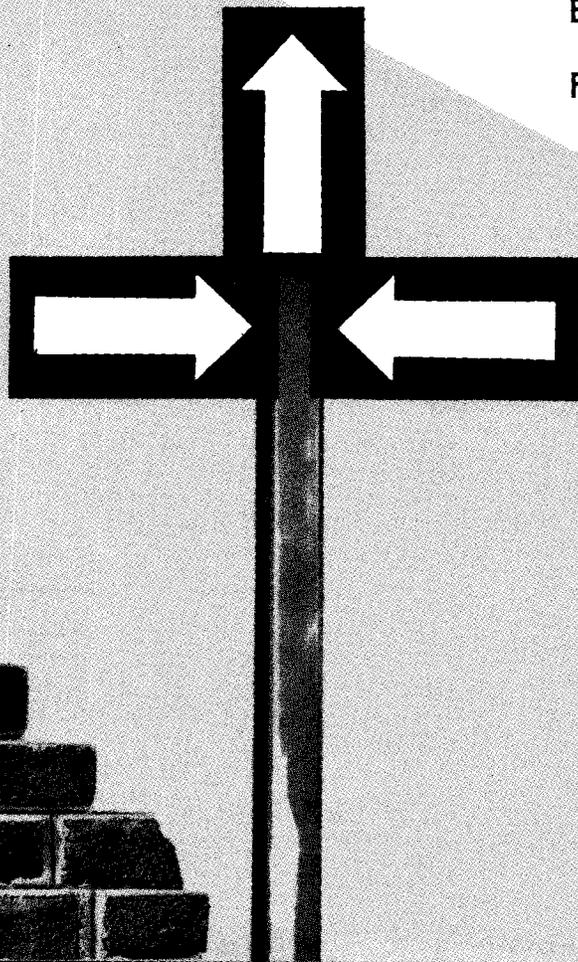


The Presbyterian Guardian

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For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that
not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. . . .
But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were
far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.
For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and
hath broken down the middle wall of partition.



In every thing give thanks

H. LLOYD BURGHART

Imagine if you will and if you can the following four situations. Place yourself in each of the positions I am about to describe and let your imaginations work freely for a moment. Picture for yourself your reactions. . . .

In the first scene we are introduced into a disturbed home. A father is in violent conflict with his son. Their lifestyles differ. The son puts a premium on his personal appearance and in particular on his long hair. For a time the hostilities between them seethe just beneath the surface, but eventually there comes open rebellion. The son is away for two years until a sort of reconciliation occurs. But it is shortlived, and soon each of them is trying to destroy the other. The picture ends with the death of the son—strung up by his long hair and run through to death by his own followers.

In the second scene we are introduced to the deprivations that come from imprisonment. Recently I have been reading about a young partisan during World War II and his prison experiences. They are reminiscent of the experiences of missionary Bruce Hunt in his book *For a Testimony*. The prisoner in each case is victimized by his captors. He is subjected to physical and mental humiliation, to constant and persistent interrogation and the implied threat of death and perhaps torture. Throughout the history of the Christian church we read of Christians imprisoned for their faith. And the tortures are not theirs alone, for their families are likewise subject to economic pressures and subsequent loss.

Our third picture brings to mind physical torment. This might be associated with the prison experience, but it may be associated with longterm illness, or a gradual decrease in physical ability, or deformities, or hospitalization, or the loneliness of old age. There is of course the kind of torment that can only result from man's inhumanity to man. Mankind has devised all sorts of horrible tortures to apply to other men. There are available in history books on the early Puritan era the most vivid accounts of the martyrdoms of many of these earnest believers.

Again our scene shifts and we are confronted with a tormented man. This man has been falsely slandered. His words have been twisted by his enemies until he is made to appear to be a revolutionary; he is accused of being unpatriotic; he is suspected of being an anarchist. In a super-patriotic community he is immediately suspect. His statements are distorted and he is identified as a traitor. For the apostle Paul, such a situation developed in the city of Thessalonica. He was accused of inciting the citizens to honor another king besides Caesar. This was a most serious charge, and although untrue, required that Paul flee for his life nonetheless.

Later on, Paul writes to the church at Thessalonica.

Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Do you think Paul's words are unreasonable? Do you think that our Lord really does not understand what our circumstances may be? Do you think you can really thank the Lord in every circumstance? Then consider. . . .

The Lord of Glory, the Creator of mankind, has experienced the grief that David felt at the rebellion of his son Absalom. For "we have turned . . . every one to his own way." Surely man's rebellion against God is that of a distinctive difference in "lifestyle," to say the least. How it must have grieved our Lord to observe man in his rebellion against God. Yet, *we are commanded to give thanks to God in every circumstance.*

Our Lord also suffered from the losses that may accompany imprisonment. He made himself—voluntarily—of no reputation, giving up his glory for the time, truly humbling himself. He did willingly what man attempts by inhuman means to coerce his fellowman to do. And yet, Christ's command through Paul is that *we are to give thanks in every situation.*

Jesus Christ endured physical and spiritual torment for us. He endured the pain and anguish of physical torture and the excruciatingly painful death of the cross. He endured total separation from his Father—willingly and for our sakes. And he tells us to *give thanks in every thing.*

The Lord endured false accusations. He was accused of all manner of crimes for which he was not in the least guilty. And we are told to rejoice, to pray, and to give thanks.

It is easy to give thanks when we have received what we consider to be good. But the clear teaching of Scripture is that we may not always receive what is pleasant. What we receive may not always be exactly what we desired. Someday we may find ourselves ill-clothed, ill-fed, our personal and family relationships strained and torn; we may be in great physical pain, or we may find ourselves falsely accused of crime. What are we to do then?

We are to rejoice, to pray, to give thanks. In every circumstance, for every situation that confronts us, we are to turn to the Lord our God with thanksgiving on our lips. This is the will of God in Christ Jesus for us. May our Lord give us grace so to do!

The thanksgiving meditation above was presented a year ago in the Second Parish Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Portland, Maine. Mr. Burghart is the teacher-administrator of the Covenant Christian School in Westfield, N.J.

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Already under a new confession

O. PALMER ROBERTSON

The 112th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States met in June at the denomination's conference center at Montreat, N. C. Muffled by the mountains, the heart-rending decisions of this great church may not have been heard or understood fully by the world outside.

Dr. L. Nelson Bell was chosen moderator, to squeals of delight from jubilant observers. Dr. Bell, father-in-law to Billy Graham, is perhaps the best-known evangelical layman in the church. The missionary-surgeon-editor should have the prayers and support of true believers throughout the church in the year to come.

Restructuring Assembly Agencies

The true character of this assembly was unveiled early Monday morning. A special committee report on restructuring the denomination's agencies was presented. A most persuasive case against the restructuring was also heard but this minority position lost 308-117.

The significance of this action to restructure may hardly be overemphasized. It was in 1949 that the General Assembly was last reorganized. Until that time the assembly had only *committee* structures. The solid argument of James Henly Thornwell against "church boards" had prevailed in Southern Presbyterian church life for almost one hundred years. (Readers may consult Thornwell's argument in volume four of his collected writings.) He had warned that creation of church boards would eventually destroy the presbyterian system; such boards would become direct rivals to the courts of the church.

How right he was! Despite the disclaimers made in 1949 that these "boards" would only be "committees" under another name, history has proven Thornwell right. Indeed, some of the greatest tensions in our denomination today stem from the conflicts of sessions and presbyteries in opposition to the boards and agencies.

Thornwell's purely presbyterian polity was ignored at the 1972 Assembly. It was indeed argued that the new structure would always be directly responsible to the assembly. But time will tell who shall give account to whom.

The new structure calls for a monolithic 71-man General Executive Board to run all the affairs of the assembly, from world missions to annuities and relief. Planning for the GEB will be a seven-member executive committee, and over this committee will be a single general staff director. In this single individual will reside powers resembling those of a president, bishop, and chief justice. So enter episcopacy; exit presbyterianism.

Union Negotiations

A significant door of hope for those still loyal to the Confession was closed by this assembly's action on union

negotiations with the United Presbyterian Church, U. S. A. As it now stands, the plan of union would allow churches and ministers to elect "not to enter" a UPUSA-PCUS union. But it became clear that no certainty can be attached to the hope that this "escape clause" will remain in the final draft of the plan. Whether it would be moral or hypocritical for conservatives to vote for union in hopes of using the "escape clause" now seems to be a moot question.

A resolution, advanced by conservatives, to urge the joint committee on the plan of union to bring their report up for a vote in 1973 never had much chance of passing. The assembly's refusal indicates an unwillingness to be sensitive to the serious plight of conscientious confessionalists. These people were born and reared in this denomination; they undertook solemn vows of faith at ordination. But the proposed union with the UPUSA would force a breach of conscience since there is a direct contradiction between the United Presbyterian *Confession of 1967* and the *Westminster Confession of the Southern Church*.

What are such people to do? Have they not been victimized by the very church they serve? Are they to be faulted for holding today to the same commitments made at the time of their ordination? Are they to be forced to bear the unjust onus of being separatists if they cannot, in conscience, enter a union with the UPUSA? Are they to risk loss of church property and pension rights? How much more Christian it would be for those who are so clearly in the majority to acknowledge the right of loyal confessionalists to continue in consistency with their consciences! Perhaps it is not too late for such expressions of justice.

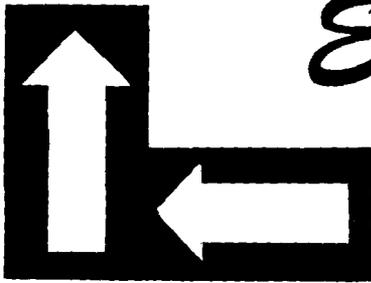
Restructuring the synods

A second major restructuring involved the matter of regional synods. In general, synods of the church were largely co-extensive with state lines. But restructuring is grouping the former state-synods into larger regional bodies.

The plea of the synod of South Carolina to be merged only with Georgia and not with Georgia/Florida was granted. A similar request from Mississippi to be merged only with Alabama but not with Tennessee/Kentucky was denied. As a consequence, the conservative hopes of maintaining some significant stronghold in the restructured synods was effectually dashed.

Hints that the Mississippi synod might politely refuse to be reorganized doubtless will be discussed in days to come. But at best such an action would only delay the inevitable. In this case, the constitution of the church clearly

(Continued on page 134)



Evangelism and God's election

DENNIS E. JOHNSON

[The following article was prepared for distribution at a booth manned by representatives of Westminster Seminary at Campus Crusade's "Explo '72" in Dallas. It speaks to one of the chief errors in the "Four Spiritual Laws," the one that says that "God loves you, and has a wonderful plan for your life," together with the one that suggests God's plan will be frustrated unless you "individually receive Jesus Christ." Since failure to understand the meaning and significance of election in relation to evangelism is not restricted to Campus Crusade, we are glad to publish this article.]

"Why should anyone who believes in predestination try to spread the gospel? If God has planned for all eternity to save certain people and to let others go to hell, there isn't any need for a gospel. The 'chosen ones,' the 'elect,' will be saved whether they believe the gospel or not. And those who aren't chosen can't be saved no matter what they do!"

This statement fairly well summarizes what a lot of people think when they hear the words "predestination" and "election" (that is, God's choosing of certain people to be his forever). It may express what you think about those words. That's the way I thought for a long time.

But when we come to the Bible, we find that Christianity's greatest defender of predestination and election (in Romans 8, 9 and Ephesians 1) was also its most active evangelist! How could the Apostle Paul teach predestination and preach the grace of God in Christ to everyone who believes? To uncover the answer to this question, we have to dig into what God has revealed about his election and our evangelism. When we do, we find two basic Scripture principles:

1. GOD'S ELECTION DEMANDS OUR UNIVERSAL EVANGELISM

The belief that "election, if it were true, would make evangelism unnecessary" is very plausible — until we realize that it is based not on the Bible's teaching about God's rule, but on pagan notions of Fate. According to the Greek poet, it was Fate that caused Oedipus to kill his father and marry his mother, despite every human effort to avoid that tragedy. But when the Bible says that God rules his creation, it is not saying that man is junk, a helpless victim who cannot make a meaningful choice about the future.

God rules his creation not by violating man's power to choose, but by directing our every decision to his own ends. Now that may sound like double-talk to you, but it is simply a way of summarizing what the Bible says about God's sovereign rule and our responsible choice. It is the foundation that underlies Peter's statement at Pentecost: "This one [Jesus], delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put him to death" (Acts 2:23). And that

is the root of the Bible's whole view of history.

God's rule, man's responsibility

When we come to election — God's choice of a people for himself — we find the same principle of God's rule and man's responsibility. When God elected the members of his church for salvation, his abundant love set in motion a whole great process of redemption — a process that includes the life and redeeming death of Christ, his resurrection for our justification, and the gift of the Holy Spirit who re-creates God's people and gives them the faith by which they are united to Christ.

This is the focus of Ephesians 1:3-14 and Romans 8:28-39. These scriptures do not say that God planned to save certain people whether or not they believe in Christ. Nor do they say that he planned simply to provide a way of salvation for anyone who might be interested. What we find is that God has planned to *save his people through their union with Christ*. God chose us *in Christ* before the foundation of the world and predestined us to be adopted as his children *through Jesus Christ* (Ephesians 1:4, 5). As many as the Father foreknew (a word that refers to intimate knowledge or love, as in Exodus 33:17, Amos 3:2, Galatians 4:9), he predestined to bear *the image of the Son*; and as many as he predestined, he called through the gospel proclamation, justified through faith, and glorified — both in the past by union with the glorified Christ, and in the future when we shall all be raised (Romans 8:29, 30).

The point is that the faith of those whom God has chosen is an essential part of God's plan for their salvation. Election demands the faith of the elect — which is to say, election demands that the elect hear the gospel — which is to say, *election demands evangelism*.

If you or I decide that since God elects people we don't have to evangelize, we are not only disobeying our Lord's clear command; we are also disqualifying ourselves from the privilege of being instruments in his gracious plan to save his people. The fact that God chooses his people for salvation *through faith in Christ* demands that we evangelize!

Election and universal evangelism

Now, this first principle includes the word "universal." God's election demands our *universal* evangelism. Especially in this age, the age of the triumph of Christ's kingdom through the gospel, our evangelism must be universal with respect to races and classes of men. And this is simply because God's election crosses all racial and class barriers, extending both to the despised Gentiles and to the poor and weak of the world.

The most significant racial barrier in the perspective of the Bible is the wall between Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2). This is because, for all practical purposes, before the death and resurrection of Jesus that wall marked the line between those within the community of God's gracious covenant —

the Old Testament church — and those outside. Now, it has only been recently that we have seen very many Jews, racial descendants of Abraham, come to know Jesus the Messiah. So it is that we often forget that election, God's choice, first focussed on the nation of Israel. To this people Moses said, "The Lord has chosen you to be a people for his own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth" (Deuteronomy 14:2).

But with the dawn of the New Covenant period at the resurrection of Christ, Paul can write to the Gentiles at Ephesus that the wall is broken down (Ephesians 2:14), that the distinction between "we Jews" inside and "you Gentiles" outside no longer holds (see Ephesians 2:1-7). The people who are chosen in Christ as God's own people now include Jew and Gentile (verses 3-5, 13, 14). Peter makes the same point: Those who were once "not a people" (being outside God's covenant love) are now the "people of God," "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession" (1 Peter 2:9, 10).

It is not by accident that Peter used the word "elected" or "chose" when speaking of the first gospel proclamation to the Gentiles: "Brethren, you know that in the early days God elected (chose, made a choice) among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe" (Acts 15:7). The great Commission, Peter's Pentecost sermon, the inclusion of Cornelius' uncircumcised Gentile household into the church, and the lifework of Paul (Acts 9:15; 13:48), are all founded on a historical shift in the focus of God's gracious election. As God's gracious choice has extended to people of every nation, so must our evangelism — the instrument of his election — go to every nation under heaven.

Evangelism to every class

God's election extends to every class as well. In 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, Paul impresses on the believers at Corinth the fact that God's choice did not rest simply (or even mainly) on the Athenian philosopher or the Roman emperor or the aristocrat. God chose the foolish, the weak, the despised things of this world in order to nullify human pride and to demonstrate that it is God himself who saves. Notice that Paul is not saying (as a modern Marxist would) that it is only the poor, lower classes who have their values straight — who are humble, kind, and loving — and so deserve God's grace. Rather, he is saying that God's choosing from these despised classes demonstrates that *no one* is worthy of his choice — that no flesh can boast before him (1 Corinthians 1:29).

James has to remind his readers: "Listen, my beloved brethren; did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he promised to those who love him?" (James 2:5). The writer paints the picture of would-be evangelists fawning over the wealthy "inquirer" in their midst, polishing his shoes and showing him the best seat. But the poor man who comes to a Christian meeting, the sort of man God chooses to give faith to (and with faith the inheritance promised to the faithful), is despised and ill-treated by the "evangelists."

The sin James is condemning here is *human election*. His point is, God has chosen, therefore we *must not choose*. When we try to pick out the elect by any external standard, we have become "judges of evil reasonings" (verse 4). God has not revealed to us who his elect are, and human criteria cannot be used. So we must present the good news of Christ to everyone who will hear, regardless of his respectability or

the likelihood of his response in faith.

This last point says something about the way we evangelize too. Are we honoring God when we make a big deal about the campus leader, the football hero, the opera star, the pro baseball player, the folk-rock star who has accepted Jesus? What about the taxicab driver in New York, the dropout in Los Angeles, the housewife in Omaha? If we are listening to God's Word, we should rejoice that God's grace is shown all the more vividly by his salvation of so many unexceptional people. To be awed by big names may be thoroughly American; but it is anti-Christian, and it should have no place in our evangelism.

II. GOD'S ELECTION GUARANTEES SUCCESS

The fact is that unless God had chosen some persons to receive faith (and by that faith salvation), no one would ever respond to the gospel. The Bible says we are all dead in our sins and violation of God's law (Ephesians 2:1, 5). We are haters of God, willing to serve even stupid idols rather than bow to him (Romans 1:18-25, 30). It is contrary to all we are as fallen sinners to believe and obey God.

That is why the Bible says that while we were still dead, God made us alive (Ephesians 2:5). But who did God make alive? The thought of Ephesians 2 flows from Ephesians 1, and that chapter traces all of God's blessings for his people to God's electing love. God has chosen certain people in Christ, forgiven them through his blood, given them the gift of the Holy Spirit — and in that gift has made them alive together with Christ! Successful evangelism requires God's election just as much as God's election demands evangelism.

And God has chosen many

We notice that the unbreakable chain of events recorded in Romans 8:29, 30 — God's prior love, predestination to conformity to the image of Christ, calling through the gospel, justification by faith, and glorification — all this was a great encouragement to Paul the apostle-evangelist in his own ministry. When he was at Corinth, the Lord appeared to him in a vision, encouraging him: "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:9, 10).

God had already laid claim to many people in Corinth. The success of Paul's evangelistic preaching was therefore assured. All whom God had chosen would respond to the gospel. Jesus had assured the apostles of that: "All that the Father gives to me will come to me; and one who comes to me I will certainly not cast out" (John 6:39). And now there were *many* of God's chosen ones in Corinth.

Ah, but you may be thinking of Jesus' statement in Matthew 22:14: "Many are called, but few are chosen." And you may have concluded that Jesus was teaching that only a few people are chosen for salvation — that God has really predestined almost everybody to condemnation.

But I think that if you look at the context in Matthew 22, especially the parable that precedes this statement, you will find that Jesus was referring to a very particular historical situation. He is not delivering an axiom true for the whole of history; he is telling the truth about the generation to which he came as Messiah. He came inviting Israel to the feast, the kingdom of God. But Israel refused to come. So he opened the feast to all the beggars and bums — the poor and the Gentiles come streaming in. Many *in Israel* were being called by Christ; but few showed themselves to be

chosen by responding to the banquet invitation.

So then, we should not be surprised to find that God has chosen many in Corinth to be saved, and that Paul can look forward to a rich ministry there. When God's final, comprehensive plan is a whole new creation beginning with his adopted children (Romans 8:18-25), it is not surprising that he has elected many to become his children — and that the success of our evangelism should therefore be guaranteed by God himself.

Assurance in our evangelism

God makes good his promises and his purposes. He doesn't cheat and he doesn't fail. Luke indicated that when he recorded the results of Paul's preaching in Asian Antioch: "And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). Here is the ultimate in evangelistic effectiveness. Here is evangelism that perfectly fulfills God's purpose for evangelism — the gathering in of those whom he has appointed for eternal life. Here is the historical outworking of Jesus' promise in John 6:37: "All that the Father gives to me will come to me."

If we read that verse in Acts 13 and then think, "It's too bad a few extra people didn't respond as well, a few people whom God hadn't chosen," then we show that we haven't understood God's purpose for evangelism. When Paul says that he is an apostle "for the faith of those chosen of God" (Titus 1:1), he is not wishing that he could have been an apostle for the faith of every single human being. There is no higher calling than to be a servant to the people on whom God has set his love!

Now Paul's ministry did have an effect on those whom God hasn't chosen for life: it was a savor of death to death

for them (2 Corinthians 2:6). But the joy of Paul's service comes from the confidence he has from the Master, that his preaching will be used to call God's chosen ones to faith. If our purpose in evangelism is the same as God's purpose in election, we save ourselves a lot of disappointment over what we think God should have done; and we move ourselves a little further from the temptation to water down our gospel (see 2 Corinthians 2:17) in order to gain a few more decisions. The success of our evangelism is grounded in eternity, in the very character and plan of God. Whom should we fear?

There is one final aspect of election that should move us to more eagerness in spreading the gospel. That is the fact that evangelism is part of the purpose for which we have been chosen. "You are a chosen race . . . that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

We have been chosen, *not* so we can sit back smugly with an eternal life insurance policy in our back pocket, but rather so we can announce to the world the goodness and grace of the God who set his love on us and called us to life in Jesus Christ. God's choice of us, like the rest of God's plan of redemption, finally results in the magnification of his glory. And "the praise of the glory of his grace" (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14) begins not simply at the return of Christ, but *here and now* as Christ's redeemed people announce far and wide the excellencies of their Savior!

Dennis Johnson is a Californian, graduate of Westmont College, and a senior at Westminster Seminary. He was among the group that attended Expo '72 in behalf of the seminary.

Already under a new confession

(Continued from page 131)

gives the power to the Assembly.

Quite a different matter is the question of the constitutionality of already functioning union presbyteries. Several presbyteries have merged with their United Presbyterian counterparts. A standing committee on judicial matters asked the assembly to request all the presbyteries to vote on the constitutionality of such union presbyteries. The mood of the assembly, however, was seen in its mocking laughter at a reminder that its own Judicial Commission had ruled, only three years earlier, that it regarded union presbyteries as unconstitutional unless approved by a three-fourths vote of presbyteries as is required for any church union proposal.

Under which confession(s)?

These unconstitutional union presbyteries also involve the General Assembly in a crucial, but unmentioned, question: Under what confession shall the Presbyterian Church, U. S. function?

For years it has been recognized that this church pragmatically has not been functioning under the strictures of the Westminster Confession. But this 1972 Assembly, at least in one sense, *officially* functioned under a different confession.

How so? Certainly not by the prescribed course of confessional amendment, but by the provisions of the unconstitutional action that created union presbyteries. Many of

these presbyteries sent delegates to the assembly who were not committed by their ordination vows to uphold the Westminster Confession. Seated as voting commissioners in this assembly were individuals whose official confession is the Confession of '67, of the UPUSA Church.

By seating these men, the assembly altered the functioning confessional basis of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. The Montreat Assembly of 1972, by officially recognizing the vote of these commissioners, smothered Westminster by embracing the Confession of 1967.

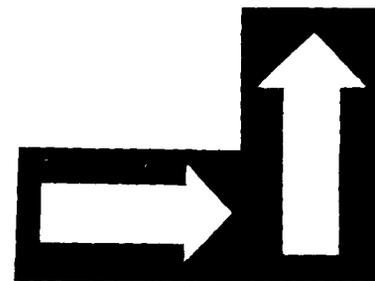
It is an idle point to note that the UPUSA still includes the Westminster Confession in its Book of Confessions. This is no more than a museum display of ancient historical documents. It is the last coat of paint that determines the color of the church steeple. What is it worth to pronounce the name of Jehovah while standing in the temple of Baal?

Let the truth be fully known. Let the church be honest with itself. The majority of the Presbyterian Church, U.S. has longed for something other than the Westminster Confession for years. But in Montreat in 1972, its General Assembly functioned, without a qualm, under a new confession.

Dr. Robertson, professor of Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary, was a commissioner from the Presbytery of South Mississippi to the 1972 Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.

THE GRACE OF GOD IN THE GOSPEL

*Excerpt reprinted by permission of
The Banner of Truth Trust.*



THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT FROM A MOST REMARKABLE LITTLE BOOK WITH THE TITLE GIVEN ABOVE. THE BOOK IS THE RESULT OF SERIOUS BIBLE STUDY BY FOUR UNDERGRADUATES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD IN ENGLAND. A MORE PERTINENT AND PRACTICAL DISCUSSION OF KEY DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH WOULD BE HARD TO FIND. THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST HAS DONE A REAL SERVICE TO THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTHS OF SCRIPTURE AND WHO REJOICE IN THE SOVEREIGN GRACE OF GOD.

"We would say from the start that we believe strongly in the majesty and sovereignty of God *and* in the clear Scriptural commands to preach the Gospel; and we would ask any who disagree with us to do so, not on the grounds of what they think we may imply, but of what we actually say."
— John Cheeseman, Philip Gardner, Michael Sadgrove, Tom Wright, in the preface to *The Grace of God in the Gospel*.

SALVATION ACCOMPLISHED

According to the divine plan of salvation, . . . the salvation of men is a triune work of Father, Son and Holy Spirit; the Father in election, and in sending his Son; the Son in redemption; and the Spirit in regeneration and sanctification. . . . In this plan of salvation, the end, to which the death of the Lord Jesus Christ was the means, was the reconciliation with God of his people, through their redemption; and this redemption and reconciliation were infallibly secured at the cross of Calvary. Here it was that, in his plan to save those on whom he had been pleased to have mercy, God's elect were redeemed from sin, and their eternal salvation rendered certain.

The *purpose* of Christ's coming is clearly stated in Scripture. He came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10); he "came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15); he came to "give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28), that whosoever liveth and believeth in him should never die (John 11:26); for these, who would believe in him, Christ gave himself "that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father" (Galatians 1:4). These, for whom he died, constitute his Church: he "loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27). . . . So we read in Titus 2:14: "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." In other words, all whom the Father had given to Christ (John 10:29), those whom God had chosen for himself, the elect, Jesus Christ undertook to redeem from the curse of the Law by being made a curse

for them (Galatians 3:13), by enduring for them the judgment of God which was their just due.

We are aware that the question "For whom did Christ die?" is a much controverted one; yet we hold that the atonement described in Scripture is *particular* — the Lord Jesus Christ died specifically for the elect, as their representative and substitute, to secure their salvation. As Christ came into the world to *save* sinners, so we hold that the Cross makes certain the salvation of all those for whom Christ died. To hold that he died for all men leads either to the conclusion that all men are thereby saved (which Scripture denies), or that his death only made salvation possible for all, and not certain for some (which Scripture also denies), or that his death was not substitutionary at all (whereas Scripture plainly says that it was). . . . For the moment, we want to justify our belief that Christ died for his Church, and not for the sins of each and every man.

Because particular atonement alone makes sense of the particular love of God the Father, and the particular calling and regeneration of the Holy Spirit. We have already stressed that God is sovereign in salvation [in earlier portions of the book]. This means both that he is its Author, and that he grants it to whom he pleases, those of his own choice. God's election is particular: he, for his own glory, had mercy upon whom he would, and passed by the rest, leaving them to their condemnation. The Holy Spirit's calling is particular: he works in the hearts of those whom God has loved, bringing them to new birth, granting them repentance and faith, and obedience to the Word of God. So too is the atoning work of the one Mediator between God and man particular: he died for God's elect that they might be justified. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that shall condemn? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:32-34).

Because the will of God is always accomplished. What he is pleased to purpose will surely come to pass. So, as it was the purpose of Christ's coming to save sinners, that is exactly what was achieved; and, by the cross, sinners are saved by being washed in the blood of Christ which was shed for them.

*There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.*

No one who believes the teaching of Christ concerning the condemnation of unbelievers would deny that the benefits of Christ's death — redemption from sin, reconciliation with God, forgiveness — are enjoyed only by those who believe; for only these are reconciled to God (Romans 5:10; Ephe-

"God's promises are indeed sincere, and given to all. But they express the connexion between faith and salvation, and demonstrate the duty of all men everywhere to repent and believe; they do not express God's purpose to save all men. . . . There is thus no contradiction, either in logic, or in Scripture, or in fact, between particular atonement and God's universal offer of salvation."

sians 2:16ff.), justified in his sight and sanctified (Hebrews 9:14; 13:12; 1 John 1:7; Ephesians 5:25-27), and adopted into his family (Galatians 4:4-5; Romans 8:15). But since these things were achieved at the cross, and partaken of by a certain group of people (who believe), so we maintain that they were intended for those by whom they are possessed (the elect), since otherwise the purposes of God in sending his Son become no more than pious hopes and vain wishes for the salvation of the world, for all mankind. The Bible sets forth a redemption that is *personal*. "The Son of God loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20) is the testimony of every born-again soul, because Jesus died that that soul might live.

Because the Church is the Bride of Christ (Revelation 21:2), whom he loves with an everlasting love. Here again, we see the forcefulness and deep meaning of the metaphor of marriage. The essence of the bride-bridegroom relationship is that the groom knows and loves the bride; so, when the Lord Jesus loved the Church, and gave himself for it, he was giving himself for a bride whom he already *knew* and cared for (Jeremiah 31:3; Ephesians 5:25; Song of Solomon 2:2). By his death, he delivered his bride from darkness, and brought her into the banqueting-house, the place of rejoicing, where the union takes place (Song of Solomon 2:4; Colossians 1:13; Matthew 25:10). If Christ died for all men, then he has a bride whom he does not know, and cannot therefore love with the particular love that every bridegroom has for his spouse.

Because God is just. All sin must be punished, but he does not require it to be punished twice over. The Lord Jesus Christ died as our representative, inasmuch as those for whom he died were themselves condemned, in his person, at the cross. When he died, they died in him and in his resurrection they passed from death to life (2 Corinthians 5:14-17). To all those who died, in Christ, on the cross, there is no more condemnation (Romans 8:1), because they have already been condemned; their Substitute "became sin" for them. God cannot, therefore, condemn a man for whom Christ died, for Christ paid the penalty for his sin once and for all. But, as all those, like Judas, who are condemned, are not saved, then Christ cannot have died for them, for God does not demand two payments for a man's sins, when, under the New Covenant, Christ's blood was accepted as a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice for that sin. If any one man perishes for whom Christ died, then God is unjust indeed. Jesus came to *save* sinners, and that is exactly what he does, by his death. . . .

It is our claim that this doctrine of particular, or, as it is often misleadingly termed, "limited" atonement, alone does justice to the free saving grace of God, and is the only atonement to be found in his Word. If we say that Christ died for all men, "then we must also say that 'Christ died that any man might live if . . . and then follow certain conditions of salvation.'" Yet, the grace of God is free (Romans 3:24;

6:23) and unconditionally given to helpless sinners. "Christ's death ensured the calling and keeping—the present and final salvation — of all whose sins he bore. That is what Calvary meant, and means. The cross *saved*; the cross *saves*."

This, the saving-power of the blood of the Lamb, is why the cross stands at the very centre of the Christian faith.

Paul was able to say "The Son of God loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20), and every true believer who has received assurance of his salvation may also say this. Why? Because he knows God has *saved* him. It is the zenith, not the beginning, of faith to appropriate to oneself this verse. No one who has not *first* repented and trusted in Christ to save him, may legitimately believe that Christ died for him personally.

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EDITOR
JOHN J. MITCHELL

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Letters

Prescription for "Once-ers"

Some thoughts concerning the article on "The Once-er" and following responses: There appears to be substantial justification for the truth that mere presence at all of the worship services does not necessarily denote a real hunger and thirst after righteousness. If our attendings of worship and prayer services are an end in and of themselves, instead of a means for a closer walk with Christ, it would seem to indicate that we have become legalistic and have forsaken our first love.

On the other hand, an individual who does not desire to worship, to pray and to fellowship with the rest of the body of Christ, is certainly not hungering and thirsting after righteousness either. If Jesus Christ is truly first in our lives, it would seem to follow that we would desire — rather than feel obligated — to gather with Christ's disciples for worship, prayer, and fellowship.

Perhaps we should emulate the early church which, according to the record in Acts, spent much time together because they truly loved one another. Where worldly possessions meant little, their chief desire was boldness for Christ that the gospel might go forth. May God grant us grace that, like the early church, our one desire might be to live for Christ. I suspect if we were less concerned about ourselves and more concerned about our Savior, the problem of the "Once-er" would vanish.

James Simmermon
Pittsgrove, N. J.

November, 1972

Warns of AACS errors

I make no doubt that you put John Van Dyk's "Why I Support the A.A. C.S." in the August/September *Guardian* so as to bring the issue of the AACS heresy before your readership. Unfortunately, publishing this statement without comment advertises the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship, rather than opening the eyes of your readers. I have a deep love for the Orthodox Presbyterian Church's witness due to my love and respect for Dr. Machen. I have a deep concern for its future since I have fifteen children and grandchildren attending its churches!

Dr. Van Dyk opens his support with a statement on politics. I ask, who among us old Machenites ever taught that political conservatism is *Christian*? We always demanded of ourselves and of those whom we could influence that in politics and in every phase of life, Christians should act according to and in willing obedience to the *Scriptures* and *Commandments* which God therein reveals as a means of blessing to all peoples unto "a thousand generations."

Dr. Van Dyk nowhere lets his reader know that in a basic statement on the Bible, an AACS spokesman states unequivocally: "To keep the law, according to the Bible, is not a matter of observing a lot of rules of do's and don'ts, something negative that spoils your fun. . . ." (A. De Graaf, *Understanding the Scriptures*, p. 29). If this does not plainly say that the negative commandment "Thou shalt do no murder" is not a law, what does? On page 35 we read, "Even the ten words . . . none of them can be literally followed or applied today, for we live in a different period of history in a different culture." Imagine! We do *not* have to refrain from "bearing false witness" because our period is different, or from adultery since ours is a different culture!

Dr. Machen separated from the (former) Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., because *they* denied the present applicability of the Bible, teaching that it was man-made and had error thereby.

So when Dr. Van Dyk says that "Christ is the answer," of what Christ is he speaking? Is it one of his own, or of AACS making, if we are to believe what De Graaff says? "We cannot deduce a history of the people of Israel from the Old Testament . . . just as

(Continued on next page)

HAVE YOU HEARD?

Have you frequently heard the words "Gift Annuities"?

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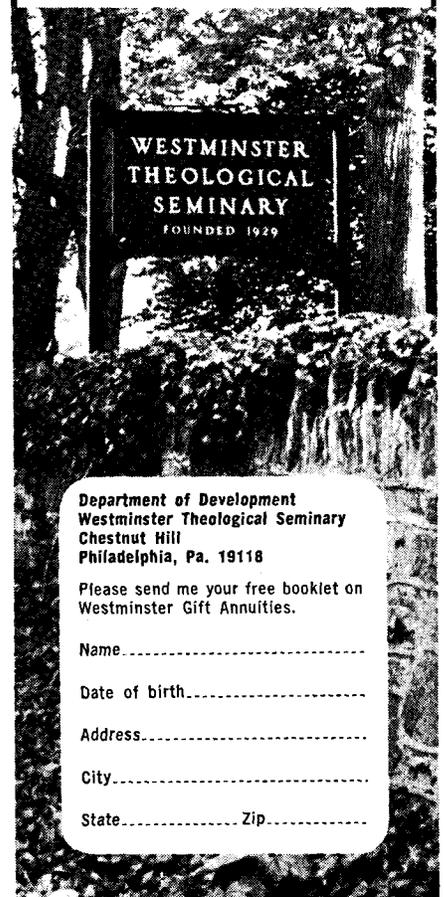
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(Continued from page 137)

little as we can reconstruct a life of Jesus from the Gospels"! (page 11). Surely then, the Christ of the AACS and his Words cannot be found by reading the propositional words of the New Testament! Let every reader notice clearly that in his article Dr. Van Dyk specifically rejects the "ideas of the Bible previously filtered through Reformed doctrine and creeds." But it was to promote *that* idea of the Bible that Dr. Machen led in the founding of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church—that is, on the basis of the Westminster Confession.

Those creeds and that confession are a safe guide to the understanding of Scripture since they were with great care established on the statements of the Bible itself. But for this, Dr. Van Dyk substitutes the "Holy Spirit's guidance" apart from "prooftexts" which he rejects.

This is in full accordance with the repeated statements of AACS teachers, heard by this writer, who reject the laws of the Bible but use their sinful minds to "discover" "Creation law" (which must be discovered *apart* from the revealed law of the Bible which God gave us to guide us safely). This is nothing but a new *humanitarianism* where man creates the law himself and God's revealed law is thrown aside!

Beloved friends of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, rise up and defend your heritage — the Bible — for the defense of which you were founded. In it *alone* is God's speech of Revelation and by which *alone* can we know of the Christ, who is His Word of Redemption, and wherein *alone* we learn (in Genesis, John 1, Colossians 1:16, 17) that Christ's was the Word by which the worlds were made.

Robert K. Rudolph,
Professor of Theology
Reformed Episcopal Seminary
Philadelphia, Pa.

Ed. note: We hope Dr. Rudolph will be somewhat reassured by the continuing critique of AACS teachings in the October *Guardian* and in this issue also.

Thanks for AACS articles

We want to thank the *Guardian* for printing a true witness to the AACS in its August/September issue. Please note that there is no disagreement between those articles and the editorial which follows. Olthuis and Zylstra's call for a school creed is not for that to *replace* the Reformed standards, but rather *supplement and complement* them with *specific* statements bearing on education.

As they put it: "The church creeds are more general and wider in scope

than educational creeds. They make the confession of Christ-believers for *all of life — thus also for the school*" (p. 105). The more general confession of the church as the Body of Christ, which acknowledges His sovereignty over all, and the authoritative rule of the Bible, is the basis for the more concrete expressions of His Body at work.

Mr. & Mrs. John R. Hamilton
West Hyattsville, Maryland

Ed. note: The sentence you quote would seem to indicate that there is no disagreement on this point. But other sentences in the article imply that, for Olthuis and Zylstra, the "church creeds" are for the church at worship, and that Christian schools need separate creeds of their own not so much as supplements to "church creeds" but as parallel elaborations of God's Word. They seem to see the "institutional church" and the Christian school as separate aspects of Christ's Body, each with its own creed, each subject to no intermediate creedal standard, but each under Scripture applying God's Word to their respective concerns.

I admit there is difficulty in reconciling some of the statements in the article with other statements, at least for me. And I hope there may be some further clarification of just this point from the authors.

J. J. M.

REFLECTIONS ON RECENT HEADLINES

IN THAT DAY shall this song be sung
in the land of Judah:
We have a strong city; salvation
will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.
Open ye the gates, that the righteous
nation which keepeth the truth
may enter in.
Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace,
whose mind is stayed on thee:
because he trusteth in thee.
Trust ye in the LORD for ever:
for in the LORD JEHOVAH
is everlasting strength.
—Isaiah 26:1-4.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto
you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.
Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be
afraid.
—John 14:27.

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth
eternity, whose name is Holy:

I dwell in the high and holy place, with him
also that is of a contrite and humble spirit

I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to
him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith
the LORD; and I will heal him.

But the wicked are like the troubled sea,
when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire
and dirt.

There is no peace, saith my God, to the
wicked. —Isaiah 57:15, 19-21.

THEREFORE being justified by faith, we have
peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

By whom also we have access by faith into
this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope
of the glory of God.

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled
to God by the death of his Son, much more,
being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

—Romans 5:1-2, 10.

The Changing Scene

HENRY W. CORAY

For preachers only

Remember Bacon's sly sidelight on writing that "some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested"? Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones' latest contribution to the church comes in the form of *Preaching and Preachers* (Zondervan) and we would promptly place it in the category of those select few books "to be chewed and digested."

The former pastor of the Westminster Chapel in London, an erstwhile medical doctor, now retired, delivered this series of lectures at Westminster Seminary in 1969. Those who heard Dr. Lloyd-Jones preach will recall that in his sermons he keeps himself very much in the background and for obvious reasons: "We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord." In *Preaching and Preachers*, however, this master of the expository homily personalizes his lectures as he draws from his rich experience in the pulpit, and this also for obvious reasons. The result is the opening up of horizons that will rejoice, startle, encourage, humble and challenge the minds of preachers old and young.

Dr. Lloyd-Jones' literary style is pure but not irksome, dignified but not stuffy. He is a man of very decided convictions and lets the world know exactly where he stands, both doctrinally and ecclesiastically. He tells you, for instance, why he is for doctrinal preaching, good music, fitting church architecture, and why he is against public altar calls, radio preaching, the giving out of sermon topics, and pulpit "professionalism." There is rugged honesty and also a strain of droll wit in his counseling. He turns the searchlight into the heart of the minister and causes him to do a great amount of healthy squirming. (He did to me!)

You pastors will probably take issue with certain details of what he has to say. The writer knows that and has anticipated your responses, but he says it anyway—and you respect him for it. In general the book is sheer unadulterated delight. My advice is that of Spurgeon on Matthew Henry: "Sell your coat if you have to, but by all means secure Henry." Even so.

A master's magic touch

The Puritan pulpiteers may have had their weaknesses, but they also had their strong points. Not all were dry, pedantic and long-winded. Thomas Manton was one who could show the twentieth-century preacher how to light up a sermon with pithy and pungent phrases. Here are some nuggets from his gold mine:

"God seldom lights a candle but He has some lost coin to seek."

"There is a clock with which Providence keeps time and pace, and God Himself sets it."

"When the sun is gone, all the candles in the world cannot make it day."

"It is of advantage to others when we pray vocal prayers, for it quickens them to the same exercise, as one bird sets all the rest to chirping."

"The best of God's people have abhorred themselves. Like the spire of a steeple (the higher it rises toward heaven the

smaller it becomes) we are least at the highest. David, a king, was yet like a weaned child."

"The first appearances of evil are many times modest. There is a chain of truths; the devil takes out a link here and there, that all may fall to pieces."

"A wolf does not worry a painted sheep, nor does the world a mere professing Christian."

Again, to quote Spurgeon: "There is no excuse for a sermon not having two characteristics: it should first of all be Scriptural, and second it should be interesting."

James Daane and the gospel

In the October 6 issue of *The Banner*, official organ of the Christian Reformed Church, the Rev. James Daane of Fuller Theological Seminary analyzes the contents of Bill Bright's "Four Spiritual Laws." In a clear and penetrating but eminently fair way, Daane points out serious flaws in the message set forth by the president of Campus Crusade for Christ. That message, the writer thinks, is thoroughly Arminian, watered-down, and a serious stricture from the true gospel of Christ.

Interestingly, this same Fuller professor, when the *Confession of '67* was officially adopted by the United Presbyterian General Assembly, enthusiastically hailed its theological patterns. Writing in the *Reformed Journal*, Daane assured Presbyterians that, in the light of their new confession, they need not worry about sound leadership from now on. Paradoxically, the *Presbyterian Layman*, the voice of conservatives in the United Presbyterian fold, vigorously attacked the *Confession of '67* for its defections from the historic Christian faith.

Daane has succeeded in straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel. Anemic and watered-down as is Bright's testimony, certainly the *Confession of '67* is far more inimical to the foundations of the gospel of God's free grace in Christ. "Consistency, thou art a jewel."

THE OLD CHINESE PHILOSOPHER

I do not understand how you Americans reason.

I attended a public meeting at which

a rabbi, a Catholic priest, and a Protestant clergyman,

Were each to present his respective position.

First the rabbi explained Judaism,

And the moderator said,

"Perfect, sir—an absolutely foolproof system."

The priest spoke next and said the chairman,

"Unanswerable, Father; positively unanswerable."

Finally the Protestant lectured,

And the man with the gavel opined,

"Unassailable, indefectible; you are completely right."

Then a gentleman in the audience, with puzzled look,

Stood up and addressed the chair:

"I do not understand you," he said.

"Three men present three contradictory theologies;

"Yet you say each one is right. How do you explain it?"

Answered the moderator with a bright smile,

"And you, sir; you are right too!"

The Word of God in the Cosmonomic Philosophy

JOHN M. FRAME

[Serious criticisms have been directed against various teachings of those, particularly in North America, who have followed and developed the "philosophy of the cosmonomic idea" first formulated in the 1920s by Herman Dooyeweerd in the Netherlands. Perhaps the most serious criticism is that leveled at the "cosmonomic" view of the "Word of God."

[In the first portion of this article, appearing in the October issue of the *Guardian*, Professor Frame pointed out the distinction made by many of the "cosmonomists" between "the Word of God in its full and actual reality and in its restricted sense as the object of theoretical thought." In the "full" sense, God's word is seen as a power or process directed to the heart of man, and not subject to theoretical analysis.

[In this concluding portion of the article, the focus is on the "restricted sense" of God's word, particularly on the various "forms" in which that word is said to come to us. (As in the first portion, we have not capitalized God's word except when quoting others, or when it is used as a title for Scripture.)]

II. THE FORMS OF THE WORD

We have seen how the cosmonomic thinkers speak of the word of God in the sense of the total process of God's making himself known to the heart of man. We have seen that in their view the word in that sense is essentially a "power," incapable of theoretical analysis, characterized as a message of creation, fall, redemption, and love. We must recall, however, that Dooyeweerd distinguishes sharply between the word in this "full" sense and the word as "object of theoretical thought." We must therefore discuss the views of the cosmonomic thinkers concerning the word in this *second* sense.

The "media" of revelation

In the "process" of revelation, God makes use of certain *media*: the created world, prophets, apostles, written scripture.¹ Even Christ is a "medium" of revelation in one sense, for he "relays" words from the Father to his disciples (e.g., John 17:8). These are ways in which the divine speech gets from God's mouth into the human heart.

As we have seen, on the cosmonomic view none of these media is equivalent to the whole process, and therefore each must be sharply distinguished from the "full" word. These media are, after all, *created* things (except, presumably, Christ in his divine nature), and therefore point beyond themselves to God who speaks through them, and to other

elements in the "process."² Further, these particular created things (unlike the "full" word), because they are created and experienced in space and time, may properly be studied in a theoretical way.³

On the other hand, the *message conveyed* by these media is the word of God itself. Therefore the media are not only media; they are "forms" of the word.⁴ The *message* of a prophet or of the written Bible is the very word of God. What they say, God says.⁵ Therefore, the cosmonomic thinkers often attribute to the *forms* of the word those qualities belonging to the "word as event," for in a real sense, those forms *are* the word.

Thus to hear the "form" is to hear the word of God; to disregard it is to disregard the word. Not only the word as event, but also the written Bible is addressed to the "heart."⁶ Scripture, like the "full word," is a "word of power."⁷ It too, is in one sense, incapable of scientific analysis. It too, is a message of creation, fall, redemption, and love.⁸

The cosmonomic thinkers say nothing unusual about Christ as the word of God. But we should look a bit more closely at their treatment of two other "forms":

a. The word in creation

This form of the word is very important to the cosmonomic philosophy. That philosophy speaks often of the "law-word,"⁹ the word spoken *to* creation and *through* creation to man.¹⁰

"General revelation," of course, is not a new idea. What is unusual in the cosmonomic construction (in comparison with traditional Reformed thinking) is the use of general revelation to discover divine commandments or norms beyond those in Scripture — divine commands by which the human conscience may be bound. J. M. Spier, for instance, tells us that a study of art will reveal aesthetic "norms."¹¹ To transgress such a "norm" is sin. Examples of "sins" against aesthetic norms are the building of "churches in the Roman style" or the writing of "a book in the language of the 17th century."¹²

As I see it, the Bible does not speak of any "word of God in creation." It is true that according to Scripture God speaks *to* creation and creation obeys (Psalm 147:15ff., etc.). It is also true that God reveals himself *through* creation (Psalm 19, Romans 1:20). But that revelation through creation is *not* in words and sentences, and it is dangerous to pretend that it is. You cannot "read" a tree as you read a book. The revelation in creation is *indirect*. Furthermore, the idea that the human conscience may be bound by extra-scriptural "commandments" is in direct contradiction to 2 Timothy 3:17, and repugnant to all Christians who have struggled

against the bondage of human theories and traditions.

b. The word in Scripture

As we have seen, for the cosmomic philosophers Scripture is both a form of the word of God and a created "human artifact."¹³ Its "basic theme" of creation, fall, and redemption may not be scientifically analyzed; that theme affects the heart of man by the pure sovereign action of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴

As a created "human artifact," however, as an object in time and space, Scripture *can* be studied theoretically. And the first thing such study teaches us is the basic character of this Bible-artifact — it is a "book for faith."¹⁵ The point seems clear enough on the surface. What is the Bible? Not a science text, not a mere literary creation, not a mere history, not a book of mere ethical lessons. Its purpose has to do with our *faith* — our primary assurances of life.

So far the view seems uncontroversial. But the implications derived from it are a bit shocking. Dooyeweerd, for instance, tells us that because the Bible is a faith-book, the "days" of Genesis 1 *cannot* be chronological! They must be *faith-days*, whatever that might mean.¹⁶ Schrottenboer, too, tells us that because the Bible is a faith-book, its doctrine of election cannot be "causal." And for good measure, he adds that the numbers "three" and "one" in the doctrine of the Trinity are in some sense non-mathematical numbers!¹⁷

It certainly seems that to call the Bible a "faith-book" in this scheme is to adopt a most unusual system of Bible interpretation! I must say that the concepts of "faith-days" and "faith-numbers" are virtually unintelligible to me. In any case, the cosmomic thinkers at this point appear to be imposing a philosophical scheme on Scripture which has no basis in Scripture itself and which has very little to do with the biblical meaning of faith. Few of us, surely, ever dreamed that such a scheme was involved in our simple confession of the Bible as a "book for faith."

A sharply curtailed Scripture

This approach that would see the Bible as only a "faith book" seems to permit the sciences and philosophy to work in relative autonomy. Since the Bible contains only "faith-concepts," or since at least all biblical statements about God must be read as "faith-statements" in the peculiar cosmomic sense, the Bible as "artifact" can say nothing much of direct interest to scientists and philosophers.

Dooyeweerd often says, to be sure, that scientists and philosophers must respect the "central basic motive" of Scripture¹⁸ (i.e., creation, fall, redemption); but he seems to regard the detailed teachings of Scripture as of little interest to non-theologians. It thus seems that scientists and philosophers in their theoretical work can pretty much ignore the Bible, except for an occasional nod toward the "basic motive." The cosmomic movement, which once appeared to many of us as a movement *opening* the Bible to all fields of learning, now appears rather to be *closing* the Bible.

The Bible, further, is even more "closed" by those cosmomic thinkers who regard Scripture as directed almost exclusively to a past age. Schrottenboer, for instance, discusses some of the problems we face in applying biblical commandments to the modern cultural situation, and comes to the conclusion that even the ten commandments

are not normative for us *in the same way* that they were normative for the people of Moses' day. No, the decalogue is not the absolute changeless law, it is rather an *adaptation* or expression of God's law for a particular

time and place.¹⁹

But if the decalogue is only an "adaptation" of law, where do we go to find *the law itself*? Schrottenboer answers: "The great and only comprehensive commandment is the love commandment, both to God and to our fellows." How do we decide, however, *how* God wants us to "love" in *our* particular time and place? Schrottenboer says that the particular injunctions of Scripture are "illustrations of how we should do it." Imitating the biblical writers therefore, "The church today must do for its age what the apostles did for theirs."¹⁹

Scripture, in other words, does not tell *us* what God wants *us* to do, except in those passages where the love-command is stated. Outside of those passages, the Bible presents only examples of how ancient man applied the love-command to his circumstances with God's help. The Bible gave to *ancient man* the definitive interpretation of the love-command; but it does not give *us* such an interpretation. To get the latter, we must write *our own* Bible! It may, of course, be an uninspired Bible, in comparison with the original Bible which was inspired. But it must be a Bible, in the sense that it will replace the old one in determining God's specific will for *us*. We must, like Moses and Paul, derive specific commandments from the law of love; but *we* must do so without benefit of inspiration!

The "law-word" — most basic form

Arnold De Graaff, who holds precisely the same view, tries to be a bit more helpful. He says that we have something to help us today besides the love-commandment and the biblical "illustrations." We also have the "law-word."²⁰ It appears that for both De Graaff and Schrottenboer, the "law-word," the creation-word, is the most basic form of revelation. After all, even the law of love can be found in creation!²¹

Scripture, therefore, tells us nothing that the "law-word" doesn't tell us. Scripture is merely an application and illustration of general revelation! Some might object, indeed, that Scripture at least goes beyond general revelation in that it contains the gospel of salvation. But think about that in relation to what Schrottenboer and De Graaff have said. What is the gospel? It is the offer of eternal life conditioned upon a *command* to repent and believe in Christ. But Schrottenboer and De Graaff have told us that all biblical commands are merely applications of the law of love. Thus it would seem that even the command to repent and believe in Christ is an application of the law of love for a particular time and place. Even the gospel, then, if this cosmomic view is carried out consistently, becomes a mere adaptation of general revelation. And Scripture loses all uniqueness of content.

In my view, this is a horrendous distortion of the truth. Just think! On this scheme, everything except the law of love is culturally relative! Everything except the law of love could lose its validity as the result of cultural change! At some future date, murder might be a *good* thing to do! Perhaps by the year 2000 it will no longer be in accord with the law of love to command all men everywhere to repent and believe in Christ! Perhaps by the year 2500 the law of love might require us to worship four or five gods instead of the one God who spoke and is spoken of in the ancient decalogue!

No! to this detraction of Scripture

To all of this, the orthodox Christian can only answer

"No!" To be sure, there are difficulties in applying biblical commands to the modern age. No one ought to be so naive as to say that we apply these commands in all cases precisely the way the ancient Israelites did. But difficult as these problems may be, these difficulties do not justify the absurd suggestion that only the law of love is permanently valid. The law of love holds a central place in Scripture; but nothing in Scripture even remotely suggests that this command is the only permanent one. We need not fear that God will require us to commit adultery at some time in the future! We need not fear that some day there will be two ways of salvation!

The cosmonic scheme, in summary, detracts from Scripture in two ways: (1) It detracts from the *sufficiency* of Scripture by binding us to extra-scriptural norms derived from the "law-word." (2) It detracts from the *authority* of Scripture by accepting only the love command as permanently authoritative, and by restricting that scriptural authority to the so-called "realm of faith." This philosophy, therefore, turns us away from Scripture where God *has* spoken, and turns us toward an alleged "law-word" full of human speculations.

It may be that these thinkers are not aware of the implications of their scheme. They may not see the seriousness of the problem. I do not question the heart-commitment of any of these men. But a philosophy that turns men away from the written Word of God and which binds them to human philosophical speculations is a philosophy that should be decisively rejected by the Reformed community.

¹ There is no fixed number of media recognized in the movement. The most common list is simply "creation, Christ, Scripture"; cf. Olthuis and Zylstra, "Confessing Christ in Education," *International Reformed Bulletin* (Summer 1970), pp. 41f. (reprinted in *The Presbyterian Guardian*; October 1972, p. 120). Others add "preaching"; cf. Schrottenboer, "The Bible as the Word of God," pp. 7, 10f.

² Cf. especially Schrottenboer, "The Bible, Word of Power," *International Reformed Bulletin* (Jan.-Apr. 1968), pp. 1-4.

³ Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought*; pp. 136, 143; Schrottenboer, "Theology, Its Nature and Task" (a mimeographed paper), pp. 4f.

⁴ See the references in notes 1 and 2 above on the concept of "form."

⁵ Members of this school do not say very much about biblical inspiration, and sometimes (as we shall see in subsequent discussion) they almost seem to have forgotten about it. There are, however, occasional affirmations to the effect that the Bible is the word of God. So De Graaff, in preface to *Understanding the Scriptures*, affirms, by citing the Belgic Confession, that he believes "without doubt all things contained in the holy Scriptures." Note also Zylstra, "Thy Word Our Life," pp. 66f.; J. Olthuis, "Ambiguity Is the Key," *International Reformed Bulletin* (July 1969), p. 8; Olthuis and Zylstra, *op. cit.*, p. 41 (p. 120 in the *Guardian* reprinting).

⁶ Schrottenboer, "Orthodoxy and the Bible," p. 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*; cf. Schrottenboer, "The Bible, Word of Power."

⁸ Dooyeweerd, *op. cit.*, pp. 136; cf. pp. 41f., 125, 144, noting how the Bible is mentioned.

⁹ Olthuis and Zylstra, *op. cit.*, p. 41 (p. 120 in the *Guardian*), seem to be saying that the "law-word" is the most basic "form" of the word of God. It is, however, hard to distinguish in this article (and in other cosmomic literature) between the "law-word" and the "word-as-event." They do appear to *define* the word of God as "the very law-order of creation," but later they speak of creation as one of three "forms" of the word. It is at least clear that Olthuis and Zylstra think that the "law-word" is the most neglected "form" of the word today, and that it is the form most in need of publicity. Cf. also Olthuis, "Ambiguity," pp. 15f.

¹⁰ Schrottenboer, "The Bible, Word of Power," pp. 9f.

¹¹ Spier, J. M., *An Introduction to Christian Philosophy* (Philadelphia, Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1954), p. 88.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 119f.

¹³ Schrottenboer, "Orthodoxy, Etc.," p. 4.

¹⁴ Dooyeweerd, *op. cit.*, p. 42. I must confess, however, that I do not see how this distinction between the "basic theme" of Scripture and (presumably) the *details* of Scripture can be maintained. How does Dooyeweerd know that the Spirit brings only the "basic theme" of Scripture to bear upon our heart? Why is it only the "basic theme" that is incapable of theoretical analysis? If the whole Bible is God's Word, then why not say that the "message" of Scripture cannot be analyzed at all? Then the only "sciences" involved with Scripture would be those sciences studying the human environs into which the message came.

¹⁵ Dooyeweerd, *op. cit.*, p. 143; Schrottenboer, "Theology, Etc.," p. 4.

¹⁶ Dooyeweerd, *op. cit.*, pp. 149ff.

¹⁷ Schrottenboer, "Theology, Etc.," p. 6. Note also De Graaff, *op. cit.*, p. 10, where he says that to ask whether the events described in Scripture "actually happened in every detail and in the order in which they are presented is to ask the wrong question." De Graaff doesn't say so, but I presume he would elaborate by saying that such questions are not "faith-questions" in some sense. At any rate, De Graaff also rather severely, in my view, restricts those subjects concerning which Scripture can "speak to us," and such restrictions seem fairly typical of the cosmomic movement.

¹⁸ Dooyeweerd, *op. cit.*, pp. 145, 148.

¹⁹ Schrottenboer, "Orthodoxy, Etc.," p. 3; emphasis his.

²⁰ De Graaff, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

²¹ Dooyeweerd, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

John M. Frame is a professor in systematic theology at Westminster Theological Seminary. The material in this article has been prepared and published not to "put down" any of the writers mentioned above. It is only just to point out that much of what has been written on the "Word of God" by "cosmomicists" lacks the consistency of a carefully developed formulation.

Frankly, however, the tendencies visible in what has been written would lead to dangerous and unacceptable conclusions if consistently developed. It is our hope that open discussion — before this developing approach becomes rigid — will serve to clarify and improve the understanding of the vitally crucial importance for a right view of Scripture.

The Elders of the Church

— the submission due to them

LAWRENCE R. EYRES

In any society of free men, the rule of law is only possible as long as the vast majority of its members are habitually law-abiding. When respect for authority breaks down to the extent that larger and larger numbers defy existing rule, the only remaining alternative to anarchy is a police state. And when this state of affairs prevails, men are no longer free.

The same is true of the church. All those received as communicant members of a Presbyterian church must take this or a similar vow: "Do you agree to submit in the Lord to the government of this church and, in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life, to heed its discipline?" (*Directory for Worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, V, 5). A close look at this question reveals two things that everyone taking this vow has bound himself to do:

1. The newly received member has said that he accepts the form of Presbyterian church government, at least at the local level, as agreeable to the government of Christ as Head of his church because he agrees to submit to the government of "this church" in the Lord.

2. Even more significant is his agreement to submit "to the government of this church." The government has a particular form to which the communicant assents; but government is more than a form. The government of any church is the men who rule over it in the name of Christ.

In Part 3 of this series of articles [in the May issue of the *Guardian*], I attempted to show from Scripture that, while only God makes elders, yet he has not withheld from his people the gift of discerning what men are so gifted and spiritually equipped to rule over them. I also pointed out that the obvious reason why this choice must remain with the members of the congregation is that it is they who must yield them that scriptural submission. Therefore the members of the local congregation, above all others, have a personal interest in choosing those to whom they must submit!

The yoke of Christ

When one joins a truly scriptural church he takes upon himself the yoke of Christ. Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29). In this our Lord said two things pertinent to our discussion:

1. In plain language he said that he himself wore a yoke in lowliness and meekness. What was that yoke? It was doing his Father's will in that great ministry in which he "humbled himself, and became obedient unto . . . the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8). Included in this yoke was his submission to Joseph and Mary in his boyhood home at Nazareth—most humbling for the Son of God! (See Luke

2:49, 51.) He even paid his temple tax and yielded meekly to the judging of Caiaphas the high priest during his trial before the Sanhedrin (Matthew 26:63). In all of this our Lord showed an amazing example of meekness under his Father's yoke, even to the God-given authority of sinful men who were over him as a human being and a son of Israel!

2. But it is his yoke that Jesus invites us to take and wear as our own with the same lowly submission that he demonstrated. That is the meaning of the words, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me." And what is that yoke? Surely it includes conscientious and glad submission to those gifted men that—along with the giving of the Spirit himself—our Lord poured out upon the church from his exalted place at the Father's right hand (cf. Ephesians 4:8, 12). Make no mistake about it: those pastor-teachers are empowered to rule us! (See 1 Timothy 3:5; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-4.)

Here is where we can see a crying need for reform in our Reformed churches. There is too often a gross failure to take the rule of elders seriously. While we are aware that it is the duty of elders to rule and to teach, we seem to be reluctant to agree that it is our duty to obey and to learn. This deficiency of serious regard for the prerogatives of the elders arises from two things: a failure in the exercise of *personal oversight* of the flock by the elders, and a failure of consistent submission to the official preaching of the Word from the pulpit. Let's take a look at these in order

Personal oversight by the elders

I have already dealt with the subject of the ruling elder's responsibility to exercise ongoing and personal oversight of the individual members and families of the church. But this is not being regularly done in a great many of our churches. And the failure has contributed to an attitude on the part of church members that personal oversight is only given in unusual cases. Consequently, when one elder (or perhaps two together) calls on a family for a formal visit there is a tensing up that greatly inhibits the elder's ministry to that family. If succeeding calls are infrequent, this tenseness and foreboding never leave the situation.

What is needed is a great deal of loving and patient instruction. The elders first need to be instructed as to how they may bring their visitation ministry faithfully and disarmingly. The whole church needs periodic pulpit exhortation so that the visitation of elders will come to be accepted and then welcomed as an extension of Christ's own loving care for his people. It seems to me that presbyteries and other agencies of Reformed denominations might well sponsor conferences and workshops dealing with this.

Let me say again that the first reason that congregations

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tend to hold a light attitude toward the rule of elders over them is due to the lack of persistent, prayerful, and loving exercise of personal oversight by the elders themselves. I long for the day that members of our churches will come to welcome, and expect as their due, regular and frequent visits from their ruling elders that are truly spiritual, catechetical, and pastoral in the finest sense of that word.

Submission to official preaching

The other area crying for reform in our Reformed churches is the lack of conscious and consistent submission by confessing members to the official preaching of the Word from the pulpits. In New Testament times believers had no option as to which congregation of worshipping Christians they were privileged to attend. There was only one church within walking distance. Failure to sit under the ministry of the Word in that particular assembly meant exclusion from the public worship of God.

Today we have hundreds of churches to choose from. And not all of these are apostate. There is even a wide choice in some areas of churches within the same denomination. Now it has often been said that Americans are "joiners." This is also true of American Christians. We need but little encouragement to join some church. But it is not uncommon, in our best churches, to find someone missing in his own church only to discover that he is now going to the church down the street that recently called a new pastor. It never seems to have crossed this church member's mind that he has any obligation to give notice of his intention to go elsewhere to his own spiritual rulers, much less to give honest reasons for so doing!

I need to be clear on one thing right here. Our duty to the government of our particular church does not forbid the visiting of other churches. There are joint services and special programs where this sort of thing is healthy and helpful to our need for Christian fellowship. Furthermore, there are times when a Christian needs to rethink his relationship to his own church. There are circumstances where one *ought* to change churches. And it is not always necessary to sever one's existing connections before considering another one. But in such cases, the right thing to do is to give notice, with honest reasons, for the contemplated change.

But unadorned "church hopping," pure and simple, is another thing altogether. Here there is evident a lack of submission to the rulers of the church to which one is bound by solemn vows. And this equals a lack of submission to Christ, the Lord of the church. To "agree to submit in the Lord to the government of *this* church" means to accept the total ministry of that particular congregation and the rule of those men raised up by the Lord of the church to teach and rule in that church. To leave the ministry of the Word in that particular congregation, without due cause or notice, is to forsake the ordinance of Christ.

It is Christ who has ordained rule in his church and ordained particular rulers in particular churches. Do you think he will smile upon anyone who takes his ordinances so lightly? Could this not lead to the terrible sin of hardness to the gospel? And should that be the result, is it not a judgment from God?

For any believer who has chosen to worship God as a member of a particular church, all other things being as they should, the official preaching of the pastor of that church is the word of Jesus Christ to that believer. The church member, according to the ordinance of God, owes submission of ears, of mind, and of heart to the content of his pastor's teaching.

Submission to the whole ministry

One other aspect of this same question needs brief mention. There is no alternative "Plan A" or "Plan B" offered to confessing members of Christ's church. It's not as though upon joining the church an option is given of being a "oncer" (Sunday morning only) or a "twicer" (morning and evening). Obedient submission is due to the total public ministry of the church within the limits of one's ability to be there.

If the Lord's Day is a whole day, and if two worship services on the Lord's Day are not only according to the need of the people but also an honest approach toward keeping the day holy, then one who is truly submissive to the rule of Christ in his church will want to be present unless prevented by providential circumstances.

Christ does not exercise his rule over the church *immediately*, but *mediately*. Therefore, he rules his church through those men he has gifted and given to the church for that purpose. Every confessing Christian ought to be under the rule of Christ by placing himself under the rule of the elders of a particular church. To take that rule with lack of seriousness and solemnity is to do despite to the rule of Christ himself! And remember: the fact that these men of God are themselves sinners—which they are—no more relieves us from submission to them than the boy Jesus was relieved from submitting to Joseph and Mary while living in their home at Nazareth.

Further articles in this series will deal in detail with the qualifications Christ has established for those who are to rule in his church. Readers interested in having the whole series may order missing parts (by number, please) at a cost of 40¢ per part, postage paid.

The Rev. Mr. Eyres, missionary-pastor in Dayton, Ohio, in a letter to the editor, remarked that these are not "do as I do" articles, but "do as I say" discussions of the Scripture's teaching on this vital subject. Or, to put it another way, our example is not this or that pastor or session, but is our Lord himself whose yoke we are urged to take, and whose Word we are to obey.