

# James Jordan's Trinitarianism

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The doctrine of the Trinity has been central to Cornelius Van Til's disciples as it was to him. R. J. Rushdoony, one of the more controversial of Van Til's followers, published a book on the political implications of trinitarianism, *The One and the Many*. Also, his social views as expounded in various works were distinctly Trinitarian. John Frame applied Van Til's insights in the doctrine of the Trinity to his work in systematic theology, developing an approach to the knowledge of God known as "perspectivalism." Vern Poythress analyzed mathematics, hermeneutics, and linguistics on the basis of the Trinitarian solution to the one and the many. In addition to Van Til, all of these men have been important for James Jordan's theological development, forming a basis for the contributions that Jordan himself has made.

Jordan is one of Van Til's more creative followers, though not by radically modifying Van Til or reformed theology. Rather in applying Van Til's insights more broadly, each of Jordan's important contributions to the study of theology reach out to new and inadequately discussed areas. His studies in worship challenge Reformed Christians because they are a systematic attempt to apply the Bible to the whole structure of worship, one of the basic concerns of the Reformation. His work on Biblical chronology promises to become the standard for Christians who take Biblical chronology seriously — though in this day, to even suggest that Biblical chronology should be taken seriously is to invite ridicule, and not just from the evolutionary opposition. With regard to Biblical symbolism, Jordan's work is less creative than it may appear since it could rightly be called "footnotes on Bavinck." His hermeneutics is typological and redemptive historical (the opposite of allegorical) and, thus, fresh and new primarily in its literary sophistication, where it is especially helpful in that Jordan offers a systematic Biblical exposition of symbolism rather than looking for "natural" meanings or doing "newspaper" exegesis. His lectures on music, his movie reviews, and his writings about literature display the wide range of his thought and all represent an attempt to apply the distinctly Biblical standards of truth and righteousness to the issues discussed.

With regard to the breadth of his thought, it is noteworthy that Jordan addresses so many areas of theology. Though it would not be altogether wrong to describe him as a "Biblical theologian" rather than a "systematic theologian," it is probably more accurate to say that his work encompasses both of these disciplines, as well as what is often called "practical theology," not to mention sociology, philosophy, comparative religion, and history. The extensive reach of topics addressed reflects in part Jordan's own personal background — even if Jordan had never come to know Reformed theology, his interest in literature and music, for example, would no doubt have been central to his life and thought. But his work does not simply mirror the breadth of his personal interests; there is a theological hub from which all of these concerns radiate.

## **The Key**

Jordan's essential theological insight comes from the influence of Van Til and the Dutch Reformed tradition. Contrary to the understanding of the covenant in the Scottish Presbyterian theological tradition, which tended to define the covenant as an agreement, some Dutch theologians saw the covenant as the expression of the fellowship of the Persons of the Trinity. Abraham Kuyper and Herman Hoeksema, for example, both saw something more in the covenant than a compact between persons and defined it in emphatically Trinitarian terms. The key to Jordan's theological system is found in his application of this fundamental idea of Dutch Reformed theology. For Jordan, the ontological relationships of the Persons of the Trinity are understood as in traditional Reformed theology, but the social relationships among the Persons of the Trinity are understood as covenantal.

This is not all. Jordan took the insight of the Dutch Reformed theologians one step further. Jordan saw that the covenant in God must be the basic covenant through which all other Biblical covenants may be understood. In other words, the doctrine of Trinity functions as the theological center of the whole of man's knowledge. Systematic and Biblical theology are included, of course, but Jordan is reaching more broadly: all knowledge of any sort is Trinitarian and covenantal. One might say that Jordan's starting point is from systematic rather than "biblical" theology. According to Jordan, every covenant in the Bible is an application of the covenant in God. Because God is a covenantal society, He created man in covenant with Himself. This means that for man to be the image of God is to be created to become a participant in the covenantal fellowship of the Trinity. The covenant in God is extended outward to the creation through its representative, man. And since all of created reality reflects the Creator, there is in all the creation a Trinitarian and covenantal dimension, functioning variously as background, support, and core.

## **Defining the Covenant**

Jordan's definition of the covenant is striking. It unveils both the Trinitarian nature of the covenant and the covenantal nature of the Trinity, as well as the connections between a Trinitarian definition of the covenant and the structure of Biblical covenants granted to man. His teaching on the subject is not summarized in any single place, but his work *The Law of the Covenant* contains a compact and highly suggestive discussion, introducing the basic issues.

In this exposition of Biblical law, Jordan explains the covenant in these words, "The term 'covenant' is frequently used in Christian theology, but with various shades of meaning. I shall be using it to identify, the personal, binding, structural relationship among the Persons of God and His people."<sup>1</sup> As he goes on to show, the notion of a binding personal relationship which is clearly structured is the basic Biblical notion of a covenant. Marriage, the very first covenantal relationship among men and the foundation of all others is the quintessential covenant. The relationship binds — "till death." It is a structured relationship with authority and roles distributed between husband and wife. It is a personal relationship — "husbands love your wives as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it." A man and woman living together without the bond of the covenant may have a personal relationship, but they are guilty

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<sup>1</sup> *The Law of the Covenant* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1984), p. 3.

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of fornication. A man and woman married may fulfill the structural requirements of the covenant bond, but fail to love one another, separating the personal from the structural aspect of the marriage covenant. The covenant oath, the personal love, and the structures of authority and responsibility are all required for a Biblically righteous marriage.<sup>2</sup> What the marriage covenant illustrates is that the covenant is a “social structure.”<sup>3</sup> As Jordan points out, in the Biblical notion of the covenant, law and love, form and freedom, are in harmony. The love of the covenant is expressed not in spite of the oath or in spite of fulfilling the duties of the covenant, but precisely through the solemn taking of an oath and the faithful fulfillment of one’s duty.

In pointing out the harmony of the covenant, Jordan follows Van Til. He is following as well as extending Van Til when he argues that to understand the covenant, we must consider the Trinity. Relying on Van Til’s doctrine of the Trinity as One Person and also Three Persons, Jordan explains that in the same way that if we could fully describe the personal character of any one of the Persons of the Trinity, we would have a description of a morally perfect person, we could also obtain an ideal picture of a morally perfect society by describing the inter-personal relationships of the Father, Son and Spirit. Man as both individual and society finds the model for true human life in God, for man is God’s image and God is both individual and society.

This definition of the covenant relies on character of God’s social relationships as the standard for man’s social relationships. In the Godhead are three Persons who are in an incomprehensible manner also one Person. The traditional formula — three Persons, one being — is not denied by Van Til or by Jordan. But there are dangers in the traditional formula. The Church did not confess nor intend to teach that the oneness of God is a oneness of impersonal being, as if there were an non-personal substratum that is more ultimate than the three Persons. The oneness of God is not the unity of an infinitely large impersonal blob of being. How could we pray to God simply as God — without the necessity of distinguishing one of the Persons — if God were not as Personal in His unity as in His multiplicity?

These three Persons are no less ultimate than the oneness of God and relate to one another as a perfect society. What Jordan has added to Van Til is the observation that the names of the persons reflect their individual character and social structure. The names Father and Son show the social relationship between the first two persons of the Trinity. The meaning of the name Holy Spirit is less obvious, but the Bible repeatedly pictures the Spirit as the one who is given or who proceeds, and the one who creates relationships. The Father is seen in Scripture as the ultimate *person* from whom the Son is defined. The Son is the *Word*, the concrete expression of the Father. The Spirit is the one who by His presence creates the covenant *bond* between God and man. These straightforwardly Biblical characterizations of the three persons clearly show how the very nature of God as Triune is related to the essential meaning of a covenant relationship. The Father is the ultimate person whose stamp on the relationships of the persons of the Trinity is found in the fact that He is the fountain of personhood. The Son is the Word, the exact representation of the Father expressed in a structure analogous to verbal communication. The Spirit is the bond between Father and Son, who proceeds from the Father to the Son and again from the Son to the Father.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 6-7.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Some readers may not be familiar with what is being emphasized here. In the Western Church, the Holy Spirit is confessed as proceeding from both the Father and the Son, in the Eastern Church as proceeding only from the Father. Cornelius Van Til commented, “In the Nicene Creed all the elements of the true Scripture doctrine are

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In this way, the covenant as the relationship of the Three Persons of the Trinity is defined as an expression of the distinctive contribution of each person and the unifying relationship of the divine society. Reference to distinctions among the persons does not imply that only the Father is personal, or that only the Son is related to structure or that only the Spirit binds. The differences are a matter of emphasis, brought out in the distinctive names of the three persons. It is important, therefore, to stress both that all the persons of the Trinity participate in all God is and does and at the same time to also stress that their distinctive names and roles are not interchangeable. It is not the case that it could just as well have been the Father or the Spirit who became incarnate to die on the cross for our sins. It had to be the Son. It is not the case that it could have been the Son who became the indwelling agent to make the covenant bond between man and God. It had to be the Spirit.

Jordan's understanding of the social relationships among the persons of the Trinity is similar to the views expressed by various representatives of what is called "social Trinitarian" perspective on the Trinity. But it differs in that the social relationship is clearly defined as covenantal, and also in that the covenant itself is understood as essentially Trinitarian. Social trinitarianism tends to understand the Trinity as three equal and virtually interchangeable persons relating as an eternal society of love. In Jordan's exposition of the Trinity, the Father, Son and Spirit each express the fullness of their distinctive personhood in a relationship of covenant love. Love is important here because love is giving. In other words, the covenant relationship comes to be what it is because each of the three persons gives Himself wholly and without reserve to the others. The personal stamp of each of the three persons of the Trinity on the nature of the covenant relationship results from this total self-sacrifice and devotion to the others.

Jordan also differs from the "social Trinitarian" school in the radically Biblical character of his Trinitarianism. Just as the Reformed theology of John Calvin was far more concerned with meeting the demands of *Sola Scriptura* than with fitting into traditional forms of theology, Jordan's Trinitarianism attempts to follow Biblical structures, rather than entering into the ontological speculation and the arcane debates that have sometimes characterized systematic theology. Jordan's definition of the covenant derives from the doctrine the Trinity, but it is also an application of the character of the Law of Moses. The Law of Moses is given to Israel as the document that establishes and defines a personal relationship. God is the Father who called His son out of Egypt (Ex. 4:22-23). The law testifies of His love and demands love in return (Deu. 6:4-5; 7:6-8; etc.). The Law of Moses is obviously structured with the traditionally numbered 613 commandments summed up in Ten, which express the demands of love. The law binds God to Israel and Israel to Him. He gives Himself to Israel by dwelling among them and becoming

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present. What has taken place since is not without importance, however. If the true doctrine was to be maintained it had to be continually restated and refined. So it had to be made more plain that it had been made that the Holy Spirit was well as the Son is a person co-substantial with the Father and the Son. Athanasius and Augustine did much to make more clear that all three of the persons are co-ordinate. And an important point in this connection was to show that the Holy Spirit proceeds not only from the Father but also *from* the Son (*filioque*). It is only if the Spirit proceeds from both that the inter-communion of the persons of the Trinity is eternally complete. The Western Church more clearly than the Eastern saw that the co-ordination of the persons and their exclusively internal intercommunication could not be expressed without the *filioque* clause. As the generation of the Son by the Father had to be an eternal generation, so the proceeding of the Spirit had to be an eternal proceeding from both the Father and the Son." *Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971), pp. 225-26. Jordan picks up on this important emphasis in Van Til and re-states it in different words. If the Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son, then He proceeds from the Father to the Son and from the Son to the Father. He is the covenant-making Person, the Personal bond and love between Father and Son.

one with them in His covenant grace. They offer themselves up to Him through the sacrificial system and the devotion of prayer and obedience that characterize the life of faith. It would be hard to find a more fully Biblical definition than Jordan's description of the covenant as a personal structured bond. Jordan shows — and in this, too, his contribution is unique — how a definition of the covenant which expresses the central concerns of the Mosaic Law corresponds to the relationships of the persons of the Trinity. This is the kind of synthesis of Biblical and systematic theology that characterizes Jordan's work and makes it at the same time Biblically faithful and traditional, while it also shatters molds that confine and restrict theology, offering fresh and often profound insights.

His doctrine of the Trinitarian covenant applies further. For Jordan argues that for man to be created in the image of God means that man was created to share in the covenant fellowship of the Trinity. Man is not related to God by a spark of divinity or a mystical ontological link. Man is related to God in the covenant. The Trinitarian covenant is the one covenant that is expressed in the various and sundry covenants that are given to man throughout the course of history. Each individual covenant calls man into the Trinitarian fellowship, as the meaning of the covenant in God is progressively revealed through history. With the coming of Christ, the promises of the older covenants are all fulfilled and the Trinity itself is revealed together with the full meaning of the covenant among the Persons of the Godhead.

## **Implications**

Jordan's view of the Trinitarian covenant as the one covenant through which all others are to be understood is an important revision of covenant theology with profound implications. First, it corrects an error of the Westminster Standards that rendered the Westminster system inconsistent — with the result that it has hobbled where it ought to have run. According to the Westminster Confession, God entered into a covenant with man as a special act of condescension (W.C. 7:1). This is the “covenant of works” or “covenant of life” that God granted to Adam in the Garden (W.C. 7:2; S.C. 12; L.C. 20). In this scheme, the covenant relationship between God and man is not a primitive reality. Another relationship exists *before* the covenant relationship, which is added on, as an extra benefit. In addition to making the covenant less than essential to the whole scheme of creation, this approach tended to reduce the covenant to a mere agreement for the accomplishment of a specific end. The covenant of works has not infrequently been called a “contract” and it is seen to consist in command and promise, rather than being a “relationship,” more broadly conceived. The covenant of grace is therefore also an agreement between the Father and the Son on a specific plan to save the world.

What inconsistencies does this involve? It means that the covenant in man is prior to and determinative of the covenant between the Father and the Son, which is called “a second” covenant (W.C. 7:3; L.C. 30). The result was that the “covenant of works” became the paradigm for covenant theology, the basic covenant in terms of which all others are understood, in spite of the fact that the covenant between the Father and the Son was an eternal covenant among the Persons of the Trinity. This is odd, to say the least. It may be too much to call it a “result” of this strange construction, but the historical fact is that the Scottish branch of Reformed theology never developed the covenant idea into a fully theological notion. The Trinity is often referred to in the course of speaking of the eternal covenant, but Trinitarianism in Presbyterian theology

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never became a distinctly covenantal Trinitarianism. The Presbyterian doctrine of God is not linked to the doctrine of man and creation apart from the fact of God's creative act and His sovereign rule. The place of the covenant in the theological framework is almost arbitrary.

Another inconsistency in this view is that man is said to have been created with the law of God written in his heart (W.C. 4:2; L.C. 17). How shall we understand the law of God outside of the covenant? What is the law of God in Scripture if it is not the heart of the covenant? If obedience to the law brings blessing and disobedience brings a curse, how can we understand law apart from covenant? But when the covenant of works is added on to the creation situation, the law written on Adam's heart and the covenant given to Adam are diverse.

Presbyterian theologians like Meredith Kline have criticized the Westminster doctrine of creation and offered a more covenantal approach. Kline rightly sees that not only the creation of man, but the creation of the whole world was a distinctly covenantal process. Man himself was not given the covenant after his creation, as an added benefit. On the contrary, for man to be in God's image is to be a covenantal representative of God and to share His covenantal nature. Though Kline's work on the covenantal nature of creation offers numerous exegetical and theological insights, which Jordan has included in his work on creation, it suffers from the most basic defect of Westminster system, making the covenant of works the paradigmatic covenant.

Other inconsistencies could be mentioned, but the most important point here is that the Westminster system, for all of its magnificence, in the end fails as a *system*. That theology is not truly systematic which does not have the doctrine of the Trinity as its living throbbing heart. Practical theology cannot be any less Trinitarian than systematic theology and Biblical theology must not be an exercise of forcing the dynamic flow of history into the systematic outline. It is only when all of these concerns come together in the Trinitarian God that we really have a Christian system.

A second implication of Jordan's view, already mentioned above, is that the covenant among the Persons of the Trinity is the standard in terms of which creation and redemption are to be understood. The whole history of the world is seen as God's plan to bring man into the fullness of covenant fellowship. God's Spirit works in redemptive re-creation to make a bride for Christ to whom He is united in marital covenant. There is only one covenant in God that is extended to man and the world in creation and then, after the fall and man's rejection of God's covenant love, that same covenant is renewed and bestowed again in an even more glorious form in the second Adam. All the various renewals of the old covenant in Adam before the coming of Christ were stages in the historical preparation for the gift of the new covenant. Jordan has illustrated this with the analogy of the human body. It is the same body that we have inherited from Adam that we now as Christians live in. Someday, we will have a new resurrection body, which will be new in many senses, but it will also be this same body we have now. The covenant as given in Christ is both new and also in continuity with the original covenant given to Adam. The gift of the covenant in every age means being included as a covenant partner in the fellowship of Father, Son, and Spirit.

This means, thirdly, that the doctrine of the Trinity, the central truth of Christian systematic theology, finds an equally central place in Biblical theology, for it is the revelation of the Triune God and His covenantal love for man that provides the energizing force for the movement of history. As a mere statement of what Jordan is doing, it may be difficult to distinguish this from any other attempt to simply force a systematic mold onto history. But Jordan's exposition of the movement of covenant history is not simplistic or Procrustean. The

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only way to really see this is by reading his commentary on Judges or listening to his lectures on the books of Samuel and Kings.

The implications of Jordan's view of the covenant for the doctrine of creation are also important. Here, as we said above, Jordan is actually offering a further application of the view of creation symbolism found in Reformed writers such as Herman Bavinck. What Jordan does, however, is to tie together the idea of creation symbolism as something which reveals God — the doctrine found in Bavinck and other Reformed writers — and the idea of creation symbols as covenantal. If God is a God for whom the social relationships of the Trinity are covenantal, then that which reveals God and symbolizes God will inescapably have this covenantal dimension. Add to this Van Til's insight that representation is the essence of the covenant. The world as a symbol of God represents God in a secondary way. Man is the primary image and representative. But all that reveals God represents Him. *The symbolism of creation, therefore, is a covenantal system.*

This gives Jordan an approach to the understanding of Biblical symbolism that is tied to the Scripture's own use of figurative and symbolic language. Jordan follows the symbolism of creation as it develops over time with the progressive revelation of God in covenant history. The book of Revelation, the most symbolically rich book in the Bible, is interpreted, not in terms of the newspaper or the present historical circumstances, but in the light of the creation symbolism that first appears in the early chapters of Genesis and then grows over time as God gives Israel the tabernacle and temple systems and the prophecies of the Messiah's coming reign and glory. Remarkably, some have misunderstood Jordan's approach to symbolism, suggesting that he allows himself to range freely wherever his imagination runs. In fact, however, Jordan's interpretation of symbolism locks the reader in to the objective revelation of the covenant. Symbols are, of course, in the nature of the case fluid and somewhat ambiguous, so the interpretation of symbols is not always easy or obvious.<sup>5</sup> But there is an objective ground and standard to which our interpretation may be compared and the symbols of the Bible, as Jordan sees them, are integrated into a systematic whole. Interpretation no doubt involves imagination and even artistic sensitivity, but what Jordan proposes is the unfolding of a covenantal system of symbolic revelation, not flights of fancy.

Not only does Biblical symbolism find a covenantal ground, the typology of Biblical history is seen as covenantal as well. God reveals His covenant love in the way that He guides the world through the unfolding covenantal processes of history. To begin with, the creation of the world in six days was a covenantal process. The progression of the six days is not arbitrary or haphazard. History after the fall, too, progresses by God's covenantal leading. In some cases, the covenantal progression is rather obvious, as, for example, when the book of Genesis gives us a prophetic type of the exodus three times — once, when Abraham goes down to Egypt (Gen. 12), the second time when Abraham goes to the land of Abimelech (Gen. 20), and the third time when Isaac goes to the land of Abimelech. The repetition of the same themes in the same basic order has been twisted by unbelieving scholarship into an example of a poor editor or editors retelling the same story, when what we actually have is God leading history so that there is a repetition of covenantal progression. Jordan outlines the covenantal history of the patriarchs to show the stages in the covenantal leading of God and to relate God's working through the

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<sup>5</sup> Note, this does not render symbols abstract. To say, "the Lord is my Shepherd" is to make a statement that is not easily summarized in a few simple propositions, and in that sense, it is ambiguous. But every Christian knows this it is not an abstraction, however broad its meaning.

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patriarchs to God's leading in Israel's history and ours. For history as typology is prophetic. Joseph's life story is true as it stands but it is not simply a story with similar details to those of the Messiah. It is part of the progressive unfolding of the covenant love of God for His people, revelatory of the Messiah's person and work and a paradigm of righteous living for the people of the Messiah.

The implications of Jordan's view of the covenant for what is called practical theology are no less important. Again, Jordan suggests certain corrections for ambiguities in the Westminster and Reformed tradition. As in the case of the doctrine of the covenant itself, these are revisions that bring greater consistency to the system of theology, not mere alterations of bits and pieces that have become inconvenient or embarrassing for modern men. In the doctrine of baptism, for example, the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Standards tells us that baptism is "a sign and seal of our regeneration and ingrafting into Christ, and that even to infants" (L.C. 177). The author of the sacrament of baptism is God and the benefits are spiritual (L.C. 176). The "parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church, and enter into an open and professed engagement to be wholly and only the Lord's" (L.C. 165). This, too, includes infants (L.C. 166) who, no less than adults, are given baptism as "a sign and seal of ingrafting into himself, of remission of sins by his blood, and regeneration by his Spirit; of adoption, and resurrection unto everlasting life" (L.C. 165). All of this suggests that by baptism one is introduced into the covenant in the same way that the marriage ceremony constitutes the official beginning of the state of marriage. But not a few American Reformed Christians have been so much influenced by Baptist theology that they find the language of the Westminster Standards here to be too sacramental. The covenantal meaning of baptism not being adequately understood, there are now numerous interpretations of baptism and the language of the Confession.

Jordan offers a more clearly covenantal interpretation of baptism which is actually closer to the words of the Westminster Standards than other approaches. But if baptism means admission into "visible church," all the baptized are members until or unless they have been excommunicated for apostasy. Infants, too, have received the sign of the covenant, the seal of regeneration and ingrafting into Christ. If they have received the sign and seal of the covenant and are to be regarded as members of the visible church, as the Standards clearly state, why should they be excluded from the Lord's Supper? Here, Jordan suggests, the Westminster theology is inconsistent. Contrary to what is suggested in the doctrine of baptism, children in the Reformed tradition are treated as if they are both in and out of the covenant. They are permitted to receive baptism, but they are denied the covenantal blessing of participation in the Lord's Supper (L.C. 177).<sup>6</sup>

Is it perhaps, at least in part, because the covenant is thought of as an *agreement* that the Reformed emphasize the importance of understanding the covenant before young people are permitted to participate in the Lord's Supper? Although the Larger Catechism specifically says that the Supper is to be "administered often," it has not been uncommon for Reformed churches to administer the Supper only a few times in a year or even less. But this is actually the tip of the iceberg, revealing a larger problem.

What underlies the confusion about the relationship between baptism and the Lord's Supper and the relative neglect of the Lord's Supper in the life of the church is a more

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<sup>6</sup> Some leeway is given in that an exact age is not given in the Standards. If a pastor judged that a child of four or five could "examine himself," that is, clearly understand that he had sinned and must repent unto God, then a child of that age might be permitted to partake of the Supper.

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fundamental issue — the Reformed tradition does not yet have a clear theology of worship, in spite of the centrality of worship to the Reformation itself. What Jordan claims — and in my opinion demonstrates — is that worship is *covenant renewal*. As Jordan explains, in the old covenant, covenant renewal ceremonies came to a climax in the covenant meal that the worshipper shared with God, symbolizing his acceptance before God and the fullness of covenantal fellowship. Few dispute the fact that worship in the New Testament era appears to have included weekly communion, but the significance of that is lost when the Lord's Supper is seen as an ontological rather than a covenantal gift. If, however, weekly worship is covenant renewal, then the place of the Lord's Supper in Christian worship is clear and the worship service itself is given a structure that comes from Scripture. Worship is the time when the Triune God calls us to covenantal fellowship with Himself, presenting us, through His covenant representatives, with the covenant meal, which symbolizes the gift of Christ Himself, the gift of His eternal love. Jordan further argues that everyone who is legitimately regarded as a covenant member by baptism is invited to partake of the meal, as indeed, the children of Israel shared the various peace offerings with the whole family. Paedobaptism, thus, implies paedocommunion. The centrality of Scripture, the meaning of singing, and the relationship between Biblical ceremonies and our worship are other aspects of the covenant to which Jordan gives attention.

What Jordan's many writings and lectures on worship offer is the same sort of Trinitarian and covenantal approach to worship that he suggests in Biblical theology or larger worldview issues. This means that worship is integration into the Biblical worldview. Worship is not a spiritual exercise that takes us into a sort of ethereal never-never land. Worship as fellowship with the God of the covenant brings us back into the real world that we, by our sins and folly, have become separated from. Drawing near to God is to be reintegrated into reality and prepared for covenantal service.

There is too much in Jordan's writings to offer anything like a comprehensive introduction here. I have not expounded in adequate detail any of the issues introduced and there is much more that I have not even mentioned. The important point is that Jordan's approach to systematic and biblical theology, symbolism, history, worship and art all find their ground in his view of the covenant as a Trinitarian relationship of fellowship and love. The brief description of Jordan's approach here cannot really do justice to it, and it may even appear to be "narrowly" covenantal, when in fact Jordan's theology is a theology of glory and beauty no less than — and precisely because it is — a theology of the covenant. The aesthetic dimension of the Trinitarian covenant is implied by the rich variety of Biblical symbolism, by the ceremonial complexity of the covenant, by the flexibility of and diverse use made of Biblical narrative structures, by covenantal themes such as the glory of the Lord, and by the covenantal emphasis on food, persons, and music — to mention only a few of the more obvious matters. Jordan addresses all of these issues and more in his writings and lectures.

All that being said, it is unfortunate that Jordan's suggested revision to Reformed theology is still relatively untested by the fires of debate. Nor has it been concretely applied for a significant time — although it may also be said that much of what Jordan has to offer picks up long tested elements of church tradition. Given the fact that it is still "new," Jordan's approach to the Trinity and the covenant is more of a promise of a revised Reformed theology rather than its realization. It is also a challenge that comes to its most concrete form in the question of paedocommunion. It is a challenge for Reformed writers to state the Reformed faith in broad terms that include subjects as diverse as human interest, while maintaining a focus upon God

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Himself. It is a challenge to develop a truly covenantal and Trinitarian worldview. Jordan himself does not present his views as if he had spoken the last word.<sup>7</sup> He sets forth what he believes and asks for interaction, correction, development. In the course of future debate, it may turn out that he is wrong in some of the details, or even wrong in ways that touch fundamental issues. But how could he possibly be wrong in his aim to develop a theology that expresses the heart of a systematically integrated worldview, one which centers on the Triune God Himself and calls us first of all to believe in Him and respond to His covenantal love in grateful worship?

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<sup>7</sup> In person, Jordan is humble and friendly. He is open to critical interaction and appreciates discussion aimed to refine and correct reformed theology and his own contributions.