

Sermon notes/follow-up

8/9/2015

The Rainbow, the Cross, and the Throne: Reclaiming a Symbol of God's Covenant  
Faithfulness

Rich Lusk

In the sermon, I dealt with what the rainbow means for God's people. The rainbow is a sign of God's covenant fidelity to Noah – he will preserve the created order and will not destroy the world in a flood again (even though men will continue to be sinners). Further, the rainbow is a sign that God himself will bear the judgment his people deserve, a promise which is fulfilled at the cross, where the arrows of God's just wrath against our sin landed in his Son, Jesus. Finally, the rainbow becomes a symbol of the church, the people who are arrayed around the throne of God and who serve as mediators (in Christ, The Mediator) of God's blessing and judgment on the creation, thus manifesting the wisdom of God to men and angels.

But we also need to consider the meaning of the rainbow for God's enemies. Does the rainbow have good news for them too? No and yes.

In the story that immediately follows (Genesis 9:18-29), there is another fall. Just as Adam fell in the garden, so there is another fall in Noah's new creation. Noah, like Adam, is a gardener. He plants a vineyard and is the first to make wine, a drink fit for kings at rest (which is what Noah is). The wine is a sign of the new and better Eden, a glorified Eden. It is a sign of Noah's kingly enthronement (corresponding to his right to exercise the royal prerogative of capital punishment).

But in the new garden, one of Noah's sons, Ham, falls into sin. It is a recapitulation of Adam's fall. (For arguments that Ham, rather than Noah, is in sin in this passage, see below.) Ham tries to seize his father's robe prematurely and is cursed.

And so once again, there is an antithesis, as humanity is ripped in two. There is a division between the righteous and the unrighteous. There is a division between those who are *in* and *under* the rainbow and those who are not. The blessed and cursed are divided from one another.

Here's the important point for our purposes: The rainbow did not save Ham and his descendants. The rainbow did not keep Ham from getting judged and cursed. And neither will the rainbow keep the wicked from being judged today. The rainbow is not universal; it is a sign to Noah-like believers. Unbelievers certainly receive benefit from the Noahic covenant (e.g., stability in the creation, order in human society, etc.), but they are not sheltered from wrath under the rainbow because they do not trust in a sacrifice to cover their sins, as Noah did. Thus, the rainbow is no comfort to the wicked.

In fact, those who pervert the meaning of the rainbow and use it to promote an ungodly agenda are inadvertently reminding God of his covenant and inviting judgment to fall on their own heads. The covenant does not provide indiscriminate protection for men. It only serves as sign of grace to those who share Noah's faith and obedience. Those who steal God's covenant sin and twist it's meaning are actually begging for the curse to fall upon them. The sign of the rainbow does not belong to man as such, but to man as believer and worshipper of the true God.

Thus: when the rainbow is used at "gay pride" parades by men who glory in what should be their shame, and who openly celebrate a lifestyle which in their hearts they know to be an unnatural evil, they are actually putting a bulls eye on themselves. By waving the rainbow flag and flaunting their sin in God's face, they are actually putting up targets at which the arrows of God's wrath will be aimed. Those who take refuge in the greater Noah and in his ark (the church) can still view the rainbow as a promise of God's patience and peace. Those who rebel against the Son should not take any comfort in the sign of the rainbow. For them, God still holds a war bow in his hand. God still wages war against the wicked. He has strung his bow and is ready to shoot them down. Thus we read in Psalm 7 that God is a just judge and is angry with the wicked everyday (7:11); if the wicked do not repent, God sharpens his sword and bends his bow to make it ready (7:12); he prepares instruments of death, including making his arrows into fiery shafts (7:13). In Habakkuk 3, the prophet says God in his anger and wrath has made his bow ready and swears to use his arrows against the wicked (3:19). In Revelation 4, we see God's throne surrounded by the rainbow. But then in Revelation 6ff, God begins to unleash fearsome judgments against the wicked (in response the prayers of his people), and he is looking right through the rainbow as he does so.

God remembers. He remembers his covenant to show mercy to those who take shelter under the rainbow, who seek refuge in the sacrifice of his Son. But remembering his people means judging their enemies, those who persecute and oppress and oppose them. God remembers his covenant – which means he remembers to judge the wicked.

Even so, there is good news. The story of the flood is an invitation to all, even the vilest of sinners. Consider what Noah took on the ark. He took his family – because God's covenants always include families. He took clean animals – no surprise there, given his role as a priest. But he also took unclean animals. Why?

The inclusion of unclean animals on the ark means God intends to include people of every tongue, tribe and nation in his kingdom (since later on in Scripture, we find the unclean animals represent the Gentile nations). The inclusion of unclean animals means God invites sinners into his kingdom, to be washed in the baptismal waters and receive his salvation (since in many places in Scripture unclean animals represent the wicked). The door of the ark is open right now. This is the day of salvation. Whosoever wills may enter in and find grace. The "unclean" (= all of us!) are invited!

Traditionally the ark has been understood as a symbol of the church. Even church architecture terms have often been derived from Noah's ark (e.g., nave). When theologians through the ages have said, "There is no ordinary possibility of salvation outside the church," they often had the ark in mind as an analogy. What the ark was in Noah's age, the church is in ours. The church is the place of safety from the outpouring of God's wrath. The church is the ark of salvation, sailing us to safe harbor through God's judgment.

Of course, Peter also makes a connection between the ark, the waters of the flood, baptism, and salvation. (1 Peter 3:18ff really deserves its own commentary, which I cannot give here.) The rain that fell in the flood, destroying the wicked and buoying the righteous to salvation, served as a precursor to new covenant baptism. And this baptism "now saves us," as Peter says, because it is the sacramental means God uses to bring believers into union with Christ and into his church. It is not merely the cleansing of the flesh/body – as old covenant washings were. Rather, it is the sign that we have a clean slate – and therefore clean consciences – before God.

It's been said the church is like Noah's ark – it might smell on the inside, but it sure beats drowning on the outside. Everyone has problems with the church because the church is full of sinners (albeit, sinners saved by grace). But there is simply no other place to be a Christian. We either learn how to live on the ark of the church or we perish.

Isaiah 11:1-10 is interesting in this connection. The prophet is giving a description of what the kingdom of Messiah will be like when it breaks into history. The prophet says the Messiah will make the wolf to dwell with the lamb, the leopard with the goat, the lion with the calf, and the cow and bear shall graze together, so they shall not hurt or destroy in the holy mountain. It's a picture of what must have surely been the case inside the ark. God had to make the animals temporarily live at peace with one another. But the pairs of animals Isaiah lists describe not only animals that would normally be at odds with one another; the pairs also mix together clean with unclean (e.g., wolf – unclean, lamb – clean; leopard – unclean, goat – clean; etc.). Again, this exactly what happened in the ark: clean and unclean animals were at peace, and lived together as one big happy family. It is prophetic of what happens when after the resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost: the Gentiles begin to stream into the church, and blend into one new family with Jewish believers. The old division between clean and unclean, as it applied to people, food, etc., is dissolved in Christ.

The passage in Isaiah 11 ends with a glorious promise of a new "flood": "the earth shall be as full of the knowledge of the lord as the waters cover the sea." God flooded the world in death and judgment in Noah's day. But in Messiah's day there will be a new flood, a flood of grace and life. A greater Noah has come, and he promises to flood the whole earth with a saving knowledge of God. The next flood will be a flood of love and mercy.

What does this mean for the enemies of God? There is still time for them to find salvation! Just as Noah preached to his contemporaries, so the gospel is going out to the ends of the earth right now. This is the day of salvation. A great, final cataclysmic judgment will come, but in the meantime, the offer of rescue stands. All are welcome. All are invited. Nationality does not matter. Sins committed do not matter. All who will come and enter Christ's ark by faith and baptism are welcome, and assured of salvation. You are welcome to come and take refuge under the rainbow, so that you may know the arrows of God's wrath that should be aimed for you have already been planted into Christ on the cross. Come to the Lord that you might be arrayed around the Lord's throne as the sign of his manifold (= multicolored) wisdom. Come to the Lord that you might be flooded with grace.

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James Jordan has done excellent work on the sin of Ham in Genesis 9. I have included both links and articles:

<http://www.biblicalhorizons.com/biblical-horizons/no-96-the-sin-of-ham-and-the-curse-of-canaan-part-1/>

The history of the sin of Ham and the curse of Canaan comes in the middle of the Generations of Noah, a section of Genesis that begins at Genesis 6:9 and extends to the closing notice, Genesis 11:9. To understand the story better, it is necessary to get in mind the literary structure of the Generations of Noah, as it develops out of the earlier sections of Genesis. To that end, I should like to quote what I have written earlier on that structure:

[Let us make] a comparison of Genesis 1:1 with 2:4b and 5:1b:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

"In the day God made earth and heaven...."

"In the day God created Adam...."

In Hebrew, the structure is:

1:1: *b+reshith* (in beginning)

verb

God

heavens & earth

2:4b *b+ha+yom* (in the day)

verb

God

earth & heavens

5:1b *b+yom* (in day)

verb

God

man & woman (5:2)

This structure is followed in the next verses. In 1:2, a break in Hebrew (no *vav*, "and") introduces the thought that the earth is formless and void, but that the Spirit and the Word ("let there be") will work together to make it a proper habitation. In 2:5, the same break in Hebrew (no *vav*) introduces the thought that the earth is barren of vegetation, but that water (symbol of Spirit) and man (image of the Word) will work together to make it a proper habitation. In 5:1b, the same Hebrew break introduces man and woman as co-laborers who should work to bring the world to fruition....

I might note here that the first section ends with God enthroned in sabbath rest. The second section moves to a negative sabbath, as man is driven from the source of Spiritual water and the earth brings forth "thorns," evil men, leading to a climax in the *seventh* generation from Adam: Lamech. The third section also moves to a negative sabbath, as man and woman become corrupt and fail to bring the earth to fruition, and God announces sabbath judgment, the end of the world (6:1-8). Hope for redemption, however, is announced at the very end of sections two and three (4:25f., 6:8).

(James B. Jordan, "Studies in Genesis One: The Structure of Genesis," in *The Geneva Review* 22 [September, 1985].)

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After the creation account, the sections of Genesis are marked by an introductory phrase: These are the generations, or offspring, of something or someone. In this way, the theme of "genesis," or beginnings, initiations, openings, births, is continued through the book. In *Trees & Thorns* 1 (1991), I wrote:

The Book of Genesis can be seen as having an introduction and seven sections:

Introduction. The Creation of the Heavens and the Earth: Genesis 1:1 –2:3.

1. The Generations of the Heavens and the Earth: Genesis 2:4–4:26 – corresponding to Day 1, the creation of the heavens and earth out of formlessness (creation of man) and the separation of light and darkness (judgment on man; division of Cain and Abel).

2. The Generations of Adam: Genesis 5:1–6:8 – corresponding to Day 2, the establishment of a firmament to separate waters above from waters below. In my speculative opinion, the godly line of Seth was the human form of the firmament, and the corruption of that line is answered by the removal of the firmament and the re-coalescence of the waters in the Flood.

3. The Generations of Noah: Genesis 6:9–11:9 – corresponding to Day 3.

There are two large sections here:

Day 3a: separation of land and sea – the Flood, and a new separation of land and sea (Genesis 6:9–9:29).

Day 3b: multiplication of plants on land – the "Table of Nations" of Genesis 10, which is one of the sub-sections introduced by "these are the generation of the . . . sons of Noah," and the scattering at Babel (Genesis 10:1–11:9).

4. The Generations of Shem: Genesis 11:10-26 – corresponding to Day 4, the establishment of light-bearers of rule in the heavens. Not only are the godly

called lights, but the patriarch's lives were marked out in years that are the same as significant astronomical numbers.

5. The Generations of Terah: Genesis 11:27–25:11 – corresponding to Day 5, when the great swarming creatures were made, and when God gave His first command to any creature. These themes, multiplication and law, are highlighted in the story of Abraham, which Genesis 11:27–25:11 delineate.

6. The Generations of Ishmael and Isaac: Genesis 25:12–35:29 – corresponding to Day 6. It is the story of Jacob that is the major item here. Day 6 also has two sections:

Day 6a: creation of helpful animals – "the generations of Ishmael" subsection (25:12-18), for the Ishmaelites were not enemies of Israel.

Day 6b: creation of man – "the generations of Isaac" (25:19–35:29), a section mainly concerned with Jacob, the man who was able to wrestle with God and prevail!

7. The Generations of Esau and Jacob: Genesis 36:1–50:26 – corresponding to Day 7. The sabbath-rest theme is clear in the story of Joseph, "the generations of Jacob" (37:1–50:26). The "generations of Esau" (ch. 36) point to the fall of man, which happened on the sabbath. Thus, a false sabbath rest is given to Esau, as he multiplies and takes control, while a true sabbath rest is given to the godly.

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Let us now expand this structure. In the first section of Genesis, the Creation of the Heavens and the Earth (1:1–2:3), we can see this large pattern:

- A. Opening statement concerning God.
- B. A problem to be resolved: the formlessness, emptiness, and darkness of the world.
- C. The resolution of the problem: the work of the six days.
- D. God's judgment on the situation: all very good.
- E. Sabbath rest.

Turning to the Generations of the Heaven and Earth (2:4–4:26), we find this same general pattern:

- A. Opening statement concerning God (2:4b).
- B. A problem to be resolved: no rain and no man.
- C. The resolution of the problem: the creation of ground water and of man.
- D. God's judgments on the situation, which take the form of a recapitulation of the pattern, since man is the image of God:
  1. Opening statement concerning man (2:25).
  2. A problem to be resolved: Satanic attack on the garden and the bride.
  3. The problem resolved: Adam succumbs to the temptation, and hands the garden over to Satan.
  4. God's judgments: Man expelled from the sanctuary of the *Garden of Eden*, but not yet from the home of the *Land* east of Eden.
  5. A Savior promised (sabbath rest will come).

This leads to an extension, with a second recapitulation of the structure:

1. Opening statement concerning man (4:1).
2. A problem to be resolved: sin crouches at the door; Satan wishes to drive

man not only from the sanctuary but also from the home.

3. The problem resolved: Cain kills Abel; sin develops with each new generation.

4. God's judgment: Cain is expelled from the home of Eden, and goes to a life of wandering.

5a. Counterfeit sabbath: Cain creates his own city and sanctuary, which multiplies in violence in the generations proceed.

5b. True sabbath: The Godly line of Seth and Enosh begins to call on the Name of Yahweh.

E. Sabbath: Men begin to worship God.

We now come to the third section, the Generations of Adam (Genesis 5:1-6:8):

A. Opening statement concerning man, the image of God: the genealogy of Adam through Noah.

B. Problem: The intermarriage of the Godly with the ungodly, equivalent to Satan's "seduction" of Eve (cp. 2 Corinthians 11:1-3).

C. The problem resolved: God's Spirit strives with men, but evil worsens with the generations.

D. God's judgment announced.

E. Sabbath: Noah finds favor (Genesis 6:8), the same Noah who it was prophesied would bring *rest* (Genesis 5:29).

With this background, let us survey the Generations of Noah. First, we find a statement about man, Noah and his family (Genesis 6:9-10). Second, we find a problem: the wickedness of humanity (Genesis 6:11-12). Third, we find God's resolution of this problem: the Flood. After the Flood, we find, fourth, God's judgment on humanity, His blessing of Noah and the new humanity. Finally, fifth, we find a promise of sabbath peace in the Rainbow Covenant. Like the Generations of the Heaven and the Earth, however, the Generations of Noah (the new humanity) continues on with two stories that show a new double fall. The first fall is that of Ham (analogous to that of Adam), and the second fall is that of the later descendants (analogous to that of Cain). We may outline it as follows:

1. Opening notice concerning the vineyard (9:20).

2. Problem: Ham invades Noah's tent and tries to seduce his brothers into rebellion.

3. The problem resolved: Shem and Japheth refuse to go along, and guard the "garden."

4. Judgment: This time pronounced by man, who has ascended to this position in the economy of God.

5. Sabbath: Noah promises blessing to those who serve the God of Shem.

This section, of course, is the subject of this paper; but to get the parallels more firmly in mind, let us outline the "fall of Cain" section that follows:

1. Opening notice concerning man: the Table of Nations of Genesis 10.

2. Problem: The whole earth had one confession and one language, and men did not want to spread over the earth in obedience to the Cultural Mandate republished to Noah.

3. The problem resolved: Men unite to build a Cainite "city and tower" (home and sanctuary).

4. Judgment: God scatters them from Babel.

5. Sabbath: Implied, since God's actions protect men from destroying the world again, and serve to ensure the coming sabbath.

Notice the "fall and decline" pattern in the Generations of Noah is the same as in the Generations of the Heaven and the Earth. First, an Adamic figure falls into sin, and seeks to destroy the sanctuary. Second, a Cainitic figure seeks to build a counterfeit city. In the Generations of Noah, however, both attempts are frustrated, the former by the actions of Godly men and the latter by God Himself. We shall have to see the reasons for this.

The reason it is important for us to look at the literary and symbolic parallels among these early Histories is that it leads us to see clearly that it is not Noah but Ham who commits the great sin in the passage with which we are concerned. It has been a temptation for exegetes to focus on the drunkenness of Noah as the great sin, but it is Ham who, Satanlike, invades a private domain, and it is Ham who is judged, through Canaan. It is the purpose of this essay to demonstrate that thesis in detail, and to draw conclusions from it; but the thesis will not be fully credible until we have exegeted the passage in depth.

### **Structure of the Passage**

The passage has a chiastic aspect, with Noah's awakening at the center. Here is the general chiastic flow.

A. Noah, master of the ground

B. Noah plants vineyard

C. Noah in his tent

D. Canaan and the three brothers

E. Noah awakens and comes to judge

(Noah's parousia, or appearance)

D' Canaan and the three brothers

C' Blessing of tents

B' Noah lives 350 years

A' Noah dies (returns to ground)

The actual literary structure, also chiastic, is as follows:

#### **A. Noah's God-like Labor:**

8:20And Noah, a master of the ground, was the first,

And he planted a vineyard.

<sup>21</sup>And he drank from the wine,

And became drunk,

And lay uncovered inside his tent.

#### **B. Actions of the Brothers:**

22And Ham, father of Canaan, saw

The nakedness of his father,

And he told his two brothers outside.

<sup>23</sup>And Shem and Japheth took the garment,

And they laid [it] upon a shoulder of each of



them,

And they walked backward,  
And they covered the nakedness of their father,  
And their faces were backward,  
And the nakedness of their father  
They did not see.

**C. Parousia of Noah:**

24And Noah awoke from his wine,  
And he knew what his youngest son had done to him.

**B' Judgments on the Brothers:**

25And he said, "Cursed is Canaan.

A slave of slaves he will be to his brothers.

<sup>26</sup>And he said, "Blessed is Yahweh, God of Shem.

And may Canaan be his slave.

<sup>27</sup>And may God enlarge Japheth,

And may he live in the tents of Shem,

And may Canaan be his slave."

**A' Noah's Life and Death:**

28And Noah lived after the flood three hundred years and fifty years.

<sup>29</sup>And all the days of Noah were nine hundred years and fifty years.

And he died.

<http://www.biblicalhorizons.com/biblical-horizons/no-97-the-sin-of-ham-and-the-curse-of-canaan-part-2/>

Commentary

**A. Noah's God-like Labor:**<sup>8:20</sup>And Noah, a master of the ground, was the first,

And he planted a vineyard.

<sup>21</sup>And he drank from the wine,

And became drunk,

And lay uncovered inside his tent.

It appears to me that there is a balance between "ground" and "tent" in this paragraph, and that the central idea is that Noah drank from the wine. Thus, the paragraph is chiasitic in outline.

The first two statements mean that Noah was the first to plant a vineyard. He is said to do this as "master of the ground." Commentators agree that Noah is presented as a giver of rest, by being a giver of wine. He himself drinks of the wine and takes a nap. We are pointed back to Lamech's prophecy when he named Noah, in 8:29, "And he called his name Noah (Comfort), saying, 'This one will comfort us in our labors and in the toil of our hands from the ground, which Yahweh cursed.'" Lamech thus prophesied that there would be a relaxation of the curse as a result of Noah's work, and that this relaxation would take the form of comfort. The soil would still prosecute God's curse,

and would still bring forth thorns and thistles, but a comfort would be given in the midst of that trial.

Comfort and rest come at the end of toil, and thus are associated with sabbath. God rested on the sabbath day after His labors of creation, but Adam did not enter into any kind of sabbath rest. Through Noah, humanity now enters into a sabbath; not the final sabbath, but a real experience of rest after toil and trial.

What was Noah's labor? He prophesied to sinners and built a church (the ark) to house God's people in the midst of historical judgment. And, this judgment was the end of the world. With the end of the old world, and the preservation of the church, Noah's work was finished, and he could enter sabbath rest. Of course, he lived on and there was more to do, but he entered a sabbath with reference to his former work. We can see here something taught everywhere in Scripture: Those who stand for God and built the Church will inherit the world and enter sabbath and rule.

Sabbath rest is always associated with enthronement. God rests enthroned in His creation. Kings rest enthroned after defeating their enemies and building their houses. It is at that time that a king can sit down and relax with a glass of wine. Accordingly, enthroned kings are often pictured with wine-servers, or drinking wine (Genesis 40; Nehemiah 2:1; Esther). Wine, thus, is a sign of completed work, of rest and comfort after labor. The priests were not to drink wine in the Tabernacle, because their work was never finished, and they did not sit down. (For a full discussion, see Jeffrey J. Meyers, "Concerning Wine and Beer," *Rite Reasons* 48 & 49.)

The change from Adam to Noah is, thus, a change from priestly labor to kingly rule. No one was allowed to avenge Cain, for God had not given kingly rule to humanity at that point in history, though men seized it for themselves (Genesis 4:15, 23). With Noah, however, the right to rule by means of capital punishment is delegated to humanity (9:5-6). Associated with the right to put murderers to death is the right to kill animals for food (9:3-4).

We can summarize the changes thus:

<b>Adam</b>	<b>Noah</b>
No sabbath	Sabbath
Toil w/o comfort	Toil with comfort
Bread only	Bread & wine
Vegetables only	Meat also
Priestly only	Priestly & Kingly

This explains, I believe, why Genesis 9:20 refers to Noah as a "master of the ground." The word in Hebrew is *ish*, which means man as lord of a lady, master of a servant, ruler of a people; while the other common Hebrew

word, *'adam*, refers to man as made of soil, man as man. A third word, *'enosh*, refers to man as under God, as part of the earth, humble under Divine rule. Thus, in a very general way, the three terms point to man as lord, equal, and servant. Adam was made ruler of the soil and cosmos, of course, but he forsook that position and was made a slave of the soil. In Noah, humanity is given an initial form of mastery back over the creation.

### **Vine, Wine, and Drink**

The statement that Noah was the first to plant a vineyard can be taken in one of several ways. It may simply mean that he began to plant a vineyard, but commentators point out that this is not the best way to make that statement. It may imply that while there had been vineyards and wine before this time (just as there had been executions for crime), this was the first proper vineyard planted with God's permission. Or it may imply that grapes were unknown in the world before the Flood. Genesis 1 mentions fruit trees and grain plants, but perhaps the vine did not exist until after the Flood. Whatever the actual historical case, the Biblical meaning is fairly clear: Noah was the first man to act as a master of the soil in planting a vineyard. Noah was the first man to be elevated to kingly status, and from that position to plant his own garden.

God is king. Man is made in God's image, which is permanent and unchangeable, and also in God's likeness, which is flexible. Man simply *is* the image of God; even in hell, people are images of God. Humanity was to grow in God-likeness, however, and become mature enough to be rulers. That was the challenge of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Adam tried to seize the prerogatives of maturity and rulership when he was only a few hours old, and long before he was ready for it, long before God was willing to give it to him. Noah is now 601 years old, and is mature enough and ready enough to be a king and to act like God in certain significant ways. To wit: Noah, like God, will plant a vineyard (same verb as in Genesis 2:8); and like God he will pass judgment on sins committed in that vineyard by his son. Noah's position of authority is signified by his garment, a garment he laid aside during his rest, and which his two righteous sons placed on him. The word for "the garment" *issimlah*. This word can be used for any covering of the body, clothing in general; but in a number of places the word is used for clothing that has some special symbolic or ceremonial meaning (Genesis 35:2; 41:14; Exodus 19:10 & 14; Deuteronomy 21:13; 22:5). Here at the beginning of the new history of the world, it is doubtful if Noah had any particular special garment, because his situation did not invite him to distinguish himself from other people and their positions. Nevertheless, in terms of the robe-theology of Genesis, Noah's garments signify his position of authority and rule over his clan. (For a fuller treatment of robe-theology, see James B. Jordan, *Primeval Saints: Studies in the Patriarchs of Genesis*, published by Biblical Horizons .)

At the center of this paragraph is the statement that Noah drank of the wine. He entered into the promised rest, and participated in the sabbath of kings. This is followed by the statement that he became drunk. In English, "getting

drunk" usually means becoming helplessly inebriated, but it does not have that meaning in Hebrew. All this statement needs to mean is that Noah drank enough to feel warm, peaceful, and sleepy. This is the kind of restful and relaxing use of alcohol that the Bible commends as entirely proper, on proper occasions. Possibly, of course, Noah was new to wine and accidentally drank too much; but however the case may be, there is nothing to indicate any sinful action on Noah's part. In this story, it is Ham, not Noah, who sins.

We are also told that Noah uncovered himself. That is, he was warm and lay down for a nap. Since he was inside his own private tent, he was hidden from view; that is, he was still covered by the tent itself.

Noah has now withdrawn from the vineyard. He has planted it, and he has entered into sabbath rest. The sons are alone in the vineyard. This is directly parallel to Genesis 2, where Yahweh God planted the garden, entered into sabbath rest, and withdrew, leaving Adam and Eve alone.

**B. Actions of the Brothers:**

A. <sup>22</sup>And Ham, father of Canaan, saw

B. The nakedness of his father,

C. And he told his two brothers outside.

D. <sup>23</sup>And Shem and Japheth took the garment,

E. And they laid [it] upon a shoulder of each of them,

E' And they walked backward,

D' And they covered the nakedness of their father,

C' And their faces were backward,

B' And the nakedness of their father

A' They did not see.

This chiastic form of this paragraph is clearly marked by the first and last phrase, which in Hebrew are reversed:

Ham saw

Nakedness of father

Nakedness of father

They did not see

The other statements are either parallels or contrasts, and illuminate each other. Statement C says that Ham told his brothers, while C' says that their faces were turned away. In context, their faces were turned away that they might not see their father's nakedness; but it is clear that they also turned away their faces from Ham's solicitations. Statements D & D' have to do with the garment that covered their father's nakedness. At the center is Shem and Japheth's restoration of their father's symbolic stature.

For the second time, Ham is called the father of Canaan (Genesis 9:18 & 22). Since Ham had four sons, there must be some special significance in this appellation (10:6). Commentators sometimes seek an explanation for this by running off to later places in Genesis, where the Canaanites are clearly a wicked people, or even later in the Bible, where the land of Canaan is given to Israel. We should, however, stick with the context as closely as possible. A father is a physical progenitor, of course, but often a "father" is also a role model, a spiritual father. Since Canaan is singled out here, it seems fairly

clear that we are being told that Ham's basic attitude and sinfulness was already being emulated by Canaan; perhaps Ham's other sons did not pick up on their father's ways. Since Canaan alone is cursed, it seems that Canaan alone was a "son" of Ham in this sense.

Ham was one of the eight righteous souls taken on the Ark. Thus, he was a faithful servant of Yahweh. The story we are considering is, therefore, the fall of Ham.

### **The Sin of Ham**

The sin of Ham is the subject of much myth and nonsense. I recently read in an internet discussion that "commentators usually consider it to have been a homosexual attack." I asked, "What commentators?" Commentators bring up this possibility only in order to dismiss it as nonsense. Yes, "uncovering nakedness" in Leviticus 18 does refer to sexual relations, but that phrase is not found here. Moreover, it is clear from the passage that Shem and Japheth did the opposite of what Ham did. They covered their father, which means Ham looked at him. That is all.

Now, the word "naked" here does imply that Ham espied Noah's private parts. In Leviticus 18, to "uncover the nakedness" of another person means to uncover her or his genitals with a view to having sexual relations. Ham did not "uncover" Noah's genitals, so there is no hint of sexual relations, but he did see Noah's "nakedness." Back in Genesis 3, when Adam and Eve became aware of their nakedness, they made coverings for their loins. Thus, "nakedness" is concentrated there.

Ham did two things. First of all, he entered Noah's tent without permission, without "knocking." This by itself was wrong, but understandable. Perhaps Ham had some interesting news, and just barged in. When he saw that Noah was asleep (on his back, presumably), he might simply have turned around quickly and left, and said nothing.

Ham's serious sin was not that he happened to see Noah naked, but was his making an issue of it. He told his brothers about it. Here again, the text is subtle and we must be careful. Ham might have come out and said, "Hey, guys! I happened to wander in to father's tent and saw he has uncovered himself. Do you think we should do anything?" If that had been the case, the matter would have been completely innocent. Clearly, however, something more was involved. Whatever Ham said provoked Shem and Japheth to engage in the purely ritual act of covering Noah, who after all was already covered by the tent itself; and whatever Ham said provoked Noah to pass a very severe judgment on his line through Canaan.

Did Ham come to his brothers and snicker about Noah's condition? This seems unlikely behavior for a man already more than a century old.

Moreover, in terms of eye-for-eye judgment, it does not fit with the curse put upon Canaan: Noah did not curse Canaan to be laughed at.

The subsequent verses give us all we need to reconstruct what Ham said: He advocated taking over rule and authority from Noah. The symbol of such authority was the robe, and by re-robing their father, Shem and Japheth rejected Ham's suggestion. The curse on Canaan to be a slave and a servant

fittingly matches the sin of Ham: Canaan will have his rule and authority stripped from him.

Ham corresponds to the serpent in Genesis 3. The serpent advocated that Adam and Eve seize the forbidden fruit and make themselves gods. Ham advocates that Shem and Japheth seize the robe and make themselves rulers. In both cases, the sin is grounded in ambition and impatience, for the Tree of Knowledge was not permanently forbidden (Genesis 1:29), and Noah's robe would descend to his sons in due time. In both cases, the sin is rebellion against authority, first against God's fatherly authority, and then against man's fatherly authority under God.

<http://www.biblicalhorizons.com/biblical-horizons/no-98-the-sin-of-ham-and-the-curse-of-canaan-part-3/>

### The Righteousness of Shem and Japheth

As noted above, the action of Shem and Japheth was purely symbolic. They did not need to cover Noah with a garment, for he was already covered by the tent. Their action was a symbolic affirmation of Noah's authority, a symbolic rejection of Ham's temptation.

We read that they took "the garment." This might mean any garment, or it might imply that they took the garment Noah had laid aside (which means it must have lain far enough away from him that the sons did not have to disturb him to get it). Since weaving cloth and making garments were laborious and time-consuming before the modern world, it is not likely that Noah had many changes of clothing, so it is entirely possible that Shem and Japheth recovered Noah with the same garment he had earlier removed. Even if it was a different garment, it is symbolically equivalent.

Not only was Shem's and Japheth's action unnecessary, it was also carried out in a highly symbolic fashion. Each son took a corner of the garment and held it on his shoulder, and then the two of them walked backward and covered Noah. In part, this was so that they would not look at Noah's nakedness, but they might have held the garment at their hips or somewhere else for this purpose. Again, the text would make perfect sense if the detail about the shoulders were left out: They took the garment and walked backward. Thus, the shoulder is important.

The word for shoulder is *shechem*, a word also used for persons and a town. In Genesis 33:18, Jacob arrived at Shechem. The king of the place was Hamor, and his son was named Shechem (Genesis 34). The town of Shechem was located in the col (saddle-shaped depression) between Mounts Ebal and Gezirim. As mountain peaks are "heads" in the Bible (Genesis 8:5; Revelation 17:9), this area was a shoulder leading up to these heads. Similarly, the son Shechem was a shoulder and support of his father, Hamor, the head of the town.

*Shechem* is not just the shoulder but the upper back and neck. A more precise term, *kateph*, refers to the shoulders as such. These two terms are regularly used for the idea of supporting something or holding something up,

especially holding up the house of God (His general throne), or the Ark (His specific throne). Note the following in particular:

"The government will be upon His shoulders" (Isaiah 9:6). "I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder" (Isaiah 22:22). "The holy objects they carried on the shoulder (Numbers 7:9). "Ark of God on their shoulders" (1 Chronicles 15:15).

The side posts of the Tabernacle/Temple are shoulders, making the sanctuary a head, and the courtyard altar the bronze feet (Exodus 27:14-15; 38:14-15; 1 Kings 6:8; 7:39; 2 Kings 11:11; 2 Chronicles 4:10; 23:10; Ezekiel 40:18, 40-44; 41:2, 26; 46:19; 47:1, 2). Aaron carries the tribes on his shoulders (Exodus 28:7, 12, 25, 27; 39:4, 7, 18, 20). God's heavenly river is on the Israelites' shoulders (1 Kings 7:30, 34). (On this see James B.

Jordan, *Chariots of Water*, available from Biblical Horizons.)

From all this it should be clear that by carrying Noah's garment on their shoulders, the two righteous sons were upholding his rule, position, and authority.

Nakedness and Holiness

Two sons as two pillars holding up a screen before the ruler is replicated in the architecture of the Tabernacle and Temple, where pillars hold up screens before Yahweh's private chambers (Holy Place) and throne room (Holy of Holies). Invasion of Yahweh's chambers by pulling back the screens without permission is equivalent to spying out the nakedness, the "sabbath rest weakness," of Noah or of any ruler (see 2 Chronicles 26:16-21; Esther 4:11; and James B. Jordan, *The Death Penalty in the Mosaic Law*, chapter 3: "The Death Penalty for Encroachment.")

The parallel between Noah's nakedness and the veiled Ark of the Covenant has another aspect. According to Numbers 4:5, when the Tabernacle was taken down the priests were to remove the inner veil and cover the Ark with it. Since they were not to look at the Ark, the veil must have hung on the inside of the posts on which it was hung (Exodus 26:31-34). The priests would take it down from its pillar-shoulders and walk backward, draping the veil over the Ark.

Does this mean that a person's private parts are "holy" in some sense? To my knowledge the Bible never directly speaks this way, but it is a fact that sinful exposures of nakedness are denoted in Leviticus 18 & 20 by a series of terms, most of which are also used in religious contexts (marked with \*).

These words are not used for such sins as murder and theft:

zimmah, lewdness, 18:17; 20:14

\*tame', defile, 18:20, 24, 27, 28, 30

\*to`ebhah, abomination, 18:22, 26, 27, 29, 30; 20:13

tebel, perversion, 18:23; 20:12

chesed, disgrace, 20:17

\*niddah, impurity, 20:21

We may also note that circumcision is performed on this central part of the body, signifying the sacrifice of the whole person.

We can draw these considerations together by saying that the private parts are a place of symbolic holiness and life, but that because of Adam's sin, they become a place of symbolic defilement and death (Leviticus 15). Either way, they are not to be exposed to view except within the closed circle of a proper marriage.

(The notion that every part of the human body is the same, and thus all of it may be exposed equally, is a piece of rationalism not supported by the Bible. If the Greeks played their Olympic games completely naked, this does not justify the practice of having communal showers for men in Christian schools, college, and armies.)

### **C. The Parousia of Noah**

24And Noah awoke from his wine,  
And he knew what his youngest son had done to him.

Noah's awakening from his wine parallels Yahweh's return to the garden in Genesis 3. It indicates that the time of rest is over, and the work of the enthroned king as judge must recommence.

According to this statement, Ham was Noah's youngest son. According to Genesis 10:21, Japheth was the eldest.

Why is Ham called the youngest son at this point? This would seem to be a point better made in the course of a genealogy. The reason for its mention here is this:

Man was sinful from his youth (Genesis 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. [James B. Jordan, "Rebellion, Tyranny, and Dominion in the Book of Genesis," in Gary North, ed., *Tactics of Christian Resistance* (1983; available from Biblical Horizons ), p. 48.]

### **B' Judgments on the Brothers**

A. <sup>25</sup>And he said, "Cursed is Canaan.

B. A slave of slaves he will be to his brothers.

C. <sup>26</sup>And he said, "Blessed is Yahweh, God of Shem.

D. And may Canaan be his slave.

C' <sup>27</sup>And may God enlarge Japheth,

B' And may he live in the tents of Shem,

A' And may Canaan be his slave."

Noah now pronounces curses and blessings, as God did in Genesis 3. As God began with the serpent and a direct curse, so Noah begins with Ham (through Canaan) and a direct curse. Yahweh followed the curse on the serpent with judgments against the woman and the man, but Noah is in the happier circumstance of being able to pronounce blessings on his two older sons.



If we take the occurrences of Canaan and his curse as our guide, the paragraph appears to have a roughly chiasmic form, as noted. Recalling that the sin of Ham is like the sin of the serpent, we can note that the curse on Canaan is like the curse on the serpent. The latter was cursed to crawl along the ground, under the feet of humanity. He was brought low. Similarly, Canaan will be under the feet of his brothers. As with a number of negative predictions in the Bible, the curse on Canaan may have a double aspect. On the one hand, "slave of slaves" may mean "lowest of slaves." On the other hand, it might imply "best of slaves." Which it is going to be will depend on how Canaan responds to God's Word. In fact, the Canaanite Gibeonites became excellent slaves of the Tabernacle and Temple. Moreover, salvation is offered to Canaan in that he will serve the righteous, and be under their influence.

The other sons of Ham are not mentioned. Perhaps they did not show the marks of their father's rebelliousness. Those who want to take this passage as some kind of prediction of the future course of all of human history must come to grips with the fact that the other three groups of Hamites are not mentioned.

Noah does not directly bless his other sons. Rather he blesses Yahweh, and links Him with Shem explicitly. This bestows the priesthood on Shem, and the later genealogies in Genesis carry this forward, specifying to Eber, and then to Abram, and then to Isaac, and then to Jacob. Why Shem rather than Japheth was given this honor we are not told, but possibly it is because Japheth was the eldest, and throughout Genesis the firstborn son is set aside in favor of a younger son – pointing to the need for a second Adam. Japheth's name comes from the word meaning "enlarge," and Noah's prayer for Japheth is thus a significant pun. It seems to mean that while Shem will carry the sabbatical duties of humanity, Japheth will major in the cultural tasks.

While it is true that Noah's curse and prayer are not set forth as a prophecy, they do initiate history. As such we do find that the Canaanites were reduced to slavery under the rule of Shemites, Japhethites, and other Hamites. This is part of what Genesis 14 is about. Any attempt to transfer the statements about Canaan to other Hamites, as Arthur Custance has done in his writings, is illegitimate.

Historically, we see Israel interacting with other Shemites and Hamites throughout the Former Days, up to the exile. After the exile, in the Latter Days, Israel interacts with Japhethite nations primarily. This history, however, comes to an end with the end of Israel and the Oikumene in ad 70 (Matthew 23:35; Revelation 1-22), and it is completely illegitimate to try and characterize post-Biblical Shemites and Japhethites as "specialists in religion" and "specialists in culture" respective, as again Custance has done.

#### **A' Noah's Life and Death:**

<sup>28</sup>And Noah lived after the flood three hundred years and fifty years.

<sup>29</sup>And all the days of Noah were nine hundred years and fifty years.

And he died.

The first statement indicates that Noah lived in the new creation 350 years. But then we are linked with the old creation by saying that he a total of 950 years. The new creation was not a complete break, but a development of the old. The full new creation has not come.

And Noah died. He was a type of the Messiah to come, but was not the Messiah. His rule in history came to an end.

#### Conclusion

The principles revealed in this story are permanent and abiding. A few years ago, I witnessed them in action. A woman manager who had built up a business over several years came into a time of crisis in her life. She was depressed a good deal of the time and almost had a nervous breakdown. She had to depend on her assistant. The assistant decided that she was incompetent, and in fact had chafed under her authority for some time. He was convinced that he could do a better job. The assistant went to the owner of the business and told stories about the woman's depression, arguing that she could not handle things any longer. The woman was demoted and the assistant was promoted. Within a couple of years, the newly promoted manager had wrecked the business through incompetence, and his life has gone downhill from there. I've seen this story more than once, and if you've lived for very long, you probably have as well.

Noah did nothing wrong. Ham had to search out Noah's life (tent) and then make an issue out of something that was not really a problem: a couple of glasses of wine and an afternoon nap. But let us suppose that Noah was becoming a real drunkard, as some have imagined. What then? Even so, it was not Ham's place to magnify this problem into an excuse for mounting a revolution.

Ham was the "youngest" son. Why is this stressed? Partly because it is the temptation of youth to think that they know better. Ham may not have said "Don't trust anyone over 30," but he was saying "Don't trust anyone over 600."

Ham had other options. He might have moved away with Noah's blessing and started up his own culture, just as the assistant in the story above might have started his own operation, or moved into a genuinely open managerial position elsewhere.

Or, Ham might have waited with his brothers until Noah was ready to retire, or died.

But he didn't.

Those who are impatient for authority will become slaves.

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Jordan also offers some extensive thoughts on the nature of the Noahic, refuting common misperceptions:

<http://www.biblicalhorizons.com/biblical-horizons/no-19-who-rules-the-land-the-meaning-of-the-noahic-covenant-part-1/>

<http://www.biblicalhorizons.com/biblical-horizons/no-20-who-rules-the-land-the-meaning-of-the-noahic-covenant-part-2/>

<http://www.biblicalhorizons.com/biblical-horizons/no-21-the-dominion-church/>

It is commonly held in Reformed thought that the Noahic Covenant is given to all men equally. The Noahic Covenant concerns "man," not simply "church," and establishes civil government as an institution among "mankind" — that is the theory. Sometimes the Noahic Covenant is regarded as a "covenant of common grace," guaranteeing God's sustenance of all human life, whether faithful or wicked; but one way or another the idea that the Noahic Covenant is addressed to "man qua man" is found throughout evangelical and Reformed literature.

The purpose of this essay is to challenge this assumption, and to point to the true meaning of the Noahic Covenant. We shall see that the Noahic Covenant was not addressed to man as man, but to covenant-man, to the Church. The benefits and duties of the Noahic Covenant are not addressed to all mankind, but only to believers.

I shall not use any previous writer's work as a foil in this essay, primarily because I don't know of any previous writer who self-consciously has taken the position opposite of mine, except possibly for M. G. Kline. For the most part, previous writers have simply assumed that when God says "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed," He is speaking generally to all men, regardless of faith. On the basis of this unexamined assumption, evangelical and Reformed theologians have erected a political philosophy that views Genesis 9:6 as the charter for civil government, both Christian and non-Christian. Because of this, it is felt that Christians may address unbelieving magistrates and under "common grace" call them to do their duties under the Noahic Covenant.

This is not the meaning of the Noahic Covenant, however. The rainbow is not a pledge on God's part to sustain all men under "common grace," as we shall see. When Ham sinned, he and his spiritual progeny lost the regal benefits of the Noahic Covenant, and instead of being entitled to rule as "pagan magistrates," they were declared to be slaves. When they tried to erect a civilization, God immediately destroyed it. What this means for believers is rather frightening, but is also very important: It means that at all times it is believers who rule the world. If we don't like how things are going, we have no one to blame but ourselves.

(A note on "common grace." C. Van Til calls it, "earlier grace" or "creation grace." I hate to disagree with Van Til, but the fact is that "creation grace" was exhausted 1656 years after creation, when the Flood came. The only grace that unbelievers receive after the Flood is the spillover from redemptive grace. "Common grace" is the crumbs that fall from the Lord's Table. Further, the idea of building a civilization on "common grace," as advocated by many today, is ridiculous. Today on television in Japan are

advertisements that say, "Come to Malaysia. A virgin every night: boy or girl, ages 8 to 11." These tours are booked up years in advance. "Common grace" is really wonderful, isn't it? Don't you wish we could get rid of our theocratic heritage, and live under "common grace"?)

#### The World Renewed

Let us now turn our attention to an overview of Genesis 8:20 – 9:27. Notice first of all, that when Noah came off the Ark, he built an altar and offered of every clean bird and beast to the LORD. It was on the basis of that sacrifice, not on the basis of some generalized "common grace," that God stated that He would never again curse the ground on account of man. God said that He would refrain from cursing even though "the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth." God had brought the Flood because the intent of man's heart was only evil continually (6:5). God changes His approach to man's sinfulness not because man has changed, but because of the sacrifice.

God says that He will never again destroy every living thing, even though man continues to be evil. How will He secure the world? The answer is given later in the Noahic Covenant. First, He will give to the Church the right to rule over the wicked, and to put them to death when necessary. Second, He Himself will act to put a stop to the civilizations of the wicked.

The cosmic aspect of the Noahic Covenant concludes in Genesis 8:22, "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." Wrenched out of context, this seems like a statement of "natural law," something that will apply to all men regardless of their covenant standing before God. In context, however, it means something entirely different. It means that the world is repositioned into the "church." The world of "nature" is given the protection of the covenant along with believers. If unbelievers benefit from this, it is only because they are squatters on our turf. They ungratefully share in the blessings God gives to the Church. God will never again destroy the animal kingdom and He will never again disrupt the world order, because these things are no longer positioned in Old Adam but now are positioned in New Adam (by anticipation, on the basis of Noah's sacrifice). God preserves the physical world through the Church, not "next to" her.

Another way to make the same point is this: The animal world started out in the Church with Adam in the Garden. Genesis 4, however, indicates that it was the wicked who developed culture and animal husbandry, and so the animal world and the world of culture were severed from the Church. During the Flood, the animals that were saved were saved by being taken into the Ark, into the Church with Noah. After the Flood, God takes steps to make sure that the animals remain under the protection of the Church.

Commentaries on Genesis note that the Noahic Covenant is not "cut," implying a new covenant, but "confirmed." This indicates that it is an "Adamic Covenant" that is being renewed here. We could, then, go back to Genesis 1-2 and see that it is a faithful humanity that is given the Adamic Covenant, and by implication that those who are faithless will lose the benefits of that covenant. Before the Flood, however, the faithful descendants

of Adam were not empowered to prevent the wicked from ruling; now they are.

#### Humanity Renewed

Genesis 8:22 rehearses in capsule form Genesis 1:1-25 — the world is restored. Now in Genesis 9:1-7 we have a recapitulation of Genesis 1:26-30 — the word of God to a new Adamic race.

It is essential to see that it is the Church that is addressed here (see 1 Pet. 3:20-21). There are only eight people, and all of them are faithful covenant members. Though Ham will fall into sin later on, at this point he is nearly 500 years old and has been faithful to God all those years. God is not speaking here to "humanity in general" or to "man as man," but to the covenant-keeping community of the Church. As we shall see, those who break the covenant lose the regal benefits of the Noahic Covenant.

It is the Church that is commanded to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (9:1; as in Gen. 1:26-28). God does not want the wicked to multiply. Before the Flood God did not cut the wicked out of the commands and benefits of the covenant as regards the world, and the wicked multiplied on the earth. After the Flood God acts to cut back the wicked, and it is only the righteous who multiply (cf. Ex. 1).

God says that the fear and terror of Godly people will be on every beast and bird, fish and crawler (9:2). This promise does not apply directly to unbelievers. God does not want the wicked to have dominion, and He does not grant it to them here. Before the Flood the wicked exercised dominion. They are not given it again after the Flood. (I believe that a study would show that in Christian countries, wild animals tend to fear people, while in pagan lands, people tend to be the prey of wild animals.)

God says that His people may eat the flesh of any animal, clean or unclean, except that they are not to eat the blood with it (9:3-4). Vampirism is forbidden. Of course, unbelievers after the Flood ate meat also (and perhaps before the Flood as well), but this grant is not specifically made for them. The unbelievers are not entitled to eat meat except insofar as they are under the "spillover" of the Noahic Covenant.

God says that He will require the blood of His people from the hands of those who slay them, specifically from the hand of "every man's brother" (9:5). This is a direct allusion back to Cain and Abel in Genesis 4. God did not require Abel's blood at the hand of Cain, and protected Cain. God allowed Cain and the unbelievers to remain "inside" the covenant grant before the Flood, but now things are going to be different. No longer are murderers protected. Instead, they are to be cut out of the world, removed from it by means of execution. Now, in a Christian theocracy we would also put to death anyone who murdered an unbeliever, but this is part of the "spillover" of the covenant. The covenant and its provisions are actually addressed only to believers. God says here that if the courts do not act to avenge His saints, He will do so Himself: "I will require . . . I will require . . . I will require"!

Verse 5 says "from the hand of every beast I will require it." Now that the animals are repositioned into union with the Church, they are accountable in

a new way if they attack covenant-man. Throughout the Bible, unbelievers are symbolized by beasts, and possibly they are also in view here. It may be that the "man" here is covenant man, while unbelievers are included among "beasts."

God says that His people are to be His agents to carry out His decree of execution against future Cainites. The reason a Flood won't be necessary in the future is that believers will take care of problems as they arise, and unbelievers will never again be able to control the world. "Whoever sheds covenant-man's blood, by covenant-man his blood shall be shed" (v. 6). This is the only possible way to read this verse in context: The only "men" in existence at this point are covenant people. God has not given to the heathen the "right" to bear the sword and execute capital punishment. It is only because heathen magistrates are puppets on the end of the Church's strings that they can implement civil justice (Romans 13 — see discussion below). What makes it clear that the wicked are not given the right to rule is that they are designated "slaves of slaves" in verse 25. They are removed from rule. Only believers rule in the full sense.

Verse 6b says, "For in the image of God He made man." This phrase has been interpreted three ways. First, it has been put with the second part of 6a, "By man his blood shall be shed." This view says that the right to execute capital punishment is given to "man" because "man" is the image of God. The problem with this interpretation is that Adam was the image of God, but Adam did not have the right/duty of executing capital punishment (Gen. 4:15). Indeed, ascension to rule and authority is an aspect of maturing in the likeness of God, not an aspect of the image. (See Jordan, "The Dominion Trap," Biblical Horizons No. 15.)

The second interpretation puts 6b with all of 6a, "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." In other words, killing a human being is an attempt to kill God, an attack on the image of God, and thus merits the death penalty. This is the usual interpretation, and I can live with it. The third interpretation, however, does justice to this idea while taking the context into account in a better way.

G. Ch. Aalders in his commentary on Genesis (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981) points out that it is most likely that 6b refers to everything from 9:1-6a. He notes that in Genesis 1, man is given dominion over the animals, given the right to eat God-given food, and told to multiply. In Genesis 1:26-30 are spelled out, in part at least, what it means to be the "image" of God. These provisions are repeated in a new form in Genesis 9:1-3, and so 6a most likely refers back to the entire paragraph.

We have seen, and we shall see again, that it is the Church that is being addressed in Genesis 9, not humanity in general. The fact that the Church is in view means that the Church is going to fulfill God's original intention regarding the "image." All men are images of God, but the Church is the undistorted and true image.

So, to paraphrase Genesis 9:1-6, God said, "I am giving all the original Adamic gifts to you, the Church. I am also arming you with a sword that will enable

you to preserve the world against the Cainites. I am doing this because I made man as My image to start with, and I intend to fulfill My original purpose, which is that the world should be ruled by My true images." Let me make it clear that Genesis 1 teaches that humanity in general, unfallen humanity and all that proceeds therefrom, is in one sense the image of God. Man does not cease to be God's image when he sins, though he loses by degrees the likeness of God. Though the Bible calls sinners "beasts" and uses this symbolism pregnantly (even, I believe, here in the Noahic Covenant), this does not mean that sinners are no longer the images of God. Theologians distinguish the "wider" and "narrower" senses in which man is the image of God. In the wider sense, all men are God's images, for better or worse, but in the narrow or moral sense, only the faithful show forth God's image. Genesis 9, however, is not simply a repetition of Genesis 1. It is not addressed to unfallen man, but to redeemed and covenant-keeping man. The creation ordinances of Genesis 1 are republished within the sphere of redemption. In terms of redemption, only covenant-keepers are manifesting the image of God properly.

Thus, we have two universes of discourse, both equally Biblical and both equally legitimate. In the creational universe of discourse, all men are the images of God, and are entitled to be treated as such. As images of God, apostate people have much in common with regenerate people, and can be appealed to evangelistically, as C. Van Til has taught us. By way of contrast, in the redemptive universe of discourse, it is the covenant keepers who have true title to the name "images of God," while those who are apostate are "beasts" and "slaves."

The Sabbath Renewed

In Genesis 2, God established the sabbath as His sign of completing His work. The sign of the Noahic Covenant is the rainbow. It is God's "warbow" placed in the sky, showing that He has completed His war against the first world (9:8-17).

Verses 9-11 restate what we have seen earlier. God's covenant is with Noah and his godly seed. The ungodly will lose the regal benefits of it. This covenant embraces every living creature, all flesh, so that the animal kingdom is now repositioned in union with the Church, and removed from its previous position in union with the wicked.

In verses 12-17, God says that He has placed His warbow in the sky. People are free to look at it, but what counts is that God looks at it. God "reminds Himself" (not that He needs to do so, but that He chooses to do so) of the covenant between Himself and "you" (the Church) and the animal kingdom. When God sees the rainbow, He will remember not to destroy the world again.

Now, are unbelievers directly embraced in this promise and covenant? Clearly not. It is evident from the events that follow in Genesis 9 that the unbelievers are not full beneficiaries of it. Unbelievers are not cut completely out, because they are "slaves" of the believers. Thus, they experience some of

the blessings of the Noahic Covenant as "slaves" of the actual members of the Covenant. What they lose are the regal benefits, the right to rule.

Moreover, the Noahic Covenant embraces the animal kingdom under the Church. The Bible calls unbelievers "dogs," and thus animals. As animals, they are embraced in the Noahic Covenant. Notice especially that the Canaanite woman called herself a dog when Jesus identified her as one, and claimed the dog's (slave's) right to a share of the children's bread. This is what "common grace" really is (Mt. 15:26-28).

But note well: The unbeliever as "slave" does not have a "right" to exercise capital punishment. The unbeliever as "animal" is not the "image of God" in the redemptive sense that phrase is used in Genesis 9:6 (cp. Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10).

The book of Revelation shows the rainbow in action. In Revelation 4:3 we see that there is always a rainbow around God's throne. Whenever God looks at the world, He looks through the rainbow. Thus, He never forgets the Noahic Covenant. But, in Revelation 6:1 we begin a series of amazing judgments against the wicked. Apparently the rainbow has nothing to do with "common grace" and does not spare the wicked at all. Similarly, in Revelation 10:1, Jesus Christ is pictured with a rainbow around His head, so that again whenever He looks at the world, He looks through the rainbow. Yet right after this, more horrible plagues are poured out upon the wicked. In both cases, the saints are given protection before the plagues come (Rev. 7:1-9; 12:13-17). So then, it is clear that the Noahic Covenant and its provisions apply only to the Church. The rainbow reminds God to protect His people and the animal world, not the wicked. (Meredith G. Kline's approach to the covenants would require that the "common grace covenant" — the rainbow — be set aside when God performs "intrusion covenant" judgments. In fact, however, God's judgments come right through the rainbow.)

As I showed in my book Through New Eyes (pp. 76-78), the rainbow is the Church around God's throne. God only sees the world as He looks through the Church. It is only those who come under the umbrella of the Church's protection — as "slaves" and "beasts" — who receive the benefits of the rainbow covenant. This does not include all men, as the imprecatory psalms and the book of Revelation show. In fact, in Revelation the saints are wielding the sword by means of prayer, as they ask God to bring vengeance on those attacking the flock (Rev. 6:10). Thus, the rainbow-Church protects heathen "slaves" but destroys heathen "murderers."

Excision from the Covenant

The first story after the Noahic Covenant shows what happens to the wicked. Ham sinned against his father. Noah cursed Canaan, one of Ham's sons. Perhaps this is because Ham repented and his other sons were faithful, while Canaan was truly unregenerate. Whatever the case, the terms of the curse are clear: "A slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers" (v. 25). Rule and dominion are instantly removed from the wicked. They simply do not have it. This is a change from the pre-Flood situation. The wicked continued to have dominion and rule before the Flood. After the Flood, they lose it.



Before the Flood Cain went out and built a city, a civilization that extended over the earth (Gen. 4). After the Flood the wicked tried to build a city at the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9), but God instantly came down and destroyed it. The wicked are not allowed to have a world civilization after the Flood. In contrast to Genesis 4, now culture, science, art, animal husbandry, and government all flow from the Church, either directly or through her "slaves." Excision from the Noahic Covenant has two degrees. The first degree means that apostates (unbelievers) become "slaves" and "beasts," but continue to be alive in the world protected by believers. They lose the dominion granted to the covenant-keepers, but they continue to receive some of the blessings of the covenant through the believers.

The second degree of excision is death, when the unbeliever is removed from the world protected by the Church, by the Noahic Covenant. Specifically this takes place when the unbeliever moves beyond Adamic apostasy into Cainitic murder: He is to be put to death. More generally, it takes place when the unbeliever dies.

The Noahic Covenant is inescapable, and applies one way or another to all men. Under the Old Covenant, there were three possibilities. You might be a member of the priestly, seed-line people, a Shemite, in which case you were a ruler of the world (especially of the "holy land"). You might be a covenant-keeping Gentile, a Japhethite dwelling in the tents of Shem, in which case you also were a ruler of the world (specifically of the "common lands"). Or you might be an apostate, a Canaanite, in which case you were a slave. You still were under the Noahic Covenant, and you still received some benefits, but you were not a ruler of the world.

In the New Covenant this situation is modified in that in the Church now the distinction between Shemite priest and Japhethite Gentile believer has been overcome. There are now only two possibilities now: either rule or be a slave. The only way to get out from under the Noahic Covenant is to die. You can do that by committing a capital crime, or by waiting until your death comes naturally.

So there is no neutral ground. Every unbeliever in the world is a slave of the Church. The only way he can become a ruler is by converting.

### The Message of the Covenant

Can we really say that the saints presently rule the world, and always have since Noah? Look around and you can see that the wicked rule in virtually every country on earth. There are wicked civilizations that rise Babelically age after age. Clearly the wicked do indeed have rule and dominion. It is insane to deny it.

Is it? The Noahic Covenant tells us that the eye of faith discerns an explanation of the world different from what we usually perceive. Let us start with "world civilizations." How many of them have there been? In fact, there haven't been any since Babel. Never have the wicked been able to get it together and rule the world. By way of contrast, the saints always rule the world, the entire world, as we shall see.

The message of the Noahic Covenant is this: Right now, the Church rules the nations of the world. We and we alone have been given power and dominion, and if we don't like the way things are going, we have only ourselves to blame. Unbelieving rulers are puppets, and we are the puppetmasters. They dance to our tune, and move as we pull the strings. They "rule" only as we direct them. Right now, they are doing exactly what the Church has told them to do.

This is the True Reality. It is the way things really are. But because of sin, we in common with all men suppress the True Reality and believe a myth (Rom. 1:18). We believe that those who wield external power are the rulers of this world, but that simply is not the case.

It is interesting to read Romans 13:1-7 in the light of the Noahic Covenant, as we have understood it. Paul says that every civil authority is established by God. He says that the Roman Caesar is a cause of fear for evil behavior. He says that if the Church does good, the ruler will praise her. He implies that if the Church does wickedly, the ruler will persecute her. Christians are to pay taxes to their slaves (rulers) so that their slaves will be able to do what Christians tell them to do.

What does this mean? It means that when the Church is faithful, God will convert the heart of the ruler and he will rule righteously. Conversely, when the ruler is evil and destructive, this means that the Church has not been pleasing to God. The Church is always in charge of culture, and she has been in charge ever since the Flood. We don't have to take the world and culture over. We already have them. We just have to start using them aright.

This is not something new that comes in with the New Covenant, though the New Covenant puts it into force as never before. When Joseph was faithful, Pharaoh converted. When Daniel was faithful, Nebuchadnezzar converted. It was because Judah was wicked that Nebuchadnezzar conquered her. The picture of the world throughout the Old Testament is that Jerusalem is the center of the world, and that the faithfulness or faithlessness of God's priestly nation determines the fate of the whole world. The New Testament presents the same picture, making the world's fate rest in the hands of the Church.

#### Summary

At creation, God gave to His Church the benefits of His world. After Adam fell, God renewed this covenant with him and with his faithful posterity, but God did not give to Adam the sword to prevent the wicked from multiplying and taking over the earth, nor did God Himself act to break down the pre-Flood Cainitic "towers of Babel." After a while, the faithful line of Seth intermarried with the wicked line of Cain, giving the strength of the covenant-people to the covenant-breakers. At this point, God acted to prevent the world from being destroyed utterly, by bringing the Flood and saving the remnant of the Church.

In the Noahic Covenant we have a change. God gives to the Church once again the benefits of creation, but adds something. He gives to the Church the right and duty to rule by wielding the sword. The Church does not to this directly,

but indirectly. From this time forward, God's people are to rule in the nations of the world, restraining evil by means of their government.

But this is not enough. Merely restraining evil is not God's programme. Fighting sinful men in the "outer" land is not the extent of His design. In the New Covenant God carries the battle into the "inner" sanctuary, and calls on His Church to defeat Satan and his fallen angels. Now the Church no longer simply restrains evil, she conquers it by liberating and transforming men. The "kingdom" given to the saints in Daniel 7:18-27 is the "full kingdom" of the New Covenant. The "dominion of the beasts" should have been broken by the Noahic Covenant, but because Satan stood behind them (Rev. 13:2), and because the Church was faithless and weak, the Noahic Covenant never operated as it should have. Whenever the people said, "We have no king but Caesar," they gave away their rule to the Satanic powers. Even so, the book of Daniel shows that the nations were governed by the righteousness of the Old Covenant saints. In the New Covenant, however, the war is taken to Satan, and the "dominion of the beasts" is fully destroyed.

This three-stage history is related to the three degrees of apostasy set out in Genesis 3-6. Before the Flood God did not cut out the Adamic apostates or the Cainitic murderers, but at the Flood He did cut out the mixed civilization of the Sethite compromisers. The great sin of the Sethites in Genesis 6:1-3 was that they intermarried with the Cainites, thereby giving the spiritual strength and vitality of the Church to the forces of wickedness. The result was a disastrous mixed civilization. After the Flood God allowed Adamic apostates to live, but cut out the Cainitic murderers by instituting capital punishment, preventing mixed civilizations. In the New Covenant God cuts off the Adamic apostates by demanding that all men come into the Church, and by instituting the post-Pentecostal campaign of worldwide evangelism.

(For more on the New Covenant, see my essay "The Dominion Church," forthcoming in [Biblical Horizons](#) No. 20.)

#### Applications

"If a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Pr. 16:7). This verse shows how it is that the Church governs the world, how she controls the puppet civil governments of all nations. When she is faithful, God changes men.

We see this in Acts 5:11-14. Here we find the faithful Church right after Pentecost. Those who lied to the Holy Spirit were slain, cut out of the covenant. "Great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things." Faithfulness caused great fear to fall on the culture.

So great was this fear that no one "dared to associate with them." People were afraid to draw near to the Church. The Church and her faithful leaders had "high esteem" in the eyes of the people.

And yet, paradoxically, "all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added" to the Church. "No one dared join . . . multitudes were added." How would you like to see that in your community? It's easy: Do what pleases God and He will send great fear, and will bring it to pass.

This is how we rule. We do not rule first and foremost through activism and we do not rule first and foremost through evangelism, important as these may be down the line. We rule first and foremost through our interface with God, by pleasing God through faithful lives or by displeasing Him.

You see, it is inescapable. Right now, you are one of the prime rulers in your city. God holds you responsible. If your city or county or country is being governed badly, it is your fault. The rulers are doing exactly what you have told them to do.

Am I exaggerating? After all, doesn't it require more than just one man to make a difference in this spiritual warfare? Yes, but remember that it only took one man (Joseph) to convert Egypt, and one man (Jonah) to convert Assyria, and four men (Daniel and company) to convert Nebuchadnezzar. And that was in the Old, weak covenant! A small church, if faithful, might make a whole lot more difference than we can imagine.

So what is to be done? How can we start sending different signals to our rulers? How do we manipulate the strings of these puppets? Let me suggest how we don't do it. We don't change our slaves (rulers) by hypocritically telling them to do things we don't do. That is the problem with Christian activism and evangelism today. We go door to door telling people they should fear God, when we don't fear Him enough to do what He says. We tell the government to judge justly, when we refuse to execute justice in Church discipline. We want the government to get out of debt, when the Church owes trillions of dollars in back tithes to God.

I am not saying that the world perceives the Church as hypocritical and thus does not listen. The problem is much deeper than this. It is not our slaves (rulers) we need to persuade. It is God we need to persuade, and He sees past our verbiage. He sees what we are really doing, and He sends that message down the wires to our slaves.

Here are six very simple, basic, elementary things that the Church today does not do — indeed refuses to do — and that she must start doing before there will be any change. I am not saying that if we do these things, change will occur overnight. In the Bible, when people begin to take God seriously, the first thing that happens is persecution and suffering, but afterwards there is significant cultural change. It took about a decade in the cases of Joseph and Daniel, so it might take a decade or longer for us. Also, there may be a few things else that need to be done. But these are for starters:

#### Take the Whole Bible Seriously

Right now anybody who takes the Old Testament seriously is called a "theonomist," which seems to mean a combination of "brute" and "heretic." I am thankful that the prestigious faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary, in their new book Theonomy: A Reformed Critique, call for serious attention to be given to the practical meaning of everything in the Old Testament. We do not have to be "theonomists" in order to study and apply all of the Bible.

The Old Testament provides the framework and context for the New, and we cannot understand the New Testament rightly until we have understood the Old.

We are sending a signal to our slaves (rulers) that the Bible is not important and that God's law is not important. That is how we are ruling our world today.

#### Do the Sacraments Properly

God invites us to His house every week, and asks us to bring along bread and wine. We cannot be bothered except four times a year, so why should He bless us?

The Bible says to use bread and wine, not saltines and grape juice. Do we trust Him enough to use the elements He commands (wine)? If we don't trust Him enough to use wine, why should He bless us? (Have grape juice for those who cannot have wine, but don't dishonor God by refusing to have any wine at all.)

I believe that the Bible says that children need to be included (1 Cor. 10:1-4, 11, 16-22). If we treat our children this way, we should not be surprised if child-killing is common in our society.

The Bible says that this rite is to be done in two distinct halves, with a prayer before each part (see Rite Reasons No. 1). If we cannot do this one simple ritual in the way God commands, why should we expect Him to bless us?

We are sending a signal to our slaves (our rulers) that God's charity to us (free bread and wine) is not important, and thus that charitable dealings with other people are not important. We are sending them signals that we regard children as "question marks" before God. That is how we are ruling our world today.

#### Tithe

God says to give to His Church 10% of our income. Calculate that amount however you want, just make sure that it is an honest 10% before God. If God had asked for 12.67843% of our income, that would be something else. But God's commands are so simple! God says, "Don't worry about money; trust Me." If God's people refuse to trust Him in something this simple, we can hardly expect Him to bless us.

We are sending a signal to our slaves (rulers) that it is okay to steal and to use our position in life to amass wealth. We are in debt to God for the tithes we fail to give, and thereby we have told our slaves (rulers) that huge national debts are just fine. That is how we are ruling our world today.

#### Do Church Discipline

We don't have any business telling the magistrate what to do as long as sin is rampant and uncorrected in the Church. We need to do our excommunications as visibly as our baptisms. We need to respect one another's discipline, and not gleefully receive excommunicated people onto our rolls, with pious pride and vain assurance that "we'll be able to help these people, where that other church failed."

Satan attacked in the Garden, not in the land. He attacked at the center, on the Lord's Day. He attacked the clergy who governed the Garden. The

decisive battle against principalities and powers is in the Church, and that is why the New Testament everywhere calls us to Church discipline. Paul warns and warns and warns about it. If we practise Church discipline, God will change the society surrounding the Church. If we despise His holiness and exalt the wicked in our midst, He assuredly will not send revival!

We are sending a signal to our slaves (rulers) that crime does pay, and that criminals should not be punished. That is how we are ruling our world today.

### Sing God's Songs

Ephesians 5:19 commands us to sing the 150 psalms. These are the arrows God has put into the quiver of His army. They deal with holy warfare, and in this respect are very different from hymns.

It is not good enough for the choir to sing the psalms.

It is not good enough to sing Scripture Songs, because they are only a line or two wrenched out of context and thereby eviscerated of power and meaning.

It is not good enough to read the psalms responsively, but that's a start.

It is not good enough to sing metrical psalms, because they change and paraphrase the Word of God. If you sing metrical psalms (a good thing to do), then make it a rule to read or chant the psalm first straight from the text. The pure psalm is the Word of God; the metrical psalm is an adornment.

It is not good enough to sing only some of the psalms. For a balanced diet, we need all of them.

It is only good enough when the priesthood of all believers, the congregation of the Lord, chants all 150 psalms straight from an accurate English translation.

What's so hard about that? It is really very simple to do. Lutherans do it. Why can't we?

The psalms are alien to the "evangelical mindset," and if we let ourselves be mastered by them, they will make new people out of us. Moreover, they are God's way of prayer, and they are the strings by which we control our puppets, the rulers of this world. God wrote them, and God likes to hear them. He does not mind our hymns, but He wants His to come first. It is utterly ridiculous for us to expect any kind of cultural change when we refuse to sing His songs to Him.

We are sending a signal to our slaves (rulers) that we do not fear God and do not care to pray down His justice, and that therefore they need not fear Him either. That is how we are ruling our world today.

### Finally, Think Locally

The Biblical conception of the Church is geographical, not ideological. In America today, we drive past twenty churches to get to the one we "agree" with. This situation cannot be reformed overnight, but we need to start thinking the way the New Testament does. We need to recover the parish concept of the Church.

Biblical government in the Old Testament is intensely local: elders over tens, then fifties and hundreds, and then thousands. The "elders of the gate," who tried capital cases, ruled over populations of only a few thousand, about the size of a large subdivision in our of our cities — about the size of a political

precinct. The New Testament view of the Church is the same: the Church in a place, taking dominion over a parish, over a precinct.

The local Church must see herself as the True Governor of the neighborhood or precinct in which she meets on the Lord's Day. Whether the people up the street worship at that Church or not, they are still part of the parish of that Church in one sense. We must reacquire a dominion-consciousness about our parishes. Neighborhood people must be prayed for, invited to Church bazaars and festivals, and the like.

Unfortunately, Christians today are all concerned about national and international affairs, or state and city affairs, all of which are "too big for us" (Ps. 131). We say that we want local government and that we are against big government, but when we act and pray, we give the lie to this.

Thus, we are sending a signal to our slaves (rulers) that we think Babelically instead of locally, and that is how we are badly ruling our world today.

Conclusion

The meaning of the Noahic Covenant is this: It is up to us. We don't need people in office. We don't need parachurch organizations. We don't need books. We don't need television and radio programming. We don't need evangelistic campaigns. These things are all secondary — in fact they are way, way down the list. What we need are a few good men and women, a few genuinely faithful churches.

God has given His keys to the Church, so that she binds and looses in all of life (Mt. 16:18-19; Rev. 20:1-3). That means she governs the world — all of the world.

She is responsible and answerable for everything that goes on in the world. And she will be held accountable.

Afterword #1: What Can I Do?

Say you are a member of a Church that is not interested in these things; or your pastor would very much like to upgrade the Church, but he is unable to move very fast. What can you do?

First, there is no excuse for rebellion and revolution. You must go to Church faithfully, pray for your pastor and elders, and pay your full tithe.

Second, you may not have the Lord's Supper in your home. It is an ecclesiastical ordinance, and it is rebellion to do it privately. Make weekly communion and child communion a matter of prayer and courteous argument, but do not act defiantly. God knows your heart and will make up the difference if your Church does not feed you enough.

Third, you can use the psalms in personal and family devotion. Use them all. Make them central. Teach them to your children.

Fourth, you can study the whole Bible and you can support ministries (like Biblical Horizons and others) that promote the study and application of the whole Bible.

Fifth, you can honor such discipline as the Church does measure out, and you can hearken to the book of Proverbs by keeping away from contentious and rebellious people.

I don't believe we shall see reformation in society until we see it in the Church, but we won't see it in the Church until some people within the Church become concerned enough to work in a prayerful, courteous, and non-rebellious way to bring about reformation.

Afterword #2: What About Civil Government?

If the Christian view of civil government is not grounded primarily in the Noahic Covenant, and its grant of the sword, then where do we ground it? I believe we simply ground it in creation. Adam was told to guard ("keep") the Garden. By extension, he was to guard the Land of Eden. In the Old Testament, the laws of sanctuary guardianship (by the priests) are parallel to the laws of land guardianship (by the judges, kings, and emperors).

Biblically speaking, however, the "state" (guardianship of the land) is not an institution "next to" the Church (guardianship of the sanctuary), under some different set of principles. We cannot reform the "state" as an action separate from reforming the Church. Rather, the land is always protected by the Church. If the Church is faithful, God will bless the land around her, and there will be good rulers (even if they are unconverted "slaves").

Even before the Flood the lands were being guarded by means of the sword, although perversely (Gen. 4:23-24). The "right" to guard the land by use of the sword only came in with Noah, and only through the Church. "Slave nations" far removed from the Church do guard themselves with the sword, but ultimately this is only possible because of the mediation of the sword to them by the Church. Otherwise, those nations would have been completely wiped out by God.

Does this mean that the institutional Church should ordain civil rulers? Not necessarily, but we find something very similar at a more "invisible and spiritual" level when we read in the New Testament that the saints are to pray for rulers. In Protestant lands, Church officers have sometimes administered the oath of office to new officials, and almost always have been asked to pray. This is merely cosmetic today, but it once was powerful, and it reflects the reality of God's covenantal order. In ancient Israel, the king was ordained inside the Temple precincts at the "King's Pillar." (See Jordan, "Thoughts on Jachin and Boaz," available for \$4.00 from Biblical Horizons.) Church and "state" only appear to be side by side. In reality the Church is the inner circle of God's world, and the "state" (land and world) the outer circle. The Church is guarded by elders administering (verbal) ecclesiastical discipline. The land is guarded by elders (rulers) administering the sword. In the Old Testament, the good priests maintained the boundaries of God's house, while the good kings maintained a series of forts around the boundaries of the land. When the priests (and people) were bad, and the boundaries of the Temple suffered (through immorality and idolatry), then God gave them bad kings who failed to protect the land from invaders. In summary, the sword is given to the "state" through the Church. The Church may not wield it, but she determines who will. If the Church wants evil rulers, she gives the sword to evil men by means of her own evil



behavior. If the Church wants good rulers, she gives the sword to good men by means of her own good behavior.

The modern Church in America and virtually everywhere else is ideology-centered, not geographical. This is because various Churches believe different things and have different customs of worship and sacraments. The ideological Church has gradually developed from the time of the Reformation, because accuracy of doctrine has become more important to the various churches than ever before. This was a net gain for Christendom, I believe, but it has now gone to seed.

The Biblical picture of the Church is clearly geographical: the Church at Ephesus, at Jerusalem, at Sardis, etc. It is very important to recover the geographical model of the Church, because it is intimately related to the Church's mission on the earth.

In the recent symposium published by the faculty of the two Westminster Theological Seminaries, Theonomy: A Reformed Critique (Zondervan, 1990), several authors make the point that the New Testament is concerned almost exclusively with the Church as a governmental organization, and has virtually nothing to say about the civil government. They make this point over against the Bahnsen-Rushdoony "Theonomic" position, which maintains that both Church and "state" are pictured side-by-side in the New Testament as in need of reformation and as needing to come under the revealed law of God. There is a sense in which both positions are correct, and I think many (not all) on both sides would agree with what I am about to state here.

As I pointed out in Biblical Horizons No. 19, the distinctive change that came about with the Noahic Covenant was this: God promised to act to call a halt to all Cainitic civilizations, and put into the hands of His people the tools with which to effect this stoppage. The Old Testament Church would determine who ruled the land. The Church would put the sword of capital punishment into the hands of civil rulers, who would then execute justice on the earth. When the Church was evil, the ruler would rule badly, but when the Church was faithful, the ruler would rule wisely.

Throughout the Old Testament, the enemy was defined as Cainitic men, and the imprecatory psalms are phrased in terms of battle against evil men. We find next to nothing about battling demonic powers in the Old Testament. What is distinctive and new about the New Covenant is that God pushes the battle back to the citadel of the enemy. Now the enemy is defined as Satan's legions, the fallen-angelic principalities and powers. The Church is called to destroy them. Now the war is against the Garden-enemy (Satan), not primarily against the Land-enemy (evil men). Church discipline is what is most important, and excommunication comes in as a more powerful tool than execution.

For this reason, the New Testament focuses almost exclusively on ecclesiastical warfare, which is liturgical warfare. We cannot rest with a mere victory against Cainitic culture. We cannot rest until men are converted, and

Satan is fully bound from influencing the hearts and minds of men. We must cast down strongholds of ideology, not merely bring criminals to justice. If the Church is faithful in her calling to prosecute liturgical warfare, there will be little need for the magistrate to carry out capital punishment. We can see that this has indeed happened in Christian societies, for there is far less tyranny, brigandage, and murder in them than in non-Christian lands. The crimes that brought the death penalty in the Old Covenant are not often committed in Christian lands. Of course, as the Western world has rejected Christianity, the old crimes of rape, incest, homosexual seduction, murder, and the like have once again become major concerns in our society. God plants the Church in specific places to exercise dominion over those places. The Church does this by faithfully obeying God in worship: weekly communion with real bread and real wine; singing all the psalms and other Bible songs; excommunicating rebels; recognizing the government of other churches; tithing; praying specifically for the people within her area, whether believers or not; etc.

But there is more. The Church is to claim territory. The old word for this is "parish." The Church governs a parish spiritually, and within her parish she oversees what is going on. A full parish is about the size of a political precinct in our state-centered age.

If some "Theonomists" (capital Tee) have failed to make clear that the Church is the center of society, some "anti-" and "non-Theonomists" have failed to make clear that the Church exercises social dominion. The Church does not exist for herself, but as Alexander Schmemmann put it, "for the life of the world." In a particular place, the Church establishes a sphere of Spirituality, driving out the demonic powers. Within that sphere, such "state" actions as are necessary — and there will always be some criminals — will be done according to the standards of the law of God. And here, of course, the Old Testament social standards have much to say.

Practically speaking, what can be done to restore the geographical model of the Church? First of all, I don't believe anything would be accomplished if we each decided to quit the church we presently attend and walk to the Church nearest to us. We might as well continue to drive to the Church we prefer. Second, we need to take seriously the idea that the place where we meet, where the Word is preached on the Day of the Lord and where the Table is set up, is the geographical center of our work. The pastor should view himself as an "elder over hundreds" (Ex. 18). Those hundreds are not the same as those on the role of his church, who drive across town to get to worship. Rather, they are those who live within walking distance of where the church meets.

The pastor should put on his clergy shirt and clerical collar, and walk to every house and apartment near the church. There is nothing like a clerical shirt to open doors: When people see the black shirt and white collar, they know who you are and what you represent, and they know you are not a Jehovah's Witness. He should speak to the people in the house, and say something like this: "Hello. I'm Pastor Green. Our church meets in the school

down the street. I want to let you know that if you ever have trouble, or if you need someone to talk to, or if you want to know more about the Christian faith, we are here to help you in any way we can."

Pastor Green should find out what church they attend, and assure them that he is not trying to get them into his church. If ever there is an emergency, however, and they cannot get in touch with their pastor, they can call on him. Green should call their pastor and tell them this as well, and thereby build bridges. If they are not in a church, Pastor Green can offer to explain the faith to them.

Pastor Green should tell them that they are invited to come to the bazaars, Christmas and Reformation Day parties, and other public events hosted by the church. He should ask them if they would like to be on a mailing list to hear about those events. He should stress events that their children or visiting grandchildren might like to attend. He should tell them about the church's brown-bag food programme. If the Church has a recreation hall, they should be invited to use it any time. In as sense, it is their Church, the Church in their neighborhood for them.

Meanwhile, the elders of the church ("elders over tens," Ex. 18), can do the same in their neighborhoods. They, too, can put on clergy shirts and clerical collars — for they, too, are pastors — and visit up and down their streets (two houses on either side, and five across the street), telling where they live, and offering the services of the church in like manner. The elder might have a meeting in his home on Sunday evenings, hosted by him and his assigned deacon, and neighbors should be welcome. The elder should try to have a neighborhood barbeque during the summer, so that the neighbors meet each other. The elder should offer to baby-sit in case of emergency. His car should be available in case of emergency. Etc.

When the New Testament speaks of the Church in Ephesus, this is what it has in mind. Jesus wrote letters through John to seven such city-churches, addressed to the bishop ("elder over thousands," Ex. 18; Rev. 2-3). In such churches, the bishop (or "superintendent," the Presbyterian term) was pastor to the pastors over hundreds, who in turn shepherded the elders over tens.

Jesus made it clear that as goes the Church in a city, so goes the city itself. The example in Revelation is Jerusalem. The Temple was wicked, so the city was too, and both were destroyed. This was the object-lesson to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3.

We can rebuild the geographical-parish view of the Church if we simply start doing what the Bible says to do. It is not hard: All we are doing is offering to help. In this way, the Church can begin to establish dominion as she did in the days of the Early Church. After a while, whole nations had "arch-bishops" called Patriarchs, each independent and equal to the other in a common brotherhood of Christian nations. A shadow of this still exists in Orthodoxy. Let me suggest some steps for implementation. First, teach these things to your officers and then to your congregation. Second, have a congregational meeting and covenant together by vote to do these things: weekly

communion, psalmody, tithing, etc. Sign and date it. Third, declare a moratorium on all hymns until all 150 psalms are learned in at least metrical versions. Chanting is easier and better; get with your local Lutheran pastor and learn how to do it. Have his music-leader come on Saturdays to teach your congregation how. The point of all this is to recreate the Church as a true home, a place you feel good about asking people to visit. After six months or a year of learning how to do it in the privacy of your local Church, have the Pastor start visiting as described above, taking an elder with him. Once the elders learn to do it, have them do it in their neighborhoods. Eventually, these elder-run house-churches may grow into new full-churches.

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[Here is an interesting thought on the rainbow as personalized promise to each believer:](#)

Here is the end of an article that was a very scientific explanation of rainbows. It reduced them to the angles of reflection and refraction of light through water. I suspect it was trying to de-mystify rainbows, perhaps to reduce them to the mundane with cold science. At the very end an article, it said:

*Because each arc of a rainbow is the result of the interaction of sunlight on raindrops between the observer and the apparent position of the rainbow, it follows that different observers will see the rainbow because of different raindrops. Each rainbow therefore, is personal to its observer.*

Isn't that amazing? It means that no two people see the same rainbow! Does that mean that we each have our own personal reminder of God's promise to us? Is it a reminder that God's promises apply to each one of us personally, as individuals who are known and loved by God? I don't know about you, but to me, this makes rainbows even more special because it is a reminder that God's promises are made to me personally!

Aren't we all looking for someone we can trust completely, someone who will never let us down, someone who will never break a promise to us, someone we can always rely on? That is God, for each of us, every day, always - perhaps that's what the rainbow could help us to remember.