his sins and bring a blood sacrifice as his substitute, chose to execute capital punishment against his innocent brother, who had shamed him. The *'adhamah*, drinking Abel's blood, cried out for vengeance, but God appointed Himself a city of refuge for Cain. Cain, however, did not want to hide in God, and built his own city, ramming it into the ground which kept trying to throw him off. In time, Cain's descendants prided themselves on the violence with which they abused the robe of office, as seen in the culminating hymn of Lamech, the seventh from Adam in the Cainite line (Genesis 4).

How did the righteous fare during this time? Not well, if Abel is an example. In time, the Godly Sethites succumbed to the temptation to become part of the enrobed Cainite culture, and intermarried with it: They were unwilling to persevere, to *wait*. Tyranny abounded, and God decided to judge the world. *Judicial evil had* matured from youth to age, and it was time to end it (Genesis 6).

After the Flood, on the basis of Noah's sacrifice (Gen. 8:20), God renewed His covenant with man, and this time enrobed His people with the office of judge. God had not put Cain to death, though Abel's blood cried out for it. Now, however, shed blood would be avenged, and the image of God, man himself, would carry it out (Gen. 9:5-6).¹² This was

¹² Some have argued that Cam was not put to death because it was not the charge of the family to execute capital punishment, but of the state, and

Noah's investiture with office. As a token of that investiture, man is now permitted to eat the meat of the animals originally slain to provide coverings (Gen. 9:2,3). The covering with skins had signified to Adam that someday investiture would come; eating — ingesting — the flesh of the animals signifies that such an investiture is now taken into the life of man.¹³

Before the Flood, wild animals had hunted men and eaten them; fierce dinosaurs had roamed the earth, signifying the lifestyle of the Cainites over against the lifestyle of the righteous, who were their prey. Now, however, man is given power to hunt and eat the animals (Gen. 10:9), and they are made afraid of man. This signified the ascendancy of true Godly men over the ungodly beastlike men.¹⁴

Man was sinful from his youth (Gen. 8:21), and when that youth had matured to full age, God had to destroy the world, so corrupt had it become. Now, however, God institutes the righteous civil authority to restrain evil, so that *such* a maturation in corruption will never again take place. The youth will be cut off, either in death or in circumcision, before he reaches full age in evil. When Noah's youngest son (Ham) attacks him, Ham's youngest son (Canaan) is cursed to become a slave, showing the ascendancy of the saints over the wicked, of true men over wild animals, and illustrating how the wickedness of man's youth would be restrained.

there was no state in the world at that time. This argument, however, would also apply in the case of Noah, since there was not yet a state in the world then either, but *only* a family. Also, in the Bible the avenger of blood is the next of kin, so there is some relationship between the family and the execution of the death penalty.

13. The period from creation to the year after the Flood, when the robe was bestowed, lasted 1657 years according to the chronology of the Bible. 1657 years is 33 jubilees of 50 years plus 7 years, $33 + 7 = 40$. This kind of reasoning with numbers abounds in Genesis; cf. Cassuto, Genesis, vols. I & II, comments on Genesis 5 and 11.

14. The Bible tells us that someday the lion will lie down with the lamb, and that the lion will eat straw like the ox (Is. 11:6,7; 65:25). There is no reason to believe that this will not physically come to pass. Foundationally, though, animals are symbols of humanity, and this signifies peace in the social realm. Man's robe was supposed to be vegetable (linen), not animal (wool); but the death and ingestion of animals was introduced to signify that man's investiture would come through the death (shed blood) of a Substitute. After the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the symbol of progressive investiture and salvation returned from the animal realm (sacrifices) to the vegetable realm (bread and wine).

We must now look at the sin of Ham, how he tried to steal the robe of office from his father, thus recapitulating the sin of Adam.

When Noah was born, his father Lamech said, "This one shall comfort us in our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the *'adhamah* which YHWH has cursed" (Gen. 5:28). The fulfillment of this promise comes after the Flood, when we find that Noah, the "master of the *'adhamah*, was the first to plant a vineyard" (Gen. 9:20).¹⁵ While wine can be used to excess, and a life characterized by drunkenness is condemned in Scripture, the use of wine for effect is praised by Scripture in its proper context. Thus we read in Judges 9:13 that wine gladdens both God and man, as also in Psalm 104:15.

According to Proverbs 31:4-7, alcohol is not for kings while they rule, lest they pervert justice by forgetting the difference between good and evil; but alcohol *is* for him whose life is bitter and troubled by the curse.¹⁶ The use of alcohol for relaxation is sabbatical; it comes after work during the time of rest. Preeminently in the New Covenant this means the use of wine for the Lord's Supper, as Melchizedek gave wine to Abram after his labor of battle (Gen. 14:18). At any rate, under the Old Covenant during the sabbath feast of the seventh month the people were enjoined to buy "wine or strong drink, or whatever your soul asks of you . . . and rejoice in the presence of YHWH your God, you and your household" (Deut. 14:26). There is nothing to suggest that Noah was a man characterized by drunkenness. He drank, became sleepy and hot, and removed his robe of office in the privacy of his tent. He was still covered by his tent, and it was necessary for Ham to invade his privacy to see him. If some reader is still determined at all costs to pin some blame on Noah at this point, the most

15. For a defense of this translation, see Cassuto, *Genesis*, II, pp 158ff. Even if we go with the more common translation, "Noah began to plant a vineyard)" we still have the fulfillment of the prophecy, though not quite so dramatically. It has been argued that the rate of fermentation after the Flood was more rapid than before, so that Noah was caught off guard and drank too much before he realized he had become drunk. See for instance the discussion in Joseph C. Dillow, *The Waters Above: Earth's Pre-Flood Vapor Canopy* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), pp. 102ff. I do not think it necessary, as I argue, to see Noah's action as questionable at this point, however, so the point may be moot.

16. Similarly the priests were not to drink on the Job, Leviticus 10:9.

he can accuse him of is a momentary indiscretion. The text says not one word against Noah; it is Ham who is the sinner here.

It was sabbath time, a time of rest, of relaxation, of enjoying the good fruits of the earth, which was now bringing up wine among the thorns and thistles. It was a time to lay aside the burdens of office for a moment, and leave everything in God's hand. In the privacy of his tent, it was a time to drink, praise God, and forget his toil. He could relax in his own tent, couldn't he?

Ham invaded Noah's privacy.¹⁷ He "saw" Noah's "nakedness." This language takes us right back to Genesis 3. Then he 'told' his brothers outside. This was the extent of his sin.¹⁸ Shem and Japheth, however, "took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward so that they did not see their father's nakedness" (9:23). The two shoulders correspond in the Bible to two pillars, and thus to two witnesses.¹⁹ The older men refused to "see" their

17. It should be born in mind that the kind of tent spoken of was not a Boy Scout pup-tent, but a private dwelling. Ham did not just happen to walk by and see into a small teepee; he had to go in and look around.

18. Failure to see the nature of Ham's sin of rebellion has caused commentators to speculate that Ham did something else, such as attempt homosexual relations with his father (as his descendants in Canaanite Sodom might have), but which the text glosses over. There is no need, however, to read anything *into the* passage.

19. Kline comments, in *Images*, p. 44f., on "the biblical usage, peculiar to tabernacle and temple architecture, whereby the two side-posts of entryways are called 'shoulders,' the first occurrence being just before the directions for the priests' garments (Ex. 27:14,15. Cf. 1 Ki. 6:8; 7:39; 2 Ki. 11:11; Ezk. 40:18, 40ff.; 41:2,26; 46:19; 47:1,2). This usage of 'shoulder' is immediately associated with *mip̄tan*, 'lintel,' in Ezekiel 47:1,2. While the shoulder pieces of the ephod represented the 'shoulders' of the entry-gate, the priestly headdress formed the lintel name-banner. This is suggested both by its lintel-like position between and above the shoulder pieces and by the fact that it bore the name of God in the inscription of its gold plate: 'holy to Yahweh.' (Engraved on precious stones on the shoulder pieces [theside-pillars in the entry imagery] were the names of the sons of Israel [Ex. 28:9ff.]. Note that the incarnate Glory promises that his people will be made pillars in God's temple, bearing the name of God and the holy city and Lord's own new name [Rev. 3:12; cf. 1 Tim. 3:15].)" The use of pillars as witness stones is seen in Joshua 24:27. The picture of two men upholding a third is also seen in Aaron and Hur upholding Moses' two pillar-positioned arms in Exodus 17:12. Even apart from all this, it should be clear that the use

father's nakedness. They went out of their way to cover it. This action is wholly symbolic, since Noah was already covered by his tent and did not need recovering by a garment. The action of Shem and Japheth was designed to dramatize their refusal to go along with Ham's plan.

What plan was that? We may already infer that Ham wanted the brothers to join him in a conspiracy to take up the robe. We can hear him investing Noah's action with sinfulness, and investing his own with righteousness. "Look guys, father has laid aside his robe. He's gone off and gotten drunk, and thus he can't judge righteously. We're well over 100 years old now. I think we ought to rule father incompetent, and seize his office. He's just not moral enough for me to submit to any longer." The proof that such was Ham's design comes in the wording of the curse pronounced on Canaan, Ham's youngest son. Canaan would be a slave of slaves (v. 25). *Those who seek power by revolutionary action, however pious in appearance, will become slaves.* The sons will reproduce the pattern of the father.

David was similarly tempted. We read about it in 1 Samuel 24. Saul was seeking to kill David, who had been anointed Saul's replacement, but who refused to act in a revolutionary fashion. Saul stepped into a cave to cover his feet (answer the call of nature), and it happened that David and his men were hiding further back in the cave. David's men brought Satan's temptation to him: "Behold, this is the day of which YHWH said to you, 'Behold, I am about to give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good in your *sight*.'" David then arose and cut off the wing of Saul's *robe*, but immediately David's conscience smote him for it and he repented. He renounced his act to his men, and confessed it to Saul. God caused the fickle Saul to feel good about David, and they were temporarily reconciled.

Ham's invasion of Noah's tent was an attack upon his father's glory, honor, propriety, and rule. As such, it could have no purpose except to tear down constituted authority, and no motive other than to establish himself as the new authority. The Bible is clear: Those who seize at power will

of shoulders to bear the garment is unusual and designedly symbolic, and in the nature of the case, shoulders are used to bear things up, in this case bearing up the position of the father

become slaves, and if the Canaanites are the example, such slaves will eventually be exterminated. Those on the other hand who honor authority, and cover up the indiscretions (real or supposed) committed by such authorities, will themselves in time be honored with dominion and rule (Gen. 9:26-27).

How many young men there are in history and today who will not wait until they are older to become elders in the church ! They go to college, where they acquire virtually no wisdom, and from there to seminary, where they are isolated from the wisdom-inducing problems of church life. Then, robed with a sheepskin, they get ordained to office at the ripe age of 25 ! Is it any wonder that the churches are in such a horrible condition? One would like to think that there are older men around who can lead, but sadly in our day and time those who are older seldom have wisdom, for they have not matured in terms of the law of God. Virtually all older Christians in this day and age have grown up believing that law and grace are opposed one to another, and so have never acquired mature wisdom based on years of study, obedience, and governance by God's law. Frequently, then, office does fall to those of younger years. Let them beware the perils, however, and always be deferential toward those who are older, if not wiser, in the faith.

Biblical teaching at this point strikes at the heart of perfectionistic and pharisaical religion. If Saul is an evil king, then Saul should be deposed; yet David, already anointed, being a man after God's own heart, refused to depose him. David did deceive Saul, and avoided him, but he never rebelled against him. This by itself does not solve all our hypothetical questions. Do we submit to an invader? Do we submit to a revolutionary regime? Are our rulers anointed of God in the same way as the kings of the Old Covenant? These questions have their place, but they are not in view here. What is in view is motive. The desire to seize power and to make oneself a ruler (a god), without waiting for it to be bestowed, and without acquiring years of wisdom first, is the essence of original sin.

Avoiding the Tyrant's Robe: The Patriarchs

The basic means for dealing with power tyrants in Genesis, and in the rest of Scripture, is though deception.²⁰

20. On the ethics of lying, see Jim West, "Rahab's Justifiable Lie," in

The reason for this in Genesis particularly is that the serpent tricked Eve through deception (Gen. 3:13; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14), while Adam stood by and failed to protect her. Thus, a theme emerges later in Scripture wherein the serpent attacks the bride, and the husband must attempt to protect her. In each case *it is the intention of the serpent to use the bride to raise up his own seed.*²¹ In each of these cases deception is used against the serpent, and God acts to protect the bride.

The use of deception against the serpent is simply an application of the *lex talionis*: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a deception for a deception. Jesus enjoins us to be “as wise as serpents, and as harmless as doves” and this is because we have been sent out “as sheep among wolves” (Matt. 10:16). In other words, our practice of deception must be in order to further good and peace, not a violation of the ninth commandment.

It is preeminently women or subordinates who practise deception in Scripture. That is, those in a vulnerable position, who do not have power to engage in direct confrontation, are advised to use deception and lies to evade the dragon. Thus, in addition to the examples we shall shortly examine in the book of Genesis, we have the Hebrew midwives in Exodus 1, and the deception practised by Jochebed in Exodus 2. We have the deception by Rahab in Joshua 2, and the deception by Jael in Judges 4 and 5.²² Powerless subordinates such as Jacob use deception against tyrants such as Isaac was in the situation recorded in Genesis 27 (although we should note that the woman here is the primary actress in protecting her covenant-seed). When Samuel fears the power of Saul, in 1

Gary North, ed., *The Theology of Christian Resistance*, Christianity and Civilization, No. 2 (Tyler, TX: Geneva Divinity School Press, 1983).

21. That the serpent does have a seed is clear from Genesis 3:15, which seed does come through the woman. Her hearkening to his voice was spiritually adulterous, and as a result both the Satanic seed and the redeemed seed come through the woman. That which is essentially *hers*, however, is the redeemed. Thus the Pharisees were serpents, the offspring of the serpent (Matt. 23:33), for the serpent was their father (Jn. 8:44). Satan’s two goals in the war of the seeds are (1) to kill the Godly seed, and (2) to take the bride to raise up his own evil seed.

22. That this situation entailed an attack upon the seed, and an attempt to use the bride to raise up Satanic seed, is made clear in Judges 5:30, which literally reads, “Are they not finding, are they not dividing the spoil? A womb, two wombs for every warrior. . .”

Samuel 16:2, God Himself gives him the deceptive strategy.

The highest privilege of man is to be the official Friend of God, which is to be God's most trusted confidant and advisor (through prayer). We see Abraham as God's Friend in Genesis 18.²³ Hushai the Archite was David's Friend (2 Sam. 15: 37). David asked Hushai to remain with Absalom and to deceive him. Hushai did so, and it resulted in Absalom's death (2 Sam. 15-18). We might note that Absalom publicly took David's concubines (2 Sam. 16:20-22), an attack on the bride and seed. Absalom died the serpent's death, by a head wound (2 Sam. 18:9). At any rate, we see from this that to be an expert liar and deceiver, in the interest of the kingdom of God, is commensurate with the highest position of moral privilege and trust God has given man.

The first occurrence of this pattern is in Genesis 13:10-20. As a result of a severe famine, Abram repaired to Egypt. The text nowhere criticizes him for this, because this is the first encounter with Egypt. Abram realized that Sarai's beauty would attract the unconverted Egyptians, and that they might kill him and steal her. Petty commentators mirror themselves in seeing Abram's deception as merely designed to save his own hide. Rather, Abram knew that if he were killed, Sarai's protection would be gone. He also knew that God's plans were tied up with his remaining alive.

Abram deceived Pharaoh by telling the Egyptians only that Sarai was his sister, not that she also was his wife. Abram counted on the common law fratriarchy of the ancient near east to protect Sarai, in that any man desiring her would have to negotiate with her brother, and Abram would be able thus to forestall any marriage.²⁴ The draconic Pharaoh, however, thinking himself a god, took Sarai against custom, abusing laws of hospitality precious to the God whose worship culminates with a Supper at His house, whereupon God sent plagues against him. When Pharaoh found out what had happened, he assumed the role of Satanic accuser, and tried to pin the blame upon Abram. Meanwhile, Abram had been prospered by God in his deception, and emerged from Egypt

²³ See footnote 51 below for more on the office of King's Friend.

²⁴ On the brother as guardian of the sister, see Genesis 24:29ff., 50,53,55,60; Lemuel was alive, but Laban did all the negotiating and received the gifts,

with much spoil.²⁵

In Genesis 20, the serpent tried again. Realizing that the godly seed had been promised (18:9-15), he sought to defile the bride before the seed could be born. Visiting among the early Philistine, Abraham again used deception to protect Sarah. Again the king violated basic rules of hospitality and fratricide and took the bride. God cursed him, but offered him a way of escape if he would ask Abraham to pray for him. The king professed that he had not meant to sin, and restored Sarah, along with many gifts, to Abraham. The curse upon Abimelech for attacking the bride was that the women of his household all became barren. This was reversed at the request of Abraham (v. 17f.).

Again we see deception used as a strategy. God again lets Abraham know that if He had not blessed the deception, it would not have worked; but no criticism is offered of the lie itself. Again we see the righteous prospering under the dominion of the ungodly, though in this case Abimelech seems not to have been such an evil man as Pharaoh.

Before returning to avoidance and deception as a strategy, it would be well to look briefly at Abram's rescue of Lot in Genesis 14. According to v. 14, Abram had 318 trained fighting men in his retinue, who were adopted sons of his house (first class servants – such is the meaning of the term 'homeborn servant'). If we take into consideration the wives and children of these, as well as the number of ordinary non-military domestic servants in such a household, Abram must be seen as chief of a rather large group of people, probably well in excess of three thousand.

What is going on in Genesis 14 is one of the early fulfillments of the curse upon Canaan. An alliance of Japhethites (Tidal king of "nations" – cf. Gen. 10:5), Shemites (Chedorlaomer king of Elam), and non-Canaanite Hamites (Amraphel king of Shinar) comes to displace the dominion of the five Canaanite lords of the circle of the Jordan. We do not see Abram interfering in the politics here. When Lot is carried off from Sodom by the non-Canaanite kings, Abram

25. Commentators regularly seem to take Pharaoh's side in this matter, completely missing the point. After all, in context Abram had been told that those who cursed him would be cursed, and those who blessed him would be blest (13:3); thus, the curse upon Pharaoh can only be interpreted as a judgment against him, and not as some oblique judgment against Abram.

takes his men and rescues Lot. We may see this as analogous to vigilante action only if we understand that it was not based on an abstract principle (free enterprise versus socialism), but on covenantal, familial responsibilities. It is, in fact, an example of the kinsman-redeemer /avenger-of-blood principle. Abram was Lot's next of kin, and it was his lawful responsibility to rescue him if he could. Because kidnapping is a capital crime (Ex. 21:16), Abram could lawfully kill men, in Chedorlaomer's army, in his rescue of his kinsman.²⁶

Abram simply rescues Lot. He does not take over the government of the area, and in fact refuses any power when it is offered to him. To be sure, in the battle some people probably died; but this should be seen as a survival operation, not as a type of resistance or revolution. Abram did not worry about what he had no control over. He did not bite off more than he could chew. He had enough forces to deliver Lot, and he did so. God had told him He would give him the land in His good time. Abram was willing to be patient and await investiture by God.

Avoidance as a tactic is seen in the life of Isaac. This is clear from Genesis 26. Again a famine drives the patriarch

²⁶ Abram was living in Hebron, where he had placed a sanctuary-altar. Later Hebron became a city of refuge. *Abram was Lot's city of refuge*, as God had offered to be Cain's earlier. When Abram leaves Hebron with his men and travels hundreds of miles to recover Lot, he is extending the boundaries of the city of refuge to cover his kin.

I dare not go into this here; space and my own lack of requisite knowledge forbid it. I can say, however, that the blood avenger in Scripture is an agent of the land, called up by blood spilled on the land (figuratively in the case of Lot). The land appoints the next of kin, not the civil magistrate. The killer may flee to a city of refuge, a sanctuary, where he will be tried by officials of church and state (since these were Levitical cities), Abram's placement of altars around the land was also a placement of sanctuaries. With the death of Christ, all the land is definitively cleansed, so that blood no longer defiles the land in this sense. Remans 13 states that the magistrate is to be God's blood avenger. Whether this means that the family is no longer permitted to be involved is a good question. For centuries the churches functioned as sanctuaries. Someone needs to take this up as a project and see how the church historically has applied the city of refuge principle to church buildings, and whether or not a Christian civilization might have a place for avengers of blood. One thing the Biblical system did was put on the apparently guilty man some burden of proof to show his innocence. He had to flee to the sanctuary, and then plead his innocence before a tribunal. There is a lot that needs exploring here.

into the land of a pagan lord. Again deception is used as a tactic to protect the bride. In this case, Abimelech the king notices that the relationship between Isaac and Rebekah is more than fraternal, and calls him to account for it. God's hand of protection is here, but in the background this time. Again the king Satanically tries to blame Isaac for a sin that one of his own people might have committed: If one of the people had taken her and lain with her it would have been your fault for not telling us she was your wife. (!!!)

Again YHWH blesses the patriarch (vv. 12-14) and this brings on the envy of the wicked, who stop up his wells and otherwise persecute him, eventually asking him to leave their area (vv. 14-16). We don't see Isaac raising up his fist, asserting his constitutional rights, or otherwise contesting the power given over by God to the Philistine. Unlike the Philistine of Samson's day, these men were not invaders, and though bullies, they had as legitimate a claim to the turf as Isaac did (though they did not have Isaac's eschatological guarantee). Isaac simply avoids them. Later, in other quarrels with the powers that be, Isaac again avoids trouble (vv. 18-22). He is rewarded when God does finally make room for him.

Isaac avoids suicidal and revolutionary action, and God blesses him in it. In time, the pagans realize that God is with Isaac, and they come, desiring to have peace with him (w. 23-33). Had Isaac defied the powers, he would have lost everything; through humility, deference, and a foregoing of his "rights," Isaac came to be a power in the community.

Isaac had two sons. They were twins and struggled in the womb: the righteous Jacob against the wicked Esau. (Had Jacob not been regenerate at this point, he would not have fought with Esau.) Esau was a hairy man, signifying a bestial nature which was his in life. Jacob was a "perfect" man, according to the clear meaning of the Hebrew of Genesis 25:27.²⁷ From the beginning Jacob knew that he was appointed to inherit the covenant of God. Esau had no interest in it, but Jacob's spirituality desired it earnestly. Like Adam and Ham, Esau was a completely present-oriented man. When he came into camp one day, he could not wait twenty

27. Determined to misinterpret the life of faithful Jacob, commentators and translators alike refuse to render *'ish tam* here as "perfect man," as they do of Noah in Gen. 6:9 and Job in Job 1:1, or as "blameless; as they do of Abram in Gen. 17:1.

minutes for a meal to be cooked, but sold his birthright for a stew of lentils. ²⁸

Isaac fell from righteousness and came to prefer the wicked Esau, who by this time 'had also married outside the covenant. Though Isaac knew the prophecy that Jacob should inherit, and though he knew that Esau had sold and despised the birthright, he tyrannically determined to give it all to Esau anyway. Isaac and Rebekah engaged in righteous deception, however, which God and later Isaac honored. Jacob did not demand a miracle from God, but used the proper means of deception to carry out God's law, even as Dutch Christians lied to Nazis to protect Jews and Christians during World War II.

True to form, the Satanic Esau tried to blame Jacob for getting the birthright, instead of asking from God a place in the covenant and confessing that he had sold and despised his inheritance (27: 36). Esau begged for a blessing, and a penitent Isaac gave him one, phrased to his sinful liking. The Hebrew is ambiguous, and can mean that Esau would dwell in the fertility of the earth, or away from it. ²⁹ Esau would live by the sword, and be a man of violence. Someday he would break Jacob's yoke from off his neck, but this would only damn him, because salvation was only to be found in being yoked to the covenant line! Thus, the rebel only finds damnation in the end.

Jacob went to his relatives to get a wife. While there, he encountered the unrighteous deceiver Laban. He was re -

²⁸ According to Gen. 25:29, Esau "came in from the field ." In other words, he was not starving to death in the bush and cheated by a ruthless Jacob, as commentators often portray it. Had the Scripture been written by some preachers, v. 34 would not read "Thus Esau despised his birth right," but "Thus Jacob *stole* Esau's birthright"!!! Nowhere is there a hint of criticism of Jacob for this. Ellison points out that Esau's request for "some of the *red*, this *red*" may indicate he thought the red lentil soup was blood soup, having forbidden magical properties (Gen. 9:4), the name of which should not be spoken but only indirectly alluded to. Whether this was the case or not, it certainly is in keeping with Esau's character. H. L. Ellison, *Fathers of the Covenant: Studies in Genesis and Exodus* (Palm Springs, CA: Ronald N. Hayes Pub. Inc., 1978), p. 64f.

²⁹ Gen. 27:39, "Behold, [of/away from] the fatness of the earth shall be your dwelling, and [of/away from] the dew of heaven from above." In a sense, the choice of whether this would be curse or blessing was still before Esau, as it lies before all men until they are dead and have no more opportunity to repent.

duced to a form of servitude in this foreign land. While Jacob is never called a slave, the verbal root meaning “slave service” is repeatedly used to describe his work. Laban’s treatment of Jacob parallels in certain respects Pharaoh’s later treatment of the Hebrews. Although Laban initially welcomed Jacob, there came a change in Laban’s attitude which resulted in Jacob’s reduction in status.³⁰ After earning his wives, Jacob labored six additional years (31: 41), the period of slave service (Ex. 21:2). Jacob was oppressed, we are told (Gen. 31:39f.). God saw his affliction (31:12,42), even as He saw the affliction of the Hebrews in Egypt (Ex. 3:7). In violation of custom (Deut. 15:12-15), Laban would have sent Jacob away empty-handed (Gen. 31:42). Even though Jacob had earned Leah and Rachel, Laban acted as though they were slavewives given by him to Jacob and so should not go free with their husband (31: 43; Ex. 21:4,7). Actually, it had been Laban who reduced the women from a free to a slave status by using up their insurance money (Gen. 31:15). Jacob did not steal from Laban, but he did act to protect his interests, and God blessed him in it (30: 28-43). Finally, when things really got bad due to the envy of Laban and his sons, Jacob simply fled. Again, God prospered him in this, threatening Laban if he harmed Jacob.

When Esau came out with 400 armed men to kill him, Jacob bought his present-oriented brother off with a series of handsome gifts. In all these things we see Jacob acting in a shrewd and non-confrontative manner. There was no rebellion in him. He sought to avoid trouble, and when trouble came, he acted in a shrewd and wise manner to turn it away. Jacob showed himself to be a master of *deception and avoidance* when dealing with tyranny. He knew that now was not the time to fight, and that God would invest him with dominion when He and His people were ready. Jesus had the same philosophy: “I say to you, do not resist him who is evil, but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any one wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your cloak also. And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two” (Matt. 5:39-41). The evil man is

30. This seems to be the meaning of Gen. 29: 15. Cf. David Daube and Reuven Yaron, “Jacob’s Reception by Laban,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* I (1956):60-62. A family member would not have worked for wages, so Laban here excludes Jacob from the family.

anyone who has power and abuses it. He may be a powerful man in town who sues you, and you cannot win in court; it is wisest to let him slap you around a bit, as Isaac let the Philistine slap him. Resistance accomplishes nothing.³¹

Joseph's unrighteous brothers Simeon and Levi took matters into their own hands, and in a seemingly righteous cause avenged the seduction of their sister (Gen. 34). Their rebellion brought only trouble upon the church (v. 30), for they acted without wisdom. Proud in the righteousness of their action, the two men refused to repent (v. 31) and received the curse of God (Gen. 49:5-7). They had the power to pull off a temporary operation such as the sack of Shechem, but did they have the power to sustain a long-term war with all the Canaanites, asked their father? The time was not right, but youthful men have not learned to see consequences. Thus, the governance of church, state, and family is reserved for the older and the wise.

We may call attention to three other examples of deception in Scripture. When Israel was captured by Pharaoh, and he sought to kill the seed and take the women for himself, the midwives lied to Pharaoh and thus kept the boy babies alive. God blessed them for this (Exodus 1). When Saul pursued David, he fled, not worrying about the humiliation, time and again; and when he was living among the Philistine, David deceived them by feigning madness (1 Sam. 21:13ff.; Psalm 34).

To explore the limits of deception, let us take as our third example Esther. Mordecai sought power with the king by telling Esther to conceal her faith (Esth. 2:10, 20). This was a great evil, and God later forced Mordecai's hand over it, so that Esther was forced to reveal her covenant commitments. We also note that Mordecai was a proud and vain man who refused to show deference to proper authorities, and Haman was a proper authority, even though an Amalekite (Esth. 3:2;

31. The context of Jesus' remarks is resistance, not simply the encountering of evil. As much as we are able, we are to put down evil, so that if a thief breaks in at night, we may kill him rather than let him kill us (Ex. 22:2). Concerning evil powers and authorities, however, we are to deal with our rebellious hearts by going out of our way to be deferential to them, as to the Lord.

Also, we are ordered to submit to the *powers* that be, not to any and every law some human authority chooses to put on the books. The powers that be may include not only civil officials but also neighborhood bosses and Cosa Nostra operatives.

contrast Gen. 23:12; 33:3; 37:9 f.; 42:6; 43:26ff.; etc.)³² In this case, God protected the bride by converting her regal husband (in some sense). That God worked good out of Mordecai's evil schemes in no wise exonerates him, and this is clear in that Mordecai was forced to abandon his scheme. We see from this that deception must never involve denying the faith. And of course, it should be clear from this discussion that it is the deception of serpentine powers and authorities which is permitted in Scripture, not the deception of one's neighbor.³³

Waiting for the Robe: The Example of Abram

The robe of dominion and authority is a basic consideration for the theology of Genesis, particularly as it comes to full expression in the history of Joseph. Before considering Joseph's earning of the robe, we should take a look at the patience of Abraham. Patience, a willingness to await God's time, is what neither Adam nor Ham possessed. It is, thus, an essential mark of true faith.

In Hebrews 6 we read that true Christians are "imitators of those who through faith and *patience* inherit the promises. For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, 'Blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.' And thus, having *patiently* waited, he obtained the promise. For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute. Therefore [similarly], God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, guaranteed with an oath, in order that by two unchangeable things,³⁴ in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong

32. The Agagites were the descendants of the kings of the Amalekites, whom God had vowed to destroy. Cf. Esth. 3:1; 1 Sam. 15.

33. See footnote 20 above. The ultimate deception occurred at the cross. Had Satan realized that the death of Jesus Christ would be the very means to destroy him and his evil power, he would never have crucified Him!

34. The two unchangeable things are God and His oath or covenant. This is seen in the very Hebrew form taken over into the Greek, called 'pleonasm,' which doubles the verb for intensity: blessing I will bless, multiplying I will multiply. This two-witness covenant language is found in the Adamic covenant, Genesis 2:17, where the punishment for eating of the forbidden fruit is "dying you shall die."

encouragement” (vv. 12-18). The recipients of the letter to the Hebrews knew that Jesus Christ had conquered Satan, and was now enthroned king of the world. They wondered why they did not yet see all things put under His feet (2:8). The answer for them was that God had sworn by Himself an oath that they would in time inherit the promise, and thus that they should be patient and await its realization. Thus the preeminent quality of faith is a trust in God that He will accomplish His promise (ch. 11). Just as Jesus was perfected through wisdom-inducing suffering (2:10), so Christians must patiently endure suffering until they are ready to be invested with authority and dominion (ch. 12).

The great example set out for consideration is Abraham. The situation referred to is in Genesis 14-15, which is a unit.³⁵ God had promised Abram the land from the beginning (Gen. 12:1-3), and had reiterated it to him when he arrived in Canaan (12:7). Abram walked the length of the land, setting up witness-altars establishing worship at two focal points (12:7,8). When God delivered him from Egyptian bondage, he reestablished altar-dominion in the land (13:4). Lot chafed under Abram’s leadership, and Abram permitted him to depart (13:5-13). Then God again promised him the land.

About that time there was a rebellion by the Canaanites, who were already in subjection (Gen. 9:25-27) to Chedorlaomer the Shemite, and the Japhethite (Tidal) and non-Canaanite Hamites who dwelt in his tents (Gen. 14). Abram stood by and watched his promised land dominated by Chedorlaomer, who was an Elamite and not a Hebrew.³⁶ Chedorlaomer’s dominion was very effective: He subdued all the people who later would frighten the Hebrews and bring about their refusal to enter the land (Num. 13). The punch line, though, is that Abram was completely able to defeat Chedorlaomer, at least in a temporary operation (Gen. 14:15,17, 20).³⁷ Yet Abram did not use his strength to con-

35. Genesis 15:1, “After these things. . . .”

36. A major theme in Genesis is the replacement of the firstborn with a younger *son*, signifying the failure of the first Adam and the faithfulness of a second. Shem’s firstborn was Elam, and Chedorlaomer was of that line (Gen.10:22). Abram the Eberite (14:13;11:15) was of the line of Arpachshad, a younger brother of Elam.

37. This is the prophetic (proclamatory) purpose of Genesis 14. Israel should have been encouraged to take the promised land, realizing that the

solidate a rule in Canaan, but refused to take any spoil; he would take nothing until the Possessor of heaven and *'erets* [place] chose to give it to him (14:19-24).

Afterward, Abram was afraid, probably that Chedorlaomer would return (15: 1). God gave him His word that He would protect him and would give him seed and land. Then, when Abram had exercised true patient faith, Abram asked for the covenant *guarantee*, the *second witness* (15:8).³⁸ He asked how he might *know*, which as we have seen indicates judicial confirmation; thus, he asked God to give a judicial sign that the matter was fully established.

God had him take five different sacrificial animals, probably signifying the whole sacrificial system in seed form, and to divide them in half.³⁹ In a vision, the sun went down and a horror of great darkness came over Abram. In the midst of this absolute darkness, the only light was that of God, Who passed between the parts of the animals. This strange action was the “cutting” of the covenant, as the Hebrew of verse 18 literally reads.

What is going on here? In the context of Genesis 1 and 6-8 we can see God again de-creating and re-creating the world. Just as the Flood returned the world to a condition of formlessness and emptiness, which God refilled, so in the vision of Abram the world returns to the primeval darkness of Genesis 1:2, before God established the covenantal separation-

inhabitants had repeatedly been defeated earlier, and that Abram with only 318 men had been victorious over those who defeated them. Giants were defeated by Shemites in 14:5; Horites in v. 6, and later again by Esau; Amalekites in v. 7; Amorites in v. 7; and Canaanites in vv. 8-11. The Canaanites had to hide in tar pits, had to flee to the hills, and were dispossessed of their goods. The updating of the names in Gen. 14 was designed to tell Israel the location of these places, so that when they came to Kadesh and Elparan (Num. 13: 26) they should not have feared the Horites and Amalekites (Num. 13:29); etc. Moses makes a similar point in his first Deuteronomic sermon (e.g., Deut. 2: 10-12, 20-23)

38. Not that God's word by itself is inadequate, but that God has setup the two-witness pattern. See Hebrews 6:13-18.

39. The animals are three years old. Thus, the de-creation and re-creation of history comes before the seventh and last day. Man is sinful “from his youth,” as we have seen, but he gets a new start before judgment day. The third-day/third-year theme is prominent throughout Scripture, particularly in Numbers 19, the book of Jonah, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the middle of history (making possible ours at the end).

union of day and night.⁴⁰ Abram himself is in “deep sleep,” the same condition as Adam was in Genesis 2:21 when God separated Eve from him and established a covenant separation-union between the man and the woman.⁴¹ Here the purpose is to reestablish the connection between man and *'erets*. The false and perverted relationship between man and land, which came in with the Fall, is undone by de-creation; but before the birds can descend to destroy matters utterly,⁴² the covenant order is re-created by God Himself becoming the unbreakable binding force connecting the two. Abram is as likely not to possess the land as God is likely to perish.⁴³

What did it mean? It meant that the birds of prey would

40. The de-creation of the Flood undid the separation of waters above and waters below (Day 2) and of land and sea (Day 3), killing birds (Day 5) and beasts and men (Day 6). It did not harm the light (Day 1) or the light-bearers (Day 4). Thus, the collapse of sun, moon, and stars later in Scripture becomes a sign of future judgment, since there will never again be a Flood. The de-creation of Genesis 15, as a sign of that coming three-hour Golgothic darkness, takes away the covenantal order of Days 1 and 4 and reestablishes the *'erets* in the power of resurrection.

41. “Deep sleep” is a different word in Hebrew from “sleep.” “Deep sleep” is close to death and is the place where covenants are made; it is de-creation preceding either total death or resurrection. The term occurs elsewhere in Scripture in Judges 4:21 (Sisera just before his head is crushed); 1 Samuel 26:12 (Saul’s head not crushed by David while Saul was in deep sleep); Job 4:13 (Eliphaz confronted with the Creator); Job 33:15 (God preventing men from entering the pit of sheol); Psalm 76:6 (man under God’s wrath); Proverbs 10:5; 19:15 (moral sleepiness); Daniel 8:18; 10:9 (Daniel’s almost dying when confronted with God’s Word, but being raised up; cf. Rev. 1:17, where the same happens to John); Jonah 1:5-6 (Jonah in deep sleep just before being cast into the de-creating waters and swallowed by the dragon, from which God resurrects him).

42. “And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away” (Gen. 15:11). The curse of the covenant is to be ripped in half and then devoured by the birds and beasts; cf. Jeremiah 34:18-20.

43. The analogy among man, the *'adhamah*, and the animals is the foundation for the covenant-cutting actions. The animals represent both man and *'adhamah*, so that the divided animals represent man on one side and the land on the other: see footnote 2 above. The connection between man and *'adhamah* is unbreakable, so that the *'adhamah* is cursed because of its tie to man. The cutting of the covenant removes the curse, and reestablishes man in a redeemed *'adhamah*, an *'erets*. The covenant relationship is restored only through the rending of death, an animal substitute typifying Christ, but a death which does not lead to bird-devoured destruction, but to God-empowered resurrection.

threaten God's people and oppress them for 400 years (15: 13), but that God's covenant was as sure as His Person, and would in time be established. It meant that Pharaoh and Abimelech and Laban were birds of prey, but that God's people would acquire possessions and wisdom and would come out in wealth and power and authority (15: 14). It meant that Abram and those who have like faith (Romans 4; Hebrews 6) must exercise patience during the "probationary forty."⁴⁴ If they try to seize it (land, power, glory, dominion, office), they will lose it all.

Abram had the power to score a temporary victory over Chedorlaomer. He was wise enough to realize he did not have the power to maintain such dominion, and quickly retired from the field of battle after rescuing Lot. He was smart enough to wait.

Earning the Robe: The Example of Joseph

Reuben was Jacob's eldest son. Reuben could not wait to inherit the robe, so he lay with his father's wife (Gen. 35: 22).⁴⁵ For this revolutionary act, he lost his preeminence (49:3-4). Simeon and Levi were passed over because of their revolutionary actions, and so the blessing of rule came to Judah, the fourth son (Gen. 49: 5-12). Because of Joseph's faithfulness, however, Jacob early on elevated him over the other brothers in some capacities. Jacob made for Joseph a full-length (not multicolored) robe, and invested him with authority over his brethren when he was only seventeen (37: 2,3, 14). This may not have been a wise move, as the sequel perhaps shows, but it was prophetic, as God's double-witness dream showed to them all (Gen. 37:2-10).

44. In this case 400. See footnotes 9 and 13 above.

45. Taking the concubine of one's predecessor was a perverted way of claiming to be the new lord of the bride. Absalom did it publicly to David (2 Sam. 16:20-23). Adonijah tried to do it to Solomon (1 Ki. 2:13-25). This act is forbidden explicitly in Deuteronomy 22:30 as an uncovering of the wing of the father's garment, and is one of the particular curses of Deuteronomy 27, in v. 20. The "wing" is the extended corner of the robe (Deut. 22:12) and signifies the extension of a man's dominion to the four corners of his life, analogous to the four corners of the world which are overshadowed by the four wings of the cherubim. For the *seed* to rise up and attack the *bride* is an extremely grotesque perversion of man's symbolic imaging of the life of God, and makes the seed into the serpent.

When the brothers attacked Joseph, the first thing they did was strip off his robe (37: 23). Then they threw him into a pit. This was the beginning of Joseph's humiliation, his passage into the "deep sleep"-like trauma of suffering, from which he would learn wisdom, and from which he would be resurrected and invested with authority.

Joseph was sold to a household in Egypt. The first phase of his service was in the house of Potiphar (39:1-7). Joseph did not see his enslavement as a cause for resentment or bitterness. We cannot imagine him throwing spanners into the works, or sand into the machinery. Rather, he served dutifully and well. As a result, lazy Potiphar gladly entrusted more and more of the household responsibilities to Joseph. Soon, it was really Joseph who was in charge, and Potiphar "did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate" (v. 6). Potiphar had the name of master (and ultimately its power as well), but he had a slave mentality and lived as a slave, a slave of food. Joseph had the name of slave, but he was a dominion man, and he ruled in life. The point was not lost on the wife of Potiphar; she knew who the real power in the house was.

Like the camp followers of all ages, the wife of Potiphar tried to cleave to the man of power, but Joseph was not only a faithful servant of Potiphar, he was also a faithful servant of God (39: 7-12). Lying with the wife of Potiphar would not only have been a sexual sin; it would also have been an act of insurrection, as we have seen. When the wife of Potiphar grabbed Joseph's robe, she was grabbing for his dominion; in terms of Biblical custom, she was not trying to strip him nude or pull him to her room, but she was trying to get him to spread his cloak over her.⁴⁶ Rather than abuse his authority, Joseph forsook it and fled. It is better not to possess invested authority at all than to abuse it.⁴⁷ Joseph could have attained premature authority and power had he gone along with her, but it would

46. Compare Ruth 3:9; Ezekiel 16:8

47. The term "garment" comes six times in this paragraph, highlighting its importance to the story. There seem to be parallels between this story and the "attack on the bride" theme, in that when the woman's sin is in danger of exposure, she Satanically blames the righteous man. The sexual roles are reversed, as is the identity of the deceiver. In a larger sense, however, all God's people are the bride, and the seduction of Joseph to sin is equivalent to the seduction of the bride to infidelity.

not have been permanent and he would eventually have been put to death for it. The temptation before Joseph, thus, is analogous to the temptation before Adam and Ham, to seize power unlawfully.

The vengeance of the wife of Potiphar landed Joseph in prison. There again, however, he ruled in life (39:20-23). Because of his effective and responsible service to those in charge, Joseph was soon put over the entire prison. He had the position of prisoner, but he was exercising dominion. From that position he could do much good. By being a good slave, Joseph acquired mastery.

From prison Joseph was elevated to Pharaoh's right hand. The narrative of Joseph's prison experiences in Genesis 40 shows the means whereby he was enabled to rule in the midst of enslavement: He understood and applied the Word of God, which came to him in the form of dreams and to us in the form of Holy Scripture. Because he understood God's principles whereby He rules the world, and because he was able to apply them accurately to the situation in which he found himself, Joseph proved of inestimable value to every master who employed him. In time he was exalted to second in command over all Egypt: "And Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'You shall be over my house, and according to your mouth all my people shall kiss; only in the throne I will be greater than you. See I have set you over all the land of Egypt.' And Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in *garments* of fine linen, and put the gold necklace around his neck. And he had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, 'Bow the knee .' And he set him over all the land of Egypt. Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I am Pharaoh; yet without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt' " (Gen. 41:40-44). From this position, Joseph was able to feed the entire world (41: 57).

The story of Joseph illustrates patient faith and its reward. It ends the book of Genesis and brings its theme to a literary climax. We know that Joseph's authority was temporary and not complete; we know that Christ's now is both. But the story of Joseph shows us that the road to victory, dominion, mastery, and judicial authority, is through service, the humble service of a slave. Through service and suffering, God purges and destroys indwelling sin in the believer (not com-

pletely, but sufficiently), builds character in him, and fits him for the mastery of the world. The man made heavy through experience will not be crushed by the robe when it comes, for he will not be inwardly naked as were Adam and Eve when they seized the robe from God.⁴⁸

Implications and Applications: Motives

In the book of Genesis we see three kinds of people. There are those who are tricked into assuming the robe of office prematurely, such as Eve. The blame for what happens to them rests on the shoulders of the authorities over them (Adam). A man is ordained to the gospel ministry at age 25, but he drops the ministry after his first pastorate, or he fails in three churches until he finally succeeds with his fourth (because he is 35 years old by that time, and much wiser)—this man can honestly say, “I wish they had told me to wait, but they said, ‘Dedicate your life to the ministry, and we’ll ordain you immediately,’ so I did. It’s their fault.” He’s right; it is the fault of the leadership.

“I went to the mission field when I was 23. After four years of agony I was totally burnt out, and left. The local people simply could not take rulings from such a young man. I lay the blame on that evangelist who got me to dedicate myself to the mission field while I was in college. Such work is not for young men, unless they are deaconing (apprenticing) under an older man.” So it goes, not only in the church, but also in the corporate business world, and other places as well. The Biblical apprenticeship system has been ignored.%

The second kind of situation addressed in Genesis occurs when the young man impatiently seizes the robe of office. The bare minimum age for rule in Scripture is 30 years of age

48. Part of this discussion of Joseph originally saw print in James B. Jordan, “Joseph’s Job,” in *Christian Reconstruction* V:3 (May/June 1981). This essay also goes into how Joseph enslaved his enslavers (his brothers, and the Egyptians). It can be had, for a contribution, from the Institute for Christian Economics, Box 8000, Tyler, TX 75711.

49. On deacons as assistant and apprentice elders, see James B. Jordan, “God’s Hospitality and Holistic Evangelism,” *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction* VII: 2, *Symposium on Evangelism*, p. 112f. On the use of the apprentice model successfully in modern corporate business structures in Japan, see Richard T. Pascale and Anthony G. Athos, *The Art of Japanese Management* (New York: Warner Books, 1981), esp. pp. 78ff.

(Gen. 41:46; 2 Sam. 5:4; Luke 3:23).⁵⁰ Men *marvelled at Christ's wisdom* when He was twelve, but He did not ask them to *submit to His authority* until He was thirty. True, Paul told Timothy not to let people despise his youth, but Timothy was at least 35; and Rehoboam was called a youth when he was 41 years old (1 Ki. 12:8; 14:21). Along these same lines, Jesus said, "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast [signifying the kingdom of God—JB], do not recline at the place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, and he who invited you both shall come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then in disgrace [exposed nakedness—JB] you begin to occupy the last place. But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, 'Friend [a technical term in Scripture, meaning a chief advisor], move up higher.' Then you will have honor in the sight of all who recline at table with you. For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted" (Luke 14:9-11). One thing that stands out in this proverb is that the man who exalts himself is totally oblivious to his offense; he is insensitive to what he has done, and must be told to vacate his assumed position. Those who do not advance themselves presumptuously will in time become chief advisors to the Lord, as was Abraham, the "friend" of God.⁵¹

The third kind of person in Genesis is the one characterized by patient faith. When Abram's patience lapsed, though his and Sarai's motives were good (bringing in God's kingdom through the seed), the result was Ishmael (Gen. 16:1ff.). We have a major problem in our culture understanding patient faith, and it is the problem of individualism. We think, "Well, all right; we'll exercise patient faith for twenty or so years, until God is ready." We think only in terms of one generation.

50. Also, the Levites had to be 30 years of age before they could carry the furniture of the Tabernacle (Num. 4:22ff.). This was symbolic of the church's being born on the pillar-shoulders of office-bearers (Gal. 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:15; Rev. 3:12). Cf. footnote 19 above.

51. Isaiah 41:8. For an example of such advising, see Genesis 18:22ff. For the office of King's Friend, cf. 1 Chronicles 27:33; 1 Kings 4:5. Joseph and Mordecai (Esth. 8:2, 15) are other King's Friends. In the New Covenant, all Christians are potentially King's Friends, after they have matured through service (John 15:14,15).

This is because of the influence of Baptist theology on our culture, for Baptist theology isolates each generation from the preceding and following ones.⁵² Biblical patience, however, extends over lines of generations, over centuries. Abraham had to look forward 400 years. After being placed into the land of promise, Israel served for another 450 years before the reign of Solomon. Patient faith means laying a foundation in righteousness and wisdom for our great-grandchildren, not looking for the accomplishment of things in our lifetime.

Is the "New Right" really "ready to lead"? I doubt it. The New Right has not yet figured out the message of the book of Genesis. It continues to think that reformation will come through the acquisition of political power. By looking to the state, New Rightists (and old conservatives as well) make themselves statist. Some anarchistically believe that the problem is the state, and we should devote our lives to fighting it. Others in their thirst for (individual) power attack more sober-minded Christians. A Christian attorney has written to me in a letter concerning Christian tax protectors in North Dakota: "One of the interesting things that has developed in that area, and in the people who are involved in the trial, is that Christian Reconstructionists are now being referred to as 'soft patriots.' There is an increasing thirst for blood. . . ." One such "tax patriot," now in prison because of his involvement in counterfeiting money, has announced his intention to devote all his energies to exposing the heresies propounded by myself and other authors writing in this symposium.⁵³

Other New Rightists are not anarchistic, but still have a political faith. Many conservative Roman Catholics thought that John Kennedy would help turn things around. They were disappointed; Mr. Kennedy apparently spent too much time doing other things to ask what he could do for his country. Mainline conservatives then trusted Richard Nixon, a man knowledgeable in international affairs, to turn things

52. On this see James B. Jordan, ed., *The Failure of the American Baptist Culture*, Christianity & Civilization, No. 1 (Tyler, TX: Geneva Divinity School Press, 1982).

53. "The Serpent Treader" bulletin, April 1983, p. 8. My own non-evolutionary essays on Tax Resistance, Biblical State Financing, and Tithing (as a way of building up the church to replace the pagan state) are available from the Institute for Christian Economics, Box 8000, Tyler, TX 75711. Send a contribution. Ask for Vol. IV, Nos. 2,3,4.

around. They were disappointed; Mr. Nixon's conscience was not sufficiently seared to permit him to act like a Democratic Party politician, guilt-free. Bible-believing Christians had high hopes for Jimmy Carter. Need we add that they were disappointed by the decisions made by Mr. Carter's mother, sister, and wife? And then the whole New Right got behind Ronald Reagan, who by his appointments betrayed them before he even took office, and has now signed a bill, updating social security, which directly taxes the churches.

I never did like the self-righteous whine of those Vietnam war era pseudo-folk-songs, but may we be excused if we sing one refrain of "When will they ever learn?"

Frankly, I believe that in all of this God has, as always, been gracious to us. Are Christians in this country ready to take charge? Heaven forbid ! Virtually none of them knows the first thing about the law of God, by which they are called to govern.⁵⁴ Most of them do not even acknowledge the sovereignty of God.⁵⁵ Few have any experience in governing, since their churches have no courts, being at best mere preaching points (where they have not degenerated into spas and literal circuses). The most powerful New Christian Right people are personality-cult oriented, one-man shows (and by shows I mean shows: radio shows, television shows, and the putting on of shows).

Thankfully, increasing numbers are seeking to be faithful in small things. They are forming elders into genuine church courts and conducting trials for offenders. They are studying the law of God, which He gave to Israel and which is sure wisdom for us. They are working with Christian lawyers to set up Christian reconciliation and arbitration commissions, dealing with divorce, with business conflicts, and with other sticky situations. To the extent that they are involved in

54. When the Bible says that the law is written on the hearts of believers, it does not mean something magical. The law has to be learned, believed, internalized, meditated on (Ps. 1, 119), and applied where possible. In this way it issues in wisdom, and becomes part of the warp and woof of a person's life.

55. Not only are most Arminian, but increasingly popular is a new Pelagianism which denies that God even knows in advance what we are going to do. This notion is pushed in several very large international Christian youth organizations, most prominently Youth With a Mission and Agape Force, as well as in certain young denominations

politics, it is local politics designed to force abortion mills out of business. Such men do not trumpet themselves into the marketplace, but they are the leaders of tomorrow.

This is not to despise the New Christian Right, or to argue that we should not exercise our (remaining) liberties as Americans to pressure the larger governments toward more Godly actions. We need to remember, however, that there is only so much time and energy allotted to each of us, and essentially that time is far better spent acquiring dominion through service than in power politics.

We may contrast three different approaches, which are not mutually exclusive, but which are of varying value at present. First, there is the effort to change laws by getting people elected to office. That has not been very successful so far, and the reason is that the vast majority of Americans essentially like things the way they are. That's why things are the way they are — it is what the people want, and it is what they deserve, and so it is what God gives them. Political action (campaigning, lobbying, etc.) should therefore be viewed primarily as evangelism.

Second, there is the effort to go about our business as quietly as possible. We submit to the “powers that be ,“ not to any law such powers may happen to enact. We do not recognize their right to make laws, for to do so would be to grant them absolute power; but we recognize that God has given them power, and we are not to contest that power as such. We practice deception where morally necessary, and that includes preserving our capital, protecting our households, and rearing our children, as Genesis makes clear.⁵⁶ If we are taken to court, we fight in that arena for the right to conduct Christian lives, as Paul did in the book of Acts.

Third, there is the effort to develop a Christian subculture, building up the churches as true courts and sanctuaries, developing Christian arbitration and reconciliation commissions, Christian schools, Christian medical facilities, and the like. These latter two methods are the primary ones for our times.

This essay is designed as a cautionary note. The Bible has a great deal to say about patience and waiting, and about the

⁵⁶ Just to review: preserving capital = Jacob's dealings with Laban; protecting household = Abram's rescue of Lot and the many lies told to protect his wife; preserving children = the midwives' lies to Pharaoh, and Moses' mother's deceptions in Exodus 1 & 2

preconditions for investiture. Eve decided that eating the fruit would instantaneously make her wise. Actually, wisdom comes from years of experience mixed with faithful righteous living under the revealed law of God. Thus Joseph is singled out as the wisest man in the world (Gen. 41:8,33,39). Similarly, it was 476 years after God gave Israel the law that the wisdom-matured Solomon, author-collector of the wisdom literature of Scripture,⁵⁷ became king of Israel and extended his dominion to surrounding lands. There is a progressive development of wisdom toward Solomon, but Solomon falls from wisdom and there is a decline away from him. If the lengths of time here are any example, Christian reconstructionists would do well to cultivate Abrahamic *patient* faith!

To illustrate: Mr. A decides to preach against corruption in Washington, and in the course of things he makes some wild statements against the President. When he is asked for the source of his allegations, he has to admit that he made things up. Mr. B, a Christian leader, tells newsmen that it is easier to get forgiveness from God than to get permission, excusing one of his own foibles. Mr. C zips through college and graduate school to become a Ph. D. and professor at age 26. In his lectures he often simply reads chapters from books or from unpublished syllabi he got from his professors, but he never informs his students of what he is doing; rather, he passes the lectures off as his own. After all, all truth is God's truth. Now, is there any particular Scripture that explicitly forbids this? No, but what a lack of basic ethical sensitivity it reveals! Mr. D zips through seminary and gets himself ordained at the ripe old age of 25. At his first presbytery meeting, Mr. D speaks on every topic that comes up. He becomes notorious for speaking first, middle, and last on every matter that comes to the floor, and for speaking at length. He is totally insensitive to the deference he should show to the older members of the court. Mr. E fights his way into a junior executive position with the company. Once he has arrived, he boldly speaks out repeatedly in board meetings, unaware that the older men are coming to view him as a fool. Mr. F decides to devote his life to getting prayer to some nebulous deity reinstated in the state schools, a total waste of time and energy. Mr. F thinks that the way the public schools were in 1952, when he went to them, is

57. Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes.

the way they ought to be. It never occurs to him that the schools of 1952 led straight to the schools of 1982, as they were set up to do in the first place, in 1832. And so it goes.

These are all examples of ethical insensitivity. Examples could be multiplied. The fact is that the law of God was not given to cover every case explicitly, but to form the foundation from which God's people could learn wisdom and become sensitive to moral and judicial matters. The kinds of cases that can come before a Christian court are frequently far more complex than those actually given in Scripture; it requires a man who has matured in the law to discern what is to be done. We don't have such men today, and that is why God is graciously keeping the church small and powerless.

When we are ready, God will give the robe to us. That He has not done so proves that we are not ready. Asserting our readiness will not fool Him. Let us pray that He does not crush us by giving us such authority before we are ready for it. Let us plan for our great-grandchildren to be ready for it. Let us go about our business, acquiring wisdom in family, church, state, and business, and avoiding confrontations with the powers that be. Let us learn to be skillful in deceiving them and in preserving our assets for our great-grandchildren. For as sure as Christ is risen from the grave and is ascended to regal glory on high, so sure it is that his saints will inherit the kingdom and rule in His name, when the time is right.

Appendix: Submission and Resistance

The thrust of this essay has been that Christian people must submit to the "powers that be," develop wisdom, and await God's time for dominion. That's fine as far as it goes, but it does not answer all questions. I hope in this appendix to give at least some helpful guidelines on how to resist the devil (so that he flees from us) while resisting not evil, but overcoming evil with good.

How do we submit? There are two proper ways to submit, and two improper ways. We must never submit to either the persons or the laws of man. When it comes to submitting to a person, the only Person we submit to is God, and when it comes to submitting to laws, the only Law we submit to is God's .

Man is made as God's symbol, and in terms of this, man possesses *office*. God has set up various official relationships in the world, to image His life among men. Submission is in terms of office, not in terms of person. Thus, the wife is to submit to the husband, not because she likes him personally (though that obviously is desirable), but because of his office as lord of the home. Similarly, the Biblical love which the husband is to exercise toward his wife is not grounded in emotion, though that hopefully is present, but is grounded in a principle of office: It is his office to care for her.

What are some of the other offices God has set up? First, there is office in the church. We are to submit to officers in the church, even when we think that they have made mistakes. God will judge them for their mistakes; God will judge us for our submission or lack of it.⁵⁸ There are, secondly, officers in the state (more on them below). Thirdly, there are officers in the home: husbands and parents. Fourthly, there are officers in the economy: owners, managers, superintendents. Fifthly, there is the general office of humanity, which increases with age, so that older people are to be shown especial respect.

We submit, in principle, to office; but we submit Biblically. We submit to office in its proper *sphere* and only under God's *law*. If a husband orders his wife not to attend worship, she is not to submit, because he is acting outside his sphere. If he administers corporal punishment to her, which between free adults is reserved only for the state, he is acting outside his sphere, and she has grounds for action against him in court. If the state attacks Christian schools, the state is not to be submitted to, since education is the responsibility of the family and of the synagogue (church). If the elders of a church tell a man not to pay taxes, or to change jobs, they are not to be submitted to. No office is absolute. Each has its designated

⁵⁸ In a recent church court trial, one outsider to the court decided, based on misinformation given him, that the court was not perfect. He broadcast to various persons involved that "you couldn't get me to submit to such a court on a bet!" Such heretical and Donatistic notions reign supreme in American Christendom, and explain why the faith is so weak in our day. (The Donatists were an early Christian sect who argued that if the leadership made any mistakes, they would not submit to them. They demanded perfection of their leaders.) Even if the court makes a mistake, it is better to submit than to rebel. Many so-called "theonomists" do not understand this principle, and that is why the "theonomic" movement is bound to split between the Donatists and the Catholics sooner or later.

sphere. When an office-bearer steps outside his sphere, he is not to be submitted to.

Secondly, we submit in terms of God's law. If the state orders us to commit evil, we must not submit; and this may mean conscientious refusal to participate in foreign wars (as opposed to defensive wars). If a father patriarchally orders his children to remain under his authority, after they are married and have children, they are not to submit (Gen. 2:24).

By itself, what we have described would be conducive to anarchy. We would obey an office-bearer only when he gave commands within his sphere, and only when such commands did not conflict with the Scripture. There is, however, a second form of submission, which God requires of us. It is submission to *power*.

Properly speaking, office, authority, law, and power should always be joined. In a sinful world, however, they often are not. The Bible tells us to submit to power *where it is manifested*.⁵⁹ That is, we are not foolishly to contest it. Those in a subordinate position are not able to confront an evil power, and thus must live by being invisible to it, by deceiving it. We take note of and submit to officers because the *law* of God tells us to. We take note of and submit to power because the *sovereignty* of God puts it over us.

Practically speaking, this means that if the state passes a sinful law, we do not submit to it unless the state puts genuine power behind that law. We do not have to obey sinful laws, because we do not submit to human law. If we can evade, avoid, deceive, or compromise with the powers, we should do so. If they close one Christian school, we open another. If they lock the doors, we cut the lock when they leave. When they come back, they can lock it again. If they want to station an armed guard, then they can keep it locked.

Rape is a good analogy. If God sovereignly brings a rapist into a woman's room, and she cannot overpower him (say,

59. This principle is recognized in secular law as well. "According to the Declaration of Paris of 1856, a blockade to be binding must be effective. In other words, a sufficient force must be maintained to prevent access to the coast of the enemy. . . . A blockade may be considered effective if the forces employed are such that any breach of blockade will bring considerable risk to the ships involved. An ineffective or paper blockade is legally not binding." William L. Tung, *International Law in an Organizing World* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1968), p. 470.

because he is armed), then she may as well submit. There is no sin on her part, and resistance quite probably will only worsen matters.⁶⁰

The Mafia is another example. If the Mafia runs the neighborhood and demands protection money, pay it. They are part of the “powers that be.” God put them there, for reasons of His own.

Another example is a conquering army. Our conscious loyalty should continue to be to our country, but our external obedience for a time must be to the conqueror.

We may summarize this doctrine of submission as follows:

- A. Submission to God-constituted office:
 1. Only in its proper, Biblically-defined sphere.
 2. Only where it conforms to Biblical law.
- B. Submission to God-ordained power:
 1. Only where that power is actually exercised, or we have good reason to believe it will be exercised.

Since the attack on Christian schools and churches is before us at present, let us expand on that for a moment. When the state tries to tax the church, the issue is jurisdiction. We must go to the civil authorities and respectfully point out that we cannot comply, for the simple reason that they do not have jurisdiction. We cannot submit to their office and rulings in this matter, since the church is not under their jurisdiction. We do not submit to court orders. We do, however, submit to the barrel of a gun. If they come and close the church or school at gun-point, make sure the media are present. Frequently, however, if we resist the devil, he will flee from us. Thus, often the civil authorities are not prepared to go to the point of drawing guns against the clergy. If they are, fine, we submit (and open another church/school down the road). If they are not prepared to use *power*, then we need not submit to their rulings.

Why not simply go along with the state’s sinful requirements, and deceive them by raising up Christian students? This argument is frequently heard, and in terms of what we have been saying, has a superficial plausibility. The

⁶⁰This may not square with Victorian ethics, but it is the position taken by Augustine in *The City of God*. There is no virtue, Augustine points out, in a woman’s killing herself to avoid rape.

problem, however, is that it *is* precisely the direct government of Christ over his Church which is at issue, and this is the heart of the gospel. Thus, no compromise is possible.

Christians should be careful about hiring lawyers and trying to fight matters out in civil court, at least when it involves the church directly. (A Christian school not run by a church is another matter.) The issue is jurisdiction, pure and simple. A lawyer will almost always *de facto* grant jurisdiction to the state. In spite of personal integrity, lawyers are officers of the court, and have a vested interest in working within the system. The church is outside the system. I do not say that all lawyers are committed statist at heart, but that Christians must be careful in employing them. There may be a place for going into court precisely to make the point about jurisdiction, but a church officer must be careful not to compromise the integrity of the church in any way.

It should also be noted that many times a judgment call on affairs such as this is a very close matter. God promises to give us wisdom *in the midst of the situation*, not in abstraction, as He says in Matthew 10:19, "When they deliver you up, do not become anxious how or what you will speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what you are to speak ." We must be careful about judging other Christians in abstraction. In the midst of the situation, a man may determine that the state intends to use maximum force, and may choose to let his church be shut down, and flee to start another. In another situation, a man might force the state actually to use force before he finally capitulates. The principle is the same, though there is variance in application.

Two areas we might briefly address before concluding this appendix are the draft and taxes. 1 Samuel 8:10ff. makes it clear that it is sinful for the state to draft men into an army for aggression or even as a standing army (as opposed to a ready militia), and it is also clearly sinful for the state to claim more than 9.99% of income as a tax, since to do so is to make the state preeminent over God. Thus, it seems that Christians should not obey calls for the draft, and should pay no more than 9.99% in income taxes. Biblically speaking, property and capital taxes are wholly wrong, so Christians should not pay them. If Christians respond to draft calls, or pay their full income and property taxes, it is out of submission to *power*, not to law. If the state is prepared to kill or imprison men for draft or tax

evasion (and it has done both, even in recent years), then Christians have good reason to believe that the exercise of force will be employed by these powers, and thus submit. There is nothing immoral, however, from a Biblical point of view, with evading the draft or evading taxation, since deception is the proper way to deal with tyrants. It is pretty hard to do, however, and the cost in psychological worry and distress, not to speak of the cost if one is caught, renders draft evasion and tax evasion unwise.

We must keep in mind that the pagan is primarily interested in *power*. This means that the maintenance of *force* (the draft)⁶¹ and the seizure of *money* (excessive taxation) are of absolute primary interest to him. If we think these are the most important things, then we will make them the point of resistance (becoming “tax patriots” or some such thing). To think this way is to think like pagans. For the Christian, the primary things are righteousness (priestly guarding) and diligent work (kingly dominion). Generally speaking, the pagans don’t care how righteous we are, or how hard we work, so long as they get their tax money. This is why the Bible everywhere teaches to go along with oppressive taxation, and nowhere hints at the propriety of tax resistance.⁶² As far as the pagan state is concerned, taxes are about the most important thing, since they finance everything else. We are advised not to make an issue at that point, lest we become like them, and because we are sure to lose any confrontation on that issue (after all, they presently have power). We know that righteousness and work will overcome pagan power eventually, so we can afford to ignore the tax issue. The pagans will give up the Christian school battle long before they will give up the tax issue.

This is not even to note that tax resistance accomplishes nothing positive anyway. Politically if the income tax were overcome by tax protests, some other more efficient and subtle form of taxation would replace it (maybe a Value Added

⁶¹ A forthcoming (1984) issue of *Christianity and Civilization*, now in preparation, deals in depth with the draft, in a symposium on war and revolution.

⁶² For a brief discussion of relevant passages and concepts in the area of taxes, see James B. Jordan “The Christian and Tax Strikes,” in *Biblical Economics Today* IV: 2 (April May 1981), available for a contribution from ICE, Box 8000, Tyler, TX 7.5711.

Tax, as in Europe), because the state is not about to give up either the military or social welfare programs, the conservatives insisting on the former, and the liberals demanding the latter. The cost to the individual of “saving my tax money” is greater than the cost of simply paying, when we consider the cost of worry, of a fearful wife (*very* common), and the cost in time and money of fighting for one’s “rights” in tax court. It is a pointless battle for the individual to engage in, but an all-important battle for the church to fight, if the church is directly taxed.

The Christian resists the powers that be primarily by avoiding them. In our day, the state is not yet wholly tyrannical in the sense that Nebuchadnezzar or Nero were. Thus, there is a place for resisting the devil, hoping he will flee from us. The question of when to resist and when to capitulate requires wisdom and discernment to answer in any given situation, but the boundary line is at the point of the actual exercise of force.