

VI. Laws of Divine Establishment and the Royal Family Honor Code: Dispensational Theology

Hannah, John D. "Book Reviews." *Bibliotheca Sacra*. April-June 1995, p. 235:

"The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind. By Mark A. Noll.

The decline of Christianity through cultural adaptation found its fullest and by far most destructive manifestation, according to Noll, in 20th-century fundamentalism. To Noll, the rise of this movement was the harbinger of disaster for Christian thinking. He suggests that dispensationalism, the most intellectual form of fundamentalism, is responsible for the decline of the serious application of the mind to the problems of society and culture today. The futiemphasis of dispensational exchatology has resulted, he says, in mindless varieties of evangelicalsism and is thus a major part of the problem of Christianity's lack of credibility and influence. It is unfair, however, to place this problem solely at the feet of dispensationalism. The problem, Noll writes, is that few Christians are active in cultural reformation. However, for decades many dispensationalists have been involved in varied efforts to reform American culture."

It is very difficult to accurately interpret Scripture if you do not subscribe to dispensational theology.

When you do, you soon draw the conclusion that this is the Devil's world, it is destined for destruction, and our primary obligation as ambassadors for Christ is to save as many as possible beforehand.

The ultimate deliverance of the Church-Age believer is the Rapture of the church which is imminent, that is, it may occur at any moment.

We are told to live our lives before God as if the Rapture might occur today, but to live our lives before men as if it would not occur in our lifetimes.

Thus, as free moral agents, we are to maintain establishment integrity toward our fellow citizens but allow Jesus Christ to control history.

This prohibits us from becoming involved in whitewashing the Devil's world.

Whitewashing includes discontent, argumentation, sedition, civil disobedience, insurrection, and revolt, and requires you to join cliques, as either the leader or a co-dependent follower, crusades, and special-interest groups.

When in a political environment which is receptive to Christianity, the believer may freely and openly seek to influence his fellow man with biblical doctrines, principles, and morals. Such was the Zeitgeist of 19th-century America.

But when, in the 20th-century, the Zeitgeist changes and becomes hostile toward Christianity, the believer must use caution lest he "*become a disgrace to society.*"

The believer must "*honor the king*" and permit Jesus Christ to take care of political corruption, social degeneracy, and the general contortions which are reflected in the current Zeitgeist.

Protestant Christianity's failure to influence the Zeitgeist has been going on for most of the 20th century.

Overt influence, however, is always second on the believer's list of priorities. The primary influence is invisible and that is the form the Philippians are being asked to execute in first-century Rome.

The issue of invisible historical impact on the client nation's Zeitgeist is brought out in the genitive of description from the singular noun: *genea* - "*generation; age.*"

Liddle and Scott show that the etymology takes the word back to a strict family application meaning, race, family, generation. It later took on the concept of an age or a time of life.

Gerhard Kittle indicates the same thing. The word originally defined one's "birth," "descent," "progeny," "descendant." The Septuagint uses the term for "generation" in the sense of contemporaries. This application is common in the New Testament. *Genea* in the sayings of Jesus is aiming at the whole people and not at individuals. Matthew 17:17

Arndt and Gingrich begin with those descended from a common ancestor but in the second definition we see: the sum total of those born at the same time, expanded to include all those living at a given time, contemporaries. Jesus looks upon the whole contemporary generation of Jews as a uniform mass confronting him.

W. E. Vine says it refers to the whole multitude of men living at the same time. Transferred from people, to the time in which they lived, the word came to mean an age.

Colin Brown, editor of The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, defines *genea* as the body of one's contemporaries, an age. Almost all New Testament *genea*-passages speak of "this generation." The reference is to a class of people who in this world stand over against the children of light and are further described as faithless (Mark 9:19), faithless and perverse (Matthew 17:17), adulterous (Mark 8:38), evil and adulterous (Matthew 12:39), evil (Luke 11:29), crooked (Acts 2:40), crooked and perverse (Philippians 2:15). The Song of Moses in (Deuteronomy 32:5) seems here to have had a certain influence on the wording. The emphasis lies entirely on the sinfulness of this class, this type of people.

Zondervan. Analytical Greek Lexicon, s.v. "ginomai", says of *genea*:

a generation, an interval of time, an age; in the NT, course of life, in respect of its events, interests, or character.

Do you get the drift here? The use is clearly that of describing the prevailing mental attitude which motivates the lifestyle of the Philippian believers' Roman contemporaries.

Thus, we can translate *genea* "generation" but that simply does not communicate the contortion of the soul which we want to emphasize.

The English doesn't have another word that will help us except for one which it has borrowed from the German. This word is perfect to communicate the idea of the soulish environment which nurtures the crooked and contorted lifestyle of the Roman people.

This word, which I use often in cultural contexts is the adopted German noun, *Zeitgeist*.

Zeitgeist

Zeitgeist is the perfect word to describe the collective thinking and attitudes of the people of any given culture.

No culture is static. The moods, attitudes, beliefs, and opinions of the people of a culture are in constant flux.

The fluctuations are based on the citizens' collective thought becoming influenced by good or evil, truth or the lie, logic or emotion.

It is this waxing and waning of collective public opinion which determines the presence of either prosperity or discipline in the land.

This waxing and waning are not a volatile shift of opinion and belief.

Instead, cultural changes are gradual so that, during certain periods of a nation's history, the general mood of the population can be classified as drifting toward either divine or human viewpoint.

We are looking for a word which captures this idea and it is the German word, *Zeitgeist*.