

- I. **JAMES JORDAN IS A WELL-KNOWN TEACHER AND AUTHOR WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTIONIST AND FEDERAL VISION MOVEMENTS (RESPECTIVELY), SPECIALIZING IN THE FIELD OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION.**
- A. Jordan, a former student of Norman Shepherd and a signer of the 2007 Joint Federal Vision Statement, has published numerous articles and resources through his Biblical Horizons newsletter, and authored several books, including *Through New Eyes: Developing a Biblical View of the World*, *Primeval Saints: Studies in the Patriarchs of Genesis*, and *Creation in Six Days: A Defense of the Traditional Reading of Genesis One*.
  - B. In 2005, Jordan contributed an essay to the volume, *The Federal Vision*, edited by Steve Wilkins and Duane Garner.
  - C. Jordan is listed as Scholar in Residence (Emeritus) at the Theopolis Institute in Birmingham, Alabama, which is overseen by various CREC pastors and Federal Visionists, including its President, Peter Leithart, who also serves as an ordained teacher at Rich Lusk's nearby CREC congregation.
  - D. Jordan was honored in 2011 with a Festschrift entitled, *The Glory of Kings: A Festschrift in Honor of James B. Jordan*, which included the following contributors: John Barach, John Frame, Peter Leithart, Rich Lusk, Ralph A. Smith, and Doug Wilson.
  - E. In 2019, due to multiple recent strokes, Jordan discontinued Biblical Horizons and effectively retired from public ministry.
  - F. Jordan's 11-part Theopolis hermeneutics course, *How to Read the Bible*, is currently available on Doug Wilson's Canon Press app, alongside literally *dozens* of lectures series on such topics as OT Studies, NT Studies, and various theological topics.
- II. **IN JANUARY 2003, JORDAN PUBLISHED AN ARTICLE, ENTITLED, THOUGHTS ON SOVEREIGN GRACE AND REGENERATION: SOME TENTATIVE EXPLORATIONS [TSGR], IN WHICH HE SEEKS TO DEFEND FEDERAL VISION<sup>1</sup> ASSERTIONS REGARDING BAPTISMAL REGENERATION BY "ATTACKING" THE HISTORIC BIBLICAL AND CONFESSIONAL DEFINITION OF PERSONAL REGENERATION, AND POSITING<sup>2</sup> A RADICAL NEW DEFINITION.**
- A. "I hope to dissolve some of the perceived problems with the 'new' ideas at issue in presbyterian circles at the present time... For example, if those putting forth the 'new' perspective are willing to speak of baptism as the 'washing of regeneration,' this is only a problem if 'regeneration' is defined a certain way." [TSGR, 1]
  - B. "I want to take up the question of 'regeneration' as it is commonly understood in Calvinistic circles since the time of the Synod of Dort. My thesis is that the Bible does not teach that some people receive incorruptible new hearts, that some people are as individuals 'regenerated.'" [TSGR, 1]
- III. **ACCORDING TO JORDAN, SINCE PAUL SOMETIMES ADDRESSES ENTIRE CHURCHES AS ELECT AND REGENERATE, THESE TERMS MUST APPLY EQUALLY TO ALL BAPTIZED PERSONS — NOT AS THOSE ELECT UNTO SALVATION AND FINAL PERSEVERANCE, BUT AS THOSE CHOSEN FOR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP, BUT WHO MAY LATER FALL AWAY.**
- A. "Or is Paul saying [in 1 Corinthians 1 and Ephesians 1] that all these people, all of them, were baptized into the Church because God elected them for this privilege from the foundation of the world, and all of them were called and sanctified, etc., in Christ? That is, they have been elected into the Church, into union with Christ, but now must make their calling and election sure by persevering, not wandering away and disuniting from Christ... I am personally persuaded of the ecclesial interpretation of these passages." [TSGR, 4]
  - B. "Does the Bible teach that somehow hidden within the 'visible' Church, within the 'external' covenant, there is a group of people who are 'truly regenerate' and who because of this will not fall away?" [TSGR, 5]
  - C. "My conclusion is that nowhere does the Bible distinguish between those who are 'truly regenerate' and those who are 'mere professors.' The Bible does not teach that God gives some baptized persons 'true, full grace' and others 'only partial grace.' What God gives is Himself, and there is nothing more that He can give. Nor does the Bible teach that those who fall away were never really 'in' the Kingdom of God." [TSGR, 18]
- IV. **ACCORDING TO JORDAN, ALL BAPTIZED CHURCH MEMBERS — INCLUDING THOSE WHO ULTIMATELY GO TO HEAVEN AND THOSE WHO GO TO HELL — ARE EQUALLY ELECTED, REGENERATED AND JUSTIFIED, SUCH THAT THOSE WHO LATER FAIL TO PERSEVERE ACTUALLY LOSE THEIR ELECTION, REGENERATION, AND JUSTIFICATION.**
- A. "The question before us, however, is whether God gives some people 'more' at the starting line than He gives others, so that only those who receive the 'more' persevere to the end; or whether God gives the same thing (Himself) to all, but continues to wrestle to the end only with some, so that some fall away while others persevere." [TSGR, 5-6]

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<sup>1</sup> Jordan also mentions Norman Shepherd and the New Perspective on Paul, both in a favorable light: "Much of what is found here, especially in the first section, agrees in the main with [Norman] Shepherd's views and the tradition of which he is a part... At the same time, however, Shepherd accepts the notion of regeneration that the second part of this paper attacks, and so nothing I have written in that area should be confused with his beliefs." [TSGR, 1-2] "I am happy to confess that like many conservative Reformed theologians, I find much of value in the writings of Reformed exegetes like... N. T. Wright and in semi-evangelicals like James D. G. Dunn." [TSGR, 2]

<sup>2</sup> "This paper... an invitation to converse, not an attempt to settle every detail." [TSGR, 1] "I wish to make a case for this thesis. I am not saying that I regard this thesis as certain. Rather, at the present time I believe this thesis to be correct." [TSGR, 6]

- B. “The thesis of this paper is that all who are in Christ are in exactly the same position as regards the grace (favor) and gifts of God, with no distinction save that some continue in that position while others depart from it. Those passages that traditionally are held to teach that apostates never really were in Christ all along have been misinterpreted, and there are in fact no such passages in the Bible. Or to put it more bluntly, my thesis is that there is no such thing as ‘regeneration’ in the sense in which Reformed theology since Dort has spoken of it. The Bible says nothing about a permanent change in the hearts of those elected to heaven.” [TSGR, 6]
- C. “To repeat the thesis: All who are in Christ are in exactly the same position as regards the grace (favor) and gifts of God, with no distinction save that some continue in that position while others depart from it.” [TSGR, 6-7]

**V. ACCORDING TO JORDAN, ALL BAPTIZED CHURCH MEMBERS ARE REDEEMED BY CHRIST’S ATONING DEATH — SOME PERMANENTLY (i.e. THOSE WHO PERSEVERE) AND OTHERS TEMPORARILY (i.e. THOSE WHO FALL AWAY).**

- A. “God is free to apply the full and special benefit of the atonement to some people temporarily and to others permanently. The special benefits of the atonement are ‘limited’ in this world to those elected in the Church (and to those who believe but have not yet been baptized), and they are limited in the world to come to those elected to heaven. The special (‘limited’) benefits of the atonement are for those who are ‘in Christ.’ Those who leave the Vine, who forsake the Olive Tree, cease to be ‘in Christ’ and cease to receive the special benefits of the atonement..” [TSGR, 19]
- B. “These men [in 2 Peter 2:1] were ‘bought’ the same as all other Christians, and received exactly the same thing, being put ‘in Christ.’ The atonement was ‘for them’ in exactly the same way it was for Peter and John. But when they denied the Lord, they lost the special benefits of the atonement. All of this, of course, was in the plan of God.” [TSGR, 19]

**VI. ACCORDING TO JORDAN, THE HOLY SPIRIT MYSTERIOUSLY CAUSES SOME (BUT NOT ALL) REGENERATE PERSONS TO PERSEVERE, SUCH THAT THEIR PRESENT CONDITION IS NO SURE INDICATION OF THEIR FUTURE DESTINY, THEREBY PRECLUDING THE POSSIBILITY OF GAINING PERSONAL ASSURANCE OF SALVATION BY WAY OF SELF-EXAMINATION.**

- A. “...the [traditional Reformed] doctrine is problematic at the very least, in that it locates perseverance not in the ongoing and mysterious wrestling of the Spirit but in a change in the being of those elected to heaven.” [TSGR, 1]
- B. “Hence my position: Everyone who is baptized has been given the same thing. No one has been given a permanently changed ‘regenerated’ heart. Everyone alike has been drawn into personal fellowship with God and has been placed in union with Christ. These gifts and promises are truly given to all. Perseverance is a matter of the Spirit’s mysterious wrestling work, and not a matter of whether a person has a permanently changed heart or not.” [TSGR, 6]
- C. “The gift is God Himself: union with Christ and fellowship with the Father and the Spirit. God really and truly gives Himself to all those baptized (and to those who are converted but not yet baptized, by anticipation). God objectively declares such people justified (forgiven), sanctified (counted as holy), and glorified (adopted as sons). What I am disputing is the notion that a guarantee of perseverance is an aspect of this gift. I am disputing the notion that those who don't persevere were never really given the gift... Hence my thesis, as qualified, is that God gives exactly the same thing, Himself, to all baptized persons, but that the Spirit orders the lives of various such persons differently.” [TSGR, 7]
- D. “To amplify: The gift to the Church is God Himself, the Triune God. In the Godhead, the Father is giving the gift of a Bride to His Son, and the Son is giving the gift of a people to His Father. It is the Spirit who is proceeding from the Father and from the Son to bring these gifts. To be baptized is to be woven into this process, to be incorporated into the Bride/people. But not everyone woven into this process, not everyone placed ‘in Christ,’ is destined to persevere to the end. The Spirit’s work is mysterious. The Spirit wrestles to bring the Bride to the Son and the people to the Father. He wrestles in history and over the course of time, throughout the biographies of individuals and the histories of cultures. The Spirit will not always strive with sinners (Genesis 6:3). He can be grieved and quenched. He can forsake Saul. Not until the gifts are finally given to the Son and Father, at the end, will the gifts be fully prepared. Not all those who start out as part of these gifts will be part of them at the end.” [TSGR, 7]
- E. “Of course, if the Bible actually teaches that God makes a permanent change in the hearts of some people, those elected to heaven, then it is still God’s business and not ours. We must still live by what is given to us, the promises, and not try to inspect our hearts to see if they are ‘truly regenerate’ or not.” [TSGR, 6]
- F. “People don’t know, because they can’t know, whether these promises apply to them or not.” [TSGR, 4-5]

**VII. ACCORDING TO JORDAN, REGENERATION DOES NOT INVOLVE THE PERMANENT SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE SINNER’S FALLEN HUMAN NATURE (METAPHYSICAL), BUT ONLY A TEMPORARY CHANGE IN THE STATUS OF THE SINNER’S RELATIONSHIP TO GOD (RELATIONAL), THE CONTINUANCE OF WHICH HINGES ON THEIR PERSEVERANCE.**

- A. “Is it God’s plan that all who receive a (metaphysical) new birth will also continue to the end? Or is it God’s plan that some who receive such a new birth will fall away and be damned? If we conceive of this new birth as a metaphysical change, it does become possible to think that anyone receiving it must persevere, because he or she has become a different kind of human being... If, however, the new birth is entrance into a new relationship with God, it is clear that a person loses his new life if he apostatizes from that relationship with God.” [TSGR, 9]

- B. “Perseverance unto the end is ultimately, of course, a matter of God’s predestination. But those who persevere do not do so because they have been given more at the starting line, because they have received some kind of permanent ‘inward’ metaphysical change. Rather, they persevere because God’s Spirit continues to wrestle with them to the end. They persevere not because of anything inside themselves, whether their own power or some infusion from God, but because God maintains His personal relationship with them to the end, because they do not reject the favor and gifts that God truly gave them.” [TSGR, 18]
- C. “Some in the Church endeavor to be faithful and to live by faith in God and God’s promises; others do not. God has given His promises to all. He has claimed them all. He has elected and called them all into fellowship with His Son. But not all are making their calling and election sure by persevering.” [TSGR, 16]

**VIII. IN ORDER TO DEFEND HIS “ATTACK” ON BIBLICAL AND CONFSSIONAL ORTHODOXY, JORDAN IS FORCED TO RADICALLY REINTERPRET MANY FAMILIAR PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE.**

- A. BIBLICAL USAGE (Regeneration) “As regards ‘regeneration,’ the meaning of this term in Reformed theology bears virtually no resemblance to its meaning in the Bible. ‘Regeneration’ in the Bible is used only in Matthew 19:27-30, where it refers to the New Creation that Jesus has come to establish. In the ‘regeneration,’ and specifically the Apostolic Age, the disciples who have left everything will rule the twelve tribes, ministering to them as true servant-kings until the end of the old age in AD 70 (cf. James 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1). Titus 3:5 associates baptism with entry into this new creation, into ‘regeneration.’ Thus, in the Bible, “regeneration” denotes the new historical epoch inaugurated at Pentecost, and is a synonym of ‘New Creation.’ In dogmatic Reformed theology, especially after the Arminian controversy, ‘regeneration’ came to be used for an inner work of grace in the heart of a person, which enables him to turn to God in saving faith.” [TSGR, 8]
- B. EZEKIEL 36:22-27 (Old Heart of Stone, New Heart of Flesh) “The heart of stone [in Ezekiel 36] is not a hard or petrified heart inside individual human beings, but refers to the Word Made Stone, the Ten Words, in the Most Holy of the Tabernacle/Temple... At Sinai, the Word became Stone, and dwelt among us, and we beheld God’s glory at Sinai... What could be better than the firmness and protection of the Word Made Stone? Only the incarnate Word Made Flesh, who will bring the Spirit in fullness... Yahweh is predicting a new exodus... At the first exodus, they were given a Heart of Stone at the center of their lives; now a more wonderful Heart of Flesh is predicted.” [TSGR, 11-12]
- C. JOHN 3:1-8 (Nicodemus, The New Birth) “John 3, however, is not about how to be saved from hell. Nicodemus is not an ‘unregenerate’ man in need of rescue. He is a believer who is seeking to learn about the new kingdom that Jesus is announcing. That kingdom is not the realm of personal salvation but the new creation, though in the future all those who find salvation will have to find it in this new creation, for the old creation will pass away... Entrance into the New Creation, thus, is what John 3 is about. That entrance is by baptism, ‘water baptism.’... Spiritual birth is birth into the New Creation. It is not a matter of an internal change in the individual, but the movement of the whole individual (and/or culture) into the new sphere of the Spirit in the new age that dawned on Pentecost in Acts 2... notice that ‘you must be born from above’ (v. 7) is addressed in the plural. Jesus is saying that Israel must enter into The Regeneration. He has also called Nicodemus as an individual to make this transition, to be born from above. Yet, even here, Jesus addresses Nicodemus as the representative of Israel, as ‘the teacher of Israel’ (v. 10)... Was Nicodemus a saved, believing man before he met Jesus? Yes. Was Nicodemus on the road to heaven? Yes. Did Nicodemus need to be born again, born from above, if he was going to enter the new kingdom? Yes. Jesus in John 3 is not providing [the order] of individual salvation. He is not discussing how an individual person comes to have a saving relationship with God. Rather, He is discussing the arrival of salvation in history at that time, a salvation that would bring with a whole new order of existence for God’s people.” [TSGR, 13]
- D. EPHESIANS 2:1-6 (Dead in Sins, By Nature Children of Wrath, Made Alive in Christ) “The [lost] person is in fact not dead. He is alive. He can hear and respond, and he in fact does hear and respond either positively or negatively. ‘Dead in trespasses and sins’ is not a metaphysical statement, but is a way of saying that the man is personally estranged from God. The man does not need to be ‘made alive’ in any metaphysical sense, but rather he needs to enter into personal fellowship with God. The ‘new life’ that he needs is not metaphysical but relational.” [TSGR, 9]
- E. ROMANS 8:30 (Golden Chain) “With this in mind, it is perfectly possible to take Paul’s statement [Romans 8:30] in an ecclesial sense: God has foreknown and predestined certain people to be called into His Church/ covenant, and has granted them justification and glorification in Christ. This gift has been given. But Paul does not say that all who receive this gift will continue in it. They should continue in it. God wants them to continue in it. But God may not have decreed that all of them continue in these blessings. They might fall away, which is why the epistles, especially the epistle to the Hebrews, abound in encouragements to persevere. In no way does such an understanding threaten the Reformed faith.” [TSGR, 10]
- F. MATTHEW 7:21-23 (“I never knew you.”) “Once again, however, the context of Jesus’ statement is false prophets (7:15). He says that false prophets will be known by their works (7:16-20). He says that these false prophets will claim to have been Jesus’ disciples on the day of judgment (7:21-22). To them Jesus says, ‘I never knew you.’ In context, it is clear that ‘knew’ means ‘acknowledged, recognized, commissioned.’ Jesus never acknowledged and commissioned these false prophets. As Yahweh told Jeremiah: ‘I did not send these prophets, but they ran; I did not speak to them, but they prophesied’ (Jeremiah 23:21).” [TSGR, 16]

- G. MATTHEW 13 (The Sower) “N. T. Wright has made a very good case for seeing the four soils as an allegory of the history of Israel, especially from the exile to Jesus. He argues that the ‘seed’ is the faithful word-bearing Remnant and that the ‘soil’ is Israel. He cites dozens of Old Testament passages where ‘seed’ and ‘soil’ have this meaning, establishing the context in which the disciples would have understood the parable when they first heard it. Birds are Gentiles in the Old Testament, and thorns are tokens of exilic judgment. There is nothing speculative here; the Bible has set up this imagery repeatedly, and the disciples were familiar with it. Building on Wright’s remarks, I suggest that the Remnant Seed was rejected wholly in the days leading down to the destruction of Jerusalem and into the Babylonian age. The Israel-Soil received the Remnant-Seed with joy when the Persians allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple, but then the Israel-Soil fell away. The experience of the Israel-Soil during the Greek period resulted in a choking out of the witness of the Remnant, down to the time of Jesus. But in the New Creation, the New Soil will receive the True Remnant (Jesus Himself) and will flourish. What this reading means is that the soil did not produce the desired fruit because it was still the old and fallen creation. When the New Creation, the new soil, arrives, the soil did not produce the desired fruit because it was still the old and fallen creation. When the New Creation, the new soil, arrives, the soil will be fruitful.” [TSGR, 18]

**IX. ACCORDING TO DOUG WILSON, JORDAN’S VIEWS ARE FULLY ORTHODOX & REPRESENT A MINOR DISAGREEMENT.**

- A. WILSON (FV: Light or Dark, 2005): “Jim [Jordan]’s a friend of mine. No problem with his orthodoxy. He’s a good guy. [His] paper [on regeneration] is a good example of what I mean by the emphasis of Federal Vision Dark, like an Oatmeal Stout dark beer. And the concern I have with it is not that I think that Jim has denied things that can’t be denied and so everything’s lost. I believe he’s denying something which, because he’s a thoroughgoing predestinarian and committed to the absolute authority of the word of God, I believe that if someone took that view and worked it down the road a bit, after twenty or thirty years of pastoring people, you would have to come up with a word to describe those people that we would currently say are regenerate and currently say are unconverted or unregenerate. So, as it stands, I would, if someone pressed me on the point, and said, ‘No, Jim denies that these passages that Evangelicals use to talk about the new birth, he just denies that they’re taking about that at all,’ I believe that his fundamental commitments commit him to a doctrine of regeneration down the road.”
- B. WILSON (FV: Light or Dark, 2005): “I’m not trying to indicate disagreement with Federal Vision oatmeal stout, but it’s a difference of emphasis. So whenever I get together with Steve Schlissel or with Rich [Lusk] or with Steve Wilkins, all the different characters, we talk about it and we come to agreement in about five or ten minutes. But when we’re turned loose, we emphasize different things according to our situations, our backgrounds, the ministry in front of us, and so on.”
- C. WILSON (FV No ‘Mas, 2017): “I would still affirm everything I signed off on in the Federal Vision statement.”<sup>3</sup>
- D. WILSON: (1) In 2011, contributed a chapter to a Festschrift honoring Jordan’s teaching; (2) Presently promotes Jordan’s lectures on Biblical studies and hermeneutics.

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<sup>3</sup> FV JOINT STATEMENT (2007): “...there are also important areas of disagreement or ongoing discussion among those who are identified as ‘Federal Vision’ advocates. Some of these areas would include, but not be limited to, whether or not the imputation of the active obedience of Christ (as traditionally understood) is to be affirmed in its classic form. Some of us affirm this and some do not. Another difference is whether or not personal regeneration represents a change of nature in the person so regenerated. Some of us say yes while others question whether we actually have such an ‘essence’ that can be changed.” EARLIER IN THE STATEMENT: “There are many people who should be considered as full and friendly participants in the Federal Vision ‘conversation’ who cannot sign this statement (even though they might want to) because of one or two issues—paedocommunion, say, or postmillennialism.” [So they are willing to accommodate those who DENY REGENERATION, but NOT those who disagree with postmillennialism and paedocommunion?]