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*The Journal  
of  
Christian Reconstruction*



Symposium on Evangelism

## THE JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTION

This journal is dedicated to the fulfilment of the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28 and 9:1—to subdue the earth to the glory of God. It is published by the Chalcedon Foundation, an independent Christian educational organization (see inside back cover). The perspective of the journal is that of orthodox Christianity. It affirms the verbal, plenary inspiration of the original manuscripts (autographs) of the Bible and the full divinity and full humanity of Jesus Christ—two natures in union (but without intermixture) in one person.

The editors are convinced that the Christian world is in need of a serious publication that bridges the gap between the newsletter-magazine and the scholarly academic journal. The editors are committed to Christian scholarship, but the journal is aimed at intelligent laymen, working pastors, and others who are interested in the reconstruction of all spheres of human existence in terms of the standards of the Old and New Testaments. It is not intended to be another outlet for professors to professors, but rather a forum for serious discussion within Christian circles.

The Marxists have been absolutely correct in their claim that theory must be united with practice, and for this reason they have been successful in their attempt to erode the foundations of the non-communist world. The editors agree with the Marxists on this point, but instead of seeing in revolution the means of fusing theory and practice, we see the fusion in personal regeneration through God's grace in Jesus Christ and in the extension of God's kingdom. Good principles should be followed by good practice; eliminate either, and the movement falters. In the long run, it is the kingdom of God, not Marx's "kingdom of freedom," which shall reign triumphant. Christianity will emerge victorious, for only in Christ and His revelation can men find both the principles of conduct and the means of subduing the earth—the principles of Biblical law.

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A CHALCEDON MINISTRY

GARY NORTH

*Editor*

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## Editor's Introduction

*The Journal of Christian Reconstruction* has several purposes. One of these is to provide scholarly introductions to important social and economic problems, from a Christian point of view, and aimed at intelligent laymen. It is the hope of those associated with Chalcedon that a comprehensive world-and-life view based on the Bible will steadily replace the erroneous presuppositions and conclusions of the various humanisms of our day—errors shared, unfortunately, by many Christian laymen and most certified scholars in Christian academic institutions. I would regard this function of *The Journal* as positive, but indirect in its influence. We assume that ideas have consequences, so we spend money and time in developing an intellectual foundation based on a creed. This creed is the outworking of the great creed of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. When the tenets of this creed, including its concrete applications in society, become part of the world's "climate of opinion," the influence of later journals, newspapers to come, and other innovative Christian media, will be direct rather than indirect. We are confident—critics might choose to substitute the word "arrogant"—that it is the general perspective of the Chalcedon movement which will be universally understood, and almost universally accepted, at some date in the future. Basic to our philosophy of life is the assumption that there will indeed be a future for our theological position to become triumphant in. Most of our critics have abandoned faith in any such future, in time and on earth, which is one reason why our movement will prosper and theirs will not. If we are correct about the future, we will gain the time we need, while our critics will find themselves sidetracked for lack of capital. The building of a capital base, including spiritual and intellectual capital, is a long-term project. Our critics are not building any such base.

Another purpose of *The Journal* is to reply to the published criticisms of our movement. Perhaps more important, *The Journal* must speak to the unpublished criticisms: the innuendos, the false inferences, the rumors, the quotations out of context, the manufactured quotations, the lies—in short, the misrepresentations, deliberate and otherwise, that people are encountering in the highways and byways of the world of faltering Reformed Baptism and stagnant Presbyterianism. Our critics seem confident in their summaries of all the evils the Chalcedon movement supposedly promotes. Yet we find, again and again, that the majority of our most outspoken critics have failed to think through the implications of their own positions. Occasionally, they become consistent, as evidenced by the systematic and virtual overnight

switch of certain Reformed Baptists into Unreformed Anabaptism. They got a taste of biblical law, and spit it out, along with any conceivable hope of social and historical relevance. But on the whole, our critics have neglected their homework, not simply in finding out what the Chalcedon-associated writers have said and are saying, but even in researching their own historical and ecclesiastical traditions. This is why we published three volumes on Puritanism. This is why we included articles of historical interest in the issue devoted to the millennium. The heirs of the Reformation seem to have forgotten a considerable portion of their historical and theological heritage. We like to remind them of forgotten material—or in some instances, suppressed material.

So when the critics begin to “shoot from the lip,” I stand prepared to produce an entire issue, or more if necessary, to clarify our position, both for the benefit of those who are not being told the whole story, and for the embarrassment of the critics. When it comes to the critics of the Chalcedon movement, *The Journal's* contributors are ready and willing to take them on, with considerable documentation. I shall continue to use *The Journal* for this important task: *to stuff their mouths with footnotes*. To choke them, if possible, into ulcer-producing silence. To send them scurrying back into the shadows. And, if possible, to lead them to a productive knowledge of the world-and-life view of the Bible. I really do not expect to convert many of our critics to our position, but I think it might be possible to get them to shut up, at least in public.

This issue of *The Journal* is devoted to the subject of evangelism. It has long been a criticism of Calvinists in general, and Presbyterians in particular, that they are relatively unconcerned with evangelism. There is an old saw concerning the evangelization of the American West in the nineteenth century, that the Baptist preachers went on foot, the Methodists followed on horseback, the Presbyterians waited for stagecoaches, and the Episcopalians arrived by train or steamboat, whichever offered greater luggage space. When it comes to realistic, systematic, organized programs of evangelism, the critics maintain, the Reformed churches have produced very little. The programs are few, and the converts are fewer.

Although the Chalcedon perspective draws on several important theological traditions, it is true that our presentation of a law-grounded postmillennialism has only recently been developed in a more systematic and comprehensive fashion—about seven years, if you date it by the publication of Rushdoony's *Institutes*. Critics have nevertheless not hesitated to lodge this familiar criticism against the members of this movement: we are not really interested in evangelism. We publish books and newsletters, but we have never placed much confidence on the traditional, face-to-face evangelism that is recommended by New Testament examples, and which has been the basis of American church growth. Despite the

newness of our movement, the critics have gone on the offensive. They complain that Chalcedon has not become truly evangelical. This would be even more discouraging if the critics had large churches or influential, widely read periodicals at their disposal in which they could publicize their criticisms. Fortunately, they don't.

If we are to become successful in promoting our perspective within the existing church setting, the ministers who are beginning their pastoral ministries will have to develop programs of evangelism that really do bring in new converts. There are few ministers today who are committed to our position. They are mostly younger men with newly formed congregations. This is as it must be, even if it isn't what it should be. A new movement starts almost from scratch, and the younger men, who have not built a ministry in terms of an older, more traditional perspective, must become the pathbreakers. Thomas Kuhn has shown how younger men and "amateur" outsiders (scholars uncertified by the existing, monopolistic academic guild) have always been the source of intellectual revolutions, which he calls paradigm shifts.<sup>1</sup> Kuhn demonstrates his thesis by using data taken from the history of science, but a similar phenomenon can be seen in any academic discipline. Calvin was in his late twenties when the first edition of the *Institutes* appeared. Crick and Watson, the discoverers of the DNA molecule, the greatest breakthrough in biology in the twentieth century, were both unknown young men, Crick a graduate student in research who had not earned his Ph.D., and Watson a postdoctoral student without a teaching job.<sup>2</sup> Young men innovate.

Anyone with even a glimmer of knowledge about the origins of dedicated ideological or religious movements knows that gaining converts is what these movements must do in order to survive. Evangelism is the very heart of such movements. In many of them, such as the modern Communist movement, evangelism is central to the training of new converts to the faith, an efficient way to get them motivated to devote time and energy in studying the works of Marx, Lenin, and other Communist theoreticians.<sup>3</sup> The feedback between evangelism and the production of more effective literature is a feature of any growing ideological movement. While the theoreticians may not be the guys on the street handing out tracts or selling copies of the Party newspaper, the leaders are always interested in getting

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1. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). Cf. Imre Lakatos (ed.), *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge University press, [1970] 1974). For an assessment of the Lakatos volume, see John W. Robbins' review in *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, III (Summer, 1976).

2. For the story of the discovery of DNA, see James D. Watson, *The Double Helix* (New York: New American Library, [1968] 1969).

3. On Communist training techniques, see Frank Meyer, *The Moulding of Communists: The Training of the Communist Cadre* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, [1959] 1967).

the message out and the converts in. Show me an author in a new, pathbreaking movement who isn't interested in increasing the sales of his books, and I'll show you a leader who has been bought off by an offer of tenure in a "respectable" academic institution.

The Chalcedon writers have not been made that kind of offer recently.

In other words, the charge that the Chalcedon movement is not interested in evangelism borders on the imbecilic. It flies in the face of the most obvious motivation of all: *self-interest*. Rushdoony gets to be the patriarch of the movement, Bahnsen gets a market for his presently unsalable books, Jordan gets students for his seminary, and I get to sell everyone newsletter subscriptions. (If demand goes high enough, I'll even raise the subscription price.) Why wouldn't we be interested in evangelism?

Well, the critics may reply, maybe Chalcedon would like converts, but nobody in the movement has bothered to develop a workable program for getting any. Nobody is out in the highways and byways knocking on doors and handing out tracts. To which we reply: we certainly hope not. Door-knocking, except under very limited conditions, fails to produce new people in the pews. What this issue of *The Journal* provides is a series of suggestions for the reconstruction of Reformed evangelism. We need a new theology of evangelism. We need a new approach to evangelism. In fact, we need several new approaches, since those that are popular today are grounded on rival theologies.

There are some basic presuppositions that had better undergird a program of Reformed evangelism. *First*, God saves men by His sovereign grace. Any theology which allows man a "piece of the action" in salvation—initiating it or autonomously responding to it—is a false theology. No program based on the autonomy of man will do much to build up Reformed churches. *Second*, evangelism involves being converted to Someone, and there is no such thing as a Someone who is not personal. God is a Person, Jesus Christ is a Person, and the Holy Spirit is a Person. This Person is going to make demands on His followers. He demands unconditional surrender, and there is never a peace treaty without provisions.<sup>4</sup> Evangelism must not be constructed on a theology which offers a pseudo-peace treaty to fallen men that contains no terms of surrender. We do not serve forces; we serve a Person. Our surrender must be personal and covenantal. *Third*, without a concept of time, there can be no evangelism. Evangelism programs will be shaped by the evangelist's concept of time. It will not do to construct Reformed evangelism programs in terms of man-shortened chronologies. *Fourth*, any successful evangelism program must recognize the personalities of the listeners and the historical context of the appeal.

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4. See my book, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory* (Tyler, Texas: Geneva Press, 1981).

Men come with varying capabilities, varying backgrounds, and varying insight into theological matters. No program of evangelism that isn't based on the idea of maturing in knowledge is realistic. No one-shot package, no single tract, no one appeal is going to bring men into a full understanding of the gospel. One-shot soul-winning systems are generally promoted by churches holding a limited view of God and His kingdom.

Eventually, the question of proper evangelism brings us to the question of the nature and role of the institutional church. One of the reasons why Calvinists have not been successful in evangelism is that they have no agreed-upon doctrine of the church. Fundamentalists have not struggled with this problem, since they are usually members of independent churches run by strong leaders. People come to hear this one leader. But Reformed theology teaches a more restricted view of the minister and his role, and Calvinist churches have not generally been independent congregations that are dominated by a dynamic pastor. The doctrine of total depravity militates against assigning this kind of authority to anyone. But the failure of the Calvinist churches to develop institutional alternatives—decentralized, family-oriented alternatives—to the “charismatic” pastor system has left them without a strong institutional base for evangelism. Responsibility which is lodged nowhere in particular seldom leads to systematic programs of any kind, let alone evangelism, with all its inherent difficulties. The pastor doesn't trust the elders, so he seeks discipline only from his peers, at least in the Presbyterian system. The presbyteries are filled with dissension, because too many responsibilities are being placed on the shoulders of an essentially impersonal bureaucratic structure. The elders have little confidence in the members, and the members have little or no conception of what constitutes a competent elder, which is understandable, since so few church members have ever come into contact with one. How could we expect a successful evangelism program to emerge from such an institutional structure? A successful program of Reformed evangelism will appear only after men in Reformed churches return to a biblical doctrine of the institutional church.

Another problem for Reformed evangelism is that Reformed theology has for almost 70 years focused on evangelizing people out of this world and into the next. The institutional church has been regarded as a sort of train depot or embarkation point between earth and heaven. The church has not been seen as a kind of boot camp for training men for conquest. The fundamentalists have always had livelier depots—*toe-tapping music, better architecture, fewer intellectual demands, bigger gymnasiums, expensive church camps, larger youth programs, and enough income and members to create a really nice retreat atmosphere.* If you were an unbeliever, which church would catch your attention? If you were a new convert, and you had been told that Jesus is sending the world to hell (Do not pass Go, Do not

collect \$200), where would you prefer to spend your time while waiting for the Heaven Express to depart? If you were convinced that the greatest hope of all is a heavenly flight, would you rather go in a 747 or a DC-3? Calvinists have been offering DC-3 flights for two generations. They have been telling people to put "salt in their oatmeal," not because they were training men for combat, but just because it is supposed to build character, and every man needs character when he is signing up for a losing earthly battle.

What we need is a program for evangelizing people out of this *culture* and into the next—a culture which serves as a down payment for that final, perfect culture, the new heaven and new earth. They will eventually leave this world for a time, temporarily, but only to return after the resurrection. The world they leave behind, when their heirs take over, will steadily approach the character of the world they hope to re-enter. Their own efforts will help to advance the development of the world they hope to inherit. Capital invested on earth pays off in both heaven and earth, if it is invested in terms of God's covenant. We have seen the appalling misallocation of spiritual and material capital by Christians precisely because they have been told that the pay-off is only in heaven. The basis of this investment program is a modern variation of ancient Greek philosophy: *neoplatonism*.<sup>5</sup> They have invested in pie in the sky, rather than in meat and potatoes on earth, followed by pie a la mode in the sky, followed by non-fattening 8-course meals in the new heaven and new earth. They have not understood that capital investments in earth-located programs, when they are governed by laws that have their origin in heaven, produce triple results: on earth, in heaven, and in the new heaven and new earth. By focusing only on heaven, Christians have wasted enormous quantities of capital in every sphere of life.

Godly evangelism must be future-oriented evangelism—evangelism which expects long-term pay-offs, in time and on earth, as well as in heaven and after the resurrection. Godly evangelism expects comprehensive results, both personal and social. Godly evangelism invests its scarce economic resources on the assumption that compound interest will lead to an ever-growing cultural transformation, until the earth is filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:9).

**R. J. Rushdoony** focuses on the relationship between dominion and evangelism. Constantly, the critics of the Chalcedon movement complain that our emphasis on dominion has obscured or even thwarted the evangelical impulse. Not so, argues Rushdoony. "Evangelism speaks to lost men in a lost world, and it summons all such to a new life in Jesus

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5. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Flight from Humanity: A Study of the Effect of Neoplatonism on Christianity* (Fairfax, VA: Thoburn Press, [1973] 1978).

Christ, and to a new creation in and through Him.” Since the world is fallen as a direct result of man’s rebellion, we must preach the reconstruction of the world through the effects of evangelism. The new creation is not limited to the hearts of men, any more than the fall of man was limited to the hearts of men. “Evangelism calls for repentance, a total re-direction of life and thought. It places men under the dominion of the Lord and then orders them to exercise dominion in and under Him. Having been made a new creation, they are in faith and obedience to their Savior-King to make of their sphere and the whole world a new creation.” He then draws upon his experience as an inner-city missionary to the Chinese, and as a missionary to the American Indians, to demonstrate his point. He shows clearly what a defective, truncated message of salvation can do to thwart the reign of Christ, when presented to men who are not the products of a Western culture which was itself the product of Christianity.

**Kenneth Gentry** presents a comprehensive case for a comprehensive gospel. We live in an era of humanism, but faith in humanism is being shaken today by the effects of humanism. Christianity offers men certainty. Humanism offers a philosophy that officially is opposed to certainty in an evolutionary universe. The humanist system is a religion, which he illustrates with some fascinating quotes; it is also a system which seeks power. Modern fundamentalism has proven itself ineffective in challenging humanism philosophically, in every sphere of life, since fundamentalism is pessimistic concerning the possibility of success, in time and on earth. It is also hampered by its implicit or explicit antinomianism. By limiting their view of the extent of the great commission, he argues, modern evangelicals have failed to challenge effectively the religion of our age, humanism.

**Herbert Bowsher** follows through on an idea introduced by Gentry. Fundamentalism is hampered by the doctrine of the “any-moment coming” of Christ. He then turns to Old Testament passages to show that Christ’s “coming” can refer to His coming in judgment, in time and on earth, against His enemies—not in person, but through the preaching of the gospel and the extension of His kingdom through the efforts of His people. Christ came in judgment when the city of Jerusalem was destroyed, for example. Most of these “comings” are not literal. They do not refer to His second advent. Christ has not come in final judgment, or to set up an earthly kingdom under His visible rule, in the past 1900 years. If Paul waited to see this kind of any-moment appearance of Christ, then he waited in vain. Fundamentalists for over a century have also been waiting in vain. (Most revealing is the fact that fundamentalists teach simultaneously that there are no intervening events separating us from Christ’s imminent return, and also that prophecy is being fulfilled in our day. But if prophecy is being fulfilled, then it has been a false doctrine that no intervening events lay between Christians and their deliverance at Christ’s second coming. You cannot

have it both ways, yet modern fundamentalists have proclaimed it both ways.) The great commission has required and will continue to require **time**. By teaching a doctrine which implies that time has almost run its course, fundamentalists are thwarting the culture-changing effects of the great commission.

The late **Francis Mahaffy** spent most of his years in Christ's calling as a missionary to North Africa. He argues strongly for a Reformed evangelism which does not de-emphasize theological doctrine. The evangelical's emphasis on momentary conversion, meaning a public display of faith—"going forward," etc.—is misplaced. God's sovereign power in converting men is our only hope, not manipulation or emotionalism. Modern evangelicalism has spent a lot of money and held giant rallies, but the long-term effects have been minimal. He criticizes some factions of the Reformed camp for their equally dangerous failure to rely on the Bible to provide the standards for Christian reconstruction. We cannot rely on slogans to change the world, whether evangelical or Cosmonomic. We should not compromise with either approach.

**Jefferson Duckett** was a successful fundamentalist pastor early in his career, and he has continued his successes at building churches from scratch since his conversion to Calvinism in the early 1960's. He stresses the need of Calvinists to be gentle in presenting the hard truths of the faith. Their job is not to alienate people unnecessarily. The success of the fundamentalists to a large degree can be attributed to their one-sided emphasis on soul-winning, but we should imitate them in committing ourselves to a similar program of bringing the good news of Christ to the lost, except we should also preach all of the good news, not just a narrow, almost otherworldly version of it. We should "keep it simple," except when pressed for more detailed explanations. We must learn to match simplicity and accuracy. He strongly recommends face-to-face evangelism. He has used a unique system in which laymen schedule appointments for him to visit those with whom they have shared the gospel. People are not to be pressured, but the opportunity is to be made available to speak with the pastor privately, for an hour one evening. Family efforts to build up local churches are better than mass-evangelism campaigns, he concludes.

**James Jordan** focuses on family hospitality as a long-neglected means of sharing the gospel. Instead of going door to door, where the visitor is "on the other man's turf," as well as in the presence of possibly rival household gods, the family should open its home to others at meetings, study groups, or similar activities. By inviting people in to see a disciplined Christian home, the family opens up the visible outworking of the gospel to pagan neighbors. Of course, this means that Christian wives must get their homes clean, and Christian fathers must discipline their children. We must abandon our emphasis on the primacy of the preacher. Man is a unity, and the



Christian home is a good place to demonstrate this to the lost. He offers some specific suggestions for reforming church services to aim at the whole man. He also calls for a decentralized ecclesiastical structure to replace today's bureaucratized denominations.

My contribution is a call to restructure door-to-door evangelism. Such evangelism has been a massive, continuing failure. It has wasted the time of the door-knockers, and it has resulted in almost no church growth. It has failed in Reformed circles for decades. What is wrong? First, people want results, not theology. You cannot show them results and implications standing in a doorway. Second, people are suspicious of people who waste their time by pitching them a new religious message in their doorways. Third, and most important, is the enormous waste of energy involved in locating the one man who responds, and never going back to the 99.9% of those who do not respond. No profit-seeking advertising program would ever waste all the time, effort, and money that is spent by door-knockers. What we need to do is to gather data on all those who do not respond, in order to direct practical, bread-and-butter messages to them after the initial contact has been made. We need neighborhood canvassing, not neighborhood witnessing. We need sound, optimistic theology; we need the culture-transforming message of the gospel. We cannot communicate all this standing in a doorway, stealing other people's time, infringing on their hospitality. We need to make use of modern technology, too. I offer suggestions here.

Lewis Bulkeley challenges many of the sacred cows of modern church growth programs. He asks pastors to ask themselves: "Should this church grow?" The answer is not always affirmative. Some churches should be allowed to die off, or be sold to another denomination or group. He outlines criteria for making this decision. He also offers young pastors some guidelines for spotting a dead-end church that will grind him up and spit him out. *Evangelism must learn to cut its institutional losses.*

## I. SYMPOSIUM ON EVANGELISM

### Evangelism and Dominion

ROUSAS JOHN RUSHDOONY

Before any analysis of *evangelism* can be made, it is necessary to distinguish it from revivalism. The two are too often confused in popular thought. Revivalism presupposes a Christian community; such a community has left its "first love" (Rev. 2:4); seems to be alive, but is dead (Rev. 3:1); has grown lukewarm (Rev. 3:15-16); or the like. Revivalism appeals to the church or Christian community to give again the priorities which belong only to Christ. Revivalism today functions best in the "Bible Belt" areas, in well established churches which have been beset with indifference, and in like settings. The basic message of true revivalism is "Return!" It is a summons to rebuild the neglected altars, and to restore the first love.

This distinction is necessary, because too commonly evangelism and revivalism are not only confused in practice but in thought as well. There is no wall of separation between the two, but there is a very real difference.

*Evangelism*, from the Greek *euangelion*, originally meant a reward for good news, and, later, the good news itself. This good news is that *the triune God proclaims the Kingdom of God as open to men through the salvation made possible by Jesus Christ and His atoning death, resurrection, and ascension* (Acts 15:7; 20:24, 25; I Peter 4:17; I Cor. 13:1-3). It is the gospel of God and His Kingdom (Mark 1:14; Rom. 1:1; 15:16; II Cor. 11:7; I Thess. 2:2, 9; Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14); the gospel proclaims God's Son, Jesus Christ, (Rom. 1:1-3; Mark 1:1; II Thess. 1:8; Rom. 15:19; II Cor. 4:4); God's grace (Acts 20:24); our salvation (Eph. 1:13); and more. The gospel or evangel is *good news* to a world under sentence of death. God calls out an elect people to establish His Kingdom, on earth and eternally (Matt. 6:10).

*Revivalism is a summons to a faltering Christian fellowship or community. Evangelism is a proclamation to the lost world.* There is thus a very important distinction between the two. When they are confused, the ungodly are approached on theologically false grounds at times. Thus, some unregenerate men are told, "God loves you," when in fact God's judgment hangs over all who are outside of Christ; a revival summons to a first love is theologically unsound as an approach to the unregenerate. Revivalism thus has a narrow function, a restoration of a first love and an early zeal and obedience. Evangelism speaks to lost men in a lost world, and it summons

all such to a new life in Jesus Christ, and to a new creation in and through Him. Evangelism calls for repentance, a total re-direction of life and thought. It places men under the dominion of the Lord and then orders them to exercise dominion in and under Him. Having been made a new creation, they are in faith and obedience to their Savior-King to make of their sphere and the whole world a new creation.

Let us examine this meaning and the difference by looking first of all at missions among American Indians. There are today fewer Christians among American Indians than in 1890, and fewer now than in 1940. The reasons are several; a few can be cited. *First*, many of the missions have been taken over by modernism as the sponsoring, old-line churches have lost the faith. All too many missions have become social service centers, not churches. *Second*, among the Bible-believing groups, Arminian and Calvinist, the emphasis has been more on urban groups, and less on America's mission fields, although this is changing. *Third*, revivalism has sometimes actually harmed mission work among American Indians. The emphasis of a revivalist is on getting people to come forward and confess Christ, or sign a decision card. An Indian audience will respond, but not for religious reasons. For most American Indian groups, *face* is very important. To see a man, especially an important man, lose face is painful. A white evangelist who has come from a distance puts his "face" on the line in appealing for decisions. Among many Indians, it is simply a courteous act, if a revivalist is getting no response, to save his face by going forward. They are later embarrassed if anyone assumes that their "decision" meant something. (This same kind of face-saving response is common to many cultures. Many revivalists, who assume that their world tour had remarkable results, are ignorant of this fact. The more important their advance publicity makes them to be, the more important it is to be gracious and save his "face" by responding. The foreign revivalist leaves, the show ends, and the decision-makers on the whole return to their ways.)

The situation I have described I experienced in the 1940s and early 1950s, on an American Indian Reservation, and with contacts with other reservations. My impressions have been confirmed by foreign missionaries, in terms of a variety of fields, many times since.

There is still another problem. On a mission field, the difference between Christian and pagan is a very real, sharp, and deep one. It has dimensions which are not normal to a country with a Christian heritage. In a pagan culture, for any person to break with that society by becoming a Christian is in very many cases to be regarded as an outcast and as the living dead. The treatment received can be brutal: family members disown the convert and refuse to speak to him or her. There are acts of sabotage to his property, his farm, or his livestock. He can be treated by law as a criminal in some countries because of his conversion. Attempts are made to seduce him from the

faith: if he was previously an alcoholic, the only friendly word he receives is an invitation to drink. If he was a lecher, then a prized girl is offered to him, and the woman convert is subjected to like temptations. Their past weaknesses are deliberately exploited.

At the same time, a defective evangelism brings the new convert into an empty world. He is born again, and the hope of heaven and eternal life is set before him, but what lies between? For the white American Christian, who has friends, clubs, relatives, television, church activities, and more, the problem does not exist, although perhaps it should. What does the convert do who has none of these? When I first arrived on the American Indian Reservation, the response of some Indians who were interested was blunt: "Wait until it is time for me to die; if I become a believer now, what is there for me to do until my time to die?"

This problem has been created the world over by limiting evangelism to conversion. Without any question, regeneration and conversion are the starting point; there is no true evangelism without them. But the gospel is the gospel of the Kingdom of God, of our regeneration in Christ to serve Him and to fulfil the creation mandate (Gen. 1:26-28; 9:1-17; Joshua 1:1-9; Matt. 28:18-20). *We are not saved for our sakes, but for the Lord's sake, for His Kingdom and purpose.* The convert must be the nucleus of a new culture, a Christian culture, and he must be trained for that purpose.

But this is not all. When Paul speaks of being made all things to all men (I Cor. 9:19-23), he did not mean that he compromised the faith, but rather that he *related* the faith to the problems of men and their specific cultures. To the Jews, he spoke in terms of their cultural problems and God's unchanging salvation. To the Gentiles, those outside the Law, he presented the total relevance of the Gospel to their context and problems. To illustrate, in the late 1930s and early 1940s, I was a missionary among the American Chinese. The ancient Chinese culture was very strong among all, old and young. Basic to that culture was a radical relativism, and absence of absolutes. It was easy to interest a Chinese youth in the faith, more difficult to get an enduring commitment. On one occasion, after a brilliant young man, a university graduate with two degrees, had dropped out completely after about six months of total and enthusiastic involvement in the church, I saw him, to ask the reason for his absence. His very sincere answer, in brief, was this: he was grateful for what Christianity and the church had done for him; it had met an important need at a critical stage in his development; he had strongly recommended Christianity and our church to several friends, because he was convinced that it would answer their problems. I in turn realized that for him conversion was an important psychological, not a supernatural fact, and that Christ and His church had met a purely humanistic need for this young man, and no more. His response to the absoluteness of Christ's lordship, dominion, and claims was negative; no

absolutes existed in his world of yang and yin. (We can thus say that, perhaps Marxism, in God's providence, is God's purgation of China's ancient religious relativism. While Marxism is in essence also relativistic, in practice political communism is an absolutist faith and bitterly hostile to alien relativisms and absolutisms alike. Marxism could well be the prelude to the conversion of China. It will destroy yang and yin and prepare the way for Christ, the truth.).

What should be clear by now is that evangelism cannot be pietistic. It then ceases to be evangelism. When a man is born again, he is born out of one world into another; he becomes *an alien* to his old world. (It is time for Christians in the United States and Europe to recognize that they are aliens in their own homelands, which are now humanistic and not Christian.) The pagans recognize this fact and insist on it. Gandhi, for example, treated all Christian converts in India as foreigners, as Scott, in 1946, made clear:

Recently some prominent Indian Christians, who are second to none in their desire for a free nation, visited Gandhi to discuss the position of the Christian community in the developments towards independence. They spoke to the Indian leader in Hindu, but he, surprisingly, replied in English. When they were leaving, he explained, "I always speak English to foreigners." Gandhi's remark is an expression of a widespread idea which nationalist non-Christians may persist in. The matter could not be better stated than it was put by P. D. Devanandan, Indian delegate to the World Council of Churches at Geneva. He said: "Wherever there is an extreme of nationalist fervor, Christians may expect suspicion. It's the price we pay for the fact that the Christian Church is a *world* family."<sup>1</sup>

Scott's perspective was modernist, but he did see the problem to a degree. But the Christian Church is more than a world family: it is a supernatural family and Kingdom.

There is a point here which is very important to keep in mind. In pagan lands, Christians are treated as *foreigners*, because, by virtue of their conversion, they do become foreigners. They have another faith, obey another God and another law, and they have a very different fellowship. Thus, in 1936, February, when in the extreme south of Travancore, India, two million Ezhava, listed as an "Exterior Caste," decided in their executive council, by a vote of 26 to 4, to go over as a whole to Christianity, the civil authorities imposed disabilities on them, and increased Hindu privileges, with Gandhi's approval. This slowed down the movement greatly.<sup>2</sup>

In the early centuries of the Christian era, the church often brought entire peoples into the faith en masse, as witness the Saxons and Russians. Rulers

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1. Roland W. Scott, "Christians in a Free World," in *The Christian Century*, October 16, 1946, p. 1243.

2. A. M. Chirgwin: *Under Fire, The Christian Church in a Hostile World*, pp. 91-93. London, England: Christian Student Movement Press, 1941.

marched people to a river and had them baptized wholesale. We read too little about such events, because they embarrass modern churchmen. There was a point to these wholesale baptisms, which we need to recognize (which does not require our agreement). Charlemagne ended human sacrifice among the Saxons by giving them a choice between baptism and death; they chose baptism. This virtually ended all human sacrifice; better than many moderns, the Saxon warriors knew that baptism is a covenant fact; for a covenant man to violate the laws of his God is a fearful sin, incurring God's especial wrath. Thus, the baptized men had to become defenders of the faith and learners in it.

But, even more, early missionaries tried to speak to kings and governors, as well as to all others in society. *The covenant man had to have a covenant society for the full life of faith.* Hence, to change the man was the prelude to changing the society, to placing covenant man in a covenant society. In brief, missionaries and rulers recognized that religion is "a package deal": it must command the whole man, his whole life, and his whole society. It would have been unthinkable for rulers to be converted without converting the entire nation, worship, laws, family life, education, everything.

This unity of life hampered missions during colonialism. Colonialism is a much-abused aspect of history and was far from evil, although sometimes very far from good also. Its assets and problems were political and economic. While Christian missions had a limited and often grudging protection from the colonial powers, the local religions, for imperial reasons, were supported, revived, and often established and financed. Thus, in West Africa, under colonialism, the British administration's prejudice against Christians was considerable, and its favoritism to Islam pronounced. Broken-down mosques were repaired; army native tribal enlistees were forcibly circumcised into Islam; and courts were open on Sundays and closed on Fridays.<sup>3</sup>

The colonies expected the religion of the ruler to be required. For the imperial power to support one of the local faiths, that of the local imperial power (usually Islam in much of Africa), was to cast doubts on their adherence to Christianity. On the American Indian Reservation, it was an obvious fact that it was rare for a federal employee to attend our mission church. The Indians knew this was true elsewhere, on other reservations also. As a result, they concluded the Christianity was a "cast-off" religion, and like clothing in an old missionary barrel, a "hand-me-down" from the white man. I saw this vividly in November, 1944, at the funeral of a Shoshone. The body was in a tent, for the mourners to view, and to wail. A fire was burning in the yard, and people were warming themselves around

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3. Samuel M. Zwemer: *Islam, A Challenge to Faith*, p. 172. New York, N.Y.: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, (1907), 1909 revision.

it, as they partook of the funeral feast. An old Shoshone medicine man began to speak (in Shoshone), saying in part:

Let us go back to the old ways, the good old ways. Worship the wolf, for he is god. The wolf is our creator and grandfather, and the coyote our brother. Even the white man's science tells us that we come from animals. Don't listen to Christianity: even the white man doesn't believe it now. They have proved it is false, and the Bible wrong. Jesus is dead, and the church is dead: worship the wolf our Father.

A stubborn attitude was: if Christianity is not good enough for the white man, why should it be any good for us?

The only way to answer this was from Scripture. The God of Scripture, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, sits in judgment on all nations. The prophets judged kings and priests, and all men, both high and low, are under Christ as Lord. There is no salvation except in and through Him, and no power nor dominion that must not submit to Him. The judgment of God is on the white man, and on the Indian as well, on all men, for their sins, and all are summoned to believe and obey, or be judged. The reservation during those years saw some progress, because the Christians, less perhaps than one in fifteen, began to exercise dominion and to rule in tribal government.

Evangelism presents the total claims of the triune God upon man and his whole life and world. Man is not saved merely to enjoy heaven but to serve the Lord with all his heart, mind, and being (Matt. 22:35-40), and his neighbor as himself. This means seeking *first* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Our salvation thus has a purpose beyond ourselves: it is the Kingdom of God and our service to Him. It is a restoration to our dominion calling (Gen. 1:26-28; 9:1-7; Ps. 8:6; Joshua 1:1-9; Matt. 28:18-20). It begins with regeneration, it continues with sanctification and dominion.

The world needs evangelization. In the United States, the dechristianization of life is daily apparent in the newspapers and television. Once a week, most papers have a church page, and television sells some time to "religious broadcasters." The Bible and Christ the Lord should be the governing principle of the editorial page, of all the news' focus, and of all television programs. Instead, humanism is. The forms of Christianity remain; the substance of the life of the Western world is humanistic.

During World War II, Denmark, occupied by Nazi Germany, reacted to the invaders by means of a slow-down, to limit productivity. After the war, the slow-down continued. Because the old "Protestant work ethic" had become an empty form, the change brought in by the war was not reversed: the culture and its humanistic hedonism asserted itself. The same sloughing off of the old forms of Christianity has taken place throughout the Western world, and the nations are in crisis, and weak-willed in the face of it.

Humanism has eaten out the heart of Christian Evangelism by its insistence on a faith for man's welfare and benefit, not man in the service of a

faith. It is not surprising that Islam is popular with many Western scholars, nor that it is in resurgence as a result of the contacts with humanism. In Islam, there is no atonement, no demand for a change of character, and no moral purification, only ritual purity.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Orthodox Judaism, with an emphasis on ritual purity, is beginning to recapture ground lost to liberal Judaism, which has a more insistent (if humanistic) sense of responsibility.

In our day in particular, as humanism all over the world decays and crumbles, a full-orbed Christian evangelism is a necessity. As Latourette noted, "The formation of the Roman Empire was both preceded and accompanied by another factor which facilitated the spread of Christianity—the disintegration of existing cultures. This disintegration had begun as early as Alexander."<sup>5</sup> A like disintegration gives Christianity a great opportunity. *It is not a post-Christian era we face, but a post-humanistic one.* We have (in Europe) been in a humanistic culture since c. 1660; in the United States, at least since 1860.

As God and the Christ are rejected, the state has been deified; now that false god is failing men. A true evangelism will call attention to idolatry, and war against it, in the spirit of Elijah.

Bakunin held, "If God exists, then man must be a slave." What he meant was that man could not then be god. All man-centered thinking and faith must be purged by and from true evangelism.

All quietism and pietism must be replaced by an active faith. In Old Russia, a group, related to the Old Believers, was named the Gapers, "who on Holy Thursday stood with their mouths open expecting angels to feed them."<sup>6</sup> Too often, false Christianity evades action by the blasphemous subterfuge, "I'll pray about it." True prayer accompanies action; it does not replace it.

Lenin said, "Deny God and you can remake human society on the lines of justice and equality."<sup>7</sup> He meant, of course, by *humanistic* doctrines of justice and equality. Christian evangelism must insist, "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain" (Ps. 127:1).

This work of evangelism in Christ requires thus a broader perspective than that held by many today. One of the mildly Puritan divines of the 17th century, who is very popular today, was Richard Baxter (1615-1691). Baxter was an able and important churchman, but he was far from orthodox at some

4. Zwemer, p. 48.

5. Kenneth Scott Latourette: *The Unquenchable Light*, p. 4. London, England: The Religious Book Club, 1945.

6. Sidney Dark and R. S. Essex: *The War Against God*, p. 113. New York: Abingdon Press, 1938.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 292.



points. His view of the atonement had a strange doctrine of satisfaction:

Christ's sufferings were not a *fulfilling* of the *law's threatening* (though he bore its *curse materially*), but a satisfaction for our *not fulfilling the precept*, and to prevent *God's fulfilling the threatening* on us. Christ paid not, therefore, the *idem*, but the *tantundem*, or *aequivalens*; not the *very debt* which we owed and the law required, but the *value* (Else it were not *strictly satisfaction*,) which is *redditio aequivalentis* (the rendering of an equivalent): and (it being improperly called the *paying of a debt*, but properly *a suffering for the guilty*) the *idem* is nothing but *supplicium delinquentis* (the punishment of the guilty individual). In *criminals, dum alius solvet simul aliud solvitur* (when another suffers, it is another thing also that is suffered). The law knoweth no *vicarius poenae* (substitute in punishment); though the *lawmaker* may admit it, as he is *above law*; else there were no place for *pardon*, if the *proper debt* be paid and the *law not relaxed*, but *fulfilled*. Christ did neither *obey* nor *suffer* in any man's *stead*, by a *strict, proper representation* of his *person* in point of law, so as that the *law* should take it as done or suffered by the *party himself*; but only as a *third person*, as a *mediator*, he voluntarily bore what else the sinner should have borne. To assert the contrary (especially as to particular persons considered in actual sin) is to overthrow all Scripture theology, and to introduce all Antinomianism; to overthrow all possibility of pardon, and assert justification before we sinned or were born, and to make *ourselves* to have satisfied God. Therefore, we must not say that Christ died *nostro loco* (in our stead), so as to *personate us*, or *represent our persons* in *law sense*, but only to bear what else we must have borne.<sup>8</sup>

In other words, Baxter denied particular atonement. He went so far as to say, "All mankind, immediately upon Christ's satisfaction, are redeemed and delivered from that legal necessity of perishing which they were under," so that all men have salvation available if they so choose.<sup>9</sup> Baxter saved himself from a full Arminianism by asserting an election to faith; he was an Amyrauldian. While a strong opponent of antinomianism, his view of the law was faulty, and he was the leader of the neonomians, believers in a "new" law, the "law of Christ."<sup>10</sup> Thus, the believer now had a divorce from much of Scripture, and a vaguely spiritual law to follow. The practical impact was *to create the climate for pietism*, because *spiritual exercises* became now the main area of concern for the believer. All this comes to focus in Baxter's famous couplet, very familiar to men to our day:

I preached, as never sure to preach again,  
And as a dying man to dying men.

8. "Baxter, Richard," in John M'Clintock and James Strong: *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, vol. I, p. 702. New York, N. Y.: Harper, 2895.

9. *Idem*.

10. Ernest F. Kevan: *The Grace of Law, A Study of Puritan Theology*, pp. 204ff. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1965.

This is commonly cited today as the true spirit of preaching. It did not mark the attitude of the reformers, or the earlier Puritans. Far from it. Baxter's attitude was *medieval and monastic*, and all such preaching creates a monastic and retreatist perspective. Calvin, Luther, and the early Puritans preached as *fighting men*, as men of war, summoning men to battle and arming them for action. We are not converted merely to die and go to heaven but to serve the Lord with all our heart, mind, and being. We are born again to be God's people, to do His will, to serve His Kingdom, and to glorify Him in every area of life and thought. Baxter's perspective reduces the gospel to saving dying men from hell. The good news of our gospel is that Jesus Christ makes us a new Creation; "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 6:17). As a new creature in Christ, we are called to a curse-free service, knowing that our labor cannot be vain in the Lord who makes all things work together for good (I Cor. 15:58; Rom. 8:28). We are saved to serve, and that service continues for all eternity (Rev. 22:3). It is time for this evangel to resound throughout all the earth. Let us remember Paul's summons to God's people: put on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:11; Rom. 13:12; cf. II Cor. 6:7). *Dying men are not told to put on armor: men who are strong in the Lord are so commanded.* Evangelism must preach and work from God's power and strength to renew men into Christ and His strength and dominion.

# The Greatness of the Great Commission

KENNETH J. GENTRY, JR.

Christ's mission on earth was redemptive: He "came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). To understand properly and apply His Great Commission (his program for seeking and saving), it is necessary not only to give due consideration to the text of the mandate in Matthew 28, but also, like Christ, *to speak it to our current situation*. It is incumbent upon the faithful Christian to be alert to significant trends influencing his historical situation, in order to challenge them successfully. Elton Trueblood has properly commented: "It is the vocation of the Christian in every generation to out-think all opposition." Unfortunately, many Christians today do not even know what the opposition is, much less how to challenge it seriously.

Man is moving steadily into an increasingly complex age. Indeed, the complexity of the age is such that the intellectual elite have characterized it by numerous labels: "post-ideological" (Lewis Feuer), "post-literature" (John Leonard), "post-traditional" (S. N. Eisenstadt), "post-market" (Tom Burns), "post-economic" (Herman Kahn), "post-historic" (Roderick Seidenberg), "technocratic" (Erich Fromm), "post-welfare" (Gideon Sjoberg), "post-scarcity" (Robert Theobald), and "post-industrial" (Daniel Bell). If nothing else, the plethora of labels indicate that we are in an era of great change. When large-scale societal changes are experienced, the urgency of maintaining proper values is magnified. It is always the case with humanism (the religion of secular man) that social change *erodes* values.

Harvard sociologist Daniel Bell has defined the "post-industrial society" basically as "a society which has passed from a goods-producing stage to a service society." Of this situation he notes:

...in Western society we are in the midst of a vast historical change in which old social relations (which were property bound), existing power structures (centered on narrow elites), and bourgeois culture (based on notions of restraint and delayed gratification) are being rapidly eroded. The sources of upheaval are scientific and technological.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Pub., 1973), p. 37.

In such an age of massive reorientation, man *must* be concerned with the course in which he is moving. Even humanists recognize the dangerous implications of society's present bearing if left unchecked. Erich Fromm has warned in this regard that "if people are not aware of the direction in which they are going, they will awaken when it is too late and when their fate has been irrevocably sealed."<sup>2</sup>

Concern with the global ramifications of the "post-industrial society" has given rise to an increasingly popular academic endeavor: *futurology*. The vast array of technical books currently in print which deal with the rapid destruction of the socio- and ecospheres amply demonstrates intense interest in the role of secular prophecy. According to Alvin Toffler, a "futurist" is one who is a member of

a growing school of social critics, scientists, philosophers, planners, and others who concern themselves with the alternatives facing man as the human race collides with an onrushing future.<sup>3</sup>

The magnitude of humanity's current perplexities in every realm is overwhelming. The depth of man's depravity has time and again come to full expression in the corruption of his culture. The vital question confronting the twentieth-century Christian is, "Does the Church in its evangelistic enterprise have anything to say to modern culture?" or, more specifically for our present purpose, "Does the Great Commission in any way speak to cultural activity as a concomitant of evangelism?" To bring this question into sharp focus, it is necessary to begin answering the query by briefly illustrating the failure of humanism.

### *The Triumph of Humanism?*

The twentieth century has been proudly heralded as the age of the triumph of humanism. This century has seen the greatest scientific advances ever experienced by man. Consequently, secular thought has placed the utmost confidence in man. It should come as no surprise to the Christian that the technological tools of anthropocentric man have been employed to carve the tomb of social order. Gil Elliot, in *The Twentieth Century Book of the Dead*, has convincingly demonstrated statistically that this century thus far has proved to be the bloodiest era known to man. More lives have been ruthlessly slaughtered through war and crime, and more people have been systematically suppressed and enslaved, than at any other time in history. Theanthropic man has abused both himself and his environment to an unbearable degree. This is evidenced in the soaring crime rate in all sectors of society; the continuing breakdown of the family unit through

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2. Erich Fromm, *The Revolution of Hope: Toward a Humanized Technology* (New York: Harper and Row Pub., 1968), p. 25.

3. Alvin Toffler, ed., *The Futurists* (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 3.

runaways, child-husband-wife abuse, and divorce; the massive failure of public education; skyrocketing economic inflation and its consequent social disturbances; increasing political ineptitude, instability, and abuse; continuing air and water pollution; and so on. An insightful truism suggests: "The problem of the nineteenth century was the death of God; the problem of the twentieth century is the death of man." There is an unbreakable cause-and-effect relationship between *godless theory* and *inhumane result*. Dostoevski notes that "if there is no God, everything is possible."

The Christian must be concerned with these problems if he longs at all for truth, justice, and righteousness in the world. The humanist is bewildered at the obvious turmoil man has caused himself. Fromm asks in astonishment, "How did it happen? How did man, at the very height of his victory over nature, become the prisoner of his own creation and in serious danger of destroying himself?"<sup>4</sup> As the Chalcedon Foundation has labored so vigorously to show, man's problem today is at heart an epistemological crisis.<sup>5</sup> Man has severed himself from God, and is drowning in the turbulent sea of Chance. He has destroyed the very foundation of knowledge, and is refusing to accept the rubble of ruin as his just inheritance.

The forfeiture of epistemological certainty was no oversight or accident of history, either. It was a calculated effort to remove God from consideration in intellectual endeavor. Witness Fromm:

...one fact of the greatest importance for the understanding of man's behavior in society [is] man's need for *certainty*. Man is not equipped with a set of instincts that regulate his behavior quasi-automatically. He is confronted with choices, and this means in all-important matters with grave risks to his life if his choices are wrong....As a consequence, man has an intense need for certainty....

For many centuries certainty was guaranteed by the concept of God. God, omnipotent and omniscient, had not only created the world but also announced the principles of action about which there was no doubt.

With the beginning of the scientific approach and the corrosion of religious certainty, man was forced into a new search for certainty.<sup>6</sup>

The creature has turned against the Creator. A refusal of God's lordship results in man's hardship. Humanism's search for epistemological certainty is frustrating. Modern philosophy has investigated a myriad of avenues in the quest for certainty, for to no avail. Man is very much aware of the *need* of certainty, but he has rejected the only foundation. Daniel Bell comments:

Cast out from the Eden of understanding, the human quest has been for a common tongue and a unity of knowledge, for a set of 'first

4. Fromm, *Revolution of Hope*, p. 2.

5. See especially: Gary North, ed., *Foundations of Christian Scholarship* (Vallecito, California: Ross House Books, 1976).

6. Fromm, *Revolution of Hope*, pp. 46-47.

principles' which, in the epistemology of learning, would underlie the modes of experience and the categories of reason and so shape a set of invariant truths.<sup>7</sup>

Because of this, man has not only reaped much woe already but his sickle will harvest more of the same in the future. In answering the question "Where are we now?", Fromm replies:

It is easier to say where we are *not*. We are not on the way to free enterprise, but are moving rapidly away from it. We are not on the way to greater individualism, but are becoming an increasingly manipulated mass civilization.<sup>8</sup>

To admit that, on the one hand, modern man has gotten himself into an awful dilemma, and then, on the other, to turn around and speak of centralizing the control of society, is quite a disheartening thought. But this is exactly the goal of man as god. Bell has noted, "The goal of the new intellectual technology is, neither more nor less, to realize a social alchemist's dream: the dream of 'ordering' the mass society. . . ."<sup>9</sup>

Isaac Asimov states humanism's hopes in unmistakably clear terms:

If we are to escape world destruction, our beliefs, our aspirations, our ideals, must all be centered upon this world exclusively, and we must all be very sure that, just as it is man alone that is destroying the world, so it must be man alone—*alone*—who must save the world.<sup>10</sup>

Consequently, he quite conveniently and logically arrogates the responsibility of "saving" man to the class of men of which he himself is a member:

But who on Earth best realizes the serious nature of the problems that beset us? As a class, the scientists, I should think. . . .

And who on Earth might most realistically bear a considerable share of responsibility for the problems that beset us? As a class, the scientists, I should think. . . .

And who on Earth might be expected to lead the way in finding solutions to the problems that beset us? As a class, the scientists, I should think. . . .

And who on Earth is most likely to rise above the national and ethnic prejudice and speak in the name of mankind as a whole? As a class, the scientists, I should think. . . .

Is it not, then, as a class, to the scientists that we must turn to find leaders in the fight for world government?<sup>11</sup>

The technocratic, anthropocentric worldview conceives of the future of

7. Bell, *Post-Industrial Society*, p. 265.

8. Fromm, *Revolution of Hope*, p. 25.

9. Bell, *Post-Industrial Society*, p. 33.

10. Isaac Asimov, *Today, Tomorrow, and . . .* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1973), p. 255.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 320.

world society in the hands of central technicians who are experts in behavior modification, economic planning, political centralization, and so on. Experts in autonomy and arrogance. The technocratic mindview formulates plans of action based on a Newtonian worldview of strict cause-and-effect relationships. Bell has emphasized that it is very deeply opposed to religious, aesthetic, and intuitive modes in its favoring of calculus, precision, and measurement.<sup>12</sup> Modern man expects a *scientist ex machina* deliverance. And the modern theologian is no help. Panneberg disciple Ted Peters has written:

I contend that humanism, either salient or silent, is philosophically **unsupportable yet practically valuable**. It fails to ground satisfactorily the values we need to embrace for our planetary future, yet the obvious concern of contemporary humanists for the welfare of all on our planet makes them appropriate allies for Christian futurists.<sup>13</sup>

Unfortunately, the "obvious concern of contemporary humanists" is *not* the welfare of all on our planet; it is a concern for *unlimited power*. The Christian should never fall for this ploy of the modernist theologian, for "what fellowship hath light with darkness?" (II Cor. 6:14).

With humanists clamoring for full control of society, and getting the ear of the governments of the world (the seats of power), it is not surprising that the world is laboring under its present burden. The inability of the humanist to resolve man's problems can be illustrated from the work of Asimov. He has the ideal solution to the "world population" problem:

But now we live in a world where we are being murdered by numbers, where life expectancy is...long and child mortality low, and the global population increases by 70 million each year. Can we still preach those old tales about the glories of motherhood?

Must we not make the turnaround and accept the fact that in our present world, excessive motherhood is an evil and, indeed, genocide? For a woman to have more than two children nowadays is evidence of a frightening and callous disregard...of the nature of the greatest crises ever to have faced man. It is the woman who deliberately decides to limit her child-bearing capacity who is now the worthwhile and noble citizen of the planet.

...Motherhood must be viewed as a privilege to be doled out carefully and parsimoniously and not as a free-for-all litter producing device.

...There is a myth that indulging in sexual practices that have no chances of leading to conception (masturbation, homosexuality, etc.) is perverse and unnatural, so that the uncounted millions who continue to practice these 'perversions' do so only under the blanket of guilt and danger of punishment, and many are forced into chancing conception when they might have had their fun while avoiding it.

12. Bell, *Post-Industrial Society*, p. 349.

13. Ted Peters, *Futures: Human and Divine* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1978), p. 122.

It is clear that in a world of limited births, where something short of forcible sterilization is used to bring it about, we will have to eliminate these myths and learn to look at sex as a phenomenon which, except on relatively rare occasions, is utterly divorced from the matter of childbirth. . . . Personal preferences in sex, between consenting adults, where no physiological harm is involved, will be no more a matter of public concern than personal preferences for food and drink.<sup>14</sup>

He offers a solution all right. A poisonous one!

This is the historical milieu in which the church exists today. How is it to confront such a world? Is it simply to "witness" to it? Or is it to *challenge* it at the very root and marrow of the problem? Why haven't the conservative churches been more effective in curbing the tide of humanism in this "one nation under God"? These questions are particularly pertinent when we consider the fact there are 40 million evangelicals in American society. The annual lists of the 100 largest churches in America are dominated by fundamentalist churches. Why has their influence been negligible?

### *The Impotency of Fundamentalism*

Fundamentalism loudly and proudly proclaims, "Christ is the answer." And properly so. It is unfortunate that as a movement, it has been ignorant of the complexity and the magnitude of the problems to which Christ is indeed the proper resolution.

"Fundamentalism," like any other religious label, is difficult to assign accurately. However, the problem is especially acute for fundamentalism. George Dollar, a "militant fundamentalist," has noted that

...American Fundamentalism has been a series of unconnected islands of protest, evangelistic effort, and educational adventure, very often without regard for systematic procedure and established standards.<sup>15</sup>

Not only does fundamentalism have an "unconnected" history, but it also has a vehement disdain for creeds, which further compounds the problem of definition.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, a definition is not entirely impossible. Dollar succinctly defines "fundamentalism" in the following manner: "Historic Fundamentalism is the literal exposition of all the affirmations and attitudes of the Bible and the militant exposure of all non-Biblical affirmations and attitudes."<sup>17</sup>

In reading Dollar's work, it is not difficult to discern the existence of an informal creed in fundamentalistic circles. As a matter of fact, he speaks of the "Magna Charter of Fundamentalism" which was drawn up in the late

14. Asimov, *Today, Tomorrow, and . . .*, p. 256-258.

15. George Dollar, *A History of Fundamentalism in America* (Greenville, South Carolina: Bob Jones University Press, 1973), p.xi.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 175

17. *Ibid.*, p. xv.



1880's in the Niagara Bible Conferences: The Articles of Niagara. The doctrinal affirmations of this "Magna Charter" consisted of the following:

... [T]he inspiration of the Bible, the depravity of man, redemption through Christ's blood, the true church made up of all believers, and the coming of the Lord to set up His reign.

... [I]n addition to those there were the Trinity, the fall of Adam, the need of the new birth, full deliverance from guilt at salvation, the assurance of salvation, the centrality of Christ in the Bible, the walk after the Spirit, the resurrection of both believers and unbelievers, and the ripening of the present age for judgment.<sup>18</sup>

Another issue, although not articulated in the Articles of Niagara, which was, nevertheless, affirmed by true fundamentalists, was a "strict literalism" in Biblical interpretation: "The Bible was given and must be taken either literally or liberally."<sup>19</sup> Dollar notes that this particular doctrine grew out of the historical context of fundamentalism's confrontation with postmillennialism and its "illusionary dreams."<sup>20</sup> This hermeneutic naturally led to the necessity of the "any-moment return" of Christ.<sup>21</sup>

Four particular problems render fundamentalism impotent as a potential threat to humanism: (1) A superficial understanding of, and a meagre concern with, theological issues; (2) a disdain for the binding validity of God's Law; (3) an historical cynicism nurtured in a pessimistic eschatology; and (4) an extremely confined evangelistic program due to a restricted conception of redemption.

I. *Superficial theology.* The *summum bonum* of the fundamentalist, rather than to "glorify God in all things and enjoy Him forever," is simply to win more souls today than yesterday. Dollar has contrasted the "orthodox allies" (Reformed conservatives) with the fundamentalists of the early 1900's in a variety of ways. One distinguishing difference was that

The Orthodox men taught their students most carefully in the languages and fine points of Reformed Theology. The Fundamentalists did not follow suit here but taught men how to preach, organize soulwinning campaigns, visit from house to house, and build large Sunday schools.<sup>22</sup>

Fundamentalism feels that theology is nice, but optional. This disdain for theological precision translates into practice in a most shocking (albeit, predictable) manner. Writing about an enormously successful fundamentalist super-church, Elmer Towns (himself a fundamentalist) explains unashamedly that

18. *Ibid.*, p. 72-73.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

The fantastic growth of Thomas Road Baptist Church is based on the aggressive leadership of Jerry Falwell. . . . Since the church is dependent upon his leadership, a two-million dollar policy insures his life, with triple indemnity. . . .

If the church changed its emphasis, its growth would slow down and finally reverse itself. The purpose of the church is to win souls. . . . If the Sunday school becomes an educational institution instead of an evangelistic instrument, attendance will follow the pattern of other deteriorating denominations. The primary emphasis is evangelism, not purity of doctrine, not purity of life. These are a means to an end and when they become the primary objective, attendance declines. These last two items could hurt church growth, but as long as Falwell is living, he should keep it all in perspective.<sup>23</sup>

Apparently, inflation is not only addictive in the economic realm, but also in the ecclesiastical!

Modern day fundamentalist Jack Hyles has written numerous "How To" books on church administration. In one book, he offers a suggestive outline for the pastor's ministerial schedule for each week. He allots only *four* hours on *one* afternoon of each week to study and sermon preparation!<sup>24</sup> As a result of this characteristic unconcern for cogent theology, Dollar can actually praise a leading fundamentalist of the 1940's in the following manner: "His ability to make a service a command performance producing spiritual conviction, decisions, and church-wide applause and amens from all corners made him a preachers' preacher without a single parallel."<sup>25</sup>

In their zeal for God, they are without knowledge, even to the point of shameful frivolity. To spur evangelistic endeavor, Hyles has written that "God is hard up and will even use you."<sup>26</sup> And John R. Rice jumped happily into bed with Manichaeism when he wrote, "The body is not the soul, and a Christian's body, of course, is not as important as his spirit."<sup>27</sup>

This mud-puddle theology finds no greater depth of comprehension even within the locus of soteriology. Justification is permanently severed from sanctification; sanctification is optional. The following quotations from a popular book on living the Christian life illustrate this basic fallacy:

[T]o teach that Christ must be lord of life in order to be Saviour is to confuse certain aspects of discipleship.

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23. Elmer Towns, *Capturing a Town for Christ* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, Co., 1973), pp. 98-100.

24. Jack Hyles, *Let's Build an Evangelistic Church* (Wheaton: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1962), p. 117.

25. Dollar, *Fundamentalism*, p. 124.

26. Jack Hyles, *Let's Go Soul Winning* (Murfreesboro, Tennessee: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1962), p. 8.

27. John R. Rice, *Twelve Tremendous Themes* (Wheaton: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1943), p. 87.

We are saying that enthronement is not a condition for salvation but rather that it should be a consequence of it.

\* \* \* \* \*

The message of faith only and the message of faith plus commitment of life cannot both be the gospel; therefore, one of them is a false gospel and comes under the curse of perverting the gospel or preaching another gospel (Gal. 1:6-9), and this is a very serious matter.

\* \* \* \* \*

[T]he believer has an option. He may serve God, and as long as he is in a human body he may also choose to leave God out and live according to the old nature.<sup>28</sup>

Ideas are the heart of scientific advance. Ideology is the marrow of political structure. Theology is the foundation of Christian enterprise. A comprehensive Christian worldview requires a cogent, Biblically derived, theological substructure. Theology is the very bedrock of Christianity—despite some movements' callous disregard for it.

II. *Antinomianism*. The tragic irony of fundamentalism is that in assailing the modernist for "chopping up" the Bible through employment of the critical method, they themselves do some quite fancy carving when they dis sever the Law of God from the Scriptures. The disdain for God's Law is as deeply ingrained in fundamentalism as it is blatantly humanistic. Perhaps one of the most popular fundamentalist writers of the day is Hal Lindsey. Several quotes derived from his multi-million selling books will exemplify fundamentalism's hatred of the Law of God:

It is imperative that we realize that law and grace are complete systems in themselves. They are mutually exclusive. To mix these principles robs the law of its bona fide terror and grace of its creative freeness.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now then, what has God done about the law and the believer's relationship to it?

He has taken us out from under the jurisdiction of the law and placed us under His grace. The law is still there, but we're not under it.

... The law just doesn't speak to us anymore as a basis of operation in the Christian life. When Christ died, was buried, rose, and ascended we died with Him to the law and its power over us.

A friend of mine tells a story to illustrate this. You're in a car going twenty in a twenty-five-mile zone. A cop is following you, and you're really watching yourself. Overhead, there's a bird doing forty. You glance at the policeman, but he doesn't move. Why? Because the law of twenty-five-miles-an-hour just doesn't have jurisdiction over that bird.<sup>29</sup>

28. Charles C. Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), pp. 178, 179, 170, 35. For a more detailed discussion of the interrelationships of justification and sanctification, see my "A Study of the Lordship Controversy," in John Skilton, ed., *The New Testament Student*, vol. 5 (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1979).

29. Hal Lindsey, *Satan Is Alive and Well On Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), pp. 178, 179.

He even speaks of our being "totally free from any domination of Satan, sin, self, the flesh, and the Law of God."<sup>30</sup> The Law is equivalent in his eyes to the tyrannical forces of sin, self, the flesh, and Satan.

In explanation of Romans 7:1-6 Lindsey writes:

The tyrannical, perfectionist husband is the Law of God. In the broader sense he also represents the sin nature and Satan himself.

These three hostile masters will never die as far as their relationship to us is concerned. So the simple solution which God arrived at was to crucify us with Jesus, thus legally breaking our relationship to these tyrants. . . .

On the basis of this legal transaction, the authority of the old sin nature, the Law, and Satan have been forever broken over us, Christ's bride. As far as they're concerned, we're dead to them. They can't legally touch us for a second unless we fail to realize and claim our freedom in Christ.<sup>31</sup>

In physics there is a law which states that 'nature abhors a vacuum.' This physical law finds its counterpart in the spiritual realm: 'man's mind abhors a vacuum,' i.e., the rejection of God's Law simply makes room for man's law. The 'tabooism' so characteristic of the fundamentalist mindset indicates this most clearly. Evangelist John R. Rice warns of sin in the church:

A church cannot be filled with worldly people, and especially cannot be controlled by worldly people, and have many souls saved.

But what can the preacher do if the Sunday school teachers themselves attend movies, use tobacco, serve cocktails, keep beer in the icebox, take the young people on mixed swimming parties, act as chaperones at high school dances?<sup>32</sup>

F. F. Bruce noted an interesting phenomenon of this neo-legalism:

An American theologian remarked in my hearing that somebody ought one day to write a Ph.D. thesis on 'regional holiness.' He had in mind various religious groups in the United States in whose conception of practical holiness to (say) tobacco, alcohol, dancing and the theatre play a prominent but varying part, and his point was that the variation in attitudes frequently depended not on denominational connexion but on geographical residence.<sup>33</sup>

Inconsistent, personalistic, regional tabooism cannot serve faithfully in the stead of God's holy Law. It can neither challenge anthropocentric ethics nor serve as a relevant and binding ethical standard for the redeemed.

30. Hal Lindsey, *The Liberation of Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), p. 230.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 180, 181

32. John R. Rice, *Why Our Churches Do Not Win Souls* (Murfreesboro, Tennessee: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1966), p. 69.

33. F. F. Bruce, *Tradition: Old and New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 16.

III. *Pessimistic eschatology*. Perhaps the most visible means of identifying the fundamentalist is through his pre-occupation with pre-tribulation, premillennial cartography. Dollar insists on the importance of eschatology to fundamentalism when he writes, "Prophecy [read: pretribulationism] must be given a central place in theology, evangelism, missions, and personal living."<sup>34</sup> As a matter of fact, one of the elements which banishes one to the outer-darkness of borderline fundamentalism is a denial of this particular brand of eschatology. The "modified fundamentalists" are those who "dismiss the doctrine of the imminent coming of the Lord as unimportant. They play down the importance of separation from apostasy and compromise."<sup>35</sup> Rice agrees:

It is no accident that the greatest soul winning churches in America are fundamentalist in position, out and out for the great truths of the historic Christian faith, including even the premillennial coming of Christ.<sup>36</sup>

Imminency doctrine is so widespread in American Christianity that charismatic entertainer Pat Boone has conjectured, "My guess is that there isn't a thoughtful Christian alive who doesn't believe we are living at the end of history."<sup>37</sup>

Premillennialism cannot effectively confront society as society because its message is exclusively individualistic. Even premillennial missionary textbooks *warn against* the notion of worldwide revival! George Peters writes in his widely used mission textbook:

It must be stated emphatically that the New Testament does not foresee the conversion of the world to Jesus Christ in this dispensation. It is clearly implied in the teachings of our Lord and the apostles that the church will remain a 'gathered out' people and thus constitute only a minority unto the end of the age.<sup>38</sup>

Let's not get too excited about our missionary hope! After all, the message of salvation is an internal, personal affair only. This sounds like an old "let's-go-out-and-lose-this-one-for-God" pep talk.

Lindsey comments,

Peace is available to the *individual* today as he invites Christ into his heart and allows Him to reign upon the throne of his life. But the Bible teaches that lasting peace will come to the *world* only after Christ's return.<sup>39</sup> [Emphasis added].

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34. Dollar, *Fundamentalism*, p. 41.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 285.

36. Rice, *Churches*, p. 73.

37. Kenneth L. Woodward, "The Boom in Doom," *Newsweek*, January 10, 1977, p. 50.

38. George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), p. 210.

39. Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 170.

Consequently, let us not worry about Communism, for instance, because we have "joy, joy, joy, joy, down in the heart." Alden A. Gannett, speaking at the Diamond Jubilee Congress on Prophecy, said,

What peace of mind this brings to Christians as the end of time approaches. What a cause for rejoicing that righteousness, not Russia, shall ultimately triumph. The triumph of Christ over Communism emphasizes the folly of getting sidetracked in spending our time primarily opposing Communism rather than in an all-out proclamation of the gospel of grace. Our task is the Great Commission. Our Lord in His time will conquer Communism.<sup>40</sup>

Let us not worry about the progress of humanism, Lindsey exhorts:

Revolutionaries, social planners, humanistic philosophers...attention please! A New World order will be established someday. When Jesus Christ returns, He is going to throw out the garbage of the world system and then—and only then—will we see perfect equality and peace.<sup>41</sup>

After all, why go to all the trouble of long-range planning, investing in the future of Christian influence, and so on, when it will bear no fruit? Christians will not be around long anyway. Lindsey exclaims, "What a way to live! with optimism, with anticipation, with excitement. We should be living like persons who don't expect to be around much longer."<sup>42</sup>

The boom-in-doom literature demonstrates a morbid interest in woe. Books by fundamentalists, such as Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Charles Tyrie's *The Living End*, and Salem Kirban's *Countdown to Rapture*, cannot promote a concern for Christian influence and progress. Daniel E. Kelly notwithstanding, "always is heard a discouraging word, and skies will be cloudy all day."

Recently, there was presented a very graphic illustration of the debilitating effect of imminency doctrine inadvertently in an interview with Billy Graham in *Christianity Today*:

Q. If you had to live your life over again, what would you do differently?

A. One of my great regrets is that I have not studied enough. I wish I had studied more and preached less. . . . Donald Barnhouse said that if he knew the Lord was coming in three years he would spend two of them studying and one preaching. I'm trying to make it up.<sup>43</sup>

His insistent belief in the imminency of Christ's return caused him to lose

40. Alen A. Gannett, "Will Christ or Communism Rule the World?" in Charles Lee Feinberg, ed., *Prophecy and the Seventies* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), p. 65.

41. Lindsey, *Planet Earth*, p. 113.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 145.

43. "Taking the World's Temperature" (no author) in *Christianity Today*, September 23, 1977, p. 19.

several decades of time in regards to diligent study. This he regretted. Unfortunately, one *cannot* live his life over again.

Not only does fundamentalism's misdirected eschatology spur delight in predicting impending doom, thus undermining extra-personal endeavor, but it washes much of the New Testament's ethical directives away. For instance, Ryrie complains that non-premillennialists confuse the church and the kingdom and in so doing give rise to a particular "danger": "In such a viewpoint the Sermon on the Mount becomes the law and standard for the Church." In his conception of things "the Sermon on the Mount... is related to the Messianic [read: future] kingdom." Thus, "one should not ignore the place Matthew gives to the Sermon—a place which definitely related to the Messianic kingdom and not to the church."<sup>44</sup> Unbridled (consistent) fundamentalism not only denies the Church the Sermon on the Mount, but the entire Gospel of Matthew. A commentary on Matthew by Peter S. Ruckman was widely advertised recently with these words: "[Matthew] has a Jewish flavor of such intensity that little in it can be applied doctrinally to the Gentile believer."

IV. *Restricted evangelism.* In fundamentalism the goal of evangelism is exclusively individual regeneration. Accordingly, all is geared toward this singular end; anything beyond this is a happy accident. In this sort of evangelism, true evangelistic power is lost, full evangelistic hope is denied, and cultural evangelism is virtually forbidden.

True evangelistic power is lost because fundamentalists are so absorbed with the current failures and crises in the world, that all looks hopeless. Salem Kirban is wonderfully pessimistic: "...the world is facing imponderable problems... unsolvable by man. We have reached the point of no return. We are on an irreversible course for world disaster."<sup>45</sup> In the Old Testament, long before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, cruel, pagan Nineveh was converted *en toto* at Jonah's powerful preaching. Why cannot the same be done today? Is the gospel in the "fulness of time" and the "age of the Spirit" less effectual? Somehow the fundamentalist enjoys this ultimate pessimism: R. A. Torrey once said, "The darker the night gets, the lighter my heart gets." It would seem that 'all is bad, so all is well' is the joy of fundamentalism. In contrast, the early church did not bemoan, "Look what the world has come to," rather it proclaimed, "Look what has come to the world!"

Not only is the dynamism of true evangelism defused, but the hope of its massive success is absolutely denied. John F. Walvoord writes,

The possibility of a form of peace today is clearly taught in the word

44. Charles C. Ryrie, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), pp. 74, 76, 79.

45. Salem Kirban, *Countdown to Rapture* (Irving, California: Harvest House Publishers, 1977), p. 11.

of God. This peace is not political, it is not social, it is not economic, and to some extent it is not even religious. It is a supernatural peace which God can give to the human heart. . . .

Although Christians have no immediate solution to the problems of our day because man will not accept the teaching of the word of God, they do have an antidote for the unrest of the human heart.<sup>46</sup>

The gospel is a tranquilizer, not a heart transplant; it belongs to a hidden part of life, not the whole of life. Walvoord not only denies the hope of success to Christians, but he tells them it is *God's* fault and *not theirs*. Gospel prosperity is not a matter of diligent, committed faith and stewardship. It cannot be, for the ultimate failure of the gospel is foreordained. Walvoord explains:

A solution to this [universal] unrest and turmoil is provided in the Bible, and there is no other. That solution is that Jesus Christ Himself is coming back to bring peace and rest to the world. . . .

It is well for evangelical Christians to remember that we should use our strength and our influence to promote peace even in our present situation, and we should support our government in its efforts to keep law and order in our world. However, according to the word of God this dispensation has not been selected by God as a time for political and moral peace in the world. . . . It is not God's plan to bring righteousness and peace to the earth in this present age. We will never attain the postmillennial dream of peace on earth through the influence of the church. . . . Therefore, the only solution to the turmoil among nations is the return of Jesus Christ in power and glory to the earth.<sup>47</sup>

Christians need not feel guilty of apathy: "perhaps Christians are not as concerned about social, political, and moral conditions in the world as they should be; but, on the other hand, it is not God's purpose in our present age to have social justice or to have all the ills and problems of life removed now."<sup>48</sup>

Hope is an illusion; despair is reality; anti-hope prevails. As Charles H. Stevens notes, the postmillennialist is foolishly deluded in longing for speedy world conversion:

To adopt a premise that fails to account adequately for this difference between the church of Christ and the kingdom of Christ is to err so grievously as to lead one into a program that is hopeless; it calls necessarily for the adoption of means that are unauthorized, and the setting of a goal that is as unattainable as it is unscriptural. Herein lies the great mistake of the 'kingdom builders' (their tribe decreases) who have as their goal a vision of Christianizing the world.<sup>49</sup>

46. John F. Walvoord, "Why are the Nations in Turmoil?" in Feinberg, *Prophecy*, p. 212.

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 210-211.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

49. Charles H. Stevens, "The Church of Christ and the Kingdom of Christ in Contrast" in Feinberg, *Prophecy*, p. 101.



The logic of fundamentalism, if consistently maintained, would discourage *all* academic and social endeavor which did not fall within the scope of narrow individualism. In Peters' work on missions is noted:

Christ is the wisest of all philosophers. He is the wisdom of God, yet He founded no philosophical school. Christ is the greatest of all scholars and educators, yet He instituted no educational system. Christ is the greatest benefactor and philanthropist, yet He founded no social welfare societies, institutions of philanthropic foundations. Christ was "Christian presence" with deepest concerns for freedom, social uplift, equality, moral reformation and economic justice. Yet Christ founded no organizations or institutions to initiate, propagate or implement the ideals which He incarnated. He poured out His life's energies to give man a true concept of God and finally shed His blood to make a way for man to approach God.

... Christ did not become involved in processions against Roman overlords, slavery, social and economic injustices, or marches for civil rights, higher wages, or better education. He was no "riot" leader or social revolutionary. He authorized no one to be such.<sup>50</sup>

Once the power of evangelism is extinguished and the hope of it denied, it should be obvious that *cultural evangelism is expressly forbidden*. Peters again gives a bit of his Manichaeic world-view logic when he quotes Hugh Thompson Kerr:

We are sent not to preach sociology but salvation; not economics but evangelism; not reform but redemption; not culture but conversion; not a new social order but a new birth; not revolution but regeneration; not renovation but revival; not resuscitation but resurrection; not a new organization but a new creation; not democracy but the gospel; not civilization but Christ; we are ambassadors not diplomats.<sup>51</sup>

In a nutshell, this statement could be summarized and paraphrased in the following manner: "Christians are not to teach the whole counsel of God, but to dwell on the principles of the doctrine of Christ and to lay again and again the foundation of repentance and faith."

Dollar lists twelve "dangers" which he believes face fundamentalism. One of these dangers is political involvement. He notes that many

believe that the world scene is one of deterioration and will continue till the rapture takes place, and that our main business should be to rescue people out of the mess and not try to improve it or preserve its good characteristics. The probability now exists that as more and more national issues come up, the pressure will increase on Fundamentalists to get into the fray and let their voices be heard, their lights shine, and their money help to stop the national erosion.<sup>52</sup>

50. Peters, *Missions*, p. 211.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 209.

52. Dollar, *Fundamentalism*, p. 278.

Remember: he wrote this as a warning of *danger*, not a call to *action*! This is in full harmony with fundamentalist preaching. Towns quotes from a Jerry Falwell sermon (pre-1973):

The Bible says no man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life. You have got to decide where the battle is. The battle is out on the front lines. . . . A good soldier does not get involved in all that monkey business while the work is left undone. We have a soul winning job to do. Why should we leave the battle?<sup>53</sup>

(Rev. Falwell's recent creation of the Moral Majority program, his participation in the Christians' March on Washington in the summer of 1980, and his enthusiastic support of the Roundtable, a Christian political activist organization in Washington, indicate a major shift in application of his premillennial theology. Indeed, the National Affairs Briefing Conference, held in Dallas in September of 1980, brought out at least 15,000 fundamentalists, including several thousand pastors, to a revival meeting encouraging Christians to get involved in political affairs. I spoke at the conference, and I was enthusiastically received. Rev. Rushdoony was invited to speak, but his schedule prohibited his appearance. The word "rapture" was not used once, and only one speaker—Bailey Smith, the newly elected head of the Southern Baptist Convention, reminded men of Christ's imminent appearance—and he really did not agree with the emphasis of the conference, as his statements to the secular press indicated the next day. He came only because some of the program's sponsors were his friends. Rev. Falwell stayed for the whole conference, and he gave the appeal for financial support to the Roundtable, which had sponsored it. Pat Robertson, head of the Christian Broadcasting Network, reminded the audience of the words of Genesis 1:26-28, calling Christians to exercise dominion, subdue the earth, and be fruitful and multiply. He even used the phrase, "Christian reconstruction." In short, a major shift in applied theology, though not of premillennial eschatology, has become apparent among American fundamentalism's vocal leaders. It represents a kind of theological schizophrenia, but a welcome affliction that is far preferable to the more consistent retreatism of 1870-1979—Gary North).

It is true that the salvation of souls is an immediate aim of evangelism. But the more ultimate aim is the promotion of the glory of the Triune God (Rom. 16:25-27). We truly must have a passion for souls because we know "the terror of the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:11). We must beseech men to be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20). Personal redemption is the necessary precondition of evangelism; it is not the end-all of evangelism.

Fundamentalists confusedly make a vital *part* of the church's mission the substantial *whole*. This leads perilously close to an adoption of un-

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53. Towns, *Capturing*, pp. 139-140.

scriptural means for reaching the lost—means that reduce evangelism virtually to the point of psychological conversion. William Sargant in his *Battle for the Mind* could have easily pointed his finger to the prima donnas of American fundamentalism as examples of psychologically induced conversions. Dollar lauds Dwight L. Moody by noting that he

was the creator of many innovations in evangelism, such as the effective use of publicity, organization, and advertising, and in so doing he “completed the reduction of evangelism to a matter of technique and personality.”<sup>54</sup>

Jack Hyles teaches that “evangelism is an atmosphere. Music can help create this atmosphere.”<sup>55</sup>

Throughout the range of fundamentalist literature on practical theology, there can be found various methodologies outlined, gimmicks suggested and warnings uttered in aiding the aspiring “super-church” pastor. This new sacerdotalism depends heavily on the third sacrament, the invitation. One popular method of administering an invitation is given by Hyles. He suggests closing sermons abruptly and even *prematurely* in order “to start the invitation from a high spiritual plane. This also prevents the unsaved from digging in. . . .”<sup>56</sup> However, if this does not prove effective, the pastor should instruct his personal workers in the proper approach to the potential convert. They should “approach the person [in the congregation] from the rear. This will give him an element of surprise. . . .”<sup>57</sup>

Rice even warns against a church having a pipe organ instead of a piano for invitational reasons. The organ, it seems, thwarts the invitation. This is due to the fact that the organ “is not a percussion instrument. The air blowing into one giant tube and then another does not make the instant staccato beginning of a note as does the piano.”<sup>58</sup> Muslims evangelize by the sword; fundamentalists by the piano. Muslims are crude.

The above four basic defects in fundamentalism pollute the wellspring of the curative waters of Christianity. Thus they deter fundamentalism from becoming a significant Christian influence in the course of world history. A shallow theology is the soil in which the seed of antinomianism is planted. When nurtured with liberal amounts of pessimism, its fruit is restricted evangelistic endeavor.

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54. Dollar, *Fundamentalism*, p. 78.

55. Jack Hyles, *The Hyles Church Manual* (Murfreesboro, Tennessee: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1968), p. 190.

56. Jack Hyles, *Let's Build An Evangelistic Church* (Wheaton: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1962), p. 97.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

58. Rice, *Churches*, pp. 120-121.

### *The Task of the Faithful*

The Great Commission as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20 appears in all the "Daily Bread" boxes of "Golden Memory Verses." It is proudly displayed on the banners unfurled at all mission conferences. Yet for all the quoting of this text, little real effort is made to even understand its full implications, much less to develop plans of action firmly based on it. Max Warren well notes, "The Gospel is for the *whole* man: for the *whole* of mankind: and it is addressed to the *whole* natural order."<sup>59</sup> In observing the modern fundamentalist movement at work, it could be surmised that "the gospel is for the inner man: to provide a retreat from the world: and is to be put on a bumper sticker." In this portion of the paper the Great Commission will be considered in respect to its authority, extension, intension, and empowerment.

### *The Authority of the Mission*

The actual Commission is prefixed with a bold claim: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (NASB). This preface is significant for several reasons. First, it reveals a dramatic contrast to the humility of Christ heretofore displayed. No more does He say, "I can do nothing of myself" (John 5:19, 30; 8:28). Victory over sin, death, and the devil had been gained (Col. 2:14, 15; Heb. 2:14). Second, it is a claim to universal dominion: it encompasses heaven and earth. This authority is framed in terms identical with that of God the Father (Matt. 11:25). God is Lord and Governor of all (Amos 1:3-2:3; Oba. 1; Isa. 10:5-34). He made powerful Nebuchadnezzar "My servant" (Jer. 25:9; 27:6; 43:10); Cyrus "My Shepherd" and "His annointed" (Isa. 44:28-45:13); Assyria His rod of anger (Isa. 10:5); and the Medes His own weapon (Jer. 51:11, 20). The Father's Lordship in Scripture is unbounded. Christ confidently lays claim to that same authority. As Kuiper has observed: "The Great Commission is usually thought of as a missionary command. It is that and far more than that. Its theme is *The Sovereign Christ*. It is a glorious declaration of his sovereignty."<sup>60</sup>

Third, not only is His authority above all other, but it penetrates every realm. Here is exposed the mortal weakness of fundamentalism's conception of the dominion of Christ. His authority is not just in the spiritual arena (the inner-personal realm), but in all spheres of life. The "all" which defines "authority" is here used in the *distributive* sense. A. B. Bruce has noted that "[Christ claims] every form of authority, command of all means for the advancement of the Kingdom of God."<sup>61</sup> Each and every

59. Max Warren, *I Believe in the Great Commission* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), p. 171.

60. R. B. Kuiper, *God-Centered Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1961), p. 60.

61. A. B. Bruce, "Matthew;" in W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Expositor's Greek New Testament*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1951), p. 339.

realm of thought or activity is under His authoritative command: ecclesiastical, familial, and personal, as well as social, political, economic, scientific, psychological, mathematical, and so on. The rich reward of His redemptive labors is sovereign Lordship over all (Eph. 1:19-23; Phil. 2:9-10; Rev. 5).

Upon making this claim, Jesus commands His followers to perform a particular mission: kingdom extension.

### *The Extension of the Mission*

Having triumphantly secured the title Lord of All, Christ sets in gear the machinery which He will employ toward the goal of exercising His dominion. He entrusts the extension of His kingdom to His people: "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of *all* the nations." The vision of the Resurrected Lord is that of the expanding Church.

"Pessimillennialism" (as Francis Nigel Lee has so aptly called it) destroys the vision of world dominion as the goal of His mission. Instead of accepting the command to "disciple all nations" as their duty, fundamentalists expect a pre-fabricated, batteries-included, no-chocolate-mess kingdom to magically appear—irrespective of either their diligence or sloth. Gospel victory is not something the church "this side of the Rapture" should be so bold as to hope for. David Fetcho has very perceptively commented on the failure of the "narrow men":

Read the book of Jonah in light of the Great Commission. Like the prophet Jonah, the church of Jesus Christ is subject to God's commission to address Nineveh, the contemporary secular society. As the appointed custodians of God's perspectives on human life, the church is sent as prophet to the fallen systems of the world. Like Jonah, too, the church is tempted to flee the challenging presence of the Lord—to escape to Tarshish, to blend into the background of worldly culture instead of confronting it.<sup>62</sup>

If Christ is confined within the structure of the institutional church and restricted to activity in the inner-personal life, then He is not Lord at all. If the sphere of His dominion does not encompass the world outside the doors of the church, then He has only limited sovereignty—and that is no sovereignty. The title of a book a few years back well summarized the plight of the fundamentalist: *Your God Is Too Small*.

Premillennialists tend to sever the unity between the Creation and New Creation Mandates. The Creation (or Cultural) Mandate can be found in Genesis 1:26-30, and the New Creation (or Evangelistic) Mandate is the Great Commission.

There are numerous obvious inter-relationships between the two Mandates. First, both occur at strategic times in history. Structurally, the Creation

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62. David Fetcho, "In the Face of the Tempest," *SCP Journal* II/1, (August 1978), 3.

Mandate occurs as the “swelling of jubilant song” at the accomplishment of God’s creative activity.<sup>63</sup> At that time the creation had just been finished (Gen. 2:1). The Lord pronounced it “very good” (Gen. 1:31). On the basis of the completion of God’s work, the joyful declaration is given. It serves as man’s creation duty. However, after man failed in his purpose, it became necessary for God to redeem man. The covenant of grace is established, thus allowing for a new creation purpose. The New Creation mandate, too, occurs at the climax of divine activity. It was given at the completion of Christ’s work in securing man’s redemption (John 17:4; 19:30). The Cultural Mandate was not withdrawn when sin entered the world. It is often repeated later: Genesis 9:1ff., Psalm 8; Hebrews 2:6-8. But the new factor of sin did necessitate divine intervention and the supplementation of the original Mandate.

Second, both Mandates are given on the basis of the ultimate authority of the Triune God. The Creation Mandate was given directly from the mouth of God who had just created all reality (Gen. 1:29, 30). The activity of the later Mandate is to be performed “in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19).

Third, the Creation Mandate was initially under the federal headship of Adam (Gen. 1,2; Rom. 5:14), while the New Creation Mandate is under the continuing headship of the Last Adam, Christ (I Cor. 15:45; Matt. 28:18,20).

Fourth, the tasks of both mandates are the same: to subdue the earth. The Creation Mandate was to begin at Eden (Gen. 2:15) and gradually to extend throughout all the earth (Gen. 1:26-28). It was restated after the great flood (Gen. 9:1-7). The New Creation Mandate was to begin at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47) and gradually extend throughout the world (Matt. 28:19). These tasks were originally given to small groups: Adam and Eve, Noah and his sons, and the disciples. Though many Christians balk at the concept of universal dominion, it is clear from the New Testament that the original disciples were not so hesitant. They were convinced of the power of God. Had they not received the command to “disciple all nations” on the basis of “all authority in heaven and on earth”? Were they not clearly commanded to preach the gospel to “every creature” (Mark 16:15)? Later, were they not reminded that they were to do their work to “the uttermost parts of the earth” (Acts 1:8)? Because of these commands, this small band of faithful men worked toward “the restoration of all things” (Acts 13:47) because they knew “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself” (2 Cor. 5:19). Indeed, the Mandate was directed “to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles” (Rom. 1:5).

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63. C. F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, “The Pentateuch” in *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., reprint 1975), p. 64.

Fifth, the enablement for the task of world dominion is found in the image of God reflected in man. Man was constitutionally created in "the image of God" (Gen. 1:26; 9:6), and thus he has a basic urge to dominion. The entrance of sin perverted godly dominion into a desire to "be like God" (Gen. 3:5), to be sure. But the New Creation Mandate provides the essential restoration of the image of God in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). The Creation Mandate is consequently undergirded by the restorational activity of God by means of the New Creation power. Therefore, kingly dominion by man is reflected in evangelistic enterprise: Christians are a "royal priesthood" (I Pet. 1:5, 7). "ambassadors of Christ" (II Cor. 5:20), and are presently ruling and reigning with the King (Eph. 2:6; Rev. 20:4). We have entered the kingdom (Col. 1:13) and are to proclaim it to others (Acts 28:19). The whole creation awaits the godly dominion of the New Creation saints of God (Rom. 8:19-23).

### *The Intension of the Mission*

No Christian should doubt the necessity of soul-winning in a fallen world. But what about culture-winning? Cultural Christianization has been widely promoted by such men as Abraham Kuyper, Klaas Schilder, S. J. Ridderbos, Henry Van Til, Francis Nigel Lee, Francis Schaeffer, R. J. Rushdoony, and others. These efforts have been largely ignored by the bulk of modern Christianity. Essentially, there are only three approaches to culture: It can be neglected (as in fundamentalism), or adopted as is (as in liberalism), or transformed (as in Reformed thought).

Fundamentalism neglects culture in part by misinterpreting the import of the Great Commission. For example, Jack Hyles, pastor of "the world's largest church," interprets the Commission's command to teach all things that Christ had commanded in the following trite manner:

Notice there are four basic verbs [in the Great Commission]: (1) *Go*. (2) *Preach*. (3) *Baptize*. (4) *Teach* them again. You teach them something after you get them saved and baptized. What do you teach them? To . . . "observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." It did not say to teach "whatsoever I have written you." But teach them "whatsoever I have *commanded* you."

Now what did He command us to do? Go, preach, baptize, then teach what He commanded us to do. So, we teach them to go and preach and baptize, that they may teach their converts to go, preach, and baptize, that they may teach their converts to go and preach and baptize.<sup>64</sup>

Due to a narrow concept of Christian mission, fundamentalists neglect culture. Consequently, the liberal sees the premillennial fundamentalist (whom he mistakes for all of the conservative movement) as one who

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64. Hyles, *Soul Winning*, p. 22. John R. Rice handles the Commission in almost exactly the same manner in Rice, *Churches*, p. 22.

justifies "social irresponsibility" and offers "a comfort in lethargy."<sup>65</sup> Sadly, Schaeffer seems to be correct when he notes that "the evangelical church seems to specialize in being behind."<sup>66</sup>

R. B. Kuiper has offered some insightful observations in this regard:

Ours is an age of secularism. Life is wont to be divided into two compartments, each of which is hermetically sealed from the other: the religious and the secular. Everyday life is divorced from God. Religion is at most a matter of church attendance, the family altar, and private devotions, but not of business, politics, or education. This sin is rampant in so-called Christian lands. The interpretation of the separation of church and state as the separation of religion and politics is a most serious American fallacy. The banishment of religion from public school education is rapidly destroying the spiritual and moral fiber of the American people. The slogan that business is business, implying that it is not religion, underlies prevalent deception and corruption.

What is secularism but the denial of the Scriptural teaching that Christ is the "head over all things" (Eph. 1:22)?<sup>67</sup>

Those who neglect the social and cultural ramifications of New Testament teaching are relegating Scripture to irrelevance. It should be obvious that the New Testament has much to say on social and other affairs. It is concerned with divorce (Matt. 5:27-32; Luke 16:18), the rich man's duty to the poor (Luke 16:19-25; 2 Cor. 8:13ff), employer-employee relationships (Eph. 6:5-9; Luke 10:17), honest wages (I Tim. 5:18; Luke 10:7), godly citizenship and the function of the state (Rom. 13:1-7), finances (Rom. 13:8; Matt. 15:14ff), and so on. To overlook these social instructions, one would have to confine his Biblical studies to the exegesis of "Genuine Cowhide" on the cover of his Bible.

New Testament teaching is perfectly consistent with the Old Testament instruction which emphasized that the "earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof" (Ex. 9:29; 19:5; Deut. 10:14; I Chron. 19:11; Job 41:11; Psa. 24:1; 50:12; 89:11; I Cor. 10:26,28). It teaches that Christ is the head over all (Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:22; Phil. 2:9-11); that "of him, and through him, and to him, are all things" (Rom. 11:36; Col. 1:17; Rev. 4:11); that all things will be subdued by Him (Acts 3:21; I Cor. 15:28; Col. 1:18-20; Heb. 1:3, 13; Rev. 19:11ff.); that His teaching is to permeate all of life (Matt. 13:33; 7:24-27; II Tim. 2:21; 3:17); that every thought is to be brought into captive obedience to Him (II Cor. 10:5). Christians must love God and serve Him with their whole being (Mark 12:30-33); everything must be done for His glory (I Cor. 10:31; I Pet. 4:11). The Lord must be followed in all manner of living (I Pet. 1:15; I John 2:6). Thus, the Christian's mind must be

65. Peters, *Futures*, pp. 28-29.

66. Francis Schaeffer, *The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-varsity Press, 1970), p. 81.

67. Kuiper, *Evangelism*, p. 99.



transformed in terms of His will (Rom. 12:1, 2) because he will one day be judged by Him concerning every deed he did on earth (II Cor. 5:10; II Tim. 4:1). Christ has ownership of the whole earth by right of creation (Col. 1:16; Jn. 1:3) and redemption (Heb. 1:1-13). His Lordship extends to all ages, all places, and all spheres of endeavor. It is sad that the children of the world show greater wisdom in terms of their faith than the children of the light (Luke 16:8-12).

The New Creation Mandate urges as an evangelistic duty that converts be trained "to observe all things whatsoever" He commanded. As Bruce has noted, *Terein*, "to observe," is to be understood "with a view not to *gnosis* but to practice. . . ." "The question arises, "What sort of things did Christ command to be observed?" The answer is *all things* He had taught. This included everything touched upon in His discourses, His parables, His "sayings," His specific predictions and promises, and so on. It should be obvious that He did not go about everywhere staging decisional-regeneration soul-winning conferences.

There are at least three categories of teaching that are subsumed under this command in the Great Commission.

First, it should be obvious that it included all *new material* which came through Him as an expansion and continuation of organic-progressive revelation. That is, all material that can be considered distinctive to His teaching.

Second, it included all *previous teaching* of Scripture. Christ upheld the binding validity of the entire Old Testament Law and Prophets. This can be demonstrated by following several lines of argument: (1) It was His preordained purpose in coming into the world that He should keep God's Law (Psa. 40:7ff.; Heb. 10:5-7). (2) He taught the essential structural unity between Old and New Testaments (John 10:35), and thus the foundation of His teaching rested on the Law of God (e.g., Matt. 10:4; John 8:17). (3) The Law was His direction in daily life (e.g., Matt 4:4ff.). (4) He specifically commanded us to keep the Law (John 15:10)—even in exhaustive detail (Matt. 5:17-20; Luke 16:17). (5) Thus, He even upheld its civil validity (e.g., Matt. 15:3-6). (6) He defined true and godly love in terms of the Law (Matt. 7:12; 22:36-40).

Third, it included the *yet-future teaching* of the apostles. Before the Lord left, He left the promise that He would direct the revelation that would come by way of the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-18, 26; 15:26-27; 16:5-15). It is important to keep in mind that the apostles depended on the Law that He confirmed in their own instruction. See for example: I Timothy 5:17 (Deut. 25:4); II Corinthians 6:14 (Deut. 22:10); Acts 23:1-5 (Ex. 22:28; Lev. 19:15). See also Galatians 5:14; I Corinthians 7:19; 14:34; I John 2:3, 4; 5:3.

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68. Bruce, in Nicoll, *Greek New Testament*, p. 340.

Furthermore, true evangelism necessitates the preaching of the Law: Sin is defined in terms of the Law (I John 3:4). Conviction of sin is based on the realization of the broken Law (James 2:9-12; Matt. 19:16-24; John 7:19). On Judgment Day, men will be judged in terms of the Law's just requirements (Matt. 7:23; 13:41; Rom. 2:12-15).

The Great Commission, therefore, orders us *to observe all things He commanded*. The things He commanded were the past teaching of Scripture—in detail (the Law and the Prophets), all that He presently taught at the time of His earthly sojourn (the Gospels), and all that He would direct the Holy Spirit to teach in the future (the remainder of the New Testament). Realizing this, a few specific examples of the relevance of the Great Commission for current cultural endeavor will be briefly outlined.

*Philosophy.* Philosophy seeks to understand reality; why it is as it is, what makes it as it is, and so forth. Philosophical inquiry has been important as a source of ideas which have molded history. The single importance of philosophy requires that it be subjected to sound reasoning. However, this is impossible for the unbeliever. The unbeliever's mind is vain (Eph. 4:17) and therefore his reasoning is blind (Rom. 1:21). Consequently twentieth century philosophy is a maze of conflicting systems. The current promulgation of idealism, realism, positivism, pragmatism, existentialism, etc., serves as witness to this fact.

The central motivation in epistemology (the heart of philosophy) has been *the quest for certainty*. This is an issue of intensely religious significance. Due to the finite capacities of man and the knowledge-effect of sin, epistemic certainty is impossible outside the self-authenticating revelation of God in Scripture. For philosophy to gain certainty, it must bow to the Creator of all reality (John 1:4; Col. 1:16; Eph. 1:10) who sustains all things as they are (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). Christ alone is the embodiment of truth (John 14:6), knowledge, and wisdom (Col. 2:3). True truth is only revealed in God's word (John 17:17). All other ground, according to Christ, is sinking sand (Matt. 7:24-27). *Presupposing* the truth of Scripture, Christianity has a self-authenticating philosophy which can challenge all other philosophies.

*Ethics.* The epistemological problem of philosophy necessarily infects ethics as well. There are basically two problems that have plagued metaethics throughout history. First, the *meaning* of crucial moral terms. All sorts of ambiguities and other problems have arisen from the problem of accurately defining essential ethical terms. To determine the wrongness of a thought, word, or deed, there must be some clear definition of what "wrong" means. Is it that which negates pleasure or benefit? Is it a property which must be instituted? Is it rationally derived? Or is it infallibly revealed (the Christian position)?

Second, there must be the *justification* of basic moral judgments. Three major

schools have always divided unbelieving ethical thought. (1) The deontological school seeks to justify moral behavior by establishing *binding standards* for behavior. But how can these rules be determined? By some transcendent standard? In terms of what occurs in nature? The individual's conscience? Rational argument? Intuitive perception? (2) The teleological school looks to the *consequences* (aim, purpose, outcome) of behavior to determine moral virtue. But are these to be determined for self, or a part of society, or the whole of society? How can the outcome of every act be infallibly known? (3) The dispositional school looks to the *motive* of an act. But what rules must be followed to determine proper character traits? Is motivation to be viewed individualistically or societally?

Christian ethics is God-given ethics; it is based on the self authenticating Scripture. Only in God's word do the above problems find sure resolution. Christian ethics defines moral terms on the basis of a *sure word from the Creator*. A thing is wrong when it violates the Law of God (Matt. 5:19; I John 3:4). God's Law is holy, just, and good (Rom. 7:12); it is everlasting and true (Psa. 119:142). We are to do all things that God commands in His Law (Matt. 19:16-26). Christian ethics determines the justification of a particular act based on *all* three of the above outlined approaches. Our *standard* is God's Law; our *goal* is the glory of God (I Cor. 10:31); our *motivation* is Biblical love (Mark 12:28-31) and faith (Heb. 11:6). Each of these elements is inter-dependent. Unbelieving ethics has always severed this interdependence and thus been fragmentary. Christian ethics is both binding and relevant. It is binding because given by the Sovereign Judge. It is relevant because given by the All-wise and Omniscient God of Scripture. Only He can give a law which is always and everywhere relevant and applicable.

*Psychology*. As Rushdoony has observed: "Humanism has come into full flower, and the greatest concern of man is with man, himself."<sup>69</sup> Psychology today affects virtually every endeavor of modern life: from business to law to education to religion. Man is the center of reality, thus psychology is the new "queen of the sciences."

But again we run against the problem of definition: What *is* man? Some have called him *Homo sapiens* ("man the thinker"); others understand him as *Homo ludens* ("man the player", i.e., the animal free from the struggle for survival); *Homo negans* (the man who can say 'no', i.e., man who can affirm right and wrong); or *Homo esperans* ("the hoping man"). Humanistic psychology understands man either in terms of himself or of his environment. It has no room for the supernatural as man's ultimate environment. In contrast, Christianity understands man in terms of God: man is *imago dei*, i.e., the creaturely image of God. Consequently, Christian and non-Christian psychologies differ radically in their approaches to

69. Rousas John Rushdoony, "Implications for Psychology" in North, *Foundations*, p. 41.

psychological studies. Each system has its own presuppositions and methodologies.

Christian psychology has the following presuppositions: (1) Man is the direct creation of God and reflects His image. As such, he possesses integrity and meaning. Scripture therefore emphasizes the absolute value of human life. Man is exalted *over* the environment (Gen. 1:26-30; Psa. 8; Matt. 6:26). He is not simply a by-product of random evolutionary forces, nor is he merely the highest animal or an interesting movement in the flux of history. (2) Therefore, man is a responsible creature and must face up to responsibility (II Cor. 5:10; Matt. 12:36). He is not helpless, driven about by environmental or social forces. He must not be allowed the pleasure of irresponsible behavior, as per most modern psychologies. (3) At the same time, it is true that man is a totally depraved sinner (Rom. 3:10) who enters the world with a bent toward evil (Psa. 51:5; Eph. 2:1-5). He neither enters the world *tabula rosa* nor inherently good. There can be no "noble savage" theory of man. (4) Man is convertible. He is not self-convertible, however. Anthropocentric psychology cannot convert or save him. He is convertible from his evil ways only by a power outside of himself: the gracious activity of the Triune God (Rom. 1:16; John 3:3-5; Matt. 7:17-19; 12:33). Consequently, sinful behavior is not unavoidably necessary (I Cor. 10:13). (5) True freedom and happiness come from fearing God and keeping His commandments (Psa. 1:1-3; Eccl. 12:13). Only when man knows the truth can he be set free from slavery to sin (John 8:32; Rom. 6:18, 22). Since God's word is truth, all psychological theory must be based firmly upon it.

*Science.* Scientific investigation rests necessarily on the notion of an orderly universe. Order is the absolutely essential precondition for science. Evolutionary theory can in no way claim to be truly and objectively scientific. It posits a philosophical absurdity: that order has arisen from disorder; that man has come about by a random variation of nothing into something. Humanistic science is religious in character: it is a faith system rooted in Chance. Even non-Christian scholars have recognized that the faith of Scripture is conducive to science. Alfred North Whitehead has commented that modern science was born only because it was surrounded by a "conductive Christian frame of reference." Gunter Howe has noted that the de-mythologizing and de-demonizing of the world that is found in the Genesis creation account "belongs to the most important presuppositions of modern science."

Scripture does, in fact, teach a rational, orderly coherent creation based on a rational and wise Creator (Prov. 3:19-20; cf. Isa. 40; Gen. 1-2). It maintains a continuity and coherence based on the powerful ordering activity of the Sovereign Lord (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). It teaches a purposeful cosmos, rather than chaos.

*Politics.* Perhaps nowhere is there more muddled thinking in Christian

circles than in the area of the relation of religion and politics. After all, is it not the case that the First Amendment of the U. S. Constitution specifically decrees there shall be no mixture of religion and politics? Rather than attempting to develop a political theory on the basis of Scripture, the average evangelical Christian is usually content to limit his political involvement to voting and perhaps criticisms of immorality amongst elected officials or to blatantly disruptive political maneuvers (e.g., the ERA, homosexual rights, abortion on demand, IRS policies affecting Christian schools, etc.). Unfortunately, most Christians will accept virtually any non-tyrannical government. And they will often do so on the basis of studied reflection! The following editorial from *Christianity Today* clearly indicates this problem:

On the one hand it is good to see that belief in the transcendent is still influential in human affairs. On the other hand, ideologically-based governments (whether rooted in a traditional religion or in communist faith) have been notoriously hostile to evangelistic ministries and even to the proper range of shepherding ministries for believers. The fact is that the record of predominantly secular governments, such as most of those in the Western world, is notably better than that of governments that have a close link with some Christian or non-Christian faith.

It is curious that while many Christians are protesting secularism in their own countries, missionaries are finding it easier to minister in just such secular environments. We think that, all things considered, governments that are relatively neutral in matters religious are best for the world as a whole and for the Christian mission in the world.<sup>70</sup>

In light of the above notoriously “two masters” editorial comment, it must be discovered whether or not the Scriptures do, as a matter of fact, speak of politics in a neutral manner.

That God is vitally concerned with political affairs is quite easy to demonstrate: it is God who ordained governments in the first place (Rom. 13:1; Dan. 2:21). He is the One who establishes particular kings (Prov. 16:12; Psa. 119:46, 47; 82:1, 2). Therefore, He commands our obedience to rulers (Rom. 13:1-3). Rulers are commanded to rule on His terms (Psa. 2:10 ff.). Even in the New Testament activity of political import is discoverable. Jesus urged payment of taxes to *de facto* governments (Matt. 22:15-22). In response to reminders of King Herod’s political threats against Him, Jesus publically rebuked the king by calling him a vixen (Luke 12:32). He taught that a judge is unjust if he does not fear God (Luke 18:2, 6). John the Baptist openly criticized King Herod (Luke 3:19-20). Peter refused to obey authorities who commanded him to cease preaching (Acts 5:29). The Apostle John referred to the Roman Empire as “the beast” (Rev. 13). Are we

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70. Kenneth Kantzer, “The Fall of the Shah,” *Christianity Today*, March 23, 1979, p. 12.

today to blend into the background of politics?

Several elements of political theory that can be derived from Scripture (by way of example) would include the following: (1) Governmental power is limited to the judicial realm (Rom. 13:1-4; Matt. 22:21). (2) Governmental law must be founded upon God's law (Psa. 2:10-12; Isa. 33:22; Deut. 4:2-9). (3) Governmental officials must be elected representatives (Deut. 1:13, 15, 17). (4) The basis of governmental authority is covenantal (Eccl. 8:2). And so on.

Further examples of the broad ramifications of the Great Commission could be brought forward. These should suffice to illustrate that evangelistic endeavor rooted in the Commission gives life and direction to individuals *and* societies.

### *The Empowerment for the Mission*

To the small band of disciples gathered around Christ, the task of world dominion would certainly have seemed quite ambitious, to say the least. But He did not leave them to conquer a rebellious world alone. His own powerful presence is promised them: "Lo, I am with you always."

"Lo" is the Greek demonstrative particle *idou*. It is employed here to draw attention to the importance of the following statement. That statement redirected their attention away from their own frailty and numerical insignificance to the grave-conquering Lord. The Lord not only directed attention on His personal presence by use of the particle *idou*, but also by use of the first personal pronoun *ego*, "I." Since verbal inflection renders first personal pronouns linguistically redundant in Greek, the appearance of *ego* in this connection bears especial significance. It further highlights the fact of the personal presence of Christ with them. It is as if He had said, "Behold, I—even I myself—will be with you."

The believer is adequately empowered for the task of culture molding on a grand and universal scale. He has the powerful and glorious presence of Christ leading him on (Matt. 18:20, John 15:18; Acts 18:10; Gal. 2:20) via the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9; I John 4:4). Christ the Victor leads the Church to dominion (I Cor. 13:24-27; Rev. 19:11ff.). He promises His people sure victory over all opposition (Matt. 16:18; John 17:15; I John 5:18). He powerfully routed Satan and his demonic hordes for us (John 12:31, 32; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14). If Christ be for us, who can be against us? As our advocate, He intercedes for us always (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 4:15, 16; I John 2:1). Paul believed he could do all things through Christ who strengthened him (Phil. 4:13). Therefore, he faithfully set about "casting down reasonings, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God" in order to bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:4, 5).

### *Conclusion*

The whole of creation groans and travails in pain earnestly awaiting the manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. 8:22, 19). Humanism's current reign is the Church's present shame. Like the spies of old, conservative Christianity in the main is retreatist, fearful of waging war against the powers that be: "The people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great. We are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we" (Numb. 13:28, 31). This was grasshopper theology then (v. 33), and it is grasshopper theology today.

The greatness of the Great Commission lies in these three facts: (1) It comes to us on the basis of the supreme authority of the Lord of glory. It is obligatory. (2) It commands the intense discipling of all nations in all the truths of Scripture. It is comprehensive. (3) It is sealed with the promise of the mighty presence and blessing of the Lord of lords. It is effectual.

Biblical evangelism draws upon the rich and varied truths of the whole counsel of God and is directed to the goal of converting all men, all nations, and all areas of life to obedience to Christ. Modern evangelism draws upon a few selected proof-texts (the "Romans Road to Salvation") and is directed to the narrow goal of individual salvation. Instead of being overcomers in terms of the Great Commission, modern Christians are *undercomers*.

## Will Christ Return “At Any Moment”?

HERBERT BOWSHER

Concerning the world of humanism, Rushdoony has insightfully noted that any age is quick to see the myths and absurdities of other ages, while failing to perceive similar contradictions in its own.<sup>1</sup> Such is the situation with eschatology and modern evangelism. Following His resurrection, our Lord declared that He has all power on earth as well as heaven. On that basis, Christians can confidently go forth discipling all the nations teaching them to obey all of God’s law (Matt. 28:18-20). In other words, God’s people are to Christianize the world.

In the light of this Great Commission, therefore, a recent advertisement for a major Christian university underscores one absurdity of modern Christianity:

Christianize the world? FORGET IT!...Try to bring Christian values, morals, precepts, and standards upon a lost world and you’re wasting your time. . . . Evangelize—preach the Gospel; snatch men as brands from the burning. . . . All your preaching won’t change the world, but the Gospel “is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.”<sup>2</sup>

Future generations of Christian students will no doubt read this statement (or one like it) in a source book of twentieth-century documents and wonder how this could possibly come from a school that claims to be “without apology for the . . . absolute authority of the Bible.”<sup>3</sup> One cannot help but wonder what course history would have taken if men like Luther, Calvin, Knox, and our Puritan forefathers had held such a view! Unlike these Reformers, modern Christianity fails to see the Faith as building on the past, while laying groundwork for the future. This outlook is ahistorical and pietistic in character. As Chalcedon scholars have frequently noted, one oft-recurring motif contributing to this attitude is the expectation that the world will end soon. This is the “Rapture Generation.”<sup>4</sup> It is important for our purposes to examine one presupposition that is central to such thinking:

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1. *The Mythology of Science* (Nutley: Craig Press, 1978), p. 8.

2. *Faith For the Family* (July/August, 1974), back cover.

3. *Ibid.* In view of this rather despairing view of the success of gospel proclamation it is amusing to consider that this school’s defenders attack, with straight faces, the Biblical doctrine of election for being pessimistic and stifling to evangelism.

4. *God’s Plan for Victory* (Fairfax: Thoburn Press, 1977), p. 47f.



the doctrine of the imminent return of Christ. While not all adherents follow this belief to its logical yet zany conclusions, it enjoys widespread acceptance. In fact, fundamentalists frequently criticize Reformed leaders for failure to emphasize its importance.<sup>5</sup>

### *The Issue Stated*

The blessed hope of every orthodox Christian is that Jesus Christ is literally and bodily coming again to earth at the end of the present age. The clear promise is that "this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). Whatever one's eschatology may be, this glorious fact is beyond dispute. Jesus is coming again. A considerable number of Christians, however, carry this truth a step further. These believers insist that the Bible teaches that the second coming is *imminent*. It is this doctrine of imminency, with its concomitant effect on evangelism, that is the subject of this paper.

It should be noted at once that those holding this view are not always rigorous in defining what they mean by "imminence." In one widely used textbook, for example, the author cites with obvious approval those early church Fathers who taught that Christ would come *immediately*, that is, in their day. This is contrasted with those "who also rejected other fundamental doctrines."<sup>6</sup> Surely Thiessen does not wish to imply that Scripture teaches an immediate coming, for then the Bible would teach a position that has been disproved by history. Obviously this is unacceptable.

The clearest and most convincing definition of imminence that I have found is the one given by Walvoord. According to him, two concepts are included in the doctrine of the imminent return of Christ. First, although the *possibility* of a delay is conceded, the Lord *could* return at any moment. Thus, it is often termed an "any-moment" coming. Second, there are no necessary prophesied events that must occur before the second advent.<sup>7</sup> Walvoord stresses the "There is no authoritative revelation of intervening events."<sup>8</sup>

Once these premises are granted, certain implications logically follow. These implications are clearly spelled out in *Jesus is Coming*, a brief nineteenth-century work that has had enormous influence. A major emphasis in the book is on *watching*.

We are commanded to *watch* for his coming. . . . Now it is absolutely

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5. George W. Dollar, *A History of Fundamentalism in America* (Greenville: Bob Jones University Press, 1973), p. 182.

6. Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), p. 477.

7. John F. Walvoord, *The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 70.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

inconsistent with the human mind to watch for an event which we believe to be one thousand years or more in the future. And yet this is just the position which Post-Millennialists are forced to take.<sup>9</sup>

This is then coupled with the idea that the world is getting worse and will continue on a downward slide until the second coming. Post-millennialists, therefore, who pray and hope for future revivals, are deceiving both themselves and the Church. As J. N. Darby, the founder of dispensationalism, declared:

... instead of permitting ourselves to hope for a continued progress of good, we must expect a progress of evil, and that the hope of the earth being filled with the knowledge of the Lord before the exercise of His judgment on the earth, is delusive.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, this doctrine of imminency is declared to be a practical doctrine for "every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as He is pure" (I John 3:3). "And do we not want *practical holiness*?"<sup>11</sup>

That this view of the Faith is the dominant view in fundamentalist churches today is obvious to anyone with even a rudimentary knowledge of the contemporary scene. This paper will seek to demonstrate that an "any-moment" return of Christ is not the hope of Scripture. On the contrary, such a hope represents a vision that is alien to the prophets and the apostles. It is this doctrine of imminency that has helped to produce the shallow, narrow view of evangelism that considers applying God's precepts to society a "waste of time."

### *A Serious Problem*

Before presenting a refutation of the doctrine of imminency, a brief discussion of a serious problem with this position should be given. Albert Schweitzer, the noted liberal theologian who denied orthodox Christianity, agreed that the Bible teaches the doctrine of imminency. Since Schweitzer was under no compulsion to guard the doctrine of the infallibility of Scripture, he was free to pursue his thesis to its logical conclusion. Schweitzer argued that the New Testament teaches unequivocally that Christ will return soon, and he cited passages such as Matthew 10:23, 16:28, and Mark 9:1. Schweitzer did not hesitate to say that such passages are "errors and miscalculations."<sup>12</sup>

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9. W. E. B[lackstone], *Jesus is Coming* (Old Tappan, N. J: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1932), p. 63. Translated into no less than forty languages, it is still widely distributed. My copy was given to me by a pastor in Pennsylvania in an attempt to return me to the chiliast fold.

10. Quoted in, Iain H. Murray, *The Puritan Hope* (Carlisle, Pa.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), p. 186.

11. Blackstone, *Jesus is Coming*, p. 116. (emphasis his).

12. G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), p. 86.

In Mark 9:1, for example, it is clearly stated that some men standing there would not taste of death till they had seen the kingdom of God come with power. Although this fits the post-millennial scheme, pre-millennialists have a real problem. Blackstone's explanation is simply not adequate. He states that Jesus had reference to Peter's view of the transfiguration, John's prophetic view in Revelation, and Paul's vision of things impossible to utter (II Cor. 12:4)<sup>13</sup> This is forced, to say the least. It is especially inadequate for a dispensationalist who prides himself on a literal interpretation of Scripture. There is no way the transfiguration can be equated with the kingdom. Neither can it be said that John saw the kingdom. And there is no warrant for saying that Paul was even "standing here," much less that he saw the kingdom.

There is a further problem that Schweitzer did not overlook. This is the phenomenon he called "the delay of the *parousia*." For him, "the whole history of Christianity is seen in the light of this delay and the efforts that have been made to explain it."<sup>14</sup> Therefore two opposing motifs are continually clashing. On the one hand, there is the radical expectation of the nearness of the *parousia*, while on the other hand, there is the contradictory continuity of history. Modern evangelicals undoubtedly understand this and realize that they cannot have it both ways. Their answer, therefore, is to downplay, if not discard, the concept of history and the future, in favor of an any-moment return of Christ. A favorite phrase, when they simply cannot avoid a discussion of the future is "if the Lord tarries," which is piously appended to declarative sentences.

How can the doctrine of imminency, therefore, be declared a comforting doctrine? How is this to promote true holiness? The Bible says that hope deferred makes the heart sick (Prov. 13:12). Those of us who look forward to Christ's return yet reject the doctrine of imminency know that the Lord is not slack concerning His promises as some men count slackness. It is scoffers walking after their own lusts (like Schweitzer) who say, "Where is the hope of His coming?" (II Peter 3:3, 4, 9). Our hope is in the reality not the nearness of His return.

### *The Coming of the Lord*

One of the most fundamental errors of those holding to the "any-moment" scheme involves their understanding of the Biblical concept of "coming." Such teaching stresses the *final* return, while failing to do justice to the *manifold* comings of the Lord in the Bible. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to give an exhaustive treatment of the various ways in which Christ is said to come, a brief survey is sufficient for the present

13. Blackstone, *Jesus is Coming*, pp. 139-140.

14. Berkouwer, *Return of Christ*, p. 67.

purpose.<sup>15</sup> This can be summarized by noting that the Lord is said to "come" or to "visit" the earth whenever He comes in either judgment and cursing, or in succor and blessing.

This concept is especially prevalent in the book of Isaiah. The overall background is the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord of all. Earthly monarchs come and go, but the Lord is the true King (Isa. 6). John 12:41 informs us that Isaiah's vision was of the second person of the Trinity. Since Christ is King, He comes in judgment. For example, "The Lord rideth upon a swift cloud and shall *come* into Egypt" (Isa. 19:1). He "comes" to Egypt by promoting internal strife (vs. 2), as well as by giving the land of Egypt over to a political dictator (vs. 4). Now this is a passage dispensationalists need to consider, for it obviously does not refer to a literal coming. Further, the parallel with Matthew 24 is striking. It is clear from the context that this "coming in the clouds" (Matt. 24:30) is also a figurative *coming in judgment*, and is a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70.<sup>16</sup> It was not a reference to the second advent, since the fulfillment occurred in that generation (vs. 34).

The judgment upon Egypt is not the only example of this concept. It is the pattern of God's righteous judgments against the nations (Isa. 13-24).

Further, the Lord is said to also "visit" Jerusalem in judgment (Isa. 29:6). Isaiah 29 represents the portion of Isaiah's discourse which is directed toward the Old Testament visible church, and should be consulted today when our evangelism turns toward "regular churchgoers." The Lord declares that He will "lay siege" against the city (vs. 2-3) and it will be "visited of the Lord of Hosts" in judgment. The people are denounced for their humanism; that is, fearing God in their own way on the basis of human authority (vs. 13), and trusting in the State (Egypt in this case, 30:2).

When was the last "evangelism conference" which included for discussion on its agenda the need to warn the people of God's various comings in judgment *on earth* and *before* the second advent? What "big-name evangelist" last stated that the Lord has withheld judicious elder statesmen and given us immature, self-serving politicians, because it is what our transgression of His law deserves (Isa. 3:1-4)?

But the Lord does not come only in judgment. He also comes to deliver His people when they cry unto Him. This concept is especially prevalent in the Psalms. Psalm 80, for example, is the prayer of the Old Testament church for deliverance. The plea is, "Return we beseech thee, O God of hosts, look down from heaven and *visit* this vine" (vs. 14). "Turn us again,

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15. For a full and exhaustive treatment see Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1972), pp. 252-262. He lists no less than eight ways in which Christ is said to "come".

16. See J. Marcellus Kik, *An Eschatology of Victory* (Nutley: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1971). The parallel passage is Luke 21:20-24.

again, O God of hosts and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved" (vs. 3, 7, 19). How unlike so many modern prayers this is! This is *not* a prayer for the Lord to come and rapture the saints out of the earth. It is a prayer for God to come and do a work of reformation in history. Psalm 44 provides a similar example of this concept. The Lord's past work of driving out the heathen is recalled (vs. 1-3), and the plea is made for the Lord to return and "command deliverances for Jacob" (vs. 4-6). Obviously, what these poor deluded psalmists really needed was a good old-fashioned prophecy conference, where it could be patiently explained to them that the world was getting worse and worse, and that there was really nothing they could do about it.

Another way the Old Testament defines "coming" is by the phrase, "the day of the Lord." The day of the Lord is simply whenever God acts in history. This point is conceded by Payne, who is premillennial and holds to an imminent return.<sup>17</sup> Examples of the day of the Lord as a past historical act are Joel 1:15, Isaiah 13:6, and Zephaniah 1:14, 15, 18; 2:2. It is clear from the context of each passage cited that *none* is referring to the second advent. In Zephaniah, for example, the Philistines, the Moabites, etc., are clearly to be the recipients of the judgment of the day of the Lord (2:4-3:7). This, of course, is preceded by God's judgment on His people (1:1-13) and followed by a promise of blessing to His elect remnant (3:8-20). The meaning is clear. This particular "day of the Lord" has no reference to Christ's second advent.

Blackstone, however, with absolutely no discussion, cites the passages in the above paragraph to "prove" that the second advent is "the key to the book of Isaiah and many of the other prophets."<sup>18</sup> Pentecost makes a similar blanket statement concerning such passages. He also neglects to explain how he arrives at such a conclusion. It is interesting that he discusses such Old Testament texts under the general heading of "The Scriptural Doctrine of the Tribulation" without bothering to explain the connection.<sup>19</sup> This omission is especially glaring when one considers that this is the *magnum opus* of dispensational eschatology. Few would disagree with Walvoord's statement that, "In large measure his conclusions are shared by the great body of premillenarians. The work as a whole merits classification as a standard and comprehensive text in Biblical Eschatology."<sup>20</sup> Such exegetical sloppiness is inexcusable.

How could Pentecost be so confused? Two reasons can be given. First, it

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17. J. Barton Payne. *The Imminent Appearing of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), p. 60.

18. Blackstone, *Jesus is Coming*, p. 55.

19. J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Dunham Publishing Company, 1964), pp. 229-231.

20. *Ibid.*, p. x (from the introduction by Walvoord).

is because he refuses to distinguish the manifold comings of the Lord and, therefore, assumes that a mere listing of chapters and verses will prove his point. Second, it is a cardinal rule of dispensational hermeneutics that a verse is to be interpreted literally unless such an interpretation appears ridiculous. Therefore, "he cometh with clouds," for example, must mean literally that. Such a hermeneutical approach, however, is an imposition of one's preconceived notion upon Scripture. The Bible itself teaches no such rule.

Nor is this concept of "coming" disproved by the book of Revelation. The common view of those holding to an imminent return is that everything beyond the third chapter takes place in the future *after* the second advent. *Therefore*, Christ's return is the next event on God's timetable, and *therefore* our Lord's return is imminent. It is this *futurist presupposition* of the book that needs to be challenged.

The book of Revelation follows the pattern of Old Testament prophetic books. All prophecy in Scripture is written with the contemporary historical circumstances in mind. As Pieters notes "prophecy begins with its own generation."<sup>21</sup> Future prophecies in the Old Testament are always given to offer warnings or comfort to the original recipients. The only exception to this rule is the book of Daniel. Here (and here only) God tells Daniel to "shut up the words and seal the book" (Dan. 12:4), for there were things in the prophecy that he could not understand until Christ's first advent at the "time of the end" (vs. 9).

No such qualification is given in the book of Revelation. On the contrary, the word "revelation" or *apocalypse* means an "unveiling" of the truth. Further it is the revelation of things which must *shortly* come to pass (Rev. 1:1). Those who read this book, therefore, are promised a blessing for "the time is at hand" (1:3). This is important for a right understanding of the book, because *it is a message directed primarily to seven churches in their historical situation*. It is strange that dispensationalists, who demand a literal interpretation, see the seven churches as seven future ages. Such a view is completely destitute of Scriptural warrant. John's purpose in writing was to offer comfort and hope for the persecuted churches. Briefly, the message of the book is that Christ will come in judgment upon the Church's enemies. He will judge apostate Jerusalem (chapters 4-12), and then He will judge pagan Rome (chapters 13-15).<sup>22</sup> References to Christ's coming, therefore, are to His *coming in judgment*. Thus, our Lord sends comfort to His people and assures them that their suffering is not in vain for He will avenge them. First, of course, judgment must come to the house of God

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21. Albertus Pieters, *The Lamb, the Woman, and the Dragon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1930). p. 64.

22. For substantiation and further discussion, the best work currently available is Jay Adams, *The Time is at Hand* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1974). Of course, this does not imply agreement with his total position.

(I Peter 4:17). Therefore, Christ will come in judgment to the church at Pergamos, for example, unless they repent (2:16). Even Ryrie concedes that this is what is meant by Christ's coming to Pergamos.<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, John concludes by saying, "*seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book for the time is at hand*" (22:10). The plea is for the Lord Jesus to come quickly in protection, blessing, and victory. As Lenski notes, "Jesus' coming is attested by thousands of judgments during all these centuries and its impending final judgment will prove the final consummation."<sup>24</sup>

### *Watchfulness*

Many have been attracted to the doctrine of imminency by the Scriptural commands to "watch" for His coming. "*Watch* therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Matt. 24:42). "Blessed are these servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find *watching* . . ." (Luke 12:37). "Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us *watch* and be sober" (I Thess. 5:6). To determine the precise meaning of watchfulness, however, a brief word study is necessary.

In the New Testament, five Greek words are translated as "watching." Our current English understanding of "watch" is most clearly conveyed by the terms *tereo* and *paratereo*. They have the idea of fixing one's attention on an object. For example, concerning Jesus, it is said that the Pharisees "... *watched* him, whether he would heal on the Sabbath day; that they might accuse him" (Mark 3:2). It is significant that as Ladd (a premillenarian) notes, "These words which refer to the physical act of fixing one's attention upon some object are never used of the second coming of Christ."<sup>25</sup> This fact is crucial to a Biblical understanding of watchfulness. Those holding to an any moment return need to deal with this.

Another term translated "watch" is *nepho*. It occurs, for example in II Tim. 4:5 and I Peter 4:7, and means simply to "be sober." Payne, who holds to an imminent return, admits that *nepho* cannot refer to watching for the coming of the Lord.<sup>26</sup>

The final two words which are translated as "watch" in the New Testament are *gregoreo* and *agrupneo*. These two terms are almost identical in meaning. *Gregoreo* means to "be awake," while *agrupneo* means "sleepless." All three instances cited in the first paragraph above, for example, are *gregoreo*. "Watching," therefore, is moral or spiritual wakefulness not a watching *for* Christ's return. We are nowhere in Scripture

23. Charles Ryrie, *Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1955), p. 25.

24. R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), p. 660.

25. George Eldon Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 106.

26. Payne, *Imminent Appearing*, p. 94.

told to watch *for* our Lord's second advent. On the contrary, the angels rebuke the apostles by asking, "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" (Acts 1:11). Ladd's point regarding Luke 12:42-48 is well taken:

*The delay of the master made no difference to the true servant: he busied himself about his Lord's business. . . . But the master's delay induced the false servant to a sinful course of action. The Lord's delay brought out the true character of his servants.*<sup>27</sup>

Therefore it is clear from this parable that the *nearness* of the Lord's return is a *bad* incentive for true holiness. Had the false servant believed in his master's imminency, he temporarily might have been a better servant. But it would not have been a godly sorrow working repentance to salvation (II Cor. 7:10). Remember Gehazi. Though obedient while in Elisha's company, he fulfilled the lusts of his heart after leaving his master's immediate presence (II Kings 5).

Christ's return is a glorious truth. But as our present distance from the first advent in no way dims the gold of the cross, so our distance from the second advent fails to dim the gold of His coming in glory.

It should also be noted that if watching (in the "any-moment" sense) is a means of practical holiness, then the apostles themselves enjoyed no such help. As Boettner observes, "It is true that Postmillennialists do not expect the Second Coming during their lifetime. And in this regard they are in good company, for neither did the apostle Paul expect the Lord's return within his lifetime."<sup>28</sup> Surely this is beyond dispute, for the course of his ministry was clearly outlined to him (Acts 9:15), and he was even able to predict his own death (II Tim. 4:6), as well as future problems that would arise in the Church (Acts 20:29).

Is there not a sense in which the Christian indeed looks toward our Lord's appearing? Of course there is. But it does not follow an "any-moment" scheme, and is entirely consistent with long periods of time. And by no means should it be used as a tool in evangelism by raising a club over the unbeliever's head. It is *faith* that telescopes distant events and brings them near. Did not Abraham *see* Christ's day and rejoice (John 8:56)? Likewise Job *knew* that his redeemer liveth and would stand upon the earth at the latter day (Job: 19:25). "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them and embraced them. . . ." (Hebrews 11:13). Such is the hope of Scripture.

### *No Intervening Events?*

There are a great many texts in the Bible that indicate a great length of time will elapse before Christ returns. One could cite the tarrying of the

27. Ladd, *Blessed Hope*, p. 117 (emphasis his).

28. Boettner, *Millennium*, p. 249.



bridegroom in Matthew 25:5. In a parable intending to teach watchfulness, our Lord intimates that He would be gone a long time. Passages announcing the transfer of the kingdom of God from the Jews to the Gentiles (Matt. 21:43; Luke 21:24; Rom. 11:25-26; Acts 1:6-8) also imply a length of time at least equal to that of Old Testament Israel. Finally, passages that speak of the *great amount of work to be done* (the Great Commission, for example) demand time. It should be recognized, however, that such examples carry little weight with "any-moment" advocates, because this is not an issue that can be settled by a mere collection of proof texts, however convincing. This is because fundamental world view and presuppositions are involved. Generally, the imminentist (to coin a word) looks at the world and the Bible in an entirely different way than the post-millennialist does.

Obviously, the doctrine of "no intervening events" is not based on any specific text. Rather, it represents a *conclusion* that is founded upon a certain view of the world, the Church, and history. The Church is seen in history as primarily spiritual rather than as an institution. Further, it is stressed that the Christian should withdraw from the *world* (instead of merely from *sin*) lest it become contaminated. Leaven is seen as *always* representing evil in Scripture which can only be eradicated at the second coming. Christians who pray and work for a Godly society are only deceiving themselves, for it is an impossibility. Such an attitude requires some truly astonishing exegesis:

We believe that the birds of the air and the leaven in the parables of Mat. 13 represent the children of the wicked one, or hypocrites, which have lodged in the Church and the false doctrines which have crept in and so pervaded the professing Church that it has, in the main, become merely formal and nominal.<sup>29</sup>

Matthew 13:33 equates the kingdom of heaven with leaven. Blackstone is, therefore, saying the Scriptures teach that the kingdom of heaven is like the hypocrites and reprobate! Finally, those holding to an imminent return see "soul saving" as the only legitimate Christian service. It is acknowledged, of course, that "secular" occupations are important. But true Christian work is narrowly confined to the "spiritual" realm. Thus, an "old fashioned altar call" will frequently include a call for those willing to go into "full time Christian service."

In summary, it can be said that the imminentist believes that Christ deals primarily with *individuals* and not with corporate entities such as the State, the family, and the visible Church. They recognize the importance of the family, for example (Scripture is too explicit on this point), but the family is too often merely seen as a collection of individuals with individual relationships with God. This is probably one factor in understanding why most

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29. Blackstone, *Jesus is Coming*, p. 95.

Christians of this persuasion have an aversion to such things as the baptism of infants and the striving for a Godly social order. Such activities are not directly related to the individual and his personal communion with God.

Post-millennialists, of course, are not slack in their emphasis on each individual's need for faith and repentance to be saved. But they also recognize that the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof (Ps. 24:1). God is concerned with every aspect of life, and once men are saved there is social, cultural, and political work to be done for the glory of God. As God's will is carried out in heaven, so we should pray and work that His will be likewise carried out on earth (Matt. 6:10).

As this relates to the question of "imminency," it is important to note that such corporate dealings require *time* and *history*. This is obvious from the nature of our Lord's pronouncements concerning the nature of the Christian's endeavor. The Great Commission, for example, commands us to *teach* and baptize all the nations "teaching them to *observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*" (Matt. 28:19-20). It is important to note that a mere proclamation of the Gospel does *not* satisfy the requirements of our Lord's command. The nations must be disciplined so that they obey all of our Lord's teaching. The people of God will be able to accomplish this because Christ is always with them (vs. 20), and all power has been given unto Him (vs. 18). In other words, God's people are to Christianize the world. To appreciate the radical nature of this requirement and the vastness of the task, one must realize that when Jesus spoke, each nation was considered inseparable from its own peculiar religion. The idea of a world religion was inconceivable. As H. P. Liddon has noted:

No existing religion could aim at it, since the existing religions were believed to be merely the products of national instincts and aspirations; each religion was part of the furniture of a nation, or at most of a race. Celsus, looking out on Christianity in the second century of our era, with the feelings of Gibbon or of Voltaire, said that a man must be out of his mind to think that Greeks and barbarians, Romans and Scythians, bondmen and freemen, could ever have one religion. Nevertheless this was the purpose of our Lord.<sup>30</sup>

The idea that the Great Commission could be fulfilled by merely raking a few souls from the muck is an affront to the power of our Lord and His work of redemption. Yet this is what many who hold to an imminent return are forced to affirm. Few, however, are as rash as the advertisement cited in the opening section of this paper.

Another pronouncement of our Lord that provides a significant complement

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30. Alvah Hovey, ed., *An American Commentary on the New Testament*, Vol. I: *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, by John A. Broadus (Valley Forge: The American Baptist Publication Society, n.d.), pp. 593-594.

to the Great Commission is this response to Peter's confession. "And I say also unto thee that thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). Our Lord makes two points that are often obscured by the controversy over the proper interpretation of "this rock." *First*, the Lord will be building His church. The church is very important to Christ. Scripture teaches that He loves it and gave Himself for it. He desires that it not have spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Eph. 5:25, 27). To this end, Christ gives officers for edification of the body (Eph. 4:11-12). Teaching is to be carried out and discipline maintained. But an "any-moment" scheme has implications that seriously undermine this Scriptural view. Dabney has seen this problem clearly:

If no visible church, however orthodox, is to be Christ's instrument for overthrowing Satan's kingdom here; if Christ is to sweep the best of them away as so much rubbish, along with all "world powers" at his advent; if it is our duty to expect and desire this catastrophe daily, who does not see that we shall feel very slight value for ecclesiastical ties and duties? And should we differ unpleasantly from our church courts, we shall be tempted to feel that it is pious to spurn them. Are we not daily praying for an event which will render them useless lumber?<sup>31</sup>

Regardless of one's ecclesiology, none would deny that an inadequately low view of the church prevails today among Christians. Could this emphasis on an "any-moment" return be a contributing factor?

A *second* point that is often ignored in this verse is the glorious promise of victory. Christ unequivocally declares that the very gates of hell will be stormed and toppled. Further, it is the *church* that is to overcome and conquer. Nothing short of the triumph of the church over evil can be read into this verse. Thus, Blackstone has completely reversed our Lord's teaching when he wrote:

It was this doctrine (the imminent return) that inspired the sainted Bliss and gave his songs such favor. How all of us love to sing . . . "HOLD THE FORT FOR I AM COMING."<sup>32</sup>

According to Blackstone, the church is cowering in the fort waiting for an eleventh hour deliverance. How thankful we can be that the Bible places the forces of evil in the fort cowering behind the walls, hell's gates.

Why then does Christ tarry? According to the imminentist, it is only to save more individual souls and not to do a work in history. Christ's relation to the world is *passive*. He is merely waiting for "decisions to be made" and souls to be saved. Therefore, there are no necessary intervening events.

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31. Robert L. Dabney, *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological* (2 vols.; London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1967), I, 208.

32. Blackstone, *Jesus is Coming*, p. 117.

The Scriptural teaching is that Christ is King and rules *now*. His role in history is *active*. He will bring judgment upon those who hate and persecute His people. This is what the book of Revelation is all about. It explains Stephen's vision during his martyrdom. Stephen saw Jesus *standing* at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55). The picture is of Jesus rising from His normal seated position to avenge the death of His saint. Jesus reigns and rules. How thankful we can be as we reflect on the fact that history is slowly moving toward the day when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

# Evangelism

FRANCIS E. MAHAFFY

One's definition of evangelism, or at least his conception of its aim, stems from his theological commitment. Broadly speaking, evangelism means one thing to a more or less consistent Arminian, and another thing to a more or less consistent Calvinist.

An Arminian views salvation to be, to a considerable extent, the work of man. He does not look upon man as dead in trespasses and sins, without hope in this world or in the world to come, but rather as sick and in need of help. The evangelist brings a message to him to persuade him to use his own unfettered free will to come to Christ. The work of evangelism is the saving of souls by the efforts of the evangelist and the consequent response made by the recipient of his witness. Evangelism is a bringing of souls to Christ rather than a bringing of Christ to souls. Out of this man-centered theology, which to a great extent grants to man the prerogatives of God, comes an evangelism in which the emphasis is upon the technique of presenting the gospel to the lost soul. High-keyed, emotional stories, tearful pleading, songs that emphasize the human element in salvation, altar calls, the calling for decisions for Christ, etc., characterize this theology of evangelism. The thrust of the evangelistic effort is to lead the subject to a verbal commitment to Christ or to a decision for Christ with a bare minimum of Bible teaching. This faulty theology and defective evangelism is not to be lightly condoned. Some who make a "decision for Christ" may indeed do so because God the Holy Spirit has wrought a work of grace in their hearts in regeneration. This is not, however, the case with many. In the past three years, while engaged in home mission work, I have made evangelistic calls in many hundreds of homes, and upon numerous occasions have met people who are assured of their good standing before God because of a decision they made many years ago. I have been able (though of course only God can judge hearts) to see no clear evidence of a work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. They are deaf to the Word of God, blind to God's demands for holiness, ignorant of the character of God, unconcerned for the church of Christ, and yet assured of their salvation. A woman to whom I recently spoke was amazed that I believed that Jesus Christ was not simply a great man but rather the God-man. This idea had never before entered her mind. Yet she had been "converted" and had no doubts of her salvation. Several others with whom I have talked considered themselves Christians but were unaware that the doctrine

of the Trinity had anything to do with Christianity. This man-centered evangelism has done untold harm to multitudes and has led vast numbers into a false sense of security, from which they are not easily shaken. Many Christians have seen that true converts sometimes come from a defective Arminian evangelism and cite this as justification for support of such evangelism. My experience has led me increasingly to the position that while God can indeed "strike a straight blow with a crooked stick," as Professor R. B. Kuiper used to say, such evangelism has confirmed multitudes in their lost condition and apparently sealed them against a response to the gospel. It is a fearful sin to lead a man through an "easy-believism" evangelism to trust in something other than Christ alone for his salvation. There is far too little of Paul's sense of the deep urgency to proclaim the gospel in its purity when he said, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (I Cor. 9:16).

Those who hold to the consistent Christianity of the God-centered Reformed Faith view evangelism essentially as the proclamation of God's message to man. They are, or course, concerned with the response to the message proclaimed. They proclaim it, however, not with any illusions about the ability of the human will, but with the prayer and confident hope that by the sovereign work of God the Holy Spirit, rebellious sinners will be converted and God's people built up in the faith.

It is not correct sharply to distinguish between the gospel as proclaimed to the lost and as proclaimed to the saints. In some churches an unwarranted dichotomy is made between doctrinal and evangelistic sermons. Every sermon should be evangelistic. True, our message needs to be adapted to the audience. But every message should be both doctrinal and evangelistic. A woman once told me that she had come to true faith in Christ in a particular church but had never been fed there. A man spoke of a certain minister of Fundamentalist persuasion as a very sincere and fine man but complained that he spoke only to sinners and did not teach the Bible to Christians. In Reformed circles, on the other hand, we have often been too quick to presume that because our stable congregations have been nurtured on the Word that they consist exclusively of born-again children of God. This preaching, like that of the Fundamentalist minister, is also one-sided: it assumes that every member of the congregation is likewise a member of the kingdom of God, and neglects to proclaim the Bible's clear command to repent and believe, or fails to underscore its warnings against false assurance and Pharisaical hypocrisy. Thus, while some ministries do little more than seek to lay the foundation of the Christian life in saving faith, and in the process lay a very shaky foundation, others wrongly assume that the foundation has been laid, and seek to build an elaborate superstructure which, having nothing beneath, inevitably crumbles. In every sermon the preacher should be aware that Satan, as well as Christ, may have his sheep in the audience. Only the whole counsel of God will suffice.

The message we are to proclaim is the God-centered message of the Word. The Rev. J. I. Packer in his booklet, *The Plan of God*, offers real help to the Christian in his understanding of how certain portions of Scripture are a part of the whole plan of God, and provides food for thought which should help Christians in their work of evangelism from the pulpit and personal witness. W. J. Chantry in *Today's Gospel, Authentic or Synthetic*, cites the shallowness of today's synthetic gospel and points to the need for a full-orbed preaching of the Word. A. W. Pink in *The Attributes of God* likewise points out the need for a truly biblical, God-centered message. When evangelism has been man-centered, the branch that it has caused to sprout has been of temporary duration. When trials come, it drops off and is lost. Worse yet, it becomes almost impossible for such branches to be grafted in again. Dr. Herman Hoeksema in his syllabus *Principles of Missions* interprets Romans 11, especially verse 22, to indicate that though God in His sovereign grace will graft in again to the olive tree Jewish branches which have been cut off, the same is not true of Gentile branches. He takes this to indicate the fruitlessness of evangelism among those who have severed connections with the church or who belong to a false church. His position recognizes the truth that those who have heard the gospel and rejected it are at least very difficult to reach. Perhaps it fails to take due cognizance of the fact that such people often have not really heard the gospel but a gross perversion of it, and that this contact with a distortion of the gospel, like a vaccine, has immunized people against the reception of the truth. Yet I am not convinced that it means that efforts to reach such may not be blessed of God. This blessing may not only come in an individual's here or there being born into the kingdom of God, as Hoeksema agrees may happen, but, in God's grace, by a turning of many from darkness to light.

Some shun particular doctrines in witnessing to the lost. Perhaps most frequently the doctrines of predestination and election are avoided as likely to be offensive to the unbeliever and to keep him from God. This indicates a failure to grasp the balance of Scripture. The doctrine of God is fundamental to the Bible. It is God's Word. It reveals God to man not as an outside observer of human affairs, but as the sovereign God by whose hand all things are controlled. The doctrine of the decrees of God is basic to the gospel. Spurgeon had no problem preaching on election to the unsaved; nor should we. It is true, as the Westminster Confession of Faith says, "The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care. . . ." (Chapter III, Sec. viii), but as Dr. Gordon H. Clark has well added, "it is to be handled."

Even as sound and able an exegete of Scripture and forceful preacher of the Word as Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones falls into the error of contending that some doctrines should not be preached to the lost. He writes,

This means that in the case of an unbeliever we should never present to

him anything but the doctrine of justification by faith only. We should never discuss any other doctrine with an unbeliever . . . To discuss election and predestination, and the great doctrines of the Church, and the present need of the Church, with a man who is an unbeliever, is obviously quite wrong. (*Sermon on the Mount*, Vol. 2, page 189).

This paragraph does not represent Dr. Lloyd-Jones at his best!

The message that is to be proclaimed is addressed to men, but it is the message regarding God. The aim in its proclamation is first and foremost the glory of God. The Christian is to bear witness from the Scriptures to that glory as it has been displayed in God's works of creation and providence, as well as in the gracious salvation that he has brought to man. And he must not forget that the main purpose even of the salvation of the lost is not the blessedness of man, as important a secondary end as that is, but the glory of God. The very purpose of creation, we are told in Ephesians 3:9-10, is that God's manifold wisdom might be displayed through the church to the heavenly principalities and powers. Thus the aim of evangelism is to make manifest God's glory among men by the full, God-centered message of the Bible.

Evangelism, then, is the proclamation of the evangel to men regardless of their spiritual state. But this study is interested particularly in the proclamation of that message to those who are yet apart from Christ. The message is proclaimed by Christians in whom the Spirit of God dwells. They have been united to Christ. God the Holy Spirit fills them in order to enable them, among other things, to witness effectively. Not only is the Holy Spirit active in the recipient of the message, bringing the elect to life and hardening the reprobate in their sinful rebellion and rejection of the gospel, but He also is active in empowering the Christian to witness effectively. In the book of Acts we have frequent reference to the earnest prayer of the Christians followed by a filling with the Spirit giving them power to witness (Acts 1:8, Acts 2, Acts 4:31). We must never, as the church too often has done, minimize the work of the Holy Spirit in evangelism. He is the Author of the new birth. He indwells and empowers the Christian in his witness. He also is the Author of Scripture, the Word which He uses to pierce to the heart of the hearer bringing conviction and life (Heb. 4:12). The scope of this paper does not permit a detailed discussion of the work of the Holy Spirit in evangelism, but such books as John Owen, *The Holy Spirit (Works*, Vol. III), or Smeaton on the same subject are excellent; for a simple, popular study, Palmer's book on the Holy Spirit is useful.

The proclamation of the gospel to the lost must certainly include the appeals of that gospel. The gospel is full of gracious invitations of God to sinful men (Ezekiel 33:11, Matthew 11:28-30, Revelation 22:17, etc.). God calls men to repent and to believe in Christ. He commands them to do so. The Word warns of the consequence of rejecting Christ and of man's



responsibility for his unbelief. We, as ambassadors of Christ, are to beseech men to be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20). We are called upon to warn the unrepentant of the judgment of God which he fully deserves. We are to beseech him to flee from the wrath to come, to repent and to believe the gospel. Yet we need to exercise care not to present the gospel invitation as though we were dangling an offer of salvation before the wicked which he is able to accept or reject. We are to present the call of God to sinners with all its urgency, accompanied by fervent prayer and in the power of the Holy Spirit, but not because the hearer is free to accept or reject it as his will. Nor are we to depict Christ as an impotent bystander who has done all He can for the salvation of the lost, unrepentant sinner, and is only waiting for him to respond to his overtures of grace by the evangelist.

Rather we are addressing the gospel to dead men. It is a failure on our part adequately to grasp the biblical teaching of the antithesis that has led us to a watered-down Arminian evangelism.

This denial of the biblical teaching of the antithesis is also reflected in a distorted concern for evangelism to members of minority races. The gospel is, of course, to be proclaimed to all races and nations. Both Jew and Gentile are to hear the Word. There has been considerable emphasis of late, an emphasis hard to support from the Scripture, on our *special obligation* to minister to minority groups. Yet often this ministry is concerned primarily with their material needs and sometimes demands of the churches that they set aside a large portion of their funds to give to members of minority groups irrespective of their faith. This emphasis, however, fails to recognize that the significant thing that divides men is not race, but their relationship to Christ. Like those who despise a person because of his membership in a particular race and thus sinfully disobey God's law, this group would also defy the Word of God by overlooking the one distinction that matters and view race as the criterion for granting special rights and privileges. The ministrations of the church to these people often replace the good news of the gospel with an almost exclusive concern for supplying the amenities of this life. This type of evangelism comes perilously close to the social gospel of the liberal churches and may well constitute a dramatic step in that direction.

Paul in Ephesians 2 describes the state of Christians before their conversion as that of being "dead in sins." (See Bishop Ryle's booklet, *Alive or Dead*, which deals with this passage. It is an excellent longer evangelistic tract.) The evangelist proclaims that Word to spiritually dead men. There is no common ground with them. Often as two of the elders in the church in Ethiopia and I met to pray before going to preach in the market, I reminded them that we were going to the cemetery to preach God's Word to dead men. Humanly speaking, our task is just that hopeless. We and the non-Christian do not even have a common ground in the enjoyment of the blessings of God. For the believer all things work together for good. For the

unbeliever all things work together for evil. The gifts of God such as health, rain and sunshine, prosperity, life, and friends are God's gifts which he refuses to recognize as such. Our Lord well said, "Ye are of your father the Devil and the works of your father ye do." The whole life of the unbeliever—even his use of God's gifts which are given to the righteous and to the ungodly alike—becomes for him the means of God's curse rather than blessing, for he has despised the Giver and sought to serve Satan with the gifts of God. He is at enmity against God, alienated from the family of God, "under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever" (Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q. 19).

This description of the state of the ungodly does not apply only to those living lives of open drunkenness, violence, and evil. It includes also many within the visible church who profess to be the children of God. This fact needs to be reckoned with far more fully than it has been. Our Lord spoke of those who even manifested some of the special gifts of the Spirit who were never known by Christ as his children (Matthew 7:21-23). The Christian must never cease to pray for and to witness to those who profess faith but who may not be the children of our Father in heaven.

The hope in evangelism among such people, dead in sin, lies solely in the sovereign work of God's grace. Were it dependent upon our eloquence or effort, the task of evangelism would be fruitless. We are at best weak and dull instruments, utterly unable to stir dead men to life. Nor can the dead raise themselves. But God the Holy Spirit, the Author of Scripture, has called Christians to proclaim the gospel. It is this Word, accompanied by the prayers of God's people, that he uses to bring the dead to life. Yet God in effecting the salvation of the lost is pleased to use means. He has elected some to life in Christ from eternity. But He has also foreordained the means of their coming to Christ by the witness of the Word by Christians. The dead sinner cannot believe of his own will. Faith itself is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8-10). Only those drawn of the Father come to Christ (John 6:44). Only the elect will respond to the gospel, but by the grace of God they will respond and thus come willingly.

The great delusion of man today is that salvation is a matter of his own efforts. For some, these take the form of ritualistic deeds. For the members of the Ethiopian Orthodox church, the eating of the right kind of meat is one of the important works that make a person a Christian. For the cultured American, Christianity often consists of a moralistic doing of "good" to his neighbor. For others it is a matter of "evangelical works," such as raising the hand or coming forward at a meeting. A Pentecostal told a friend of mine that she could not be a Christian because she had not been baptized with the Holy Spirit and had not spoken in tongues. A woman told me that she knew she was lost because she smoked. I assured her that since

she considered smoking to be a sin and still deliberately engaged in it, she was thus giving evidence of lack of faith—though the smoking in itself was not necessarily evil. I reminded her that her running around with other men while separated from her husband, her neglect of the Bible, and her refusal to believe in Christ were a more significant evidence of the truth of her words. Had a minister or another friend been able to persuade her to give up smoking, she might well have regained her false assurance of salvation to the further peril of her soul.

The fruit of evangelism comes as the Holy Spirit applies the Word in a man's life. We need to be sure that in our evangelism we present the nature of and the demands of this life. A man told me he could not become a Christian because he could not live a Christian life. Truly he could not live a Christian life without having that life, and as long as he continued to love the way of death, he could not be a Christian. The life which the Holy Spirit gives is a life in Christ. God has elected us to obedience; we are chosen unto holiness, predestinated unto sanctification and the adoption of sons (I Pet. 1:2; Eph. 1:4, 5; II Thes. 2:13). The quality of God-given life is that of eternity (John 5:20). A professed Christian who does not give evidence of a holy life is deceiving himself in thinking that he is a child of God who has received life from the Spirit. Doctrine is unto holiness. Life is unto godliness. Regeneration is the beginning of sanctification and in a sense it cannot be separated from sanctification, for sanctification is but the out-working of the life implanted by the Holy Spirit of God. To evangelize is to proclaim the Christian life and not merely its source.

There has been a renewed interest in the work of evangelism on the part of theological liberals as well as on the part of evangelicals. Unfortunately, some of the evangelicals have either been influenced by the liberals or come to conclusions similar to theirs. This is not surprising when we consider that the Arminianism which characterizes much of evangelical evangelism today is the first step (and a long step) down the road to liberalism. Both are man-centered. The one carries out its presuppositions more consistently than the other and brings its adherents further in the direction of humanism. Billy Graham's ideas and practice have undergone considerable change through the years. In the early years of his ministry I do not believe he could have said as he has said, more recently, of Karl Barth, "We need more men like him."<sup>1</sup> Barth's concept of the Word is radically diverse from that of evangelical Christianity. For him it is not the infallible Word of God. It is a human book full of errors. The God portrayed in his writings is not the God of evangelical Christianity but a god who is dependent for his very existence upon man. The Bible for Barth may be the means to the Divine-human encounter but it is not the Bible of historical Christianity. The subjective experience of the old liberalism is transformed to the primary but irrational

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1. *Harper's*, February 1969, p. 39.

*encounter* of Barth. Evangelism under this concept becomes not the proclamation of the Divine message but the encouraging of an irrational experience. Truth and its statement in creeds is not needed; the encounter is. Graham in his teaching has said,

You can decide right now that you want to be born again. You can decide right now that you want to wipe out your sinful past and make a new start, a fresh start, a right start.

Dr. Gordon H. Clark quotes his words addressed to those remaining in their seats after many had gone forward in Indianapolis:

Don't pray for these people who have come forward. You may have prayed for them before, and that is good. You can pray for them later on, and that will be good, too. But right now prayer is useless, for not even God can help them. They must accept Christ of their own free will, all by themselves, and God has no power over the will of man (*Biblical Predestination*, p. 54).

Dr. J. G. Vos points out the great danger in modern evangelism of people coming to have "faith in their faith" or in a "decision" rather than in Christ.

It will not be necessary to dwell on the rapidly expanding work of the Campus Crusade for Christ. Dr. Gary North has done a superb job of criticizing their Arminian, unbiblical approach to evangelism. (See *Campus Crusade for Christ: A Critique*. Chalcedon, Inc., 1969). This approach is rooted in a denial of the sovereignty of God and of the biblical teaching regarding the antithesis. The first of the well-known four spiritual laws states that "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." God had a plan for Judas, Pontius Pilate, and Herod also (Acts 4:27-28), but that plan was not wonderful as far as they were concerned, though it did redound to the praise and glory of God's sovereign justice. An impotent God who must stand by waiting for the act of man in order to perform His work of salvation is a god made in the image of man and not the sovereign God of Scripture.

Of more interest perhaps to those who adhere to the Reformed Faith is the recent Coral Ridge or Kennedy plan of evangelism set forth in detail in "Evangelism Explosion." This is of greater interest because it does not partake of all the weaknesses of the CCC approach. It is presented by a minister in a church that has a Reformed confession and in which there is a great deal of solid Reformed teaching and zeal for evangelism. I have profited from a careful reading of this book. It is to be commended for its emphasis on a direct approach to people. It seeks to present the claims of the gospel directly to the individual and does not simply bring in the gospel by the back door. Soon in the conversation the prospect is presented with the fact of heaven and hell and urged to consider his relation to God. The approach is developed in a friendly, unoffensive manner. Much is to be said

for such an approach, and a careful reading of Kennedy's book should prove helpful in this regard. It emphasizes also the teaching of the methods and message of evangelism to groups in the churches. Another merit of this approach is its stress upon the need not only for the pastor but for all Christians to become active in evangelism and in prayer for the evangelistic efforts. Also in the presentation of a great deal of Scripture truth is employed.

Although there is much to be commended in the Coral Ridge evangelistic approach, a word of caution is in order. This program partakes too much of the man-centered Arminianism mentioned above. A brief summary of the essence of this approach and a critique of it will be in order.

The Kennedy program seeks to prepare the worker for a one-minute, an eight-minute, or an hour's presentation of the gospel. It has been my personal experience that even in an hour it is extremely difficult to correct a multitude of erroneous notions and to lay an adequate foundation for intelligent faith. The Apostles were able to do this in dealing with people steeped in the Scriptures, but such people are almost non-existent today. It is commendably true that the Kennedy system envisions follow-up Bible classes for converts. It would be far better, however, if such classes preceded rather than followed a confession of faith.

The approach states that Christ purchased a place in heaven for us and offers this to us freely. God is described as loving all men and as not wanting to punish us for our sins. The unbeliever is described as one who has made some progress in his spiritual life but needs faith, the key to open the door of heaven for him. Then the prospect is asked if he wants this gift. The evangelist continues to describe the wonderful nature of this gift. He backs this by his personal testimony concerning the greatest discovery he ever made which he desires to share with the listener. The reason, apparently, why people who naturally hunger for this gift do not receive it is that they have never heard and thus never known the way. Then the evangelist suggests to the person that he or she already believes in God and has prayed to God and even exercised faith. But this prayer was for temporal things. This faith was for the needs of the children, for health, or for other temporal needs. But saving faith is trusting God for eternal things, for salvation. He is urged to transfer his trust from what he himself has done to what Christ has done for him. "God," the evangelist says, "is asking you the question, 'Do you want to receive this gift of eternal life?'" The individual is brought to see that he is a sinner falling far short of the perfection required by God. He is told what Christ has done by His life and death for him and then asked if he wants to take this gift which God offers. If the individual assents, this is followed by a prayer which the prospect is asked to repeat after the evangelist. In this prayer he confesses that he is a sinner who was trusting in his own works for salvation but now in Christ as personal

Saviour and Lord. He then asks God to help him to turn from sin and to follow Christ. He acknowledges that he has received the gift of life God proffers, and concludes by thanking God for salvation.

Having himself concluded with prayer, the evangelist asks the person whom he is trusting. The answer is "Jesus Christ." John 6:47 is quoted as the ground for assurance. Then the further question is asked: "If you were to die tonight, where would you go?" The answer is, "To heaven." Then the evangelist shakes his hand and says, "Welcome to the family of God."

This very condensed summary may not do full justice to the gospel presentation in the book, but it should at least give the highlights and provide the basis for a brief criticism.

The presentation is not free by any means from the Arminianism prominent in the CCC approach. It seems to present a universal love of God and a universal atonement. If the author denies this, at least he has not made himself sufficiently clear, and the approach surely gives the impression to the recipient that God's love and Christ's atonement are for all indiscriminately. It would be hard to reconcile this presentation with the biblical doctrine of election. It does violence to the Scriptural teaching of the sovereignty of God in salvation. It is faith, which is not sufficiently and consistently presented as a gift of God, which opens the gate of heaven. The individual is urged to transfer his trust from his own works to the work of Christ. It would appear that the sinner's will is not really depraved, nor his ability to turn to God really lost. This transfer of trust is not clearly portrayed as a fruit of regeneration but seems to lie within his own natural abilities. He is pictured as having faith and truly praying even before his conversion. This is hardly the biblical picture of man spiritually dead and unable to come to Christ apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. The sinner is not pictured as really bad. His condition is more a matter of a degree of difference from that of the Christian. Sin, while it is emphasized more than in CCC, is not really pictured in the black hues in which the Bible portrays it. The man who is urged to turn from sin to Christ is hardly given an adequate concept of what sin is nor of who Christ is. The holiness, justice, and sovereignty of God are inadequately presented. In its place, a God who must wait upon man before He can accomplish His work is in view. To trust in Christ becomes one easy step, a simple decision couched in a few words of prayer repeated after the evangelist. Little is said of the demands of the gospel. Of the holiness to which God calls us, of the need for renouncing all to follow Christ. Then the assurance of salvation is not by the biblical method of godly living as a fruit of regeneration and faith, but is given by a few words of the evangelist and the quotation of one verse of the Bible. Such an emphasis on assurance could well lead to a false assurance. It seems incongruous if not blasphemous for the evangelist to conclude by welcoming the individual into the family of God.

An outline gospel presentation to be used by Christians in evangelistic calling has been prepared by the Rev. Wallace Bell, pastor of the Paradise Hills Orthodox Presbyterian Church in San Diego, California. While it is weak, I believe, in its view of the decrees of God, and needs some revisions in the application of the Word to the Christian life, it takes a more biblical and realistic view of sin than does the Kennedy material, and provides helpful suggestions in presenting the gospel to the lost.

Over a year ago I attended and spoke at a conference on Reformed evangelism. Some who participated represented what has sometimes been termed a "New Reformation" movement. Various recent publications and writings present similar views. (This discussion does not claim to represent any one group but only general impressions from what I have heard and read.) One very important emphasis is upon the need for submitting all of life to God and His rule. They often advocate the formation of a Christian political party, Christian labor groups, Christian schools, etc. They also are often critical of the deadness and formalism in the institutional church. Sometimes they are equally critical of the establishment of the state and of what they deem a false patriotism. Some of the positive as well as the negative criticism is well made. Calvinists have talked a lot about a world and life view but have done all too little about it. The church has so degenerated that a particular tradition often has become more important than the message of the church or the communion of the saints.

The church has reacted to this criticism and sometimes over-reacted. To some, this view is wrong because it savors of a postmillennial position. It envisions a future when, by the efforts of dedicated Christians, society and its institutions will be brought under the rule of God. Some criticism stems from a pessimistic view that precludes any improvement or at least any radical change for the better before the second coming of Christ. While the adherents of this pessimistic position may be convinced that they hold their view on the basis of the exegesis of Scripture, yet Reformed churches generally have granted tolerance to a variety of views on the millenium. Some outstanding and respected Reformed scholars have held a type of postmillennial view. (See Iain Murray's *The Puritan Hope*.)

Other, more serious, objections can be laid at the door of many adherents of this position. While some of this criticism of the institutional church may be unpleasant, there is a good deal of justification for it, and if this awakens us to clean house from within, it will be to the good. But in its criticism it seems to do an injustice to the New Testament teaching regarding the institutional church. The church of Christ is truly the body of Christ, but it has an institutional form with its worship, officers, and discipline. To deny this is to destroy the church. These same people who oppose the institutional church, it would seem, tend to institutionalize other areas of life such as politics, labor, and education. Criticism has been leveled against them

precisely for not seeking to establish these institutions on a consistently biblical foundation.

More serious still is a view of Scripture that sometimes appears among them. The Bible may be relegated to a position, yes, even a privileged position, in their overall philosophy, but it does not, at least to some of them, provide the norm. Nor is the underlying philosophy arrived at by way of the exegesis of the Word of God; rather, the Word of God is subject to a philosophy that is thus above the Scripture. This view of Scripture is evident in many of their writings in various areas. Not the law of God but "biblical principles" are spoken of as the norm for ethics. Yet writers of this view clearly repudiate the New Testament teaching regarding the church and even advocate or condone socialism-communism which openly and violently repudiates the law of God. Likewise, I would criticize some of their writing in the field of education, politics, and labor for its failure to recognize that the law of God provides the criterion of judgment. When Christians advocate action that clearly contravenes God's standard, they have lost their right to claim to be consistently Christian. Observing its attempt to bring the gospel to modern man and especially to the young people (and there are many young people in this group), some outsiders have complained that they break the third commandment of the law by showing irreverence to the holy name of God. A paper I read recently reviewed a movie which openly portrays vice and evil. Except for the one adjective "profane" that described it, there was little in the review to convince the reader that this was not a good movie. This is hardly an application of Christian principles to the field of art! The standard of God's holy law has not been brought to bear on the evaluation of this movie. This hardly represents a truly Christian world and life view!

This group is concerned with evangelism. Yet to some of them the term "personal evangelism" is anathema. Sin appears to have become institutionalized and is not viewed in the biblical perspective as adhering to individuals. The important thing, it would seem, is to change the institutions of society. (One wonders if it is not also to destroy the institution of the church.) Then when society has been transformed, there will be time to worry about the conversion of individual sinners. This view is perilously close to the liberal, evolutionary concept that man is a product of his environment, and the need is to change the institutions in order to change man. Perhaps this accounts for their leanings toward the views of Karl Marx. A Reformed Ecumenical Synod report speaks of "evangelizing living." Here also the emphasis is upon the life, while doctrine or truth appears to fall into the background.

...emphatic stimulation to witness was superfluous because the command to evangelizing living was given at the founding of the church. . . . This witnessing of the apostles and of the church is not the



conveying of information about a system of religious conceptions. They are 'my witnesses', witnesses on behalf of 'someone' and not about 'something'. (*The Evangelism and Service of the Church in an Estranged World*, 1965.)

The biblical, Reformed concept of evangelism is that it is a proclamation of the truth of the gospel. This is the official work of the church. The preaching of the Word can never be minimized. This preaching may be in homes, in the market, in parks, on street corners, or in a church building, but the church must officially proclaim the Word of God. Evangelism is the work of the church. It should be church-related. Space will only permit that statement of that fact and not its argumentation.

Evangelism, however, is not merely the official work of the church. It is also the work of every Christian. This was clearly the pattern in Acts (Acts 1:8, 8:3-4). This evangelistic activity of the individual members of Christ's church was essentially personal evangelism. The Christians were scattered abroad. In obedience to the command of Christ and impelled by the filling of the Holy Spirit, they went everywhere preaching the Word. This evangelistic witness was accompanied by a godly life. The people as they observed their lives could comment on how the Christians loved one another. Yet it was far more than an "evangelizing living." It was a laying of the foundation for the subjection of all to the King of kings and Lord of lords. We must not today neglect the application of Christianity to all life. It may well be that God will be pleased to bring the day of revival when some of the prophecies of the Word will be fulfilled more fully before the end, and "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14). Whether or not such is to be the case, the Christian must acknowledge that Christ does as a matter of fact reign today and he is called upon to serve Him in all of life. But neither is he permitted to forget the clear biblical teaching that the root and foundation of the Christianizing of all life, whether here or in the new heavens and new earth, is the work of the Holy Spirit in regenerating the individual sinner, bringing him into the church of Christ, and subject to its order, thus equipping him for a full life of service for his Lord.

The fruit of evangelism is a work of God, not of man. Hence our witness must always be accompanied by fervent and earnest prayer. The church has been remiss in this regard. Reformed churches too often have neglected the mid-week prayer meeting. Prayer has often been reduced to a perfunctory habit in our family worship. We can learn a lot from groups of Christians less sound in the faith who, inconsistent with their basic man-centered theology, believe firmly in the need of prayer. We who hold to a doctrine of the sovereignty of God in creation, providence, and salvation should above all be men of prayer. The work of evangelizing must be accompanied by prayer. God saves. The Holy Spirit regenerates. But the

Holy Spirit uses our prayers and our witness to accomplish His purposes. God is pleased to use the "foolishness of preaching," and this includes personal witness as well as official preaching, to save the elect.

Reformed evangelism is biblical evangelism. Because it takes sin seriously, it is not content with a shallow man-centered approach. Rather it proclaims fully God in all His glory and grace. It sets forth the holiness, justice, and wrath, as well as the love and grace, of God in Christ. It declares Christ as the one all-sufficient Saviour. It shows sin as rebellion against God and presents God's demands for a holy life. It gives a clear call to the unconverted to repent and to believe the gospel, to rest upon Christ alone for salvation. It gives this gospel command in a spirit of deep love and concern for the one still apart from the life that is in Christ Jesus. So its evangelism is steeped in earnest, effectual prayer, which is the very life-blood of the Christian. It recognizes the fact that God alone is the Author of salvation, and that the means God sovereignly uses to call sinners to life is the witness of the Word. So the Calvinist in his evangelism faithfully proclaims the Word, the whole counsel of God. In obedience to the command of Christ his King and impelled by the indwelling and empowering of the Holy Spirit, his witness is spontaneous and enthusiastic, for the message he brings is the message that alone brings life from the dead. He takes seriously the Word of God by the Apostle Paul in Romans 10:13-15,

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.

Let us pray! Let us evangelize!

# Evangelism and the Reformed Faith

JEFFERSON G. DUCKETT

We will consider this subject under three general topics. First of all, some built-in hindrances in the contemporary Reformed Church. Secondly, the Arminian advantage (or the Arminian apparent advantage), over the Calvinist in evangelism, and thirdly, we will discuss two plans of evangelism that work.

Anti-Christian humanism trades in the souls of men. Wise and prudent servants of God are also to trade in the souls of men for entirely opposite reasons. Humanism seeks to save souls through social reform, while those who are servants of God seek to save souls for the glory of God. To this end we use all lawful means through expert teaching and prudence. The Bible is replete with the concept that soul-winning is a wise use of our resources as Christians. However, there are at least three built-in hindrances within the contemporary, organized, Reformed church.

## I. *Calvinism's Hindrances*

One hindrance concerns pressures within the Christian community. As we in Reformed churches move toward a (hopefully) common goal, a goal that is often unpopular throughout the community, we realize that we are not held in high esteem by other Christians. Also, we uncover old truths within our ranks. As a result of this position in the community and in the church, we often get in a lockstep because we do not want to offend unnecessarily other Reformed Christians, and we do want to keep up doctrinally in our new-found faith.

As we advance in our ranks, we take side-glances to see if we are in step with those around us, if our swords are properly aligned, if there is a correct and proper interval between ranks, and if we are marching together, completely in step. Our objective narrows from a world-and-life application of the Christian faith, from extending God's Kingdom, and from an evangelistic emphasis that identified our early experience, to an immediate, but narrow, objective of *pleasing peers and being doctrinally pure, or doctrinally clever*. We want to be assured that we can stand inspection within our group and almost stand inspection by other Christians on the outside of our group.

The well-equipped French (poilu) soldier was considered the flower of soldiery while taking his position inside the Maginot Line. Inside those fortifications he had no one to measure himself by but his peers and his environment.

This hindrance is easily built into our ranks. We become so entrenched in our desire to defend the faith that we forget how battles are won. We fail to close with the enemy or even test his willingness to do combat. Although we need constantly to defend our faith and to improve our apologetic position, we need to realize that apologetics represents our defenses. We need to *advance*. We need to evangelize against the humanism of this day, or we will be overrun in our own defenses.

A *second* hindrance to evangelism follows in the wake of the first. We often feel that it is our required duty to address issues of such magnitude that *our troops are never ready for the good fight of faith*. Back in the fifties I had an interest in the American Council of Christian Churches. The old-timers were in complete charge, and were thorough in tracing the apostasy beyond Bishop Oxnam, down to the present, at times predicting a defeatist future. Speakers always were handy to fill in the details of the apostasy. Attending those meetings were hundreds of young people who were ready to do battle for our faith, for our cause. But instead of battle lines being drawn, the emphasis was always on *educating us about the enemy*. We needed to send out our troops to infiltrate his army and make the kind of progress that angels in heaven rejoice to see—the progress of turning men and women to righteousness, the righteousness that is in Christ Jesus. Instead, our ranks became thinner. The young people gave up and quit because they were either tired, bored, or ready to defect to the enemy. In other words, young people were not encouraged to advance our cause. *Too much teaching had destroyed their readiness and willingness to do battle.*

We need another dimension in our warfare besides apologetics and education. We need a heart and a desire to evangelize. *Calvinism demands a balanced warfare*. History teaches how Calvin's school, or academy, in Geneva raised up men of the Word, and these men were sent into many, many countries. I believe there were as many as nine hundred young men trained to evangelize. So eager were they to carry the Bible message to other countries that the King of France himself complained that too many were being sent into his country from the Geneva school.

A *third* hindrance follows in the wake of the two just cited. The first hindrance that I mentioned is our tendency to measure our success within our own ranks. The second one is to limit ourselves to an intellectual defense of the faith. Now, thirdly, it is easy for us to be taken up with the exotic, or some exotic,<sup>1</sup> doctrine.

During the first five years of my ministry, I listened to every able preacher I could hear. It is embarrassing now to confess that I aped not a few of them. I always became obsessed with "new truth," the "deeper life," the pulpit mannerism, and a host of trivia that had not really contributed to the ministry of these fine examples. I did not give myself over to the strong and broad and able exposition of the Scriptures that characterized the men I

sought to emulate, but rather, I adopted their accents, or their mannerisms, or their sympathies for some new scheme or some exotic missionary effort in faraway Timbaktu. Sad indeed is this tendency reflected today in the contemporary Reformed Church. One church makes a fetish out of certain apparel. Another emphasizes some minor doctrine, and even if that emphasis is not actively taught, the casual conversation concerning that doctrine dominates the atmosphere when several like-minded Calvinists get together. Leave it to us, if Knox, Calvin, Luther, Beza, and Farel had mentioned something exotic to emphasize or imply, we would find it out, and it would run its course through our ranks.

Please excuse this homely illustration, because it *is* only an illustration. Before I became well-known in a certain public school district, I was placed on a committee to recommend Social Studies texts for the coming year. Now if there is anything I dislike, it is Social Studies. I like Geography and History, but Social Studies implies management of people. After the presentation of one company, the argument went something like this. The blacks declared that the book under examination contained too much history and too little to favor them. The Mexican-Americans who were present wanted to remove certain portions because their culture was at stake and in jeopardy. There were some Japanese teachers present who objected because it did not give place to the concentration camps of World War II where Japanese were held during the war. And so it went. Every ethnic group had its say, and everyone "got in his shot." Finally, I had to speak up, and this is what I said: "I object to the book because not enough credit is given to the religion of the Founding Fathers. And, I object because I am among the least of the minorities in America." Well, everyone looked dumbfounded except a Chinese lady whom I'd known in several classes and who had a good sense of humor. She smiled in anticipation of what was to follow. I continued, "You see, my race is only one-sixth of the world's peoples—the white race. There are more Islamics than Christians in the world, and I'm a Christian. But there are more Catholics than Protestants among the Christians, and I'm a Protestant. And there are more Protestants who have never read the Scriptures than those who read them regularly, and I read them regularly and believe them. Then, there are more Bible-believing Arminians within the ranks of Protestants than Calvinists, and I'm a Calvinist. As a matter of fact, only about one professing Bible-believing Christian out of perhaps a thousand is truly Calvinistic in his interpretation of the Scriptures. The people who first settled in the thirteen colonies were Calvinists, and your book doesn't throw me and my ethnic group one bone on which to gnaw." Well, the result was that the entire group walked out of the room and left the book salesman and me all painted into a nice little corner. The Chinese lady on departing, turned to me, smiled, and said, "You know, I knew we had a whole lot in

common.” It is sad, but true, that we Calvinists are often found painting ourselves into a corner. What was done at the book fair should never be done as a missionary effort in a church.

*The exotic.* Instead of becoming missionary-minded, we are apt to place a great abyss between ourselves and those we seek to win to our cause. The story above that I cited is true; and it is given to illustrate the fact that there is enough challenge in one acronym, TULIP—T-U-L-I-P, to place us beyond most people whom we seek to win for Christ. Why dwell in issues until only a small group occupies our corner? It doesn’t make sense. Place apologetics in its rightful place. Don’t stagnate on endless teaching. Take action. Be a soul-winner. Don’t let the exotic widen the gulf between you and broad Calvinistic goals. I am speaking here, not about church polity or public preaching, but about initial contacts with the unconverted.

## II. *Arminianism’s Advantages*

Now let us discuss evangelism and the apparent Arminian advantage. Space will not permit me to do any expositional work on various passages of Scripture, but Matthew 18:1-14 would contribute greatly to our message. The Arminian has an apparent advantage over the Calvinist for several reasons. He knows how to attract people to his proposition. The Bible teaches that a soul-winner is wise, and those who turn men to righteousness shall occupy a goodly place for ever and ever. As good soldiers of our Lord, we ought to recognize the several strong emplacements of the Arminian establishment, or Arminian Church. It is an oversimplification, but the following beliefs or practices characterize the Arminian Church.

First of all, the Arminian has a good, simplified knowledge of the Bible. We perhaps should say, *the Arminians are strong in the Bible superficially*. They are very weak in catechisms, history, and confessions of faith. The average member, however, can find a reference in the Scriptures as quickly as anyone. He has learned verses of Scripture, not passages or chapters, or context, but given a reference, he will find it readily.

Secondly, the Arminian has a *simplified doctrinal position*. He believes in eternal retribution. He believes that heaven is real. Many believe in the eternal security of the believer. He believes that to win souls for Christ is his job at whatever cost and by using whatever means may be available. He also believes that the second coming of Christ is imminent. Whether he believes that or not, *he talks it*—all the time.

Thirdly, *he has confidence that he is able*, and he does practice his doctrinal position with fervor. His zeal is to be admired.

These three points are characteristic of the Arminian belief. We should not for one instant suggest or imply that the typical pastor of an Arminian church does not teach other doctrines because there is an emphasis on the duty of the Christian, the Deity of Christ, the bodily resurrection, and

almost all of the cardinal doctrines. However, the Arminian pastor weaves into almost every sermon a measure of soul-winning, an exhortation to win souls and second coming. Stated plainly, as a former pastor in a large Arminian denomination, I never thought of delivering a message that did not make it plain that I believed in the Blood Atonement, the Second Coming, and that souls were in danger of neglecting so great salvation.

What is wrong with such a message? Actually, what I was saying every time I preached was this: the starting point of Christianity, or the *starting point* of the Christian life, that is, salvation by grace through faith in Christ, is the *chief end* of Christianity. Secondly, the return of Christ is not only sure and certain, but imminent. Third, between these two mammoth doctrines, Christians were exhorted to provide a “fire escape” for loved ones and acquaintances by witnessing for Christ. All of these three points were humanistically oriented. God’s glory was incidental to the mind of the listener. In other words, he was concerned with the souls of others, but concerned for the glory of delivering them from hell. He was not concerned primarily for God’s glory. However, I hasten to repeat that this description is one-sided, and does not describe the godly pastor who seeks to encourage a more exhaustive approach to the ministry. I am describing what I taught, and what I know many Arminian pastors still teach.

Now, what does this mean? It means that the Calvinist, who has taken years to arrive at his fortifications, may find that his weaponry is at an apparent disadvantage, so far as the attack is concerned. Our weaponry is too cumbersome. It is too involved. It is too heavy. It is too complex to operate in taking ground. *The Arminian brother is equipped with light and maneuverable weaponry.* Although his weapons are not as awesome as the Calvinist’s, more people see his formations, and more people experience his attack skills. More people join his army. If we refuse to recognize these things, we are never going to win many others. We are never going to evangelize successfully.

Furthermore, the new convert in many Arminian churches is initiated into a very simple program for advancing the Christian faith. This program consists chiefly of two parts: he is put to work in the church, and he is brought under the influence of those who have a desire to evangelize. He is given a job in the church, and he is told to go out and win people to Christ. It is that simple. This strategy, by the way, is also used by the Communists. So virtually every member as well as the new convert to the faith become soldiers who read their Bibles, have jobs, witness to the lost, talk about the “Rapture,” and deeply believe that they should love everybody (except Calvinists).

The Arminian has the apparent advantage over contemporary Reformed people when it comes to evangelism—when it comes to winning people to his cause. He is often indifferent to all but a handful of Bible teachings, but

these he presents well because he believes that he understands them. Instead of recognizing that the Arminian often does more with his limitations than we do with our advantages, we too frequently attempt to sharpen our swords with passages misinterpreted by the Arminian. Almost every convert we have to Calvinism came out of an Arminian church, but he came out of that church after long years of weighing controversial Scriptures, or issues.

By the way, how long did it take *you* to find out these things? How long did it take *me* to find out these things? I was fifteen years preaching in an Arminian church before I became thoroughly Calvinistic. Actually, the best source for converts to Calvinism today is the Arminian church as described above, with its evangelistic emphasis. Now let us not fool ourselves. We do not proselytize the Arabs; we do not proselytize the Moslems; we do not proselytize anybody but people who have nominal Christian backgrounds. Therefore, if we fail to win souls in the United States—if we cannot evangelize successfully in the United States—we cannot expect to evangelize anywhere in this world.

A good source for converts is often the Pentecostal-type church. In one Baptist church, I baptized nineteen former Pentecostals in one evening, and I had two deacons who were angry because they said that I was bringing “garbage” into the church. Let me tell you something. They were not “garbage” to start with, and they were not Pentecostals when they were baptized! Neither were they thoroughgoing Calvinists. We need to understand that it takes years of study and teaching to change a person who is humanistically oriented into one who has a broad world-and-life view of Calvinism.

Remember this: the Arminian brother has not learned *passages* of Scripture, but he has memorized *verses* of Scripture. He can outdo the Navigators, and he will find the verse of Scripture in his Bible before the average minister will find it in his Bible. *What the context and the pattern of the Scriptures teach is less important to him than what one verse or part of one verse means to him.* One or two confrontations will not change his view. Let’s look at First Timothy, chapter 2, verse 4: “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” If you think that you are going to take that away from him in one or two sessions, you are mistaken. He has a verse, but no context. Let me illustrate, using I Tim. 2:4. The same word that is used for “men” here is the word that is used throughout the Scriptures for men. It is not an italicized word. It actually appears in that verse of Scripture. The Arminian is unable to see that his impression of this verse would make a better case for universal redemption, because universal redemption is no problem with him. He doesn’t even know people who teach universal redemption. Back in the early 1900s, quite a few pulpits were given over to the heresy of universal redemption, but your Arminian brother has never been exposed to that sort of teaching. He has a verse, but no adequate theological context. As far as



our strategy is concerned, it would be useless initially to attempt to argue away his understanding of the meaning of this verse by pointing to the error of universal redemption. He believes that this verse of Scripture teaches that God is doing His best to save every man without exception, and he believes that it is his job to get out there and win every man to his cause. So, if we are not wise, we will lose those we seek to win. Let us be assured that whatever we say to the contemporary Arminian, he has a verse of Scripture which he believes applies. *The context means very little to him, and to teach him one verse exhaustively at one or two meetings is impossible, because you cannot hold his attention for that span of time.*

A general may know volumes about deploying his army and destroying the enemy and yet be deficient in the handling of the weapons of the infantryman. If the handling of weapons by the general decided the outcome of the battle, the cause would never be advanced, and the tide of battle would never be turned. Likewise, it is true when we seek to win people to Christ: we do not need to go to them with an exhaustive teaching of the whole Word of God. We simply need to be obedient and go.

Let me qualify myself. Because the Arminian has an oversimplified knowledge of the Scriptures, because he believes and practices some truths and half-truths, because he is confident in his doctrinal position, and because, chiefly, he does seek to win people to Christ, he enjoys success in evangelism. Now it may be a facade, and it may all be outward, but it cannot be denied that he is successful in attracting people. I make no comment as to the quality of his work, only the fact that most of the Bible-affirming churches in America today are Arminian-oriented churches, chiefly because *people win people*, by God's grace.

On the other hand, we often feel that we must either correct all of our own errors institutionally, or feed our own egos sufficiently, before we become successful in evangelism. That is not so. Amid all the strife that you can find in an Arminian church, the warp and woof of the membership, including the leaders and the minister of that church, believe that the church has at least one chief mission. That mission is to win people to Christ. They all agree on that. They may fight over other issues, but they all agree on the church's mission.

We may say then that *the Arminian operates out of a more favorable climate for evangelism*. He is constantly buying time to evangelize, and even though his church may be rent with strife, all the membership of the church agree that a live church is a church that does evangelize. If you do not believe me, you can attend some of these churches, and you will find out that winning people to Christ is an emphasis that we might well adopt.

### III. *Plans for Successful Evangelism*

The third broad view that I want to present consists of two plans to

evangelize. They work. It seems that sometimes when we advance in the Christian faith, especially in doctrinal precision, we forget some of the fundamentals and some of the necessary elements of the Christian faith. We forget that evangelism is very important, not only in the Christian faith, but it is important so far as any conviction is concerned. We must win others to our cause, or we dry up.

I am not going to take a text for this message, but I want to refer to the Book of Ephesians, and particularly two verses, 15 and 16 of chapter five. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Every activity with which we concern ourselves, or every activity that concerns us, ought to be consistent with the Scriptures. The two verses that I lifted from Ephesians, chapter five, almost seem remote to evangelism when considered within the context. But a careful examination of this chapter shows that it treats the Christian's life and duties as a whole. The chapter includes exhortations to love, to be discreet, wise, and to use our time with wisdom and our talents in dependence upon the Holy Spirit. We are to lay aside folly and to pursue wisdom. All these concepts are found in Ephesians 5:1-20. They argue against foolishness and place wisdom at the door.

In verses five through sixteen, we find that we ought to walk circumspectly, not as the world walks. We are to walk accurately, exactly in the right way, and to walk diligently. We must not be fools, seeking adventure, with no understanding of our duties or the worth of our souls. We must, of course, be taught of God, endowed with wisdom. *When we walk in this manner, we are buying up opportunities to trade in the marketplace of this world.* We improve our circumstances *as wise* in the marketplace. We make the best use of the seasons of grace, and we understand more accurately the will of God. We are to walk circumspectly in the world, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time. We should buy up opportunities because the days in which we live are evil.

This is all general and applicable to any Christian mission, and I do not strain the Scriptures to teach that it applies to evangelism as well. Evangelism is a mission of the Church. The pastor is charged to perform the work of an evangelist. The present condition of our many fundamental churches may be illustrated by a case that actually happened in my early ministry. I was struggling in a small mission. One Sunday morning, a family visited the mission service, and after the service, they indicated that they would like to join or be identified with our work. Their reason? "Our pastor is no longer concerned with soul winning." I knew their pastor quite well. Later in the week I happened to meet him, and he asked if a certain family had been present in my service. On learning that they had, he said, "They like hell-fire and brimstone sermons, brother, because they figure they're saved. Such sermons leave them asleep in Zion, and that's where

they want to rest.” This family abandoned the broad concepts of a world-and-life view of Christianity, and had narrowed Christianity down to the one mission, that of soul-winning, or soul-saving. That family decided that it was a waste of time to be instructed by expository preaching. Nothing mattered but getting people in the aisle—plucking brands from the burning. That was their philosophy of Christianity. That used to be the philosophy of many of us, but sometimes I am afraid that we have been delivered, too much so, from this philosophy. Remember, we dare not surrender that which is good, just because others overuse it.

Face-to-face evangelism is a very effective form of evangelism. There are people who are won through the ministry of those who live quiet and godly lives, and who are not gifted in oral communication. There are those who are won to Christ by another person’s being used as instrument. Some young person may invite them to a Bible study, or even to church. There are others who are won by those who are gifted and wise enough to *listen* over a span of time, before talking about the Bible. There are those who are gifted and patient enough to go out into the neighborhood and start a Bible study for nominal Christians and interested sinners, and stick to *a simple expository teaching that invites questions*. Listeners may need simple instruction before they are ready for hell-fire sermons. *It does no good to apply the whip to a starved team*. The burden-carriers need food and water before the whip will move them. They need instruction. No soul elected of God in eternity will miss heaven. We want to be instruments of God fitted to look upon the fields ready for harvest, and missionaries who participate in that harvest.

I hasten to say that few have been less successful than I when my messages were chiefly slanted to “drawing in the net.” But years ago, God placed in my hands two simple and sane methods that have been most rewarding. Before I describe these two methods, I want to assure you that one method resulted through my observation, and one resulted from my desire to see the church evangelize, but without offending all the friends and all the relatives and all the loved ones of those who attended the church. I do *not* mean that there is no place for a prophet to speak. Certainly, men should be raised up who have the ear of the public and can sound forth an alarm from the steps of the Capitol in Washington, D. C. We should see men raised up who can warn America. But I am talking now about the local and indigenous church. I am taking about *building up the local church*. And, by the way, that is a ministry in which *you* are not too big to share. Are you greater than Farel? Are you greater than the Reformers? They all had a desire to evangelize and build the local church.

In 1951, I became a member of a church which was unique in my experience. You had to arrive fifteen to thirty minutes before the service if you wanted a seat with a view unobscured by columns and other obstructions.

The minister was a rather average person in appearance; he did not have what the world would be pleased to define as "charisma." His messages were easily understood. They were expository and never sensational. Almost every month, twenty to thirty people were added to the church rolls through baptism or profession of faith. What was the program behind this remarkable ministry? This church, even at that time, was a very large church, and it had members conducting over seventy-five Bible classes each week throughout the community. These classes were sponsored by several families meeting in their homes. The families would go out into the neighborhood and invite nominal Christians, friends, acquaintances, and loved ones to their homes for Bible study. These studies were not sensational, just simple verse-by-verse studies led by an able teacher who was wise enough to avoid controversy. There was no fan-fare and no name-dropping. Only a quiet and unpretentious confidence in the ministry of their church was manifest. When those who attended became more interested, they were invited by the sponsoring families to visit their church and hear their minister. All the time the Bible class was being taught, the sponsors referred to the minister as an able, wise, and understanding person.

I have seen this method work for me in a small church where the membership conducted fewer than five Bible studies each week. It works because family efforts to build up the church is a motivating program that overshadows egos, teaching techniques, training programs, and efforts to place people under some renowned evangelist. In one place, I refused to curtail my church activities, declining to become part of a city-wide evangelistic campaign. At the end of two weeks of campaigning, where a well-known evangelist was holding forth, our church had more new members than all the churches combined that had participated in the campaign. Our method proved to be the better way to reach people for Christ and teach them over a period of time. (The last report I had on the evangelist was that he was renting theaters for counselling sessions.)

The second method is more personal. Earlier I mentioned that the Arminian has an apparent advantage over the Calvinist, but now I want to qualify this advantage. *He has an advantage over us only when we practice his techniques and are motivated by his philosophy.* We have the advantage when we adopt several presuppositions. (1) We are probably only one instrument used of God to reach an individual. (2) God has used many other instruments to influence this individual in the past. Many people of God have probably dealt with the individual that you and I seek to win. Some have dealt with him directly; some have prayed for him, dealing with him indirectly. I have never seen a person converted to the Christian faith in any church who did not have someone or some relative praying for his conversion. So if we take the position that we're just instruments of God, and only one of many instruments, we are already cushioned against any apparent

failure. (3) We are missionaries. We are not called of God to throw down a threatening proclamation in the pathway of those whom we seek to influence. We are out to win people to our position. That is what I mean by soul-winning. We are there to win the person. We are not there to turn him against ourselves, or turn him against his own friends. When we meet with no apparent success, we must remember that this person can either help us meet others or hinder us in our mission to evangelize.

There are other points, but any person who is interested will be able to fill in those to meet his own circumstances. Out in the world we meet people. We influence friends on the job. We influence friends who make up car pools. We influence friends who are tradespeople. We influence many with whom we deal. Chances are that *almost all of the people that we meet have some reason or reasons for not being interested in our God and His Son*. When the conversation turns to religion, or when we can, without offense, turn the conversation to religion, we do just that. But we always avoid "in-depth" discussions. ("In-depth" is an overworked term borrowed from the teaching profession.).

*Only a fool divulges his whole mind.* (Pr. 12:23). The person you seek to influence does not need to know how you stand on everything. He does not need to know your philosophical orientation on everything. He does not need to find out that you are a walking encyclopedia of the Bible. Let the person express *his* religious feelings. There is no need to rebuke ignorance. There is often reason to rebuke those who are blasphemous, but the conversation usually is wide of blasphemy. I can only recall a couple of instances when dealing with people that I have had to caution them against blasphemy. Show a genuine interest in the person. You are not running up to some stranger on the street corner to deposit a tract in his hand, or pin a button on him, and then get lost in the crowd. This person you see frequently, weekly or daily. There are always those people with whom you come in contact who show but little interest. If there is but little interest, be satisfied to be one of God's instruments, and let someone else be used of God. What is wrong with that? My father used to give out a little bit of bad advice that he never really expected me to heed. He would say, "Son, if you can't fix it, be sure you fix it so the next guy can't fix it." We hardly need to carry that kind of philosophy into evangelism.

If things do work out over a period of time, wisely suggest that you would like to have your pastor, or somebody who is well known and more gifted, visit the person with whom you are dealing. *Carefully avoid any pressure*. Remember that your friend has met many pressure artists. If he has not met pressure in religion, he has met it out in the trade world. Tell him that some time when your pastor has the time, you'd like for him to call. If there is no interest, drop the subject until he brings it up. You will find that many think it is a pretty good idea, as long as the call will be made on him sometime in

the future. Later, suggest that your pastor has two free evenings, and ask if either one of those evenings would be suitable. If he makes excuses, drop the matter. However, you will be surprised to learn that in a good percentage of cases, you will be successful in bringing the two together.

It is important that the pastor be wise, going no further than interest is manifested. He must always leave a friend behind for a follow-up by someone else, if not by himself. In other words, the pastor's first job in a case like this is to be friends with the individual, and to leave in such a way that the individual does not become hostile to the pastor or hostile to his friends, or to the cause. *People want to talk to friends.* People often will not talk to those who are walking books of theology, or who appear to be Bible experts. Now believe this! We know this to be true, and our object is to win this person to Jesus Christ, and to bring him into the Church where the Word of God can be ministered to him. Until he comes to a saving knowledge of Christ, it is useless for you to be an expert. He does not need an expert. He needs someone who has understanding, who has compassion, and who is a missionary and missionary-minded. Whether we evangelize through a Bible class, or whether we deal in a more personal manner, let our goal be that of a *missionary*, bringing someone into fellowship with our church. No one should believe his mission in life is more important as a Christian than that of building up the local church.

Although the church is but one manifestation of the Kingdom of God upon this earth, *it is just that*, and a most essential manifestation. It is part of God's Kingdom on this earth. It is the place where men and women and boys and girls are to worship and to be built up in the most holy faith. To undercut the local church because we fancy that we have a system which is superior to the local church, or because we feel that our system of values is greater than building up the local church, means that we ought to rethink our position drastically. *Any man who undercuts the church or the church's place in God's Kingdom is a man who destroys himself and his family and never sets up anything for the next generation.*

The Kingdom of God is much wider than the local church. I know that. I used to believe that a man had to be a preacher or a missionary to be doing anything for the Kingdom of God, but I was delivered from that intellectual bondage. I know that the local church is only one manifestation, but it is an essential meeting place. Even in the days of our Lord's first Advent on this earth, the meeting place was used to take the message of salvation to men and women, boys and girls. America can have no real restoration of Calvinism unless America has strong Bible-teaching churches that build up God-fearing families in the faith of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

# God's Hospitality and Holistic Evangelism

JAMES B. JORDAN

The thesis of this paper is that one of the most important Christian virtues possessed by the effective evangelist is hospitality. The practice of household hospitality by Christian saints and elders is an image or copy of God's hospitality, seen as He invites us into *His house* to eat at *His table*. Because the modern church does not understand the importance of the Lord's table, and because Christ's supper is not visibly displayed week by week, the virtue of hospitality is not clearly understood in our day. As a result, numerous less-than-effective evangelistic techniques have developed that do not take advantage of the Biblical model. In order to reform our evangelism, we need to reform our churches, so that God's hospitality is made visible to all.

The virtue of hospitality is repeatedly enjoined in the New Testament. Elders in particular are to be given over to hospitality (I Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8), for they especially are to display the grace of God in the world. Every Christian is to practise hospitality, however (Rom. 12:13; I Pet. 4:9). The presence of these exhortations to practise hospitality presupposes the *need* for such exhortations: it is easy to lapse into a convenient lifestyle and ignore hospitality; thus, the exhortation is needed. Especial praise is accorded those who show hospitality to strangers. In some cases, hospitality to strangers means hospitality to travelling Christians (Matt. 25:35, 40 + Matt. 12:50). No travelling Christian should ever have to stay in a motel, ideally. Other verses speak more generally of entertaining strangers (Heb. 13:2), and in yet other places, the entertainment of unbelievers is clearly in view (Job 31:32; I Tim. 5:10).

The last verse mentioned, I Tim. 5:10, distinguishes between hospitality shown to the saints and that shown to outsiders, for the phrase "washed the saints' feet" is a reference to the practice of hospitality (cf. Gen. 18:4; 19:2; 24:32; 43:24; I Sam. 25:41; II Sam. 11:8; Luke 7:44; John 13:5). Here as elsewhere we are enjoined to do good to all men, but especially to those of the household of the faith (Gal. 6:10).

The repeated injunctions in the Old Testament to care for the alien and sojourner in the land are reflections of the concept of hospitality (see, for example, Ex. 22:21; Lev. 19:34; 25:35; Num. 35:15; Deut. 10:19; 27:19; 31:12; Jer. 7:6). The stranger was under the protection of the LORD, in His

house (land), having crossed the threshold of His house (the Jordan), and thus being entitled to hospitality.

The only persons excluded from Christian hospitality were excommunicated persons (I Cor. 5:9-13) and perhaps false teachers (II John 10). As regards the latter passage, John Stott in his fine commentary on the epistles of John points out, first, that it is only *teachers*, not all adherents to false teaching, who are to be excluded. Stott also points out that the specific heresy was the denial of the true doctrine of incarnation, not some lesser matter. Third, Stott calls attention to the fact that the epistle is written to a *house-church*, and thus it is likely that the prohibition is actually to the church, not to individual households. The church must not extend an official welcome to a false teacher (*i.e.*, allow him to teach in their midst); possibly an individual Christian household might show hospitality to the false teacher in an effort to correct his errors.<sup>1</sup>

### *Holistic Man*

The Biblical virtue of hospitality, specifically, *ministry to the whole person in a structured environment*, points us to the *Biblical concept of man*. Here we arrive at one of the major errors of historic orthodox Christianity, for the Bible teaches neither a bipartite nor a tripartite view of man. Rather, the Scripture teaches that *man is a unity*, not *composed* of several parts, but *acting* in several dimensions or spheres of life. *Man is a spirit in bodily state*, not a spirit housed in a body. It is Greek philosophy which teaches that man is a soul or spirit housed in a body. The reason for this is not hard to understand.

Pagan man senses, indeed *knows*, that he will continue to survive after death. It is clear from his experience, however, that the physical body will die. Thus, pagan man assumes that there is some immortal soul living inside his body, which soul or spirit is his true self, and this soul will go on living in some other place after the physical body dies. These conclusions are very logical, but are founded on the false premise that death is a natural phenomenon. The Bible teaches that God never intended man to die, so that death is a most unnatural phenomenon. True, the personal self-awareness of each human being is sustained by God apart from his body after death, but this is an unnatural situation which will be remedied finally with the resurrection of all bodies at the last day. Heaven is temporary.

What makes men different from animals is not that man *has* a spirit but that man *is* the image of God. Both animals and men are quickened and kept alive by the Holy Spirit, and this is the meaning of such often misinterpreted passages as Gen. 2:7; 7:22; Eccl. 12:7. *The Bible has a holistic view of man.*

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1. John R. W. Stott, *The Epistles of John*. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 19 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), *comm. ad loc.*



This is not to say that all aspects of human life are equally important for all purposes. It is *the religious dimension of human life*, man's relationship to God, positive or negative, which is primary above all else. For this reason, cultural and personal transformation must begin with, and be ever grounded in, a proper relationship with God. The religious dimension of life is most important, *not* because the soul is the most important "part" of man, but because the *whole man's* relationship with God is the most important of all aspects of his life.

Under the influence of Greek thought, Christianity began to hold that man is divided into various parts or faculties, and that the most important of these parts is the intellect.<sup>2</sup> This notion is called the doctrine of the *primacy of the intellect*. Because the brain was regarded as the most important part of man, the most important work of the church was to communicate intellectual information to that brain. Thus, instead of the primacy of the *Word*, the church fell into the primacy of *preaching*.

What the Bible teaches, however, is the primacy of the *Word* in the work and worship of the church. This means, of course, the Word read, proclaimed, and taught, but it also means the Word sung (in Psalms, Bible songs, and Psalm-like hymns), the Word prayed, the Word obeyed and implemented from house to house, and the Word made visible and experienced (in the sacraments). A church which practices the primacy of the Word will have a healthy balance among all the elements of worship and life, and will not be a preacher-centered church. The primacy of preaching, however, leads to the primacy of the preacher, the so-called "three office view" (for which there is not a shred of Biblical evidence), and all the problems attendant with that.<sup>3</sup>

### *The Primacy of the Preacher*

There are two large problems which afflict the overly intellectualized church: the primacy of preaching and the problem of revivalism (next section). The primacy of preaching means the primacy of the preacher. It is understandable that the Reformation resulted in a great emphasis on preaching and teaching the Word. For centuries, little or no such instruction had been carried on. Incredible ignorance prevailed all over Europe. Moreover, when the Reform began, the established Church strongly opposed the teaching of the Bible. Thus, the Reformation was forged in a crucible in which one of the principle elements was preaching. All the same, the Reformers did not hold to the primacy of preaching in the sense that their later followers did. John Calvin, for instance, wanted the Lord's Supper to be administered in connection with every preaching service, for the

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2. For a brief and helpful introduction to the problem of Greek influence on Christianity, see Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The Flight from Humanity* (Fairfax, VA: Thoburn Press, 1973).

3. See Appendix at end of this essay, p. 111.

Word should always be made visible when it is preached. (Calvin did not have a well-developed doctrine of the Sabbath, so he did not associate the sacrament with the Lord's Day as this essay does; more on that later). The Reformers emphasized the singing of the Word, and the congregational praying of the Word in the use of set prayers drawn from Biblical language.

The magistrates in Geneva and elsewhere did not want the sacraments to be administered regularly, however, and Calvin, perhaps unwisely, allowed them to have their way. As a result, Christ was less visible and the preacher more visible. As time went along, the Reformed churches, especially in the English-speaking world, lost sight of the value of frequent communion, and often relegated the Lord's Supper to an annual observance. The use of prayerbooks came to be frowned upon, out of reaction against the abusive enforcement of their use by the then almost crypto-Roman Church of England, and thus Biblical praying was lost. In time, the book of Psalms came to be viewed as a strange, Old Testament book, not really suited for New Covenant worship. Isaac Watts produced "New Testament paraphrases" of the Psalms, inserting the name of Christ (and "Great Britain") at those points he deemed appropriate. Eventually the Psalms fell into total disuse, and all that was left were non-inspired hymns. The early Reformation hymns were very Psalm-like in character, preserving the primacy of the Word: later hymns became more and more light and frothy, less and less like the Psalms.

Thus, we face a situation today in most evangelical and Reformed churches in which the reading and preaching of Scripture is the only way in which the Word is made manifest in the lives of the saints. This is a real loss for the people of God. The result is the primacy of the preacher. The preacher not only does the only really important thing in the service (preach), he also composes (if he even does that) the prayers that are prayed, and he prays them by himself. It boils down very often to *worship by proxy*, exactly what the Reformation fought against. Only in the Lutheran and Episcopal churches is there any real continuance of congregational participation, because of the use of prayer books.

Since all that is left is preaching, the act of preaching takes on dimensions foreign to the Bible. *Preaching has become a great rhetorical event.* Sermons ought to open with a stunning introduction, proceed through three alliterating points, and conclude with a gripping application. People should be stirred, moved, etc. The full-orbed worship of Scripture, with congregational prayer, singing, and the Supper has been lost, and this leaves the people psychologically starved, so the preaching must make up for it. *The history of the church becomes the history of preachers.* People leave one church and seek another on the basis of who is preaching. If one is in a church with bad preaching, there is nothing else to look forward to in going to church: no worship, no real singing of the Word, no sacrament.

*Everything hangs on a man*, and that man is not the Lord Jesus Christ.

One of the saddest stories one can hear is that of the young preacher who was not very effective at his task. One Sunday he ascended into the pulpit to find a note which read, "Sir, we would see Jesus." After several weeks of this, the young man broke down and began to preach Christ in earnest. Doubtless the young man needed some such exhortation, but the request to see Jesus was erroneously directed to the pulpit. The reading and preaching of the Word is that we might *hear* Jesus. The Bible emphasizes the hearing of the Master's voice, not the seeing of His face. Jesus Himself was so ordinary looking that He could, at times, disappear into the crowds. After arguing with Him for three years, the Pharisees could still not remember what He looked like—He looked like everybody else—so they had to hire Judas to lead them to Him. On the road to Emmaus, His disciples did not recognize His face, but their hearts burned when He taught them the Word. It was when He broke bread (the Lord's Supper) that they had the *experience* of recognition, that they "saw" Him (Luke 24:13-32). If we would see Jesus, we need to restore the visible Word as the complement to the audible Word.

What about preaching? In the New Testament and in the early church, preaching (heralding) was something done to outsiders, persuading them to repent and believe the gospel. Preaching is recorded for us in the book of Acts, for instance. Within the church, however, what went on was *teaching*. The teaching elder did not stand to teach, though all stood for the reading of the Word. Rather, the teacher sat *enthroned* while he explained the text in simple language, without rhetoric, and made some applications. It was a family meeting. (See, for instance, Luke 4:16, 20.) When the Gospel became established in the Roman world, the influence of *Greek rhetoric* began to be felt, and ministers began standing to "preach" to God's people, delivering polished oratory for edification of the saints. Augustine, for instance, initially went to hear Ambrose preach, not because he wanted to learn about the Bible, but because he wanted to improve his rhetoric, and Ambrose was greatly remarked as an orator.

Because so much of the Reformation occurred within state churches, the Reformers and preachers treated the churchmembers as if they were unsaved people in need of the new birth. This was doubtless necessary at that time, but it is not the normal Biblical way to view the church. The Baptist churches to this day continue to treat their churchmembers as if they were unsaved, and so they *preach* to them. If the churches are healthy, however, with good doctrine and sound discipline, the elders should not treat the people as goats-in-disguise but as true sheep, and teach them. Those who are not truly converted will eventually rebel against the teaching of the Word. There is no need for rhetoric and flamboyance, for "preaching." What is needed is simple, direct teaching. The notion that there must always be "a word to the unconverted" during a *worship* service is unBiblical rubbish.

All this is to say that *of course* the Word must be read and expounded in worship, whether the minister stands or sits enthroned. Such exposition should, however, be direct and simple, not rhetorical. Spurgeon must not be our model in this respect. Let the preacher keep the people's noses in the Book, not their eyes on his posturing. Many of us enjoy listening to good rhetoric and brilliant "preaching," but as often as not this kind of thing only gets in the way of simple Bible exposition and application. The Word, not the preacher, must be paramount.

### *The Tragedy of Revivalism*

An intellect-centered ministry of worship leaves holistic man unsatisfied. His emotional and physical aspects are not dealt with on a normal, regular basis. Thus, the *second* problem that afflicts such churches is that the "irrational" side of man manifests itself in unhealthy ways. The situation in early America was very often this: the weekly service consisted of a few verses of a Psalm or two, droned in the slowest singing imaginable, together with a very long prayer (one hour), either prepared by the preacher or made up on the spot, followed by a very long sermon (two hours or more). Then, once in a great while, there was a "communion season." The Lord's Supper, a great mystical event, would be administered, and there would be many special sermons leading up to it over the first couple of days of the conference. The people tended to get all worked up in anticipation of this extraordinary event. It is no accident that the earliest revivals broke out at communion seasons.

Soon the revivals were a regular part of church life, regular in the sense of being expected from time to time. At the revival, people's physical and emotional outbursts were given full play, from "barking" to the jerks (and after the revival, illicit sex). Eventually there came a split between the anti-intellectual churches and the anti-emotional ones. The emotionalistic churches drifted into liberalism, since they had no real doctrinal interest. The intellectual churches also drifted into liberalism, because their emphasis on the intellect left them open to the supposedly irrefutable fruits of modern Biblical research. Small groups of conservatives have remained in both groups: mystical pentecostalists, intellectualistic Calvinists and dispensationalists. Men seemed to make an unnatural and unBiblical choice between the mind and the heart.

The rationalistic or intellectualistic conservatives have been plagued by irrational movements in their midst for a great many years now. Psychologically starved members, unfed by lecture-sermons, seek out more fulfilling ministries, and sink into the quagmire of American know-nothing-ism. They are attracted by a screaming "fundamentalist" preacher, for at least he stimulates them. They may try tongues, or some other "Spirit-led" movement. They may mix their intellectual religion with screaming at the weekly

chaos festivals of the American Football Religion. They may seek meaning in group-grope, touchie-feelie sessions in which all participants are to bare their souls to each other.

Sometimes the irrational is standardized and becomes part of a sadly truncated religious establishment. The primacy of the intellect is replaced with the primacy of the will or of the emotions, and it is the preacher's job to stir up one or the other. Such is the case (pardon my frankness, brethren) with most of the Southern Baptist churches. The "altar call" has become a weekly ritual (pseudo-sacrament). Each sermon is preached to the congregation as if the congregation were a bunch of goats-in-disguise. Unhappy Christians, searching for more, ritually re-dedicate their lives to Christ, only to find in time that they have lapsed back into the same stale lifestyle. How can Bible teaching take place under such circumstances? The people get a bare minimum of teaching, and a little emotion as well, but are still unsatisfied, because the Word is still locked up to a great extent. Pastors pray for reawakening, and redouble their efforts to convert their congregations, but to no avail. What is needed is *exposition of the Word*, and an *emotionally satisfying worship service* which matches the *psychology of holistic man*.

What is needed in all these churches is a restoration of two Reformation principles which have been effectively eclipsed. *First*, the Word must be restored to primacy, in place of the primacy of the preacher. By this we mean the Word read publicly to a standing congregation, the Word explained simply and quietly to God's people, the Word applied in an *encouraging* manner to God's people, the Word sung in Psalms (preponderant Psalmody), Bible songs, and genuinely Psalm-like hymns, the Word prayed in prayers drawn from the language and concerns of the Bible, the Word (Christ) made visible and really present every single week, the Word eaten and rejoiced in.

*Second*, the congregation must be encouraged and *trained* self-consciously to participate in worship. This means (yes, let it be said) *prayer-books*, so that the people can read aloud in unison the great Bible-based prayers of the Church, and can follow the teaching elder when he prays.<sup>4</sup> The congregation needs to be told that Christ is really (in the Spirit) present at His Table, and they need to eat the food Jesus gives them. By eat, we mean *eat*: a good chewable hunk of bread and a good-sized glass of real shalom-inducing wine. The people need to sit at a table, facing each other, when they eat Jesus' meal. This, not the "altar call," is the kind of active participation the Bible sets forth for the people of God.

Fulfilled, well-taught, fed, happy Christians will naturally be better evangelists. No longer will people be invited to "our church" because it

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4. The *Book of Common Prayer* of the Episcopal Church remains the finest source-book for prayers. Discernment must, of course, be used, and the older version is more trustworthy than the recent revised version.

has a fine gymnasium or because the preacher dresses up like an Indian chief for the amusement of the congregation. People will be invited to the fellowship of the Word, and the congregation will be excited about the Word. The unsaved visitor cannot, of course, participate in the Lord's Supper, but he will see there displayed to his view the glorious privilege of the saints.

The restoration of the primacy of the Word in the churches is not optional, nor can it wait. There are many desperately important matters that the churches must be about, but none more important than the restoration of the Word and the exaltation of Christ in worship. Worship is the heart and central training ground of the church, for in special worship we come directly to the special presence of Christ, and this is the foundation of all personal and social transformation.

### *Familistic Culture*

The church must not only implement the whole Word of God to the whole man, but it must do so in the proper God-given context. That context is a familistic culture. The family or household reflects the image of God. God is a Trinity, three Persons in One. They share a community of essence and of life, which we call *covenant* life because this shared life entails a personal-structural bond. The three Persons relate one to another *personally* by means of love and communication, and *structurally* by means of conformity to their own character (law), and by means of an order in which the Father begets the Son, and the Father and the Son send the Spirit.<sup>5</sup> They are joined in being, but also joined in a covenant bond, which has only been broken once, when the Son on the cross cried out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Mankind, the image of God, reproduces this pattern at the created level in the family. Right in the Garden of Eden, God established the family and its boundaries (Gen. 2:24). The family is a covenant bond, which includes personal (love and communication) and structural (law and hierarchy) aspects. Ephesians 3:14-15 states that all human families derive their name, that is their character, definition, and interpretation, from God the Father. Human culture is an outworking of religion, and the outworking of the Trinitarian faith is a familistic culture.

Most of the basic powers of society are given by God to the family: children and their rearing, property, inheritance, and care of the

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5. Louis Berkhof writes: "The subsistence and operation of the three persons in the Divine Being is marked by a certain definite order. There is a certain order in the ontological Trinity. In personal subsistence the Father is first, the Son second, and the Holy Spirit third. It need hardly be said that this order does not pertain to any priority of time or of essential dignity, but only to the logical order of derivation. . . . Generation and procession take place within the Divine Being, and imply a certain subordination as to the manner of personal subsistence, but no subordination as to the possession of the divine essence is concerned." *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), pp. 88f.

poor.<sup>6</sup> The *plan of salvation*, covenantally administered, is *administered familistically*, so that the *sign of the covenant* is administered not individually but by *households*.

The state and the church are different from the family, and have powers and duties which the family does not have. The state has the power of the sword and the church has the power of the sacraments (binding and loosing). *Both state and church, however, are seen in Scripture as outgrowths of the family.* It seems that in the Patriarchal era, when all of society was organized by households, the father was ruler both of "state" and of "church," with his firstborn son as deputy and heir (cf. eg., Gen. 13:4; 14:14, 18; 25:15 + 50, 53, 55, 59, 60; 43:33; Deut. 21:17; Heb. 1:2, 5, 6, 13 + Gen. 48:17f.; Heb. 5:1-10). In the providence of God, Moses received his training under such a patriarch, Jethro (Ex. 2:16, 21). When, however, Moses attempted to implement the traditional patriarchal mode of government (Ex. 18:13), the sheer number of disputes among over two million people made it impossible. Thus, Jethro's advice was to establish circles of courts above the household level to handle the *ministry of order*, seen in Ex. 18:21-22. It must be noted that this power structure is extremely *decentralized*: a familistic, household-based culture.

As regards the church, the family retained its central importance in sacramental worship, in that the sign of the covenant was placed upon society at the household level, and in that the Passover was celebrated in a *primary* familistic manner (Ex. 12: 4; II Chron. 35:12). Nonetheless, the Lord saw fit to remove the ecclesiastical duties from the firstborn and erect a special clan, the Levites, to perform these duties (Num. 3:12-15, 40-51; 8:16-19). The Levites, however, were only a temporary ecclesiastical arrangement, being a bloodline, thus typifying the eternity of Christ's Lordship over the ministry of worship, and being tied to the Aaronic sacrificial order (Num. 8:19), which has been fulfilled and superseded (Heb. 7:4-28).

In the New Covenant, it seems, the church has reverted to an essentially household form (Acts 2:26; Rom. 16:5, 10, 11; I Cor. 1:11, 16; Col. 4:15; I Tim. 5:13; II Tim. 1:16; 4:19; Philem. 2). The logical pattern for organizing the New Covenant church is that found in Exodus 18, with the elders over tens (houses), and fifties (local churches) and hundreds (the churches in a city), etc. This seems, indeed, to have been the pattern in the early church.

Early on, however, the church departed from this familistic structure. The higher elders (over hundreds, thousands, myriads; that is, bishops, archbishops, and patriarchs) were to function as *advisors* and *shepherds* to the younger, lower ranks of elders. In the event of a judicial case which was

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6. On the powers of the family, see Rousas J. Rushdoony, "The Family as Trustee," in *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, IV:2(1977):8-13; and Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1973), pp. 159-218.

appealed to them, the elders would sit together as a court, for adjudication is a *joint* power. There would be *little legislation* in the church, for the Bible was the legislation, and there would be *little administration*, for the Spirit was the Administrator. Soon, however, in naivete perhaps, the church adopted the imperial form of the Roman empire. Bishops became monarchs, not shepherds. This is the *imperial* stage of the church, and it continued down to the Reformation. These monarchs replaced the Bible and Christ as the Law and King of the church.

The Reformation broke with the imperial form and substituted the *bureaucratic* form of the church. Instead of familistic elders over tens, the elders sat as bureaus, boards, and committees, ruling over the churches. Or else the pastor acted as dictator. Instead of being courts of appeal, presbyteries and synods became ruling bodies in a legislative and bureaucratic sense, again tending to replace Scripture with church laws.

This bureaucratic form of the church is thankfully dying now. Churches are instinctively returning to cell groups, meeting in homes of elders, and in small groups.

The bureaucratic form of the church turns rulers from footwashers into distant dictators.<sup>7</sup> The result is that people do not really know the elders, and suspicion abounds as to what the elders are doing. This is aggravated when the board of elders becomes close-mouthed and secretive. The next stage is for the elders to come down on the congregation and accuse everyone who is unhappy of being rebels and troublemakers. The problem, however is in the structure. Rule in the church is to be by means of foot-washing (hospitality) as much as by giving orders (Mark 10:42-45; John 13). Christ rules by being present with us, by being our Host and having us over to His house for dinner, even by being our Servant! The elders, who are to imitate Christ, must do the same.

Why do churches assume that all the elders must be acceptable to and rule over the *entire* congregation? This is not the pattern seen in the Bible (cf. Acts 6:1-6). If a congregation has several sub-groups, each sub-group should elect its own elder to be elder over that particular house-church. These elders over tens (or twelves)<sup>8</sup> will meet together to compare notes and to settle judicial cases, but it is not necessary that the elder over the poorer people be regarded as socially perfect in the eyes of the upper class people. Paradoxical as it may seem, such a decentralized structure will not lead to greater divisions but to fewer problems, for people's needs will be met effectively, and suspicion will disappear.

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7. See Mark 10:42-45; John 13:1-17.

8. The Biblical pattern appears to be that the civil structure of Christian society is to be organized by tens and the ecclesiastical or covenantal structure by twelves. There were twelve tribes and twelve apostles. If we use Jesus and the twelve as our model, we shall have elders over 12s, 60s, 120s, 1,200s, and 12,000s.



The house-church is not the *only* level at which the churches are to be organized. After all, the church "at Ephesus" was also considered a church, not simply a court of the church. At each level, however, the church is a household and its primary gathering is at a meal.<sup>9</sup>

### *The Gospel Invitation*

Is there a Gospel invitation? To many evangelical Christians, the answer to that question is an unqualified "yes." Some Calvinists, reacting against the misleading character of the "altar call," seem less interested in inviting men to anything than they are in sending men away to think about the message they have heard. The answer to this conflict is to understand that *the Gospel invitation is an invitation to come into Jesus' house and have supper with Him*. The psychological *instinct* in the "altar call" is correct: men should *do* something and *come* somewhere in response to the call of the Gospel. Physical response, *holistic response* by the whole person, is the proper response to the Gospel. It is a perversion to hide the Lord's Supper from view and to ask men to make some hidden, inward motion of the "soul" in coming to Christ. The Biblical gospel addresses the whole man, and the whole person is expected to respond.

To come into Jesus' house to eat His Supper, a person has to *cross the threshold of the house*. That threshold crossing is the sacrament of *Baptism*. We do not invite men to be baptized; we invite them to come in and eat, but they must cross the threshold and be baptized before they can sit down. In the parable of the wedding supper (Matt. 22: 1-13), one man shows up without the proper garment. Obviously, he did not come in through the door, or he would have been washed and given one. (cf. also John 10:1-9.)

It is interesting to note how the Greek philosophical influence has gutted Scripture of its clear meaning for so much of Christendom. In Revelation 3:20, for example, Christ asks to be admitted to the church so that He can participate in His own Supper! This, however, is instinctively read by the Greek mind as "asking Jesus into your heart," which the passage really has next to nothing to do with. Revelation 3:20 is speaking of the covenant meal.

Similarly, the parable of the wedding feast (Matt. 22:1-13) and the entire discussion of the Gospel in Luke 14:1-24, as well as such passages as Isaiah 55, are read as if *only* some inward "spiritual" matter were under consideration. Not at all. The invitation is to a real meal, one at which Christ is present as Host. Real food, physical food, is to be eaten.

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9. Many valuable insights into the concept of the church as a house are to be found in two works by Meredith G. Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975); and *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980). The present writer does not agree with Dr. Kline's overly dispensational approach to the relationship between the Old and New Covenants, and it should not be assumed that Dr. Kline would agree with everything in this essay.

From the Garden of Eden to the Tree of Life in the book of Revelation, *shared food is a sign of the covenant between God and His people*. The Scriptures have so much to say on this that one scarcely knows where to begin. Melchizedek shared bread and wine with Abram (Gen. 14:18). God shared a meal with Abraham (Gen. 18). When Jacob and Laban made their covenant, they shared a meal (Gen. 31:44-46). The Passover meal was the sign of God's covenant to Israel in Egypt, and down through the ages thereafter. At Sinai, when God established the covenant with Israel, Moses and the elders ate with God (Ex. 24). At the Feast of Tabernacles, the people were to eat in the presence of God and rejoice (Deut. 14:22-27). In the wilderness, the people ate manna and drank water from the rock, both of which were sacraments of Christ (John 6; I Cor. 10:1-5). The milk and honey in the land (house) of promise were tokens of God's presence and blessing. And we can go on and on, not to speak of the other feasts in Israel, and the Peace Sacrifice which the family shared with the priest and with the Lord.

Are these all "spiritual" meals? Away with such internalized Greek nonsense! *Of course* what matters most is the presence of Christ, and fellowship with Him, but He has ordained that fellowship to take place *at a meal*. He invites us over for supper every week, and we decide to have lunch with Him four times a year. Do you think He might possibly be offended? He invites His enemies, in the Gospel, to join Him for dinner, but we encourage men to contemplate an absent Christ in their souls. Is our evangelistic display askew?

The Lord's Supper is not some mystery kept hidden from the view of the world. Nor is it some mystical rite to be kept "special" by infrequent observance. It is as simple as dinner with Jesus, and more profound than any theologian can ever fully understand.

The Lord's Supper does not have an exclusively backward orientation. It is a perversion of Medievalism to focus only on the death of Christ in the Lord's Supper. The emphasis in Scripture is equally on the active presence of Christ at His Supper, and on the Supper's prophecy that He will return. Holy Communion is not a morbid event, but a feast. Let the churches celebrate it as a feast, before the eyes of the world, so that the unconverted will realize the full extent of what they are being invited to partake of.

### *The Time of the Feast*

Christ, as God, is present everywhere. Christ, as King and elder Brother and Guide to His people is present with them all the time. The question is whether there is any special presence of Christ which is associated with special worship, or is all worship the same?

The church has always affirmed, because of clear Biblical indication, that there is a distinction to be drawn between Christ's general presence and His special presence, between *general six-day worship* and *special sabbatical*

*worship.* The presence of God is marked by special blessing and curse (Ex. 3:7-14; 6:1-8; 20:5, 7, 12; Ps. 135:13f.; Is. 26:4-8; Hos. 12:4-9; 13:4ff.; Mal. 3:6; John 8:31-59). In the New Covenant, this special blessing and curse is attached to the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 10:16; 11:17-34). Christ, then, is specially present at His Table.

Also, the Day of the Lord is the great time of *blessing* and *curse*. The sabbath day is the Day of the Lord, or the Lord's Day. The association is all important. We are told in I Cor. 11:31 that judgment is associated with Lord's Day worship and the Supper. This is the time of the coming of the Lord, when He comes specially to be present with His people.

*Everything* in sabbatical worship stems from the concept of *special presence*. The special regulative principle of worship is an expression of the special regulation of special worship. The special day is an expression of the special time of special nearness of the Lord. Special blessing and curse is attached to the observation of sacramental worship. The special institution of worship (the church), with its special officers (elders), flows from special presence.

Historically, Calvinism has not always been clear on this. Some, such as John Calvin himself, affirm the special regulative principle of worship, but do not distinguish between the sabbath and the other days. If we take a consistently sabbatarian approach, then the special regulative principle *only* applies to special sabbath worship. Thus, informal voluntary feasts, such as Hanukkah (John 10) or the festival of the incarnation (Christmas) are not bound to the rules governing special sabbatical worship.

The special time is clearly the sabbath. Some have argued that just as space has been decentralized in the New Covenant (no more central sanctuary, but now Christ is present wherever two or three gather), so also time has been decentralized, so that *we* choose the time of special worship. Against this notion are two considerations. First, it does not follow that the decentralization of space means the flattening of time. Time has no "center," and the sabbath is not *one* center but a repeated series of special times. Moreover, second, the references in the New Testament to the Lord's Day imply that the special time for worship continues.

The testimony of the book of Revelation is particularly important here. John says he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. The reference to being "in the Spirit" (1:10) is a clear reference to Special Presence, particularly since John was caught up into heaven and participated in the heavenly worship service (Rev. 4, 5). The sound of the trumpet (1:10) was the call to special assembly (Num. 10:3, 4).

Further, we ought simply to recognize that we do not meet with God for special worship when we choose, but when He appoints. That appointment is the sabbath or Lord's Day.

Man is a cyclical being, and the seven-day and seven-year work-rest cycles

are part of his makeup. Violations of that cycle lead to sickness and death. God will have the entire cosmos operating together on that cycle, angels included (Rev. 4, 5). Thus, we do not choose our own personal sabbath, unless we are engaged in some unavoidable work of "mercy or necessity."

When does the sabbath begin? The Biblical day seems most clearly to begin at sundown, according to the testimony of creation (Gen. 1:5, etc.) and of redemption (Ex. 12:6, 14). Passover was held beginning at sundown, and the Day of Atonement, specifically called a sabbath, ran from evening to evening (Lev. 23:32). Since the Day of Atonement was the preeminent sabbath of sabbaths in the Old Covenant, coming in the seventh month, and characterized by fasting as well as rest, the rule of evening to evening is surely established for the sabbath.

The New Testament clearly teaches that the Old Covenant sabbaths are abolished (Col. 2:16-17). This does not abolish the *creation* sabbath of rest, but the pedagogical sabbath of the Old Covenant. Interestingly, the New Testament institutes the Lord's Day, or Day of the Lord, in the place of the Old Covenant sabbath, so that it is proper to speak of the Lord's Day as the Christian sabbath. The Lord's Day, however, is not spoken of as a day of rest but as a day of worship. This raises the possibility that the day of rest, for some people, might be another day than the day of worship—as indeed is the case for ministers and for those engaged in works of mercy and necessity. For the most part, worship and rest should coincide, as they do in Christ.

The Lord's Day clearly begins with sunrise and continues after sunset. The sunrise is a sign or token of the New Covenant (Mal. 4:2; 2 Sam. 23:4; Is. 60:1-3). On the first Lord's Day, Jesus met with the disciples after sunset and shared bread and wine with them then (Luke 24:29-43; John 20:19). The preaching of the Day of Pentecost came in the morning (Acts 2:15), while the Lord's Supper was eaten on the evening of the Lord's Day (1 Cor. 20-22, 33-34).

On balance, then, it seems that we should ideally begin our restored-creation-sabbath rest on Saturday night (unless we must rest some other day), have a preaching service Sunday morning, and the Lord's Supper Sunday night. All things considered, the Lord's Supper is an evening meal, as was the Passover, so the most appropriate time for special Eucharistic worship is Sunday evening. The fact that people brought their meals to the Agape Feast (Love Feast) before eating the Lord's Supper shows that preparation of food is not forbidden on the Lord's Day. Thus, we may wisely and joyfully reinstitute the Biblical Agape Feast (covered dish supper) for Sunday nights, at least occasionally.

The Lord's Supper is not optional on the Lord's Day. The Bible never contemplates divorcing these things. God commands our presence at His table. Ordinarily, it is not wise to set up extra communion services on other

days of the week. It is true that the New Covenant is a kind of perpetual sabbath and Lord's Day, but this does not eliminate the special weekly Lord's Day. In times of revival, such as are seen in Acts 2:42, 46 and in Calvin's Geneva, daily preaching services may occur, and perhaps the Lord's Supper would be appropriate on a daily basis. I am inclined to think not, however. Acts 2:42 does not say that the people broke bread daily, but that they *continued* in the breaking of bread (which I think rightly does refer to the Lord's Supper). On the other hand, Acts 2:46 seems to be speaking of daily common meals, analogous to the community of property in verses 44 and 45, and *not* to the Lord's Supper. At any rate, the observation of the Lord's Supper at presbytery meetings and general assemblies should be reconsidered, especially since such meetings cannot be attended by the members of the churches.

In the writings of theologians, there is a preoccupation with the question of whether or not the efficacy of the sacrament is the same as or different from that of the preached Word and general daily faith. This question arises only because the Biblical unity of sabbath, proclamation, sacrament, and gathered priesthood has been ripped asunder. The Bible cannot answer questions concerning the supposed sacramental status of the sabbath, or what there is "extra" about the communion service. As John Calvin pointed out, the sacrament is in the nature of a miraculous visible seal to the preached word.<sup>10</sup> Just as Word (authority), Presence, and miracle (power, control) go together in the Scripture, so Word, Presence, and sacrament go together in the New Covenant.

If we distinguish the sabbath day from the six cultural days, and sabbatical activity (special worship, rest, and recreational delight in the works of God and man) from cultural activity (creative work and labor in restraining the curse), we may also distinguish the special presence of Christ, as heaven is opened on the sabbath, from His general presence with His people on the cultural days. Thus, we may distinguish an informal Bible study or a Wednesday night meeting from a sabbath worship festival. Moreover, we can distinguish the official gathering of the priesthood under the leadership of special priests (elders) from general informal gatherings of the priesthood on the six cultural days for Bible study. It is the power of the special priest to bind and loose, to admit to sealing ordinances or to excommunicate, to *place* God's blessing on the people (not merely to invoke it, Num. 6:23-27) and to curse God's enemies. There is such a special priesthood in the New Covenant, though to distinguish ourselves from Romanism, we do not call it a special priesthood but rather the eldership, which it also is (see I Cor. 9:13-14).

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10. Roland S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1953), pp. 137-141.

Thus, the special efficacy of the sacraments is part and parcel of the special efficacy of sabbath worship, the blessing of special priests, the special "official" proclamation of the Word, and preeminently the special presence of Jesus. The difference between this and daily Christian experience is not normative, as if something different in the way of principle were involved; nor is it existential, as if we exercise some other kind of faith; but it is *situational*, carried out on the sabbath day in the special presence of God, the angels, the spirits of just men made perfect, and the gathered priesthood (Heb. 12:22-25).

To rip the eating of the sacrament out of this setting has two effects. *First*, it perverts the revelation of Christ in worship, just as to have ripped out a piece of the Tabernacle furniture would have perverted the revelation of Christ under the Old Covenant. Thus, God's people are confused, and do not experience the fulness of revelation, of the Word. Nor is their need for the covenant meal, and for sealing ordinances, satisfied. Thus, God's people will seek substitute experiences elsewhere.

*Second*, ripping the sacrament out of this regular sabbath worship setting makes it into something special and mysterious. The question is then raised, what is the special mysterious efficacy of the sacrament? This tends toward superstition among the people, whereas weekly observance and rejoicing in the covenant meal would prevent that.

The Lord's Supper is the *covenant meal*, and the Lord's Day is the *day of judgment*. As we break the covenant through sin during the week, we come to the Lord on the sabbath, confessing our sin, accepting His judgment, and renewing the covenant. *The broken covenant is reratified ceremonially on the sabbath*. Thus, there is a *covenant recital*, rehearsing the deeds and the law of the covenant. We rehearse the deeds of the covenant when we say the Apostle's Creed, and we rehearse the law when we hear the proclamation of the Word. The covenant is renewed, and sealed once again by the covenant meal. This is not to say that we lose our salvation during the week, only to regain it on the sabbath as a result of covenant renewal. This is the error of Rome. Rather, we must distinguish among three different things. First, there is the total removal of sin from us in Christ, as He died for our sins on the cross, and as this is applied to us definitively when we are born again. Second, there is the daily cleansing from experienced sin which comes, based always on the work of Christ, as a result of our confession and repentance (I John 1:9). Third, there is the *sacramental* signing and sealing of cleansing. It is not only baptism which serves as a sign and a seal. The weekly sacramental cleansing from sin adds, as it were, a seal to the daily repentance we have engaged in during the week. *The weekly covenant renewal is a weekly (sacramental) clearing of the deck*.

This is why the Corinthian church was in such gross sin: they came to the

covenant renewal supper, but refused to forgive one another, holding grudges right into the next week. The meaning of the weekly sacramental cleaning of the slate was lost on them. The faithful Christian rejoices in the fact that God has not only forgiven him all sin in Christ, but God forgives his daily sins as he confesses them, and seals that forgiveness in the weekly covenant renewal.

### *Covenant Bonding*

Man was created to participate in the covenant life of God, though obviously not in the being of God. Adam was created the son of God (Luke 3:38), and a son is a member of the family covenant. Sin broke that covenant, and since life itself is a covenant phenomenon, given by the Holy Spirit, the breaking of the family covenant community spelled death for the ones cast outside (Gen. 2:17). The restoration of covenant community and life was only possible if God Himself should become the substitute for man's punishment, and experience covenant exile and death on man's behalf. This the Lord Jesus Christ did for His people (Mark 15:34). As a result of His death and resurrection, God's people are restored to covenant fellowship and life (John 17:21-23). The covenant is reestablished through *blood unto resurrection life*.

*All covenant bonding in human life is an extension and replica of the covenant life of God.* This means that the covenant of marriage, of the family, and of the household (slaves) involves a *community of life*. Since ordinary life comes to us through food, a community of life is a life of shared food. *The boundary of the household covenant is established by the supper table.* Those who eat at the same table on a regular basis are in covenant union, sharing covenant life, which life comes through food. (Notice the emphasis on food in the Bible, starting in Genesis 2. The household of Israel shared common food, having been told in Lev. 11 and Deut. 14 what to eat and what not to eat.)

*Because of sin, however, all covenant bonding is destroyed.* The man attacks his wife, and she attacks him (Gen. 3). The children fight and kill each other (Gen. 4). Thus, all covenant bonding must be reestablished in the sphere of *resurrection life and through blood*. The marriage bond is reestablished through the blood and pain of the wedding night. (Would Adam and Eve have experienced blood and pain? No, for the covenant had not been broken.) The parent-child bond is reestablished through the bloodied birth of the infant. The slave-master bond is permanently established through the bloody boring of the slave's ear at the master's doorpost (Ex. 21:6). The God-man bond is reestablished through the blood of the sacrifice and of circumcision.

These are all *threshold* experiences, in which a person passes through a door into a house. Because of sin, the door must be bloodied, so that the

passage through the threshold is a passage through death to resurrection life. Thus, the door of the human body is bloodied in marriage and in childbirth, and the door of the house is bloodied when the slave is adopted into the family (from then on being known as a "homeborn" slave).<sup>11</sup> Once established through blood, the covenant is renewed through the evening meal—those of the same household eating the same food together. This is simply an extension into common life of what we find in the church as well: the threshold experience of entering the land was the passage through the Jordan river, and the daily food was the milk and honey of the land. The threshold experience of entering the special covenant with God was circumcision, and the covenant renewal was the Passover. In the New Covenant, the threshold experience of entering the house is the cleansing of baptism, and the covenant renewal is the Lord's Supper.

Thus, *covenant bonding is a resurrection phenomenon*, and covenant life is in the sphere of the resurrection. To the extent that the unbeliever experiences covenant bonding in his marriage, family, business, etc., to that extent he is borrowing capital from the resurrection. This is common grace, the goodness of God which leads to repentance. If he will not improve on these graces, he will lose all covenant life, and be isolated apart from all community by himself in hell forever.

Covenant life, resurrection life, then, entails *a social bond*, a bond between God and man and between man and man. Thus, the idea of community is inseparable from that of resurrection life. The sacrament of life, in which Christ's resurrection life is imparted to us, cannot but be a community-creating experience.

To eat Christ's body and drink His blood, then, entails participation both in His *death* and in His *resurrection*. These cannot be separated. In the sense that the body is broken and the blood shed, we participate in His death, *covenant renewal*. At the same time, the bread represents the unbroken life of the church, and the wine represents the life which is in the blood (Lev. 17:11, John 6:53). The Spirit is the life. As life is in the blood, and as the blood sustains the body, so the Holy Spirit sustained Christ, and now sustains us. To drink His blood is not only to participate in His death, but also *to drink the life of the Spirit, resurrection life*. This resurrection life is *covenantally bonding*, and creates the community symbolized by the one loaf (I Cor. 10:17).

In the Bible, the entrance of a man across the threshold of God's kingdom and into covenant life also meant *bringing his whole household with him*. The boundaries of that household can be seen from Gen. 2:24 and

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11. On the comparison of the human body to a house, see the works of Kline, footnote 9 above.



those passages which show that slaves were included in the household. When a son or daughter leaves the household and cleaves to a spouse, a new household is established. Before such a time, the son or daughter is included in the father's household, for as long as he or she eats at the father's table.

All those who eat at the household table are included in the covenant with God, at least during the historical administration of the covenant. (If a son or a slave does not mix faith with the covenant promises, he will be cut off from the eschatological fulfillment of the covenant.) Both children and slaves were circumcised (baptized), and both participated in the sacramental meals (Passover, Peace Sacrifice, Feast of Tabernacles, Lord's Supper).

The Scripture plainly states that the infants and children under the Old Covenant ate at the Lord's Table. This is found in I Cor. 10:1-5 and John 6:31-65. In these passages, both Paul and Jesus teach us that the manna and the water provided for Israel during the wilderness were true Spiritual food, the same food as the Lord's Supper. It is not the precise substance of food that matters, but the *Spirit Who comes* to be with the sacramental food and Who gives life. The Spirit came to be with the manna and water in the wilderness, with the Passover meal, with other Old Covenant meals, and He comes to be with the Lord's Supper today.

What this means is clear enough. The children ate the manna and drank the water. Indeed, there was nothing else to eat or drink. The passage in I Cor. 10:1-5 associates this with baptism: all those baptized in the Old Covenant were entitled to eat the Lord's Supper (Note that it does not say that all, including children, were *circumcised* in the Red Sea crossing, but that they were *baptized*. This is a proof text for infant baptism.) This does not mean that all were saved, for "with most of them God was not well pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness." Those who were initially included in the historical administration of the covenant by baptism did not all persevere in faith so as to attain to the eschatological fulfillment of the covenant. At any rate, we can see that *the Lord has invited the children to His table*; do we dare to turn them away, as the disciples did, and received Christ's rebuke (Matthew 19:13-15)?

Slaves, including those not personally converted, also ate the Passover in the Old Covenant. All purchased slaves were circumcised when they became part of the master's household, according to the express command of God. (Ex. 12:44; Gen. 17:12f). The act of circumcision made the slave into a covenant member, in the same class as the "native of the land" or Israelite (Ex. 12:48; Lev. 15:29), able to partake of the Passover, which no foreigner could partake of (Ex. 12:43-45).

A newly purchased slave would not even know the Hebrew language, let alone be inwardly converted. It would take time to teach him Hebrew, and then to explain the covenant of God to him. Notice, however, that *the slave*

was circumcised in ignorance, and admitted to the Lord's Table in ignorance.

This seems strange to modern Americans because of the influence of individualism. The Bible however, is *covenantal*, not individualistic. The household is included in the decision of the covenant head, and it is only as the members of the household mature that they are expected to continue in the covenant on their own. Under the influence of humanistic individualism, however, Baptist theology has grown up. The Baptist doctrine is that baptism symbolizes a person's individual faith and regeneration, so that only such persons can come to the Table of the Lord. This, however, is not what baptism means in the Bible. In Scripture, *baptism is God's claim of ownership and God's promise of salvation*. In the sense that it is a *claim*, baptism creates an obligation to *obey* God's Word. In the sense that it is a *promise*, baptism is the Gospel, and creates an *obligation* to exercise *faith* in God. Thus, the Reformation faith exhorts its children (and slaves, if there are any) to *improve* on their baptisms, to mix faith with the promises. The *promise* is for you and to your children, we are told (Acts 2:39), just as it was for Abraham. The promise must be *mixed with faith* to be effective, for there is no automatic salvation. Baptism, however, is not man-centered, a sign of faith, but God-centered, a sign of the promise. Thus, baptism is administered *first*, and then faith is to follow. The Bible does not teach us to baptize indiscriminately, but *to baptize by households*. Those who share table fellowship with the covenant head of the household (wife, children, and slaves) are included in the household covenant, and baptized. They also belong at the Lord's Table.

When Jesus invites us over to His house for a dinner, He does not tell us to get a babysitter and leave the kids at home. They are invited, too. They cross the threshold with their parents, and sit with them at the meals.

Current-day practice, however, often assumes that baptized children must go through some experience, to the satisfaction of some spiritual examiner, before they can be admitted to the Lord's Table. *There is not a shred of evidence in Scripture for this additional demand*. If we are going to treat our children as unregenerate until they have gone through some mystical experience, we had better not teach them to pray, or even permit them to pray. Away with such hymns as "Jesus loves *me*, this I know, for *the Bible tells me so*. Little ones to Him *belong*; they are weak, but He is strong." That song is a lie, if children are not even allowed to eat Jesus' food.

The Biblical perspective is clear. We teach our children that Jesus is their God and Savior. We teach them to pray, and we teach them the laws and precepts of the kingdom. Baptism is God's *seal* of covenant membership, and entitles the child to *all* the benefits of the covenant. If the child later on breaks the seal and rejects the covenant, he is to be excommunicated; and

this presupposes that he is already a communicant member.

Indeed, the Bible indicates that the foetus participates in Jesus' Supper. We all know that unborn children get their food from their mothers, in the "natural" sense. Indeed, one of the traditional ways to calm down a violently active foetus is for the mother to sip a small glass of wine; it puts the baby right to sleep. But, does this fact really apply to "Spiritual" food, in the sense of the Lord's Supper?

Yes, there is Scriptural evidence that it does, and it is found in Judges 13:7, 14. When the angel of the Lord appeared to the wife of Manoah and told her that her son (Samson) would be a Nazirite from his earliest days, He told her not to eat or drink anything a Nazirite should not eat or drink. Now, the reason the Nazirite was forbidden to drink wine and eat raisins was not because of any physical influence these would have (Numbers 6), because there is no special physical influence associated with raisins and grapes. The reason was quasi-sacramental: during the course of his work, *the Nazirite was not to participate in the good fruits and blessings of the Lord*. This was as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who took upon Himself the curse of the covenant during His life, so that *we* might experience the blessings of the covenant during our lives.

The fact that the mother of the Nazirite was to abstain from the fruit of the vine means that the Spiritual-symbolic character of food pertains to the child as much as to the mother. Indeed, this would be obvious if we were faithful to the Scripture and used wine in communion, for then the effect on the foetus would be noticeable. At any rate, those who believe that children do not belong at Jesus' table should excommunicate all pregnant women during the terms of their pregnancies. Only in this way can we be sure that no children are partaking. If this seems extreme, it is only because the theological position which prohibits children from eating the Lord's Supper is extreme.

What is the relevance of this for evangelism? It should be obvious. In an age when the family is breaking down as never before, and when there is, moreover, great alarm over this breakdown, the church must make clear that Christianity has the answer. *Evangelism is not exclusively individualistic, but covenantal*. We are not out simply to convert individual people, *we are also out to convert families*. Part of the display of the Lord's Supper week by week needs to be its familial character. Away with the nauseating individualism which has done so much to wreck the family during the last two centuries! The invitation to the wedding feast is extended to the whole family. There should be no nursery during the Lord's Supper in our churches. Indeed, the evening Communion service should have only a short sermon, in language simple enough for the children to follow, so that the entire family can participate without the children becoming restless. Use

Sunday morning for long in-depth teaching, and have a nursery then, but not during the Communion service.

### *Analogical Hospitality*

Now that we have considered how God would have us display His hospitality in worship, let us return to a consideration of how we as Christians should evangelize by hospitality. Just as we are to think God's thoughts after Him, so we are to live God's life after Him. This "imaging" of God is called analogical living. *Just as God sets a pattern of hospitality, inviting people over to His house for dinner, so we should imitate that pattern.* The perfect context for evangelism is the Christian home.

We may contrast this practice with the more common method of going door to door. When we knock on the stranger's door, we are at his mercy. He may or may not let us in. He is immediately suspicious of us: What are these people doing? Are they Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses, or some new cult (like *serious* Presbyterians)? Moreover, if he lets us in, we are on his turf. It is his house, his castle. And this is as it should be. God in His common grace grants to the unbeliever the joys and privileges of having a family and a household. It is indeed his house, and we are invaders. We are speaking to him in his context. Moreover, he cannot see anything of how Christians live, so we cannot give him a whole-life message. The situation is not only awkward, but it is relatively ineffectual. The gains to the church from this method are minimal. That is not to say that God never blesses visitation evangelism, but that it is not a very strong way to witness.

Now, if I have a neighbor family over to my house, I have the opportunity to display Christian hospitality to them from the moment they cross *my threshold*. I am in control of the situation, and it is a Christian environment. They observe Christianity in action. They eat my food. They observe the devotions conducted at my table. Without invading their privacy, I can explain Christianity to them. And even if I do not give them the Gospel with a direct verbal appeal, it is set before them unmistakably in all that they experience while in a Christian home. The advantages of this method of evangelism are obvious.

Of course, this means that *I must have my Christian household in order*. Probably the main deterrent to hospitality evangelism, and hospitality in general, is the fact that the Christian family sees itself as too disorderly and not a good witness. An untidy house with a sloppy housekeeper will effectively keep the covenant head of the home from inviting people over. Bickering parents, undisciplined children, poor leadership by the father, are all too often found in Christian homes as well as in pagan ones. *The Christian household, however, must analogically reflect the order found in the kingdom of Christ.* Christians must honestly face up to the disorder in their own lives and homes, for judgment begins at the house of God. Then

hospitality will be a real possibility. Most children will act up when company is visiting the home, because the children are made to feel insecure by the attention the parents are giving to outsiders. The issue is not whether children act up or not, but whether the outsider will see Christian parents handling the problem in a Christian manner (e.g., giving extra love to the kids). The churches must double their efforts to raise up orderly Christian homes, as a prelude to hospitality in general and hospitality evangelism in particular.

Since elders should be the leaders in the church in her imitation of God, *no one should be an elder who is not given to hospitality*. The diaconate, the apprenticeship for the elders, is characterized by "waiting on tables," or training in hospitality. Because there are great expenses connected with frequent hospitality, all elders (and deacons also) should be given money to help with this. (See I Tim. 5:17, which presupposes that *all* elders are given some honor [money].) No Sunday morning visitor should ever get away from the church without being asked over for a meal at an elder's house!

If it is questioned whether we should invite unbelievers to our table, the answer is that our table is not the Lord's Table. It is related to the Lord's Table analogically, but it is not the same thing. *The household table is a feature of common grace and of common life*. It is a blessing which partakes of covenant bonding and is a benefit of the resurrection, but until the end of history it is an institution of common grace. Abraham extended Patriarchal hospitality to any stranger travelling by. The stranger in the ancient near east was always entitled to three days of hospitality, regardless of his religion. While in Abraham's house, the stranger was under the protection of Abraham's household God, who in his case was the Lord.

Similarly, our hospitality can be and is to be extended to anyone except persons excommunicated from the church. *When in our houses, the visitors are under the protection of our God, the Lord Jesus Christ*. This enables us to tell them about Him, and to invite them to put their own households under His covenantal canopy. In this way, the unbeliever sees the whole Christian lifestyle, a style of life which he cannot help but wish were his own, since his own marriage and family life is in bad shape.

It is much more difficult and takes much more skill to witness for Christ in a strange house, with its own *alien household gods*. Such a difficult task is not for every Christian, but requires gifts and skills of a special sort, akin to the work of casting out demons, since going into a strange house is often going into a demonized environment. The space enclosed by a house is a real defined space, a *place*. For this reason, the question of what gods or God is ruling in the house-place is not an idle question. There are such things as demonized or haunted houses.<sup>12</sup> How much better is hospitality evangelism,

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12. This theological explanation of the phenomena of haunted houses is again dependent on the general scenario set forth by Kline, though Kline does not make this particular application. Cf. footnote 9 above.

when the stranger is in a Christian house!

One of the sad side-effects of the notion that every Christian should be involved in visitation evangelism has been the production of truncated, simplified presentations of the Gospel. This kind of thing goes hand in hand with the Greek notion of the soul and the primacy of the intellect, since *the Gospel is reduced to a personal individual decision to accept Jesus into one's "soul," and not the adoption of a new lifestyle*. As a result, the actual message gotten out this way is only a small part of the whole Gospel. *Hospitality evangelism*, on the other hand, addresses the *whole man* in the context of his *whole family*, and in the environment of the Christian household. Hospitality evangelism is more natural and conversational, and can range over the whole spectrum of the Christian life. The Gospel is as wide as all of life, and hospitality evangelism enables us to make that point clear in a way that visitation evangelism usually cannot.

### *Summary and Applications*

The modern church has confused preaching and teaching, so that it preaches to the saints instead of teaching them and building them up. The proper place for *preaching* is the *marketplace*, the highways and byways, which today means primarily the *media*. If the local newspaper will not give you a weekly column, then take out advertisement space and put in a brief, hard-hitting message for the times.<sup>13</sup> Remember that you are not advertising your own church, but you are heralding the good news in the marketplace. The same thing applies to the use of radio and television.

At the same time, the media is *not* the place to conduct a worship service. When worship services are broadcast, the teacher tends to become a preacher, trying to save the lost instead of building up God's people. Also, worship services should not be broadcast because the people of God are supposed to gather for worship, not sit at home. The Lord's Supper is an indispensable part of worship, and can only be partaken of at the church.

The modern church has failed to make visible the Word of God, confusing the saints as to the meaning of the Lord's Supper, and confusing the holistic nature of the evangelistic invitation. The Gospel addresses the whole man, invites him *and his family* to the Lord's feast. This is sadly obscured today. The mysteries of the kingdom of God are open public "mysteries." The Word is displayed through preaching the Gospel to the unbeliever. This is the *active* form of evangelism. All of the Christian life, however, and especially worship, are *passive* forms of evangelism. The unbeliever who visits the service of worship should hear the Word taught and sung and prayed, and should see the covenant meal displayed before his

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13. Excellent illustrations of the kinds of things you could put in your local paper are found in two books by Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Law and Liberty* (Fairfax, VA: Thoburn Press, 1971), and *Bread Upon the Waters* (Fairfax, VA: Thoburn Press, 1969).

eyes, even though he does not participate in it. In this way, the worship service, though not oriented toward evangelism, performs an evangelistic function in displaying the worship of God.

The emphasis on visitation evangelism has produced a lot of simplified Gospel tracts and methods, but little transformation of society. While door-knocking is usually necessary in starting a church from scratch, the Bible indicates that hospitality evangelism is a much preferable method under ordinary circumstances. While it is true that Christ is a Visitor, the Biblical concept of visitation is usually connected with judgment. While it is still day, we should show Christ as the gracious Host, Who invites people to His home for a feast.

### *Appendix*

Although the Bible gives no evidence to support the so-called three-office view, it does not thereby exclude the possibility of experts and specialists among the elders. It is clear that all elders have the same powers and authority. The modern notion that only a teaching elder can "preach" is rubbish. The idea that ruling elders admit to the Lord's Table but only teaching elders can administer the Table is nonsense, and nowhere to be found in Scripture. The tendency of this error is once again to surround the Lord's Table with superstition, so that the teaching elder "consecrates the elements" or "sets the elements apart from ordinary use." What is supposed to happen at this point in the service? There is no ritual of consecrating the elements in the Bible or in Protestant theology. *It is the people, not the elements, which are to be consecrated to God, and set apart.*

Expertise is another matter. In I Tim. 5:17 three levels of reward for expert service are mentioned: the normal situation in which the elder receives some pay to offset the time and money he puts into kingdom work, the elder who does exceptionally good work and should receive double pay, and the elder whose expertise lies in the area of Biblical teaching and who should also receive double pay.

In a largely illiterate (pre-Gutenberg) society, the man who could read and write had a real skill. Such was the scribe in the Old Testament, such as Shaphan in II Kings 22:8, 10. He read the Law of God for Hilkiah and Josiah, who apparently could not read it for themselves. The scribes, by New Testament times, were expert students of the written Word. This expertise continued into the New Testament church. Special expertise does not, however, qualify any elder for special powers. Indeed, *the qualifications for elders are almost entirely moral, not intellectual* (I Tim. 3; Tit. 1). The notion that the primary skills of the eldership are intellectual, the three-office view, is a byproduct of the Greek primacy-of-the-intellect philosophy.

In the post-Gutenberg era of universal literacy, it is to be expected that

whatever boundaries between teaching and ruling elders have grown up should begin to break down. This is a good thing, and a real bonus for the churches. It should be encouraged and enhanced.

Public teaching, however, need not be the only area of expertise recognized by the churches; counselling is another. Throughout its history, the church has always labored in the "cure of souls," and the ministry of counselling is not only a real skill which should be remunerated, but it is also an excellent means of evangelism, particularly in an age of social collapse.

If we employ the model set out in Exodus 18, we might have higher ranks of elders. It must be kept in mind, however, that the *elders have two functions: shepherding* by means of teaching and advice, and *rendering judgments* in judicial cases. The former is a personal function, the latter a joint power which requires the elders to sit together as a court. The concept of ascending courts does not place in the hands of higher elders any special powers, such as the power to administer sacraments, or to administer the "rite of confirmation." Nor are the higher elders either administrators or legislators for the churches under them, since the Spirit is to administer the loosely-organized churches, and the Bible is her legislation. Higher elders give advice and counsel to junior elders, and handle appeals from lower courts. That is all.

The Bible actually teaches, by the way, only one office in the church: the office of ruler (priest-king-prophet). The church ruler administers the sacraments (priestly), rules (kingly), and teaches (prophetic). The only other office in Scripture is the office of ruler in the state. (See Zech. 6:13.) The Biblical concept of *office* is primarily kingly. A deacon is an assistant and apprentice elder. This is so obvious that it is an amazing testimony to the power of the bureaucratic mind-set that it has escaped notice for so long in recent years. There is no "board of deacons" in Scripture, any more than there is a "board of elders." The bureaucratic church is a modern monstrosity.

In the Bible, each elder rules over his house-church, not primarily as a member of a board over a larger mass. Each elder would have a diaconal assistant, and the deacons would assist the elders generally in their work. This would be obvious to us if we lived in an age in which job training was by apprenticeship instead of by university education. Some of the great deacons in the Bible who later became elders are Joshua, Elisha, the twelve apostles, and the seven deacons of Acts 6.

The notion that elders rule and deacons serve is an unBiblical and pagan monstrosity, which completely contradicts the message of Mark 10:42-45. The idea that elders minister to spiritual needs and deacons minister to material needs is a nice, tidy piece of Greek philosophy, but has no foundation in the Biblical holistic view of man. Since the deacon is the apprentice, he will wind up doing the "dirty" work, and this means the more material



and less directly Word-related tasks (II Kings 3:11; Mark 6:41-43; Acts 6:2ff.) These are not two offices, however, but the relation between master and apprenticeship.

While we are on this subject, it might be well to note that the minimum age for rule in Scripture is 30 years of age (Gen. 41:46; II Sam. 5:4; Luke 3:23). They *marvelled at Christ's wisdom* when He was twelve, but He did not ask them to *submit to His authority* until He was thirty. He was wise; the modern evangelical and Reformed churches are incredibly stupid in this regard. They ordain men to become super-elders (three-office "ministers") who have no experience at all, have never been deacons, have had only three years of *booklearning*, and are about 25 years old. A more incredibly moronic system of training can scarcely be imagined. It is no wonder that the church is in the shape it is in. Paul told Timothy not to let people despise his youth, when Timothy was at least 35, and Rehoboam was called a youth when he was 41 years old (I Kings 12:8; 14:21). The word 'elder,' after all, does mean *older*.

Of course, after a century of ignorance and compromise there are very few older elders in the churches. It may be and usually is necessary for younger men to take the lead; this is not the Biblical norm, however, and the young men should be aware of the dangers in their undertaking.

## Bread-and-Butter Neighborhood Evangelism

GARY NORTH

"Hello. I'm from the Futility Presbyterian Church here in town. We'd sure like to have you come out and visit this Sunday."

"Sorry. I attend Behemoth Baptist Church. You know, the church on First Street. And Second Street. And Broadway. And Main."

"Well, that's just fine. But we have a unique program at Futility."

"A youth program?"

"Well, no. We're still working on that. I mean a *theological* program. We're getting across the distinction between the Ontological Trinity and the Economical Trinity. And wait until you find out about univocal reasoning and equivocal reasoning! And predestination! Not just single predestination, but *double* predestination!"

"Yes, well, thanks so very much, but we're real happy with Behemoth."

"But what about double predestination?"

"Well, the way I see it, it doesn't make much difference, just so long as you get to heaven. Now, if you'll excuse me. The Blue Devils and the Red Demons are in the playoffs, and they're televising the game. Thanks again. And if your kids want to get into a terrific youth program, send them out to Behemoth."

There is limited demand these days for theology. There have been few eras in history when theology was in heavy demand, but it seems certain that we are not living in one of them. The problem facing Reformed churches is that the limited supply of theology that they make available is nonetheless glutting the market. People are not beating down the doors to get the message.

When people begin to evangelize a professing Christian culture, they face the problem of self-deluded listeners who think that they are Christians because, obviously, they aren't Jewish. What else is left? They think that their attendance every week at the local Baptist church, or three times a year at the local Episcopalian church, certifies their commitment to the Christian way of life. They think that sitting in a pew and not going to sleep constitutes total commitment to Jesus. And you are going to have a hard time convincing them that they are wrong, in three minutes or less, standing in their doorways on Saturday afternoon.

I have seen the results of door-to-door Reformed evangelism for about 15

years. I have yet to see a single convert, or even a single visitor who has returned for a second dose of theology. I have seen whole congregations (yes, as many as 30 adults) of Reformed churches go out to give brochures, tracts, and other materials every Saturday afternoon for months at a time. Measurable results: zero.

In the mail-order business, you learn a lot about successful offers and unsuccessful offers. If you rent 1,000 names, send out 1,000 offers, and get zero response, you can bet your remaining capital on one thing: 10,000 names will also produce pretty close to zero response. So will 100,000. *You don't make an ineffective mailing package any better by simply mailing out more of them.*

The churches in the Reformed camp have not come to grips with this fact. They are willing to repeat unsuccessful evangelism programs, year after year, decade after decade, almost as if they were convinced that zero response is what God has established as His norm for Reformed churches in our era. Since God has apparently predestinated most men to hell, or at least to weak theology and large youth programs, what more can we expect from our door-to-door witnessing? Ours is a God-ordained failure!

Another feature of effective sales that most salesmen learn quite early is that if you expect to make no sale, your expectations will be fulfilled in a statistically significant number of cases. The character portrayed by comedian Red Skelton in his movies in the 1940's, the salesman who knocks at the door and says to himself, "Nobody's home, I hope, I hope, I hope," serves as a representative example of how not to sell. It is a good way not to evangelize, too.

But, some people will reply, evangelism is different from sales. The successful evangelism programs may resemble sales, but if they really are sales programs, then they could not possibly be true evangelism. And if they really are gaining true converts, then the means are invalid, or else they are not truly basic to the winning of souls. But evangelism is completely different from sales.

Making a sale is a one-time event. The sale is completed when each person fulfills his side of the bargain. There is an immediate goal for each party to the transaction: an exchange. A sale is seldom a covenant. It is limited by the terms of the contract (90-day warranty). This is obviously not evangelism.

Yet Jesus speaks of an exchange. What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mark 8:36-67). And didn't Christ redeem mankind—buy them back from destruction?<sup>1</sup> So in some way, men are warned of the similarities

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1. Christ died for all men, some unto eternal life, the others unto temporal life. "For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe" (I Tim. 4:10). Adam was promised death on

between salvation and an economic transaction. After all, isn't the kingdom of God like a pearl of great price which, when a merchant discovers it, he sells all that he has to buy it? (Matt. 13:45-46).

There are limits on how far we can push the parables, but they do speak to us in terms of familiar transactions. If we are to present the gospel effectively, why not use effective tools of communication? Why not inform the listener of the benefits of God's covenant? Wasn't that what God did in Deuteronomy 8 and 28? Were the blessings described there blessings exclusively of the heart? Or were they blessings of culture, of economics, of military success? Isn't the kingdom of God an eminently salable package? Shouldn't men use persuasion, including the promise of benefits, as a part of their evangelism programs?

### *Motivation*

The salesman learns very early that he must find out what the potential buyer really wants. If a man is interested in buying an automobile, the salesman had better find out what the man is really interested in. Transportation? Luxury? Prestige? Speed? Or peace with his wife? Discovering the other man's motivation is crucial to effective selling.

Similarly, the effective evangelist must do what he can to find out about needs and wants of his listener. Is the person an intellectual? An unemployed laborer? An elderly patient in a rest home? An unmarried mother? A successful businessman? A Presidential advisor? Who is he, what does he want, and how does the gospel aid him in gaining his goals?

We say, almost automatically, that "the Bible has answers for everyone." Do we really believe this? If so, then isn't it our responsibility to try to discover what questions our listener is asking? What good are answers if they don't deal with particular questions? If the evangelist isn't listening to the questions men ask, will he offer the applicable biblical answers?

I have in mind personal questions, or existential questions, not simply intellectual questions. We have to have answers for intellectual questions, of course. We have to have answers for all sorts of questions. "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (I Pet. 3:15). This includes personal problems. What is bothering the

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the day that he would eat of the forbidden fruit (Gen. 2:17). Yet on that day, he did not die physically. Why not? Because of Christ's atonement. Nothing else could have preserved mankind. The parents of the human race were preserved in God's plan for the ages. The same is true of all men, regenerate and reprobate. All men live because of the atonement. The basis of God's common grace, like the basis of God's special grace, is Christ's atonement. Cf. Gary North, "Common Grace, Eschatology, and Biblical Law," *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, III (Winter, 1976-77). All men owe their lives to Jesus Christ. The evangelist should point this out to his listeners.

man facing the evangelist? Something must be bothering him. He is in rebellion against God. Men cannot rebel against a holy God and not suffer the consequences. *Something* is bothering him. The grace of God can solve his problem. Specific answers are available. To ignore this fact is to become an ineffective evangelist, since an evangelism without promised blessings is as partial as an evangelism without promised cursings.

Modern door-to-door evangelism has tended to emphasize the personal, individualistic blessings of faith. It has not devoted much time to the doctrines of hell, final judgment, and eternal fiery sacrifice. Such evangelism neglects the doctrine of the salted sacrifice. The offerings on God's altar had to be salted (Lev. 2:13). Jesus warned the rebellious man: "For everyone shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt" (Mark 9:49). Regenerate men are to become living sacrifices, spiritual sacrifices (Rom. 12:1), while rebellious men will become sentient but dead sacrifices throughout eternity. The second death is to become a permanent burning sacrifice (Rev. 10:14).

This concept bothers modern doorway evangelists. If ever there were a spiritual law to put into a booklet, this is it. On the other hand, those who have traditionally preached the doctrine of individual cursing have tended to ignore the equally important doctrines of *external covenantal cursings*, and especially *external covenantal blessings*. They have preached hellfire and damnation, but they have not preached gold, silver, and cattle (Gen. 13:2). They have not preached military victory (Deut. 28:7). It is good to preach the promised escape from the individual wrath to come, but is it not equally good to preach the promised advent of the external, covenantal, cultural victory to come, in time and on earth? Is it not equally good to preach the power of the gospel, the power of God's law in subduing the environment, and the power of God's covenanted people over their enemies, in time and on earth?

Consider the motivation of the man who wishes to escape the wrath to come. Which wrath to come? he asks. External wrath, in time and on earth? The amillennial evangelist tells him that this wrath will fall upon the Christians, who will become less and less powerful. The wrath of Satan's forces will be visited on them as God's plan for the future unfolds. As each side, the saved and the lost, becomes more consistent with its own presuppositions, we are told, the pagans will almost succeed in crushing the faithful. Almost, but not quite. Bad days are coming:

But when the reprobate are epistemologically self-conscious, the crack of doom has come. The fully self-conscious reprobate will do all he can in every dimension to destroy the people of God. So while we seek with all our power to hasten the process of differentiation in every dimension we are yet thankful, on the other hand, for "the day of grace," the day of undeveloped differentiation. Such tolerance as we

receive on the part of the world is due to this fact that we live in the earlier, rather than the later, stage in history.<sup>2</sup>

If this scenario were true—and it is not true<sup>3</sup>—then the forthright evangelist's message would have a distinct problem in terms of motivation. The wrath of God beyond time would have to be overstressed, in order to overcome our promised defeat, in time and on earth, as the message of the gospel is extended. Why else would a man choose sides with an army that is headed for inevitable earthly defeat—a defeat guaranteed by its very success in preaching its message of the final distinction between the saved and the lost, good and evil, life and death? The terrors of hell and the escape hatch of heaven become the evangelist's message.

Motivation should be both specific and comprehensive. A man facing destruction should be presented with the alternatives that the Bible presents: life or death. But life is more than heaven, and death is more than the grave. Life is fulness—in time and on earth, in heaven, in the new heavens and new earth. It is membership in an army that is headed for victory: in time and on earth, in heaven, and in the new heavens and new earth. *A man should be motivated to take sides with the victors.* He is offered specific cures for specific sins, and victory as a way of life in general. The *whole man* is saved. He becomes a new creature, comprehensively and specifically (II Cor. 5:17). Man is totally depraved without Christ, though his sins are restrained, in time and on earth. Man is totally regenerate in Christ, though his sins are not fully overcome, in time and on earth.

What does the listener want? It is the responsibility of the evangelist to seek out information concerning the man's motivation, and then present the gospel in terms of this motivation. *Personal evangelism must be personal.* This involves knowing men's personal situations, meaning their personal motivations. If our evangelism is exclusively general in nature, then it is not fully personal. If it is geared to "sins in general," then it is not geared to this listener in particular. If it is geared to "answers in general," then it is not geared to this listener in particular. Like the salesman who tries to sell benefits in general, the evangelist is hampered by a lack of focus. Economic motivation is both specific ("these benefits") and general ("to be happy," or "to be successful"). Evangelism should also be specific and general.

### *Theology*

Theology is very important. It is important for professional theologians, who have specific talents in the area of mental gymnastics. It is important for evangelists, who are striving to present Jesus as He said that He is. It is important for the lost, who should know Who it is who offers salvation to

2. Cornelius Van Til, *Common Grace* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1954), p. 85.

3. For my critique of Van Til's amillennial version of the doctrine of common grace, see my essay, "Common Grace," *op. cit.*

men. But it is not important *to* the lost, who are blind. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit (I Cor. 2:14). He does not see the importance of finely drawn theological distinctions. Only if the evangelist can simply and effectively demonstrate the importance of a theological point for the man's personal, specific situation, will he initially regard it as being important to him. We must strive to make theology important to him.

Those who have skills in drawing fine theological points seem to have difficulty in grasping the fact that other people, especially the lost, do not share their enthusiasm and their skills in this area. They seem to be convinced of the primacy of the intellect, rather than the primacy of faith, when they begin to confront a lost man with the gospel. Few men have the intellectual appetite for theology. It is an acquired taste for most people—one which most of them never develop.

Sound theology should be implicit theology in the initial stages of evangelism. We should answer questions, but *the function of theology in evangelism is to provide balance to our presentation*. The presentation is balanced because the evangelist understands and respects the subtleties of the Bible's revelation. His specifics will be accurate and relevant because of his understanding of general principles. But his task is to *conserve his time* and *make his point*. He is not to spend the time demonstrating the wonders of his general, comprehensive theology. His time is limited, and so is the ability of his listener to understand. He can drive home his specific points because he understands the foundations of the faith. He is driving home the truth, which is more effective than falsehood. But he is *pounding away at specifics*, almost as a sledgehammer slams the back of a wedge: the specifics bite deeper and straighter when the worker knows how the sledgehammer operates in general. Theology guides our presentation almost in the way that a firm grip drives the sledgehammer. Our purpose is not to concentrate our efforts in presenting theology, any more than the wood splitter is to concentrate on the sledgehammer. We are to understand theology as we understand sledgehammers, when we begin our evangelism: how better to drive home the wedge.

It has been the great advantage of Arminian evangelists that their grasp of theology is limited, their taste for theology is limited, and their use of theology in evangelizing is limited. They have a very imperfect grasp of the general sweep of theology, but this has enabled them to focus on the specifics facing men. They have assumed that their listeners have no more skill at, or interest in, theology than they do, which has usually been the case. So they have been content to present the "simple gospel," which is all that most listeners can understand initially. The Arminian evangelist is a milkman, not a filet mignon specialist. He delivers spiritual milk, which is about all his listeners can tolerate initially (I Cor. 3:2). Evangelists have been better able to focus on the wedge, having had so little understanding of the sledgehammer.

Modern Arminianism has been able to deliver the ABC's of the faith, since so few of the leaders have ever gone beyond the DEF's of the faith. They have been unable to develop followers with a broad, biblically based program of Christian reconstruction. They have succeeded in filling large churches with people who are theological basket cases, even though some of them have memorized chunks of the Bible. Modern Arminians have devoted a lifetime to studying milk delivery, and they do it effectively, because of their unfamiliarity with, or lack of concern for, the meat of Christianity.

Reformed evangelism has been crippled by men who are only down to the KLM's of the faith. They have not developed the full-orbed theology which was begun by the optimistic, law-oriented Puritans.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, they have forgotten about the specific needs and limited abilities of the unregenerate, who have little understanding of even the ABC's. A program of evangelism that starts with the HIJ's of the faith is doomed. A developed faith, from A to Z, from alpha to omega, recognizes the one and the many, the need for *general theology as a guide*, as well as the *specifics of motivation*. *A developed theology is a practical theology*. It recognizes the limits of theological speculation, and it uses this knowledge to confront men with the specifics of life—the true specifics, which are too often ignored by the peddlers of a simplified gospel.

### *Culture and Evangelism*

We preach Christ, and Him sacrificed. We also preach Deuteronomy 28 if we believe His words. We preach to a society that was once under God's protection, through a covenant, but which is now facing judgment because of men's transgression of that covenant. We face a society very much like the one faced by Isaiah and Jeremiah. Those prophets were specific in their cataloguing of national sins, and they did not hesitate to carry their message to the highest people in the land. We must preach the *comprehensive judgment* of God—internal and external, personal and national—if we are to remain faithful to His word. But we must also preach the *comprehensive salvation* of God—internal and external, personal and national—if we are to remain faithful to His word.

Our knowledge of the relationship between covenantal faithfulness and external blessings allows us to preach a comprehensive gospel of optimism and cultural regeneration. At the same time, our knowledge of the covenantal faithfulness of God to His law also allows us to understand the cultural disintegration of our day. We know why men run in fear, why institutional authority is slipping, why brute force is replacing this lost authority, why men are being confronted with impending catastrophe. We understand

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4. See *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, VI (Summer 1979): "Symposium on Puritanism and Progress."



God's covenant, so we understand both His blessings and cursings. In short, we understand the gospel. We know that God will not be mocked (Gal. 6:7).

The great advantage which Reformed evangelists enjoy, though one which far too many of them have deliberately chosen to renounce, is that *we understand culture*. We understand the law of God and the nature of God's comprehensive sovereignty. We understand theology, and the Reformed thinkers have been the leaders in Christian intellectual circles from the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. It is no accident that the Calvinists have had a near-monopoly on the scholarly Christian markets, rivalled only by the Lutherans. The Calvinists have taken seriously the idea of the sovereignty of God. They have believed that the whole man is saved, just as the whole unregenerate man is depraved, and they have worked to develop a Christian world-and-life view. They have understood from the beginning that *ideas have consequences*. Without this understanding of the sovereignty of God over every nook and cranny of creation, coupled with an understanding of the dominion covenant of Genesis 1:26-28 and Genesis 9:1-7, the rigors of scholarship are too foreboding and too expensive. Those who do not grasp the implications of the sovereignty of God are content to remain defenders of "feel-good religion," as long as those institutions they come into contact with on a regular basis are at least moderately safe (meaning only moderately perverse).

You would think that such an understanding of culture would have led to the triumph of Reformed evangelism. After all, if we know what is wrong with culture in general, presumably we should know what is specifically bothering individuals who live in a rebellious society. You would think that most Calvinist churches would have developed evangelism programs that confront men right where they are, namely, in the midst of a collapsing secular humanistic order. You would think that they would have addressed themselves to the specific evils of the age, and then offered specific programs of reconstruction based on biblical law. But if you have thought that, you have thought incorrectly.

Because they have abandoned the optimism of the Puritans, and also the concept of biblical law as a tool of dominion, *modern Calvinists have become third-rate fundamentalists*. They have become fundamentalists with large libraries. They have become fundamentalists who focus on theology as an end in itself. They have become fundamentalists who cannot get down to specifics. They have become fundamentalists who have forgotten how to communicate the ABC's. Yet they have adopted doorway evangelism techniques that are geared to the limitations of fundamentalist theology. How can such an evangelism ever work?

*"What's in it for Me?"*

Ours is an era of pragmatism. Men want to be successful. They define

success in many ways, but what they want is a program for life's problems that really works. What they mean by "works" generally rests on some faint vision of Christian standards, the fading heritage of Western Civilization. But they want results. They will not usually be content merely with sound doctrine. They would rather have good feelings. After all, if the ship of state is inevitably sinking, you might as well get a comfortable deck chair. Calvinists have been peddling hard wooden pews in an era of La-Z-Boys. They have been selling pessimistic beds of nails in an era of water beds. You can pop a water bed with a bed of nails, but that will not make for more comfortable sleeping. In short, you don't polish brass on a sinking ship. Calvinists call men to diligent service, but for what purpose? They tell us the ship of history cannot be successfully repaired. Fundamentalists call men to the lifeboats, where everyone can sit around and sing choruses. And the seats are padded, too.

Is it any wonder that Arminian evangelical techniques produce larger numbers of converts? Arminianism's lifeboat theology at least offers a respite from the cares of the world. Who needs a life of guilt-producing failure, or even worse, theologically justified failure (if your theology is explicitly or implicitly pessimistic)? If the kingdom of God is essentially an inner phenomenon, why knock yourself out to build an external kingdom? The fundamentalists have been smart enough, and consistent enough, not to lay the "external kingdom burden" on men, when those men have been taught that the only victorious external kingdom, in time and on earth, will be Satan's. The Calvinists, dismal to the end, keep burdening men with a mountain of cultural responsibilities, while denying the possibility of victory, in time and on earth. In a pragmatic era, how would you expect such evangelical premises to fare? Not well, you say? Not well, indeed.

When we come before an unregenerate man, we must know in advance that he recognizes the failure of our civilization. He knows that the foundations are slipping. The advertisers, who are incredibly sensitive to public opinion, even to unstated public opinion, have grasped the plight of modern man. How else can we explain the success of the mid-1970's television ads for Buick automobiles? "Buick: something to believe in." Or the success of the Schlitz beer commercial? "You only go around once in life." The advertising copy writers have a better understanding of each man's linear history (Heb. 9:27) than the occultists and primitive pagans do. They ignore reincarnation. They call men's attention to the once-and-for-all nature of earthly life, and then they sell him some beer.

Modern man knows that something is radically wrong. He recognizes his plight, at least to some extent. He knows what is happening in his own household: to his marriage, to his children, to his finances. He wants answers, but he cannot find the right questions. The right questions are the ultimate questions. The Christian evangelist comes before him to present

both the right questions and the Bible's answers.

Two of the most successful ministries in the Calvinist world are those of Francis Schaeffer and Jay Adams. Schaeffer has shown modern man what is happening to the twentieth century. He opened his home in Switzerland to the "up and outers," the wandering sons and daughters of the rich and upper middle classes. In the late 1960's, these children were on the road, all over the non-Communist world. The modern nomads of the West, with their thumbs up, looking for a free ride to somewhere, needed a temporary destination, and Schaeffer's L'Abri gave that to some of them. Schaeffer also has provided a running commentary on the sinking ship of Western humanism, and his son has recorded it in living color on film. Schaeffer's ministry has been a combination of relevant cultural criticism, the hospitality principle, and just enough theology to make Christian alternatives look good by comparison with humanism.

His ministry will die with him, unfortunately. His films will survive, but not his ministry. His eschatology is premillennial, so it offers no hope of successful earthly reform. His ecclesiology is unstated, and he leaves behind no church, no seminary, and no continuing publishing ministry. His intellectual defense of the faith is not consistently presuppositional, so it leaves autonomous man with what appear to be possible loopholes. Finally, his ministry has never emphasized biblical law, so now that he has finished the task of drawing up the plans for Western Civilization's coffin, he writes as though Christians have barely enough time to prepare for God's getting it built and having the body interred. He has ignored our tool of reconstruction.

Jay Adams has written several fine books on Christian counselling. These books train Christians to deal with the psychological problems of people who are in a crisis. Adams focuses on the necessity of restructuring our habits in order to avoid temptation. He also emphasizes the sufficiency of Christ's grace in overcoming personal problems. With respect to personal healing, Adams preaches optimism. But with respect to cultural, eschatological affairs, his amillennialism precludes a similar optimism. His works, like those of Schaeffer, sell very well in the Bible book stores. Since both men's books deal with the problems of the real world, especially Adams' books on counselling, there is a market for them among fundamentalists.

What both Schaeffer and Adams have demonstrated is that ministries *can* be built in terms of concrete problems and intellectual concerns. Both approaches are valid, and both approaches confront modern man in the world in which he lives. What is needed is a comparable evangelical program which is equally concrete in its appeal, equally philosophical when necessary, but which is optimistic concerning the church's ability to fulfill the terms of the dominion covenant.

Another amazingly successful ministry is Bill Gothard's Basic Youth Conflicts. Without visible advertising, Gothard draws 20,000 people for

four evenings and all day Friday and Saturday to hear him speak on the problems of the family. He has selected an inescapably bothersome problem for modern man, namely, the disintegration of the family unit. Every man confronts this problem to one extent or another, and he seeks positive answers. Gothard's program is not antinomian, so it has preliminary answers. It has no stated eschatology or ecclesiology, so it is a one-man ministry, but it has been successful. It is a bread-and-butter ministry. It offers Christian answers to real problems—problems that cannot be deferred until the rapture or the day of judgment (which take place on the same day).

What these ministries show us is that the message of the gospel can deal with all sorts of people who face all sorts of problems. What we have to recognize is that it is *the world-and-life view of the Bible*, and only this view, that offers to the world a prospect of healing. But modern evangelists have not talked much about rival world-and-life views. They seem almost blissfully unaware of the incompatible nature of the pagan views and Christ's, as we can see in the popularity, even on Reformed seminary campuses, of that confused mixture of Marxism and evangelicalism, "liberation theology."

Men want to know what the gospel has for them. If "liberation theology" comes with a message of God's radical love and the proletariat's radical right of revolution, there are men who will listen (especially seminary professors). What Christians should offer is a program of reconstruction, both personal and cultural, that dwarfs the crude ravings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and their followers. We can offer men hope, for we offer them victory, in time and on earth, for God's church. A man's efforts are then contributed to the kingdom with confidence in that coming institutional victory, not just in heaven after a man's death, but for his spiritual heirs on earth. We offer people not just pie in the sky by and by, but meat and potatoes on earth, right now, with at least a reasonable prospect of pie for dessert. In heaven there is pie a la mode, and non-fattening at that.

Men want concrete answers to concrete problems. They want *answers in time for problems in time*. Unless we can show a man that a particular theological doctrine is innately and immediately important for the solutions to his specific problems, then our adherence to a program of *evangelism through theological disputation* will produce in the future what it has produced throughout this century: empty pews (except in pillbox churches designed especially for tiny congregations).

The sovereignty of God in election is no excuse for ineffective evangelism programs on our part. The public wants relevance, or a psychological escape. The fundamentalists offer the latter. We had better start offering the former.

### *Programs*

When we knock at doors to pitch our message, we are adopting a program designed for other messages. *Calvinism cannot be encapsulated in a*

*two-minute pitch*. We need time and patience to spell out Calvinism's distinctives and their practical implications. It also takes time to train up people in the congregations who understand the distinctives and their implications. We are not asking people to make an instant decision for Christ. We are not asking them to buy a copy of *The Watchtower*. We are not asking them to focus on the church as an institution (Mormonism). We are trying to get them to *rethink everything*. This cannot be done in a doorway.

Furthermore, the impersonalism of door-knocking works against us. Who are we? We haven't been invited. We are intruding. We know it, and the listeners know it. We are using their tendency toward hospitality to force them to stand in their doorways listening to a strange religious pitch. It should be *our* hospitality, not theirs, which serves as an introduction to the faith. We need better programs.

### **The Bible Study**

The home Bible study is a very good way to substitute our hospitality for the listeners'. A family invites other local families into the home for a Bible study. The invitation can be accepted or declined, at the discretion of the recipient. He is not being pressured in his own doorway. Furthermore, he knows the name of the family inviting him. This places the *family* at the center of the evangelism campaign, not the stranger who knocks at the front door. Since Christianity is innately family-centered, this makes use of the strengths of the faith.

The problem with Bible studies is that not many Christian families are trained in the Bible. Who will teach it? We need special training in teaching. We need pastors who will prepare training materials and tapes each week to guide the heads of the families. We need to train the teachers.

The videotape (or videodisk) is the greatest technological breakthrough for group teaching that we have seen in this century. The television screen is almost hypnotic. Children who cannot sit still for five minutes will sit still for hours in front of a T.V. The screen focuses people's attention. This is why we can produce half-hour videotapes that will fix people's attention on the message, whereas a half-hour audiotape in a room of five families or more will seldom work. Without a *visual hook*, audiotapes lose people's attention. They start talking among themselves, or get bored. An audiotape longer than 15 minutes, unless it is being played for "true believers" in the message, or unless it is filled with vital information—recognizably vital information—is a useless group instruction tool. But videotapes are different.

Not every family will have a videotape machine. But most families have a T.V. The church could buy one videotape unit and provide it for one night to a family. One videotape machine can service three or four families per week. On Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday nights, and possibly Saturday

night, successive families can offer Bible studies. The pastor can produce tapes, or perhaps he can rent them. What we need are professionally produced, effective, six-unit lessons on relevant topics. Churches could rent these tapes, or buy them, from the producing organizations. When the videodisc players come along, we will need mass-marketed discs for this purpose.

One organization that is making such tapes available is the Geneva Divinity School. The school is preparing tapes of all sorts on several topics that churches can purchase. These are suitable for home Bible studies, church Sunday schools, and special conferences. For more information, write:

Tape Ministry  
Geneva Divinity School  
708 Hamvassy  
Tyler, TX 75701

Pastors can probably rent recording time in the early morning hours at the local T.V. station. Tape producing equipment, though aesthetically minimal, can be purchased for under \$3,000: a color camera, tripod, recorders (master and slave), and lights. Two machines will cost about \$1,500, the camera may cost \$900, and the lights will cost \$250-\$500. I recommend the VHS format rather than the Beta format, but both are satisfactory.

The Bible study can use a T.V. tape or a competent leader. Possibly one or two skilled teachers can do two lessons a week at different homes. *But the goal is to have competent teachers at the head of every household.* This takes time, but it should be the long-run goal of every church. With a reasonable, practical goal of evangelism in front of them, household heads can be motivated to spend the effort to become good discussion leaders.

Bible studies should be geared to immediate problems: family finances, drug abuse, crime in the community, Christian education, child discipline, and so forth. They should be *specific*, both in content and length. People may not want to commit themselves for an indefinite period of time, but a six-evening course over six weeks in a specific problem area may appeal to them. They know what they have signed up for.

To secure a commitment from people, it is best to have one night with an open house. Present the first tape or lecture. Everyone is welcome. That first presentation had better be good! At the end of the meeting, the family signs up other families for a five-week commitment. No one will be allowed to attend later meetings who refuses to sign up. Tell them that every presentation is cumulative, and that the later ones will not make much sense unless the earlier ones are viewed. But get them committed. Then they can be called to remind them in a friendly way to show up, since they have volunteered in advance.

At the same time, tell everyone the first night that they may have another opportunity six weeks later to sign up for another study group on another topic, or even the same topic. Make sure they know that this is an on-going program in the neighborhood. This family is a rock of stability, a source of vital information, in a concerned neighborhood. If families are too busy this time, then they can come next time. Maybe they want to see the results, or hear feedback, or see if this group is a cult. The "Jim Jones syndrome" is a real factor in some circles these days. People are not interested in getting involved in a cult, if they know it is a cult.

The idea is this: to offer sound, relevant, but theologically grounded information in the neighborhoods of the city, week by week. This information must come in bite-sized doses. It must be palatable for newcomers.

I would also recommend *study outlines* for people to take home. They should have spaces in between the typed lines for note-taking. About 90% of everything learned from the tapes will be forgotten within 24 hours. The printed outlines will help. The church should be able to provide these in mimeographed form. Geneva Divinity School makes outline masters available to those who buy the tapes.

If videotapes are not used, the audiotapes can be, but the messages must be kept short. *The printed outlines are absolutely imperative with audiotapes*, since people must fix their attention on something visual if they are to remember anything, or be kept from chatting with the person next to them. Discussion can follow the tape.

Discussion is important in any case. People must feel as though they are part of a program. Also, the skilled teacher can discover what topics are vital to which participants. This provides the "wedge" for later sharing of the gospel. The evangelist can focus the Bible's specific insights on the problems bothering each of the participants. The evangelist should keep notes on what the others are saying. This is another reason why everyone should have a note pad. Everyone should be expected to take notes, so that the evangelist does not stand out like a sore thumb while he is taking notes. Since everyone likes to think that his words are important, no participant will be bothered when the evangelist starts copying down his ideas. He will not know the purposes of the notes. The evangelist knows.

It is imperative that each lesson be closed after one hour. People do not appreciate losing time. Even if the discussion is lively, participants will hesitate to show up the following week if the meeting has gone on well into the night. Tell them how long each lesson will take, and then close on schedule. If some members want to stay, they can, but only after everyone has been given a valid opportunity to leave—a guilt-free opportunity. They should know in advance what it will cost them in time to sign up. *Stick to the schedule, no matter what.*

Refreshments can be served, but be sure to fit this time into the agreed-

upon schedule. I would suggest having refreshments after the meeting, so that people can leave when they feel like it. Paying for these refreshments can be a strain in some cases. The church should have a hospitality fund for such cases. The trouble with refreshments is that all of the popular ones are bad for you nutritionally. If you have health food addicts in the group, offer a choice of fruit or other non-junk-food treats.

The Bible study should probably be the *primary evangelism program* in any church. It is local, family-oriented, hospitality-oriented, and makes use of existing capital (home space, neighborhood good will). No Bible study program should be disorganized. They must be carefully planned. It is too important not to be an integral part of the church's basic evangelism strategy.

### Conferences

The special-interest conference is the Calvinists' version of the revival meeting. Instead of getting people healed physically, we should attempt to get them healed mentally and intellectually. (Mental healing is a big part of the travelling healers' programs, but not intellectual healing.)

What the local church must do in advance is *to find out what the local population wants to hear about*. For this purpose, door-to-door contact is valid. When you tell them that you are taking a survey, you should be taking a survey.

First, if you select the door-to-door method, get 4" X 6" cards printed. The cards should have space for names and addresses on the front. There should be space on the back for a list of the topics, with check-off boxes. The canvasser goes to the door of the prospective visitor. He introduces himself to the resident, tells him that he is a member of the local church, and announces plans to put on conferences of interdenominational interest. Not necessarily interdenominational conferences, but conferences with interdenominational interest. But the church needs to know what topics are of real interest to local people, so a survey is being taken. "Would you or someone in your family be interested—seriously interested—in attending a weekend conference on any of these topics?" Read them off, and then ask if any one of them sounds interesting. Have a place for checking off one topic, or perhaps two topics, and at the bottom put boxes for "seriously interested," "probably interested," and "maybe." Take the person's name if he seems interested. If possible, get his telephone number. People sometimes hesitate to give that information to strangers (they have unlisted numbers), so never make a point of this. But after he goes back inside, put down his address. *This is crucial; the church's goal is to develop a topical mailing list.*

Each week, the church files the cards by topics. A date of entry should be stamped on each card. When the church sees which topics are hot, it can



begin to plan a conference. I would suggest these topics as possibilities:

- Civil defense (Soviet build-up)
- Family discipline
- Family finances
- The economy
- Abortion, pornography
- Crisis in the schools
- Schaeffer films
- Christians in politics
- The drug problem

Once the canvasser has received a positive response from the resident concerning his interest in attending a conference on a given topic, the canvasser can then take a second important step: ask for a *referral*. "If we can get this conference organized around this topic, are there friends of yours who might want to attend?" ["Well, I think I know a few who would be interested."] "We want to find out how many people locally might be willing to attend, and we don't want to put on a conference, and then find out that only a few people actually show up. If you could give us the names and even addresses of those you think might be interested, we can contact them and ask. That way, we won't make a mistake and put on the wrong topic. Who are the ones you think would really like to have an opportunity to learn about our plans?"

The resident now has a problem. He has told the canvasser that he knows people who might like to attend. He wants his topic presented, and the canvasser has stressed that it is at the planning stage. A vote from his friend might "push it over the top." In any case, to refuse to give the canvasser the name and even the address at this point would seem a bit rude. The canvasser should never be pushy about this. He should be friendly, hopeful, and fully prepared to write down the name on a blank 4" X 6" card. He acts as though he *expects* the referral, as if everyone always gives referrals.

Referral cards can then be used to contact others. In the corner of the card, the canvasser can write down the name of the referral-giver. That way, when another canvasser goes out to call on the referral, he can use the name of the referral-giver. Referrals can shorten the time necessary to line up potential attendees at any conference. A referral system speeds up the "rifling" program.

Referrals should be requested at the actual conference. Get the names and addresses of people who might be interested in another conference like this, or on other topics. A special referral card can be designed for this purpose. Hand several out to each attendee. Get one name per card (address if possible). List several topics on the card. Have the attendee check off the topics his friend might be interested in. Get the referral's phone number, if

possible. Build up a list of referral cards. Pass the cards out at the end of a conference, when the attendees are most enthusiastic. Try to get these cards filled out before they leave the building. Never insist on it, however.

A "shotgun" approach to locating possible attendees is to run an advertisement in the local newspaper. You might try the business section on a Monday, or the Women's section on a Sunday or Monday, depending on the topic. Women make decisions like these on topics that are family-oriented. The ad should include the following items:

- A strong, catchy headline ("My child on drugs?")
- An announcement of the general topic
- Brief "bullets" on subject matter (space permitting)
- "Are you interested?" ("No obligation assumed")
- A coupon to clip & mail in: name, address

This assumes that you are at the actual planning stage for a particular conference. If you have not yet chosen the topic, you might consider an ad which would allow them to vote for two out of five or six topics. Tell them that your church is lining up conferences of community interest, and that the reader has an opportunity to vote for *two* topics. Tell them initially if there will be a charge for the conference. Then ask them to vote for any two that they *might* be willing to attend (no obligation is involved). Let them know that they are not signing up for anything, just voting.

This ad could be run on a regular basis. You could call them "Family Life Conferences," or whatever. Keep hitting the newspaper, for as long as the ad keeps pulling responses. This builds up your file on people and topics. It is expensive, however.

It is my opinion that any ad without a coupon to clip is a mistake. If an ad is not sufficiently motivational to get readers to sit down and do something positive, right then, the ad needs to be rewritten. If an ad will not help you build a mailing list, it probably is a poor ad. Even an ad for the conference should have a phone number to call, or a special "pre-registration discount" for people to take advantage of. You want a response, and the moment the person turns the page of that newspaper, the percentage of responses drops like a stone. Get him to do something to identify himself (meaning to qualify himself) before he turns that page. By the way, always demand *right-hand placement*, preferably in the upper right-hand corner of the page, when you place your ad. You can always get at least right-hand placement. Demand it.

Once the church knows what topics are of interest, it can begin making preparations to bring in seekers, or at least to rent videotapes. The church might want to rent a large-screen videotape player, such as a Sony or RCA. The local sales outfit might even provide it free of charge if the church allows the company to hand out a brochure on the product. These large-screen

projectors are pretty good.

You can use tapes instead of films. Howard Ruff used them at his 1980 national convention, and hundreds of people preferred sitting in another room—a well-lighted room—to hear and view the speakers, rather than sitting in a large auditorium and looking at a distant person on the stage. Ruff also put the viewing units in every 20th row, and people watched them inside the main auditorium. They work.

Various groups provide speakers and audio-visual materials on topics of special interest. One source of information on which groups are reliable and which materials are useful is

The Roundtable  
1500 Wilson Blvd., Suite 502  
Arlington, VA 22209  
(703) 525-3795

The Roundtable publishes a newsletter, *Issues and Answers*, which provides continuing reports on new materials being made available on Christian-related topics. It costs \$15 per year.

Once a topical mailing list is developed, the church can schedule a conference. Letters or other advertising can be sent to those who expressed interest. Get them to sign up for the conference. I would charge at least a token amount, such as \$5, but even if it is free, make them pay in advance, with a full refund at the door. It is too easy to say you will come to a conference. The church needs to know what *real* interest is there. The charge will screen out those who are not that interested, but who do not want to hurt a pastor's feelings by verbally refusing to come. They will come in order to get their money back. Even if they never show up, then the church has something to show for its trouble. I think that a \$25 fee, with \$15 or \$20 refundable at the door, is better than a free conference.

It might be best to send out printed letters first. Then hit those who do not respond with an autotyped letter. Then hit those who still fail to respond with a telephone call. It depends on church finances and volunteer labor supplies. It would be nice if the church had Master Card and Visa capabilities; that way, reservations can be taken over the phone. Get as many signed up in advance as possible. Posters, brochures, ads handed out in local Christian schools (if possible), newspaper ads, and similar "shotgun" advertising is important, but you use the "rifle technique" on those names that you have "qualified" by means of the cards. That is your list of the "hottest prospects." (Who says that you can never "sell" Christianity? You cannot sell Christ, but you can certainly sell Christian projects.)

One technique that works is to have a Friday night speech or presentation that is open to the public free of charge. Then you sign up people at that

meeting to attend the full program the next day. Tickets at the door on Saturday should be at least 50% higher than reserved seats. This should be stressed in all preliminary advertising. The impulse buyer must pay for his weakness. (Or, if you prefer, reward the plan-maker.)

By putting a price tag on something, you screen out some people. But not every evangelism campaign should be aimed at zero-payment people. A fee will make the conference appear to be something other than a traditional evangelism service. Take no offerings at the conference. It must look professional. They get what they pay for, and they pay for what they get. If necessary, offer "scholarships" for students, pastors, etc. But a price tag is a good idea.

The conference can be truly interdenominational, or else it can be a more direct appeal for people to start attending your local church. If it is set up as an interdenominational meeting, no open church appeals should be made. This way, local pastors may cooperate in the future. You have now established your church as a leader in the community, and some people will get the message. I would recommend all types of conferences, depending on your strategy: community response to a specific local problem, community response to a national problem, or personal response to a presentation of the gospel by your church. But make certain in advance that you know what your goals are for any given conference.

Goals are important for success. Get them down on paper in advance. Know whether your efforts have achieved your goals. If you are after numbers, say so. If you are after name identification in the community, say so. But decide in advance which are your highest goals for the conference. This way, you can work more effectively.

A true interdenominational conference can be advertised by other churches. A local church conference, since it has to be organized by the local church, should rely more heavily on canvassing and telephoning, since other churches are not "qualifying the prospects" at their expense. But it never hurts to spend time each week to build up a topical list, whatever kind of conference is planned.

*Door-to-door canvassing* is faster, and it has a more legitimate purpose, than door-to-door direct evangelism. A church can announce its presence (which few people will care to remember anyway), and it gets names, addresses, and useful information while its people are out there ringing doorbells. The problem with conventional door-to-door evangelism is that *nothing is done about those who fail to respond, yet it has taken 99% of the evangelists' efforts to reach these people*. By developing a topical index, with names and addresses, the church has the basis of follow-up programs that can be directly or indirectly evangelical.

The church can also use these names for mailing pamphlets, or announcements concerning tapes, or new books that are available, or the formation

of a local Bible study. You can get a local Christian book store to cooperate, if necessary. Let the store take some of your cards, so that customers can fill them out. Allow the store manager to copy the information, so that he can promote mailings to people about books of interest to them. Also, allow him to set up a booth at the conference to sell *books that your church has screened*. He gets some profit, you get the books you want to see read into the hands of the readers, and the book store hands out blank cards to pre-screened Christian people to help you fill up the conference. We might even get book stores to start carrying our books locally. Maybe the manager knows nothing about the kinds of materials we can make available.

Once you get people into the conference, you have an opportunity to present the gospel, but always in relation to the concern of those who have shown up. You can tell them about books, newsletters, tapes, and other materials that are available. You can tell them about your church, if that is the purpose of the conference. You can get their names for follow-up programs, such as the local Bible studies.

The thing to remember, above all, is this: *once you have qualified your prospect, you can contact him over and over for related programs*. The overwhelming waste of conventional door-to-door evangelism is that it re-directs and misallocates time that could have been used to qualify prospects—incredibly precious time—and it completely ignores those who have failed to respond, which means virtually everyone. Door-to-door evangelism is wasteful because it provides the evangelist with only one brief shot at the prospect. Once the man refuses to respond, the evangelist usually cannot afford the time to return for another presentation. But by gearing the door-to-door evangelism program to topics of widespread interest, the church builds up a file of information on the members of the community—a file which can be used again and again.

The prospect cards might even have the listener list his preference for topics by number, 1-6, so that he can be contacted in the future if his third-favorite topic is scheduled for a Bible study or conference. But this gets complicated. Better to know his first two choices. He is more certain about these. In any case, the church now has names to go with those addresses, and even zip codes and phone numbers. No longer does the church have to mail to “occupant.” *The church now mails to those who have responded to a survey*. The church can introduce itself in all subsequent mailings as the church which contacted them earlier about various conferences. They may remember this previous personal contact.

By the way, all mailings should go out under the “change of address requested” system. The Post Office charges money for each name and address returned, but it allows the church to keep its mailing list up to date. A “clean” list is important.

I realize that very few churches know anything about mailing lists. They have no idea how to use them, or what kinds of results may be expected. But mailing lists allow us to *target specific audiences*. Getting relevant, motivating information into the right people's hands is always expensive. We have to prepare years in advance in some cases to compile an effective mailing list. Once assembled, such a list is worth a pile of money. More significant, it is a unique motivational tool. No other local church will have anything like it. It takes years of work for a small church to develop such a list, and your church can have this critical head start. Large local churches may be able to get the canvassers out in force, but what will these churches do with the information? What unique theological program can they offer? People are interested in results, which means *applied* theology. *If your church has the answers, it had better spend some time and effort in discovering who is asking the questions.*

It would be wonderful if these cards could be computerized. That should be your long-run goal. To be able to pop out labels of names and addresses of all those concerned about a particular topic: what an advantage! To have these labels all nicely zip coded, too: what a money-saver!\* (Bulk-rate postage requires mailers to sort the mail in advance by zip code.)

One last possibility: if your conference has used films and local speakers, you might ask the attendees if they think it is worth putting on an identical conference in two weeks. Would they be willing to bring two or more friends next time? Get the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of everyone who raises his hand. If enough volunteer to help, then go ahead and do it. If they can't get responses from their friends within a week, cancel the conference.

### **Crime-Watch Evangelism**

People really are not initially interested in your views concerning predestination. They may be very concerned with your views on community safety. Crime is a growing problem nationally. Calvinists can put the criminals to work for us.

Here is a program of bread-and-butter evangelism. The church orders electric marking pencils. These sell retail for about \$10 each, but you can go down to a local hardware store or Radio Shack, get the address of the

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\*One firm which supplies computer programs for the Radio Shack TRS-80, Systems I and III, is Political Data Systems, Inc., 101 S. Whiting St., Suite 112, Alexandria, Virginia 22304. For about \$5,000, the buyer can set up a very functional computer for surveying people on 40 different topics. The computer will then sort by zip code, topics, and almost any other way desired. The package includes a printer for writing letters and addressing envelopes. It has been used successfully for political organizing, and it could work equally well for church canvassing and evangelism geared to specific topics. The firm sells a tape explaining the various applications for \$2.00.

producer off the back of the box, and write for discounts. Maybe you can buy two dozen with a 20% discount. Local police departments provide them free of charge (with a deposit). There may not be enough of them available on a lease basis, however.

The church then assembles its canvassers. Each canvasser gets several pencils, probably about 10 of them. The system can be tried in advance by one man, just to see how many units are optimal. The canvasser goes to the local police department and tells the officer in charge about the church's intention to get local property marked. The police will sometimes provide a "community watch" sticker for the window of each home containing marked property. Perhaps the church can get several boxes of these stickers, or at least several dozen stickers. A letter from the police chief on the importance of community efforts in fighting crime by marking personal property would help. This letter can be photocopied by the local church. A canvasser should carry it.

The canvasser then starts hitting neighborhoods. He introduces himself as a member of the local church. The church is concerned about burglary. The church is community service-oriented. The church wants to do something about crime. The church thinks that local people ought to take steps to protect themselves. To do this, the church is sending out teams of people to provide marking pencils to all those who want to make it more difficult for burglars to "fence" (peddle) stolen goods. Every citizen is being asked to mark his property with his driver's license. (Social Security numbers are useless. The Social Security Administration refuses to provide the names of those whose numbers are reported by the police when they locate stolen goods.)

A driver's license number makes it easier for the police to contact the victims when the property is recovered. It makes stolen goods somewhat more expensive for the thief to get rid of. But most important, "neighborhood watch" stickers let criminals know that some neighborhoods, or at least some streets, are higher risk areas than others. This tends to push them into other blocks or neighborhoods. This, in turn, creates demand for crime-prevention activities in the newly inundated areas. You will meet that demand later on.

A crime-prevention program operated by churches would help to penalize criminals. The churches, predictably, do nothing. A serious program like this one would mark your local church as an innovative, concerned, relevant congregation.

The canvasser leaves the marking pencil for half an hour with the property owner. But the property owner signs a receipt. Presto; the canvasser has his name and address. When he returns, he can get the person to fill out a topical index card (if you have decided to use topical cards), or whatever. But a receipt gets the person's name and address. (The canvasser, before he

returns to pick up the marking pencil, can fill out the front of the topical card.) He returns and gives the person back the receipt. Naturally, on the back of the receipt is some sort of message on church concerns, biblical law, support your local police, or whatever. *The receipt is, in effect, a tract.* It is a tract aimed directly at the property owner's concern about crime. It is a specially designed tract which raises no hackles when it is passed to the recipient, since the recipient wants it back. On one side is the receipt: "I have received an electronic marking pencil from [*canvasser's name*], who is a representative of [Such and Such] Church." He signs his name in a space provided for this purpose. On the back is the tract. When the canvasser leaves, he will have accomplished the following:

Burglars have had their costs increased  
 The property owner reduces his risks of burglary  
 The property owner owes something to God's church  
 The property owner has a tract in front of him  
 The canvasser has a name and address  
 The church has been identified as relevant  
 The church may have a topic card filled out

Since the canvasser has typed in or stamped in his own name on the original receipt, some degree of personal contact has been established with the property owner. The church's name has been displayed prominently, front and back. If necessary, the canvasser can call back and identify himself by name to the listener. He is not quite a stranger any more. He is someone who has taken time to help the property owner and the property owner's neighborhood.

The names can be used by the church to sponsor a special Saturday afternoon seminar on home defense techniques. Bring in a local policeman to give a talk. If you think it will help, invite in a lock specialist who can sell some items. The trade, of course, is the local lock salesman's willingness to display a poster or sign-up cards inside his shop for the seminar. Again, his motivation to help your church is the same as the local Christian book store owner's motivation: profit.

Depending on the success of this preliminary canvassing, and the length of time it takes to get everyone on one block to use the marking pencil, the church can buy pencils and get the members to go door to door. In this case, women can go, or even younger members. They do not have to be qualified evangelists. All they need to do is to appear sincere, and to hand out the marking pencils. Since there is no deception involved, and no unwarranted invasion of local people's privacy, it will be easier to get church members to participate. This program really is a community service.

To summarize, *the goal is long-term dominion.* The means are obvious: community service. The church identifies itself as a concerned, relevant



congregation that is taking specific steps to reduce the threat of crime in the neighborhood. This is the first stage in a *multi-pronged program* of community evangelism. It develops a base of community trust, and it develops a card file for future use in specific educational programs.

There is another important consideration. The local police force may begin to notice the efforts of your church. This could be *extremely* important if there is some sort of military catastrophe in the future. In any case, the police are beneficiaries. Their work is made easier. The "community-watch" stickers get put in windows that never would have displayed them if it had not been for the church.

### Civil Defense

I am convinced that local communities ought to take far more interest in their local civil defense program. These programs are dying on the vine in precisely the era of greatest danger for the United States. Therefore, it behooves a local church to find out who runs the local CD unit and get into contact with the director.

The church could open its doors to a special seminar on civil defense. Have the director come in and give a speech. One very important service to any community would be the showing of one of the most horrifying, accurate, and immediately relevant films available, *The Salt Syndrome*. Churches can rent it for \$35. I think that every church in American should show it. It should go out and promote a showing for a Saturday night or Friday night. Your church can order it from

American Security Council  
Boston, Virginia

What you might do is to reprint an article from the newspaper on the Soviet arms build-up. Then use this to hand out to people, with an announcement of your seminar in civil defense at the bottom of the reprint and on the back of the sheet. This should be handed out everywhere you can think of. Get civic groups to announce it. Get advice from your Civil Defense director. A letter on his stationery would also be persuasive, even one which fails to mention your program specifically. Anything will do, since you are trying to get the letterhead most of all. This adds credibility to your campaign.

I think it should be a matter of church policy to maintain a continuing relationship between the local Civil Defense unit and the church. A *liason officer in the church* should be appointed, and he should become an expert in the field. He should monitor the CD publications, get the books and booklets for the church library, and generally do everything possible to keep the church informed of Civil Defense programs, and to keep the local Civil Defense program informed of the support and concern of the local church.

If a war or other national emergency comes, *you want your church to be the first outside private institution that your Civil Defense director will turn to for assistance.*

I am convinced that every church should subscribe to a publication devoted to the whole question of nuclear war. Every church should be prepared to exercise leadership, should war come. I strongly recommend that every church order a year's subscription to

Nuclear War Survival Skills  
P. O. Box 39825  
Phoenix, AZ 85069  
\$75/yr.

We must consider any evangelism program a *long-term dominion project*. Church evangelism programs today are operated in terms of the belief that Jesus is coming soon to pull His people into safety. Our evangelism programs should be established with an eye to our *children's* future efforts in the community and *their* children's efforts. If nuclear war comes, our churches had better be in a position to exercise leadership. *Christian leadership in a time of crisis is essential to evangelism.* This is one reason why I think churches, through the diaconates, should be storing dehydrated food and grains. One very good company to order from, which is operated by a Christian businessman, is

Arrowhead Mills  
P. O. Box 866  
Hereford, TX 79045

When I recommend bread-and-butter evangelism, I really mean it. Soy-bean evangelism should also be prayerfully considered.

### *Conclusions*

The Reformed churches of our era cannot hope to be successful with evangelism programs geared to the theology of American fundamentalism. They must adopt programs that correspond to Reformed theology, Reformed psychology, and Reformed capacities. The Reformed churches are not emotional enough, not anti-intellectual enough, not one-shot decision oriented enough, to compete with fundamentalist-style evangelism. Where the Reformed churches can make an impact for God's kingdom are in the areas of social, intellectual, and cultural development. Here is where we have almost an operating monopoly. If we fail to use this monopoly effectively, we will have squandered our theological heritage.

Our chief theological-social heritage is a concept of human history and corporate responsibility which is geared to the *future*. We have inherited the scholarship of generations of Christian thinkers. Our heritage is not burdened, as fundamentalism's heritage is, with the responsibility of

starting from scratch intellectually every generation. Reformed scholarship survives the test of time. So should Reformed institutions. We have to look to the future. We have to build our evangelism programs in terms of the future. *Reformed evangelism should be cumulative in its impact and development.* Any program of evangelism which is not cumulative in its impact probably is not systematically Reformed in its foundations.

We should be training our church members to exercise leadership in their areas of responsibility. We should especially be training men to exercise leadership in a period of social, economic, and military crisis. If our churches refuse to take Deuteronomy 28:15-68 seriously, then which churches will? We must recognize a fact of political life: *power flows to those who will bear responsibility.* The basis of successful leadership is successful service (Luke 22:26).

There is another aspect of evangelism which should be considered. Church splits are a way of life in Protestant nations. People would rather switch than fight, or better yet, they would rather fight, lose, and switch. There are many reasons for church splits: quarrelling wives, choirs and choir directors, pride (perhaps the most common factor), and doctrine. Doctrine is the best reason to split, although I think it is more of an excuse than a cause in the bulk of the splits. People just refuse to pay that much attention to theology these days.

A good evangelism program is important in a Calvinist church to keep the inevitable theological battles directed outward, toward Satan's kingdom, rather than inward. Calvinist churches do take theology seriously, and in an era of theological transformation, which ours is, this tendency toward theological rifts is increased. Amillennialism has tended to focus men's concerns primarily on the problems, failures, and shortcomings of the institutional church, since amillennialism by definition believes that it is in the church, and not in society at large, that Christian reform is historically possible. Men will not concentrate their hopes, fears, efforts, and capital in lost causes, and amillennialism teaches that cultural transformation at large is a lost cause. Therefore, men turn inward, first to the institutional church, and then to the family. Finally, they focus an increasing portion of their concern on self-reform, which is the emphasis of pietism, quietism, and many of the transcendental-type cults.

Fundamentalists share this pessimism toward cultural reform, but their emphasis on evangelism—lifeboat theology—has enabled them to turn outward. Fundamentalists are less likely to have the “dominion man burden,” the desire to reform and improve life's institutions, which many amillennialists (especially Dutch amillennialists) have. So they are out handing tracts and knocking on doors all the time. They are not likely to develop a morbid preoccupation with institutional reform in a world which is supposedly unreformable.

An optimistic, reform-minded, socially healing evangelism can refocus men's innate tendencies toward conflict, and turn them into positive programs. Bread-and-butter neighborhood evangelism is ideally suited for Calvinist churches.

People are not visibly interested in classroom theology. But people *are* interested in *applied* theology. If we say that we have the most accurate, most comprehensive, and most relevant theology in the world, then our evangelism strategy should reflect this. If we have a theology which is not immediately applicable to the problems of life, and not in fact more applicable than any rival theology, then we are self-deceived. We are as tinkling bells. Our commitment to ever-more rigorous classroom theological speculation will amount to no more than late-medieval Scholasticism did. The world will not be saved by mental gymnasts. The world will not be redeemed by footnotes alone. The world will not be transformed by three-minute doorway summaries of 400 years of Reformed scholarship. The scholars need to bring evangelism into the homes, and so do the the doorbell ringers.

When a man walks away rejected from a doorway encounter—and this is the case in virtually all instances—he usually feels dejected. Dejection then leads to feelings of revenge. “Well, he’ll get *his* someday.” Almost nobody can survive with a cumulative series of rejections. Salesmen get out of sales if it goes on too long. Yet doorway evangelism by Calvinists virtually never works. This means men must go through endless agony without any visible pay-off. Psychologically, this is suicidal for any evangelism program. When an evangelist leaves a household, it is much better for him to be able to say to himself, “Well, I’ve laid the groundwork. Now, the follow-up program can do its work.” He needs to have an incentive to leave behind him whole neighborhoods that have been softened up for the next stage of the long-term evangelism thrust. He wants to be able to leave behind him generally favorable, or at least not openly hostile, households. A clean break—theologically, psychologically, motivationally—on his part or the target’s part is to be avoided, if possible, at this early stage of the program. An endless string of open, visible defeats will cripple the one-shot doorway program before the church can visit all the homes that need to be visited. A positive program of canvassing must involve several stages, and these later stages should be able to be repeated, with new conferences, new Bible studies, new offers.

# Church Renewal: The Real Story

LEWIS EDWARDS BULKELEY

Several years ago, a bright young seminary graduate began to seek a place in the ministry. He applied to the missions arm of a fairly large denomination, and he was accepted as a mission pastor. The board looked over his credentials and qualifications, and then sought a place of service. Soon the young pastor found himself in a small town in the mid-south, ministering to a church of fifteen members averaging age sixty.

Within the first year the pastor buried three members of his congregation. It was a severe loss. The church had been in existence for two decades and could hardly afford to lose any of its precious remaining members.

During the first few years, the church gained several new members, all by transfer and none by conversion. Even now, the outlook is not promising. A few more years, and the entire congregation will be gone. The pastor will be back on the street, or back at the mission board taking responsibility for having failed to work renewal miracles in this dying white-elephant of a church.

## *A Typical Case*

The story is typical. Across America are hundreds of small, dying congregations in search of renewal. Most of them have been around for ten, twenty, or even thirty years. They have seen the good times and the bad. They reached their zeniths years ago. Perhaps they hit membership of three or four hundred under the leadership of the founding pastor. Then the pastor moved on to higher ground (more money, prestige), or got in trouble with members of the board (usually the big givers). Perhaps the pastor just moved on.

Then came the splits (check your small, dying church-with-a-history, and you are bound to find a bad case of the splits). By tens and twenties families departed, probably over the obnoxious character of one or more loud-mouthed members, or over just which side of the church does the piano belong on. Something important.

The faithful few held on. It was their church. They would stay to the end. Others, with little or no conviction, went on to more fertile territory, usually with lower doctrinal standards. And so it went, year after year.

Then there was the time no one could agree on which man to call as

pastor. So the church went without one for several years. During this period, half the remaining members went elsewhere.

Of course, the older people stayed. They held the positions of influence (?) in the church, and, as the saying goes, the tenacious shall inherit the property. And then there were those folks who could not bear to see the work that they had supported for so many years fall apart. The witness had to be maintained.

In desperation, the leaders of the church appealed to the national missions organization. Send us a White Knight, they cried. Send us a young man "on fire for the Lord" who will revive our church through his Spirit-guided, single-handed efforts in the community. In short, send us a miracle.

The missions board did its best to meet the plea of the congregation. Surely this work had to be preserved at all costs. Let us find a committed young pastor in search of a flock and send him out into the fields white unto harvest. This church will be renewed, if only he will follow the right course.

So the board sent out a man. A sound man. A man with a family and a zeal to serve the people of God. This man was new in the ministry and still laboring under an idealistic altruism. The board had judged this work to be of importance and a work worth salvaging. If he would pursue the building of the congregation with vigor, God would certainly bless his labors and resurrect this church. The young man became committed to the work. He looked at all the factors, emphasizing the positive in his own mind as grounds for hope (there are already some members), and suppressing the negative (they are close to death) as unworthy of consideration in light of the truth that God is able to do all things, to overcome all obstacles.

Whenever doubts entered his mind in the course of preparing his family for the task ahead, this young pastor would mentally flagellate himself for his lack of faith. The family moved to the dying church. Throughout the months, or even years that the pastor labored to revive the work, his attitude began to change. He began to recognize not only the realities of the ministry through fiery trial, but also the realities of a congregation in limbo. Eventually he moved on, either to a more promising work, or to a job that paid a living wage.

The scenario is familiar. The pattern is regular and, seemingly, everlasting. Attempts to rejuvenate gutted churches are endemic in both evangelical and reformed movements. The diseased church is like the perennial counselee—always eager for progress but never making any.

Time never seems to change either the churches or the approaches. The best the board can do is send another man. Perhaps this one will have a better program. Perhaps he will be more dynamic. Perhaps pigs fly.

### *Are There Answers?*

Are there? There are for those who have ears to hear and eyes to see.

There are answers for churches, missions boards, and mission pastors who sincerely want answers and will recognize them when they appear. For those who want to continue in the old pattern—business-as-usual—there are no answers, only holding patterns. But for the few who have the courage to break with some old traditions and take a new look at church renewal and the task set before the church by the Lord Jesus Christ, there are some simple but powerful principles. The willingness to hear and to change must be present in all parties—the churches, the boards, and the pastors. A closer look at each of the three parties to this perpetual drama reveals a provocative picture.

### *Shall We Renew This Church?*

Good question. It is one we seldom ask about any particular work. When is the last time we looked at a particular floundering ministry and said: Should we spend our time, personnel, money, and effort to rebuild this church? Is it worth it?

The historic answer to these questions is an unequivocal “yes.” Deep in our convictions is the presumption that every church is worth saving. It is the church of Christ. The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. Yet the question remains, all the same. And it is a legitimate question. Is this church worth saving? If this church folds, will the community of pagans out there have lost the witness of Jesus Christ, our Lord? Will it make a difference?

Probably not. If the church has been around for twenty years and cannot even support one man without help from the national board, something is terribly, terribly wrong. This church is *not* prevailing against the gates of Hell. Hell has already passed through and is now on the other side looking for a real opponent.

The church in trouble usually suffers from a comprehensive set of maladies, each designed to counteract effectively both witness and growth. In addition, certain external features such as geography and history weigh heavily in retarding the forward progress of this church. For true renewal to take place, all of the problems have to be solved effectively. All of the problems will not disappear, but they must be countered in a practical manner for practical regeneration to take place.

*Internal problems* are probably the most critical. Solve the internal problems, and the external problems become inconveniences. What are the internal problems? There is really only one: the leadership of the church. The church leaders are just that—leaders—whether by accomplishment or by default. As the leadership, so the congregation.

Here is a reality in today's troubled church. The leadership is corrupt (I am not paid by a congregation or leadership, so I can say it right out). And the corruption runs long and deep. The board is composed of men who have little spiritual awareness, pathetic knowledge of the Bible, virtually no time

commitment to the work, and carefully concealed hostility to scriptural teachings on doctrine and holiness. As James Jordan puts it, the troubled church is the “business-as-usual” church. This leadership is annoyed by any real (read “concrete”) attempt to implement Reformed doctrinal standards in the church. This leader sees the standards, as one elder put it, “sort of like the pledge of allegiance to the flag”—something to which you assent mechanically with critical faculties fully disengaged.

*Minimal time commitment* is another weakness. The elder who does not have the time to minister to the members of the congregation is an elder wrongly elected and ordained. It is just that simple. Long and tortured discussion on this point is fruitless.

Elders of this sort suffer from another weakness. They believe in their *divine right to office*. Oh yes. It may come as a surprise, but six out of six ruling elders from troubled churches recently interviewed stated that were their congregations to ask them to step down from office, they would leave their churches. The rule is: if I can’t be an elder, I won’t be a member. A similar rule is: if I can’t make the rules, I won’t play the game; or, if you won’t do it my way, I’m taking my ball home.

*Money* also plays a big part in the drama of the historically troubled church. The big givers call the shots either because they hold office (almost always) or because they have the power to make church life uncomfortable for the plain folks. More churches and seminary institutions have been perverted by the pious sugar daddy than can be named in one article. “So-and-so said he’d pull out his big bucks if we let T. Ruly Reformed into our congregation or take him on as pastor.” A familiar refrain.

Is this church a candidate for renewal? Is there life after corruption? It is doubtful, at best. For it is into the situation outlined above that the new pastor enters.

### *Suckering the Super-Pastor*

Play-acting reaches dizzying heights when the troubled church courts a pastoral candidate. Elder board and pulpit committee become veritable hot beds of fervor for the faith during interviews with ministerial prospects. Without a few years of experience under his belt, the target pastor usually succumbs to the earnest pleas of the committee. The situation is reminiscent of the Massachusetts seal, where the Indian is pictured saying, “Come over and help us.” Right. Can’t you just picture the Indians asking the settlers to come over and help? *Just* what they had been hoping and waiting for all this time!

Committee members picture a dedicated but forlorn crew for the candidate. Our folks are real committed. They have stuck with the church all this time. They are ready to go; they are ready for a dynamic program of outreach. Have you got the vision, that kind of a program?



Providentially, the neophyte falls for this aggressive ploy. He begins to see himself in the role of the seller, rather than the buyer. He is the one to be proven, the one who must meet the qualifications. And being mostly messianic in his outlook, he fails to take a hard look at the history and status of this congregation so apparently eager to propagate the message of Jesus Christ. It must have been the former pastors, he reasons. And he gets plenty of help here. Members are only too glad to catalogue the weaknesses and failings of virtually every man that has taken their church. The candidate suppresses the suspicion that his ministry will soon take its place on the same chopping block.

So he tries to measure up. He details his visions for an expanded ministry. He talks about home Bible studies and evangelistic visitation—all the things the committee wants to hear. He wants the job.

What does the committee want?

### *The Mechanized Ministry*

Perhaps the most devastating blow to the Protestant church in modern America has been the gradual Romanizing of ministerial functions. Rome teaches the doctrine of “*ex opere operato*”—the sacraments operate by themselves. It is a sort of magic. Like an antibiotic for sin.

Applied to the Protestant minister, it means that he becomes an *impersonal functionary*, placed in the ministry to marry and bury and hold hands generally. He is a lot like the county clerk.

Ask any pastor that has been in the ministry for a few years, and he will tell you an amazing story. He will tell you of the many phone calls he has received from people he has never met, people who think his job is to marry people who call in off the street. For a fee, of course, He regularly gets requests from assorted Romans, divorcees, and fornicators looking for a quick, convenient service in a nice little church. Some are horrified and offended to find that he doesn't consider himself a Justice-of-the-Peace, but a minister of the Gospel. These folks just cannot understand the difference. Neither do many of his church members.

Within the congregation the preacher marries and buries and performs functions. They are his job. Night and day. He is paid for it.

Congregations and boards of troubled churches get a lot of mileage out of the messianic character of the modern pastor. He is to give his absolute everything for the church—time, money, family, future—everything, without complaint. But just ask the typical board member to go that extra mile at his job without overtime or other compensation. The response is predictable.

The board expects the pastor to perform his paid functions. If he does them well without intruding on their spiritual siestas, he gets periodic praises and raises. But let him suggest in the mildest way that the board get

off its duff and get to work, and attitudes reverse quickly. Let the pastor suggest that the board members are to be more than decision-makers, more than executives, and the waters are deeply stirred. Here is a man who threatens our entire rationale for existence. This man is dangerous. How did he get in here, anyway?

The pastor has made the fatal mistake in the chronically troubled church. He has taken away the rock and let the light shine in. One way or another, the problem is solved. Either the pastor leaves after many sleepless nights and examinations of his own soul, or he capitulates to the system.

His doctrinal position softens. Distinctives he once held dear have now become negotiable. Beliefs he once envisioned himself dying for in the face of pagan persecution have now been effectively amputated by his nominal brethren. He has become, for all intents and purposes, prophetically hamstrung. He has become the lowest of all men—the spokesman for God who refuses to speak.

*The board wants a puppet.* The board gets what they want. Either that or they lose their pastor entirely. They did not want renewal, at least not at such expense. They wanted to hire renewal. They wanted to buy it with money. They wanted a bargain.

Renewal is expensive. It comes neither cheaply nor easily. It takes sacrifice, personal sacrifice. And these people have proven that they are no longer willing to sacrifice to build the church. The new pastor may not have a track record, but the troubled church does. Who must bear scrutiny? Who is on trial here?

The church that seeks a mechanized ministry has already chosen mediocrity and irrelevance. *The automated pastor has already assented to the hopelessness of renewal.* He has settled into a pattern of ministry that gets the gold-plated watch and the traces of what was once considered a pension. It is a heavy price to pay for permanent retreat.

### *The Flock of Innocents*

Characterizing pastors and boards is easy enough work. But when it comes to evaluating a congregation in general, we enter into the great myth on Innocence. In the eyes of higher courts and even individual fellow pastors, the congregation-at-large can do no wrong. The regular member is the pure element of the church, for he of all parties is assumed to have no personal interest in political sin. In the eyes of the initiated (the ordained), the ordinary member is both ignorant and naive. He is the Noble Christian Savage. Teaching him will spoil his idyllic spiritual lifestyle much as Christian civilization has ruined the pure innocents of many a pagan society. Immerse these untainted believers in picnics and revival meetings, but never expect them to digest spiritual meat.

The presupposed purity of the congregation is reflected in any conflicts

between members of the congregation and the pastor. Few church courts will discipline ordinary members or find them at fault. It must be the pastor who is causing all the trouble. He is presumed to have a whole horde of ulterior motives, usually attributed to an indefinable hunger for "power."

Pastors are always suspect. And for the pastor of the troubled church, it is invariably so. Some troubled churches change pastors regularly every two years or so. Each one is credited with having added to the woes that went before, and rarely with having improved the situation. The congregation has always been wronged. The flock has always been fleeced by the undershepherd.

One specific weakness of the troubled congregation is finances. Pastors are, without exception, the most underpaid professionals today, given the time and money invested in preparation. The typical pastor averages \$10,000 to \$15,000 a year. Compared with the plumber, he is not even on the economic horizon. He cannot even compete with the garbage man. On the other hand, he has invested thousands of after-tax dollars in outgo, and tens of thousands in foregone income to prepare for this meager fare. And rarely has the church financed this preparation. It has been family, friends, wives, and midnight jobs at motels that have kept the seminary student in school. The congregation has invested nothing in the preparation of the pastor and, frankly, invests nothing in his future.

The troubled congregation seeking renewal knows deep in its heart-of-hearts that *the work is not really worth saving*. The prevailing attitude is just this: let us invest a minimal amount in this marginal operation and see if it goes. If nothing important happens, at least we keep our services going and we have our functionary in case we need him. And how can he complain? We pay him for preaching a couple of times a week. And we hardly need to pay much, since he really doesn't do much. And if he gets on the ball and builds a church for us, so much the better. Then we will be able to pay him more. We believe in paying for performance.

But God requires more. *The whole church must be working if the pastor is to be effective*. Here is a fact. A good pastor can bring the people in, but a poor board and congregation will drive them right back out. The effective pastor can preach commitment to the new ones and they will respond. But if the leaders of the church do not have that commitment, the pastor is quickly seen as a chauvinist hero. The committed ones begin to drift away in disgust, and the would-be church builder is left with the crumbling foundation he began with. It is too much. The preacher either is dismissed or quits.

Why? Because the finances simply will not hold out through another couple of years of rebuilding. Neither will the wife and kids. After two years of building, in which the congregation increased by fifty percent, one pastor was offered a raise of fifteen dollars a week. In the meantime, inflation had stolen 25% of his earning power. *The pastor could no longer subsidize the congregation*.

Church congregations are notorious cheapskates. Since the pastor is paid out of general income, the lower the giving, the lower the salary. and the giving is not much. Most troubled churches barely survive on the contributions of their members. And it isn't that the average member is struggling financially. He simply has a low view of the prospects of the church, along with a negative view of tithing. He lives by the non-principle of "grace-giving"—give what you are led to give. Since, by this non-rule, one might be led to give nothing, the giving of anything at all becomes meritorious (in a non-meritorious sort of way, of course).

Those who are not normally privy to information about who-gives-what might be interested to know that giving as a percentage of annual income ranges from zero to a high of about six percent. Few members of troubled churches give over six percent. And those are the big givers. Two to three percent is standard.

No wonder the pastor is poorly paid. When asked why the church couldn't pay the pastor more, one deacon replied, "We just don't have the money." Being interpreted, this means, "we have the money in our pockets, but we won't put it in the plate; therefore, we don't have it." A supreme example of sleight-of-wallet.

On the other hand, the pastor does little to correct abuse of the tithe. He is so economically depressed that he is thankful for any giving at all. He has entered into *the mentality of the chronically poor*, an attitude of hopelessness about his financial future that saps his strength to conquer the problem. Believing that it would be unspiritual to ask for more money, he waits for other parties to promote his economic welfare before the board. He waits and waits.

Hearing no complaints (and expecting none), the board reasons that all is well with the pastor. After all, the pastor cannot be expected to drive a new car or wear the extensive wardrobe of the businessman who must impress his contemporaries. He's working for God. God doesn't need His man in fancy clothes to do the work of the ministry. Let us increase our missions budget for Paraguay. Let us put the money where it'll do some *real* good.

Perhaps the above is a caricature of the troubled congregation. But it really makes no difference. The pastor and his family are no better off if the intentions are innocent and the income the same.

Many Reformed churches enter into covenant with their pastors to pay them a specified annual salary. In the wording of the covenants, the phrase "that the pastor may be without worldly care or concern" is included when specifying the amount of the salary. The pastor is not to have financial worries, so he can prosecute the work of the ministry with a single mind. In reality the pastor's mind is often occupied with worldly cares and concerns. Providentially, it is just the troubled church in need of renewal that pays the pastor least while placing upon him the heaviest burden.

*Fighting the Historical Factor*

Because of strong undercurrents of pietism in the Protestant church at large, the question of "whether" in church renewal has rarely been asked. The church has taken a positive but unconsidered approach to the renewal question. The cost has been paid but not counted. Too often the bottom line is red, and, like the demon-possessed man, the church is in sevenfold more trouble after expensive but fruitless attempts at regeneration. The blame is laid at the feet of the pastor, the boards, or the congregation. And certainly persons are to blame somewhere along the line of historical development of the church.

But there is more. It is not a simple question of personnel or programs. Commitment is important. Finances are important. Leadership is crucial. All these ingredients are necessary for the renewal process to occur. But they are not enough. Some other practical, concrete realities in renewal must be faced.

For instance, history. A look at the history of church development in relation to community development is instructive. What is the history of the community, and how does church growth relate to it?

It ought to be axiomatic that the community began small and grew large. When the town was small, the denominations began their respective churches. These churches, barring other problems, grew normally with the community. The older downtown churches fared well, since they were the first. Unless their internal problems overcame their outward thrusts, they prospered with the growth of the community, growing to tremendous sizes. They were popular. First Baptist. First Methodist. First Presbyterian. Names to be reckoned with. Names to be identified with, if you wanted to get into the right clubs and pocketbooks.

Then came white-flight. The downtown churches went one of three directions—they survived where they were, they moved, or they died. Not many other alternatives. If they were truly prestigious, they continued to attract the crowds in spite of the neighborhood. If their ministries were marginal, and they stayed where they were, they died. The churches with foresight moved to more appealing locations. They survived right along with their television services.

The small city grew into a large one. As the city grew geographically, newcomers found it more difficult to drive downtown to church. So new churches formed and grew along with the pattern of population growth. As the community spread farther out, even newer churches arose to meet the needs of the growing population. The pattern of development was practical and obvious. So obvious that the church fathers never planned for the inevitable.

But the inevitable came, as it always does. Property values went up between the rotten fringe (the inner city) and the outlying areas. Families that started the *in-between churches* grew older. Their children, who once

populated the Sunday schools and teen groups, grew up. Few could afford to live in the parents' neighborhood, so they moved to the edges of the city where they could afford to buy. Fewer young families moved into the old neighborhoods to repopulate the inner suburban churches. And unlike the highly-moneyed "First" churches, the suburban churches either *could* not or *would* not produce the dollars necessary to make the move outward.

As the average age of the membership rose, even the few younger families in the area found the fellowship relatively unattractive. They sought families in their own age group with similar interests. Few older members of the local community could be persuaded to come into the church, since they had made their commitments to local churches years before.

Probably the most devastating factor from demographic considerations has been the apartment boom in suburbia. Families do not live in apartments. Singles, childless couples, divorcees, widows, swingers, addicts, and other assorted nomadic types live in apartments. They are neither churchgoers, givers, nor long-term prospects. Popular apartments can change occupants completely in less than one year.

Add to these external difficulties some organic weaknesses in the church itself, and doom is spelled. Here is a case in point. The young pastor begins door-to-door evangelism. His church is fifteen years old, and has been plagued with internal strife and splitting for years. The membership has been reduced to twenty. The church is located in what has become a commercial district. Not too many blocks away is an older residential area. It is to the residential area that the pastor goes, hoping to attract some families to the church. He rings a bell and an older lady answers the door.

"Hello. My name is Pastor Eager and I'm here to invite you to our church just four convenient blocks away." He smiles a fresh smile.

"My, how nice," she replies, "but we attend First Anesthetized and we're really happy where we are. How many members did you say you have?" She is being conversational now.

"We have twenty, Ma'am," says Pastor Eager, feeling just a little ashamed at the small number. But the lady is delighted. A baby church. Women like babies.

"And where is your church again?"

"It's at the corner of Blank and Dash." Now he is a little proud. The church has some property. "We're that nice white church with the six acres," he beams.

"Amazing!" She cries. "You have gotten so much property in such a short time!"

"Oh, no Ma'am. We've been there fifteen years."

"I see." And she does, she really does. Red lights flash everywhere. The facts scream out, and there's no perfuming over the smell of death with new programs, revivals, and campaigns. *Nobody wants to associate with a loser,*

and there simply is no excuse for a fifteen-year-old church having only twenty members. No excuse at all.

Other people in the community are more aware. Word gets around in fifteen years. So when it comes to friendship evangelism, the folks in the church have exhausted that route years ago.

Countless other troubled churches sit and wait across the country. They wait for another pastor, another program, another chance. The hope of renewal glimmers in the breasts of the few who really care, and these continue to take tired steps toward improving the situation. The others are about business-as-usual. They are waiting for the rest to give it up or become resigned, as they have become, to their interminable private Bible studies every Sabbath morn at 11:00 a.m.

National home missions boards dutifully work toward the rescue of these ecclesiastical waifs every few years—more money, new pastors, continued encouragement through these brief periods of testing. No one wants to face the original question: Is this church worth saving?

### *Reassessing Renewal*

If the student of Scripture reviews his Old Testament history, he finds the story of renewal writ large. God's chosen people rose to heights of glory when they obeyed God. The people were established in the Land. They prospered and thrived. But decadence was not far behind. Success bred complacency, and complacency, rebellion. God disciplined His people, but He never abandoned them. He saved a remnant for Himself and raised up a nation from them. The Lord God, by the power of His Holy Spirit, renewed His church. He even promised future renewal through a New Covenant (Jer. 31:31ff). God guaranteed the future success of His church.

But not all of it. Isaac multiplied and was blessed, while Ishmael disappeared. Jacob conquered while Esau was obliterated. Judah lived, Israel died. The history of Israel is the history of a purged people, purified by the sovereign will of God through a sovereignly ordained repentance.

Throughout the history of the covenant people, God cast out faithless members and groups. Ishmael was a covenant child (he had the sign), as well as Esau and all of the Northern Kingdom. It was not nominal pagans that God rejected, but those within the historic kingdom who broke or failed to keep covenant.

The same is true today. The Lord God is effectively rejecting those churches that fail to keep covenant, just as surely as He rejected the practical atheists of the Older Covenant. No church today has the right to expect that His discipline has slackened in the least, especially in light of the greater task before the covenant community. Every church is equally liable for the demands of the covenant, and no church can voluntarily excuse itself from moment-by-moment obedience to its duties, regardless of eschatological rationale.

Abandoning the terms of the covenant means becoming historically impotent and irrelevant. Having abandoned the covenant, the troubled churches in need of renewal have abandoned the means to recovery. Only a return to explicit obedience opens the mouth and creates the voice that the God of covenant mercy hears. Let us not be surprised, then, that the Lord has rejected many unfaithful local churches in our day. He is under no obligation to renew the unfaithful.

The fundamental question remains: Shall we work toward the renewal of this church? And the second question is like unto it: If not, what shall we do with it, and if so, how shall we renew it? No formula answer can be given to the first question, but some guidelines for evaluation are possible. If the troubled church has had a chronic performance problem, if its leadership is uniformly incompetent, if its local fields are black unto destruction (Rome has not been white in centuries), then it probably needs to be razed to the ground. Or better yet, sold to a newer congregation which has an excuse for not having filled the building.

On the other hand, if the problems are immediate, if the leadership is committed and willing to sacrifice, willing to change or be replaced, if the greater community is composed of young families (without which the building of a stable local church is impossible), then renewal is a realistic option.

### *Renewal by Re-Creation*

The greatest hindrance to the creation of a thriving work, all other things being equal, is *demographics*. Churches in older, inaccessible areas have an uphill road even if all other areas of weakness are dramatically improved. The church must move. A pastor of an inner city church in its terminal stage asked members of the congregation if, knowing the importance of its distinctive teachings, they would be willing to travel an extra ten or fifteen miles to attend services. They were overwhelmingly unified in their unwillingness (unity at last). Why, then, the pastor asked, should prospective members, not yet embracing the doctrinal position of the church, be willing to drive the extra miles in the other direction? If you, who know the truth, are unwilling to go the extra miles, why should the ignorant make the sacrifice?

A local church cannot be built on narrow strata of society. The evangelical Arminian ideal of the teenage church is untenable. The hopes of building a local congregation on young singles, apartment dwellers, the childless, divorcees, the elderly, and other minor strands of our social fabric, are largely illusory. To be sure, all these are a part of the church, but they cannot and do not provide a center for long-term stability and growth. If the troubled church insists on working primarily with these people, it must understand that it is taking on a halfway-house mission project. It cannot expect to grow stronger.



The church looking for new life must move. *It must go where the young families have gone*—the outer suburbs of the city—not to substandard housing projects scheduled for perpetual transiency and poverty, but to new middle-class areas. The church must recruit young families with children. Such families provide a growing financial base and a growing group of covenantal children so necessary to the future development of the church and the lawful dominion of the greater community.

But relocation is not enough. *The leadership must be changed.* Men who have consistently failed to lead the church must recognize that stepping down is the only hope. It will not do to use the leadership positions of the church as training slots. Paul lays down for Timothy and Titus (1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1) the actual qualifications for actual elders, not the potential qualifications for actual elders.

The idea of resignation is not popular in troubled churches, especially among the leaders. But it is the price that must be paid for healthy change. Providentially, the marketplace tells the businessman when he has failed by driving him out of business. Church leaderships fail to read the ecclesiastical handwriting. They are like the businessman who refuses to believe he has failed, and continues to pour good money after bad. Often the real pain of bankruptcy is necessary to get the point across. Perhaps church leaders ought to have their entire financial futures tied up in the success or failure of their churches. They would quickly make room for the competent.

Can the entire board resign? Where does this leave the church? If a congregation is serious about renewal, it ought to be able to trust its pastor to make minor decisions (and even some major ones) during the period that new leaders are being raised up. Pastors *do* have their personal and financial futures bound up in the success of the church, and usually do everything possible to promote its success. Godly pastors (and you *must* have one of these) do not intend to “take over” churches. On the contrary, they long for qualified men to stand with them and share the responsibility for decision-making and passing judgment. And besides, what is there, pray tell, to take over? Here is a pathetic shell of a church that is barely making it on any front, and some members are deathly afraid that the pastor will gain too much power. Power over what? In today’s voluntary church, no one is in submission to his brethren anyway, whether they be one or many. So where is the power? From the standpoint of the pastor, there is only duty and responsibility. He has a hard time seeing great personal advantages in church leadership. And so it was with Moses, was it not? Remember how Moses coveted the leadership of Israel? Remember how Moses besought God to destroy the people and raise up a new nation from his own seed?

No, not revolution, but regeneration. Drastic? Remember, we are in the emergency room trying to save a dying patient. Radical injuries require radical treatment. The real question for the leadership is just this: Do you

want to see this *church* renewed, or do you simply want to retain *your position* in the existing bureaucracy? Ask this question in the troubled church. Take the answer with a pound of salt.

The historical failures of the troubled church can be dealt with, too. Put new wine in new wineskins, not old ones. Dismantle the former church and create a new one in a new location. The problem of history, virtually inescapable under the former management and in the old, worn out location, disappears. The new church is a future winner, not an old loser. Renewal by re-creation is the most radical of steps, but the most effective. How long have you been in existence? Six months. I see, and how big are you? We have twenty attending. Not bad for a new work.

Everything changes. The new church has every reason for smallness. It has every excuse for lack of officers, large facilities, youth groups, and all other types of specialized ministries attending the successful work. The new church may be, in the eyes of the community, an untested commodity, but then it is not one with a poor record. *Newness is a tonic*. It gives the frustrated faithful in the new location an opportunity to get in on the ground floor of a church that has an open horizon. Past stigmata are not seen.

The older members of the previous church can fit easily into the new church. And the extra effort required to get out to the new location will flush out the lazy and other assorted deadwood.

The above strategies are external. Changing the composition and the structure of the troubled church is absolutely necessary. But it is not enough. Were the changes merely outward, the church would soon drift into its former infamy.

### *Wine and Grapejuice*

Grapejuice needs no new skin. It is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. It will never have the aroma, the flavor, and the invigorating effect of wine. Grapejuice can be safely put in old wineskins because it does not threaten to burst them. But it is just this expanding, effecting quality that must characterize the church seeking regeneration. Without it, the church will be living death, all dressed up for the undertaker.

A young pastor in a derelict church sat talking with one of the matriarchs (another problem) of his congregation. She complained that the church did not seem to be reaching out into the local community to evangelize the neighbors. What, she asked, could the congregation do to bring in new members, and what plan did the pastor have to remedy this long-term ailment?

The pastor asked the lady to play roles with him for a moment. Suppose, said the pastor, that I am a local resident and you are a member of this church. I call you on the phone and ask just why I ought to attend your church. What do you say? Well, she said, the church is nearby. But

nearness, the pastor said, was not really a factor in his choice of a church, since many churches were nearby. Was there, perhaps, another reason?

The woman reconsidered and then suggested that the reason for attending her church was that the Bible was taught there. Very interesting, said the pastor, but down the street is a "Bible Church." They think so much of the Bible that they've even named their church after it. It seems that a number of churches in the area claim to teach the Bible. That still does not recommend *your* particular church. Is there any special reason that I should attend your church and not another?

There is another reason, she said. "Our church is Presbyterian." That is a good reason for coming. The pastor replied that, indeed, he had noticed that fact, but in a conversation with a local Baptist advocate, he had been told that the Baptists were right and the Presbyterians wrong in their teaching concerning baptism. Was this true, the pastor inquired?

In a fit of frustration the woman said, "Well, then, I guess we'll just have to go after the Presbyterians."

In a local community dominated by Baptists this statement was a death rattle. There were no Presbyterians.

Church renewal will take place only when there is *doctrinal renewal* and a return to an emphasis on *doctrinal distinctives*. Often it is the very refusal to emphasize and teach distinctives that has invited rottenness and decay. If it is a matter of nearness, or general Bible teaching, or nominal affiliation, the troubled church will simply take its place alongside dozens of other churches offering no greater distinctives. As long as doctrine is not central, facilities, size, programs, revivals, and all other externals become the basis for the family's decision about which church to attend. In these respects, the troubled church cannot begin to compete.

Be not misled. The Baptists have built their churches on the doctrinal distinctive of professor's baptism by immersion—nothing more, and nothing less. Only when competing with one another have the Baptist churches emphasized externals, and then only in the later stages of local dominion.

Of all conservative churches, the Reformed have been quickest to retreat from distinctives in their attempts to capture part of the evangelical Arminian market. They have switched and not fought, and are now amazed to find that instead of bringing more members into the Reformed churches, they have opened up non-Reformed options for once-faithful members. After all, if there really is no difference, why should we waste our time with a struggling Arminian church when we can attend a thriving one? Good question.

*Doctrinal polarization* is critical. Not only must the "healthy" Reformed church promote it, but the troubled church must press it with a vengeance. The five points, the application of the law, covenant baptism, dominion post-millennialism—all these must be proclaimed clearly and relentlessly if there is to be hope for the troubled church. Rather than driving the saints

away, the highlighting of distinctives surfaces the committed, the ones that build churches, face struggles, and never look back. The Reformed church needs these people in general, and the church striving for renewal in particular.

### *Cementing the Covenant*

*Polarization, relocation, reorganization*—we are talking about a completely new church, of course, and the essential abolition of the old. With basic changes come hopes of renewal. Many of the necessary ingredients are present, but, like the Rich Young Ruler, one thing is yet lacking:—*the institution of true covenant*.

Never has any institution committed to conquering the world with its ideology fallen so low in its demands upon its members. The practical outworking of the Covenant has been replaced by a *pietistic voluntarism* from start to finish. Attendance is voluntary, giving is voluntary, church work is voluntary, everything is voluntary and, thus, meritorious. The choir wants to be thanked (“Right after the announcements, Pastor, if possible”) the women who made that delicious church supper want to be thanked, the tireless (and tiresome) deacon board wants to be thanked. Thanks, all, for a wonderful church. You have your reward.

Conflicts within the membership are resolved, not by church courts operating under Covenantal law, with all parties submitting to the discipline, but by the retreat of the weaker party (to another congregation). Petty differences become far more important than the mission of the church. Like the political conservative, the member of the troubled church does not have the word “subordination” in his glossary.

Nowhere is the weakness of the institution of the Covenant more clearly expressed than in the membership “vows” of the local Reformed church (non-Reformed churches are omitted here, since they have no official covenant). To become a member, one must promise to “study the peace and purity of the church,” “be in submission to the Elders,” and “support the worship and work of the church to the best of your ability,” all of which may be summed up in one word:—*nothing*. The vows are purposely vague to avoid specific commitments. For who can decide, without particulars, whether one is studying the peace and purity of the church? How does the board determine who is supporting the worship and work of the church to the best of his ability? Church discipline is impossible without clear guidelines, and the troubled church has seen to it that no guidelines are discernible. “No law, no offense.” No offense, no discipline. Simple, but effective.

What are some non-negotiable specifics of the Covenant? Two examples are tithing and attendance. If the norm of member giving is three percent, God’s church is being robbed of two-thirds-plus of its working capital. Adequate staff salaries, promotional literature, all forms of local outreach,

building facilities: all are sacrificed when there is no compulsion to give. When giving is voluntary, giving becomes meritorious, a fact clearly attested by endless memorials on the premises—"The Minnie G. Dudley Memorial Sacrament Table," "The Walter L. Winsome Memorial Fellowship Hall," and "The Pearl B. Pious Memorial Pew."

As Peter Drucker points out in *The New Society*, business enterprise cannot continue to exist without surplus (profit) because of the high cost of growing and changing with a dynamic market. So goes the church. Without an adequate financial base, the church can neither prosper in the present nor prepare for the future. God has provided the tithe for His work. It is a Covenant obligation. And seeing the tithe as a covenant *duty* removes merit. And so it should be. There is no super-erogation in the Protestant church.

Another Covenant obligation is attendance. Israel had to attend the feasts and had to sacrifice. Neither was voluntary. Where there are no people, there is no church. A minimum obligation of the Covenant should be consistent attendance. Even the Rotary Club puts the church to shame here.

But woe to the man who demands these two basics in the troubled church today! He is interfering with our free will! The reactionaries have lost sight of the character of the Covenant and the demands that God so clearly places upon His people. Troubled church leaders have not learned the lesson of the committed:—demand little, receive little; demand much, receive much. In spheres outside the institutional church, members will forfeit lives and fortunes for politics, business, and sports. Each demands and receives. The world understands that men respond to ultimate demands, and in response achieve momentous results. Yes, the children of darkness are wiser in their generation. Douglas Hyde's *Dedication and Leadership* is adequate testimony to the strength of the unilateral demand for performance.

The Covenant is not voluntary in any sense of the word. Those who are sovereignly called must visibly enter into it by the command of God. Others are not fit to enter it. No ground is neutral, and no decisions concerning the Covenant are autonomous. Each prospective member is faced with a decision. Submit to the Covenant or deny it. To demure is to deny.

Tithing and attendance are only two of many Covenant obligations that must be recognized by the troubled church longing for renewal. No less important are Sabbath-keeping, restricted communion, and church discipline (the return to concrete spiritual sanctions). All work together in God's ordained plan for the dominion church of the Lord Jesus Christ. No particular may be deleted without marring the whole, and the concept of the Covenant may not be deftly abstracted from its concrete particulars without making a mockery of the Word of God.

### *Reality in Renewal*

As long as the church in trouble demands so little in terms of time and

money from its members, it can continue on almost indefinitely without making any real progress. Those members with pessimistic outlooks can see their dreams come true, as the church, unlike the state, withers away. It has served them well in the limited sphere they have graciously granted it. They have expected little from the church and have gotten even less.

It is not the current members who will suffer for the failure of the church, but the children and those afar off. With few exceptions, the children of members of troubled churches depart from the church, if not the faith itself. There really is no continuing covenant community, just a sterile remnant frozen in the history of the past three decades. For these terminal churches it is the last remnant.

The reality of renewal is that *everyone is to blame*—pastors, congregations, boards, and mission organizations. Preachers accept intolerable situations and tolerate them. Boards are self-satisfied searchers for the magic men who will put their churches back on the local map. Congregations sell the work short by refusing to invest, and missions boards . . . well, missions boards seem content to hold the same meetings, give the same speeches, and shift the same people from church to church, year after year.

The church needs more than a new face; it needs a new heart, a new soul, a new mind, and a new strength. And it will be hard for veteran supporters of desolate churches to accept the fact that the glory has departed. The younger members of the church learn the ways of their elders or depart for other congregations where the leadership is positive. The dedicated Christian is dynamic, not static. Without positive leadership, the committed will not stay; without the committed, the church expires. With the proper external and internal changes the church can keep her young and prosper. Without the necessary changes, the young see only hypocrisy in stagnation.

### *Diagnosis in the Dock*

The indictment of the troubled church is merely an indictment of the church in general. The problems that have become acute in the decimated church are often present in germ form in churches less suspect. Eventually the erosion of doctrinal standards and practices reflects itself in the worship and work of the church. Demography and theology work together for the ill of the church without solid biblical moorings.

History is filled with stories of successful men, written by those men, purporting to reveal the secrets of their success. Each thinks he has discovered his own prosperity formula. But the physician hesitates to diagnose his own illness, and the lawyer says that the man who represents himself has a fool for a client. Discerning the ills of the church is, likewise, rarely the forte of its leadership. Self-reformation by the entrenched is a scarce commodity, and the leadership willing to take criticism to heart and transmit it into action is, indeed, a diamond in the rough. Ironically, leaderships of high

quality are not normally found in distressed works.

The church leader, not the church member, must be the reformer. Whatever sort of board administers the affairs of the church can change pastors. Recalcitrant members of the congregation may be disciplined out. The leaders can change the location of the church, they can even create a new one to replace it. But unless they themselves change or replace themselves with men who will commit their time, lives, and fortunes to the work, little else of substance will be accomplished.

Pastors must wrestle with the central issue presented here: Shall I commit myself and my family to the restoration of this work? Will my efforts, unlike the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, be a sacrifice without redemption? Am I willing to pay the price of an unequivocal stand on doctrinal issues? Will I go so far as to uproot three tares through the pure preaching of the Gospel to plant a single stalk of wheat?

Church members must ask themselves similar questions. Is the church worth renewing, or have I been hanging on all these years merely out of convenience? Am I willing to pay the price of Wednesday night bowling to support the work and worship of the Prayer Meeting and Bible study? Am I obligated?

None of these questions has neutral answers. They are being answered now in every floundering church across the country, regardless of affiliation. Daily the church diagnoses itself through its policies and actions (or inactions). Each diagnosis is in the dock. The Lord Jesus Christ will come to reward each one according to his works.

Time is running out for the American church. Either renewal will come through self-motivated reformation, or the Lord God will bring it, through persecution unknown in American history. The golden age of the 'Fifties is over, and we are now bearing the fruit of the existential 'Sixties and the decadent 'Seventies. There is no longer any time to argue about whether the choir robes will be red or black, or whether to have the cake sale instead of the car-wash.

Renewal is possible through transformation of doctrine, leadership, membership, and location. It will not come through extended prayer meetings and Youth Sundays.

The troubled church must repent of its institutional evil or die.

## II. CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTION

### Historical Revisionism:

### Mesopotamian Chronology from Abraham to the End of the First Dynasty at Babylon

DONOVAN COURVILLE

#### *Introduction*

The aim of this article is to demonstrate that the traditional dates for early Assyria and Chaldea are susceptible to the same gross abbreviation as that shown to hold for Egypt in my published volumes.<sup>1</sup> Not only so, this abbreviated structure provides a *more* consistent picture of the interrelations between the peoples and dynasties of Mesopotamia than does the traditional structure. Agreement with biblical data is retained, and certain puzzling situations in the current views are eliminated.

The approach has been to set up a *floating* chronological unit (Chart I). This chart shows the time correlations between selected dynasties of Assyria and Chaldea with no suggested dates on the time scale. There is but one major deviation from the traditional views; minor differences of opinion among scholars are recognized but not always noted.

Contrary to current opinion, it is here recognized that Ilukapkapi, an Assyrian ruler in the late line of Abraham's descendants, is the same person as the Ilukapkapi who is the stated father of Shamsi-Adah I, a known contemporary of Hammurabi. When so recognized the kings in the *Khorsabad King List*, numbered 28-46, represent a dynasty that ruled parallel with the line of Abraham's descendants, thus clipping off some 300 years from the traditional views on the antiquity of Assyria.

This floating chronology can then be traced back in time, step by step, using known synchronisms and stated dynastic periods, to a point which must approximate the point of entrance of Abraham into Canaan. Here a new synchronism appears which confirms the general correctness of the floating unit, based on this altered identification of Ilukapkapi.

Further dynasties of Assyria and Chaldea have been superimposed onto the unit of Chart I to comprise Chart II. Absolute dates are now assigned to the time scale to agree with the biblical date for Abraham in the early 19th century. Among the further dynasties added is that of Assyria, founded by Adasi, and whose dates are calculable from the established dates of late

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1. Courville, D. A. *The Exodus Problem and Its Ramifications* (Crest Challenge Books, Box 993, Loma Linda CA 92354.)



Assyrian kings. This is possible since the reign lengths of the individual kings are known.

When this is done, it is apparent that a further mistake of 200 years has been made in arriving at the traditional chronology. This has resulted from the unwarranted assumption that the names prior to Adasi in the *Khorsabad King List* ruled in sequence back in time from Adasi. When this error is corrected a further 200 years are clipped off the antiquity of Assyria.

The resulting structure now lines up with that derived for Egypt in my published volumes and shows clearly the mistake in the current views relative to the origin and demise of the Hittite line of kings. Also, the correction of a puzzling situation relative to king Gudea of Lagash simultaneously brings the dynasty of Sargon of Akkad into a position which allows a contemporaneity with both the *Ebla Tablets* and the era of Abraham.

The abbreviated chronology of Egypt as presented in my published volumes was the result of a strong suspicion that the failure to find the expected agreement between Scripture and archaeological observations was first of all a chronological problem. If the traditional chronology was actually an unwarranted expansion of the facts, such a multiplicity of discrepancies could be expected.

It had been generally believed that it would be impossible to abbreviate the chronology of Egypt and of antiquity in general to the degree demanded by Scripture without reducing to a shambles the innumerable interrelations between the peoples and dynasties of antiquity. The revelation of the fallacy of this assumption comprises the content of these volumes. But it is also demanded of this reconstruction that it shall be possible similarly to abbreviate the chronology of Assyria and Chaldea. It is not enough that such an alteration of the chronology of Mesopotamia shall agree with Scripture—it must also agree with that of Egypt and the areas correlated with Egypt, and this despite the fact that the Khorsabad list of Assyrian kings is unbroken back into the mid-17th century B.C. This is no minor demand. This area of investigation was treated only in a cursory manner in my published volumes. This present paper is the result of a more detailed investigation in the chronology and problems of early Mesopotamia.

#### *On the Construction and Use of the Accompanying Charts*

Horizontal lines on the charts represent relative durations of dynasties or peoples, based on the time scale at the top, in which each division represents a century. These are numbered from left to right by Roman numerals I-VII. The vertical lines represent synchronisms. When such a vertical line crosses a horizontal line, no known synchronism is inferred *except* as small arrows occur at the juncture. Synchronisms may be relatively exact or only approximate. Each is evaluated in the body of the text.

A scale division at the left margin is provided with divisions indicated by capital letters A to F. A symbol in the text such as (B-III) then identifies the area on the chart under consideration. If a more extended area on one axis is meant, a single symbol such as C or IV is used; or if a limited area is intended, such a symbol as A-II-IV may be used.

Reference figures are to the corresponding numbers at the end of the article. Biblical tests, however, are usually included in parentheses in the text for greater convenience.

### *Explanations and Supporting Evidences for Details on Chart I*

Chart I begins with the point of Abraham's entrance into Canaan. Abraham (A-I) was 75 years old at this time (Gen. 12:4). Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 years old (Gen. 21:5). At this time Sarah, his wife, was 90 years old (Gen. 17:17). Sarah died at the age of 127 (Gen. 23:1). Abraham was then 137 years old at the death of Sarah. Shortly after this, Abraham remarried (Gen. 25:1). A partial genealogy of Abraham's descendants to the third generation is given in Gen. 25:1-3. Among these descendants is the name Asshur (given in the plural form Asshurim, referring also to his unnamed descendants).

The name Assyria is derived from the name Ashur, indicating an origin in a person by this name. Cities are commonly named after their founder or rebuilder. The capital city of Assyria had the name Ashur for an extended period. Such an origin is stated in Gen. 10:11. This Asshur is stated to have migrated from Chaldea into the area of Assyria.<sup>2</sup> Clearly, this Asshur does not belong to the era of the immediate descendants of Noah. The statement must be understood as parenthetical, intended to state the origin of Assyria rather than the time as related to Noah. The accompanying statements indicate that Chaldea was already a developed territory at the time of this migration. This interpretation is confirmed archaeologically by the established fact that historic Assyria had a much later origin than did Chaldea.<sup>3</sup>

The Asshur of Gen. 10:11 is here identified as the Asshur of Gen. 25:3 who was a great grandson of Abraham. Verification of this identification will appear as we proceed. On the chart, 90 years have been allotted for this Asshur to have attained sufficient maturity to lead a migration of his clan from Chaldea into Assyria (A). This identification of the Asshur of Gen. 25:3 is confirmed by the Khorsabad list of Assyrian rulers.<sup>4</sup> The first seven-

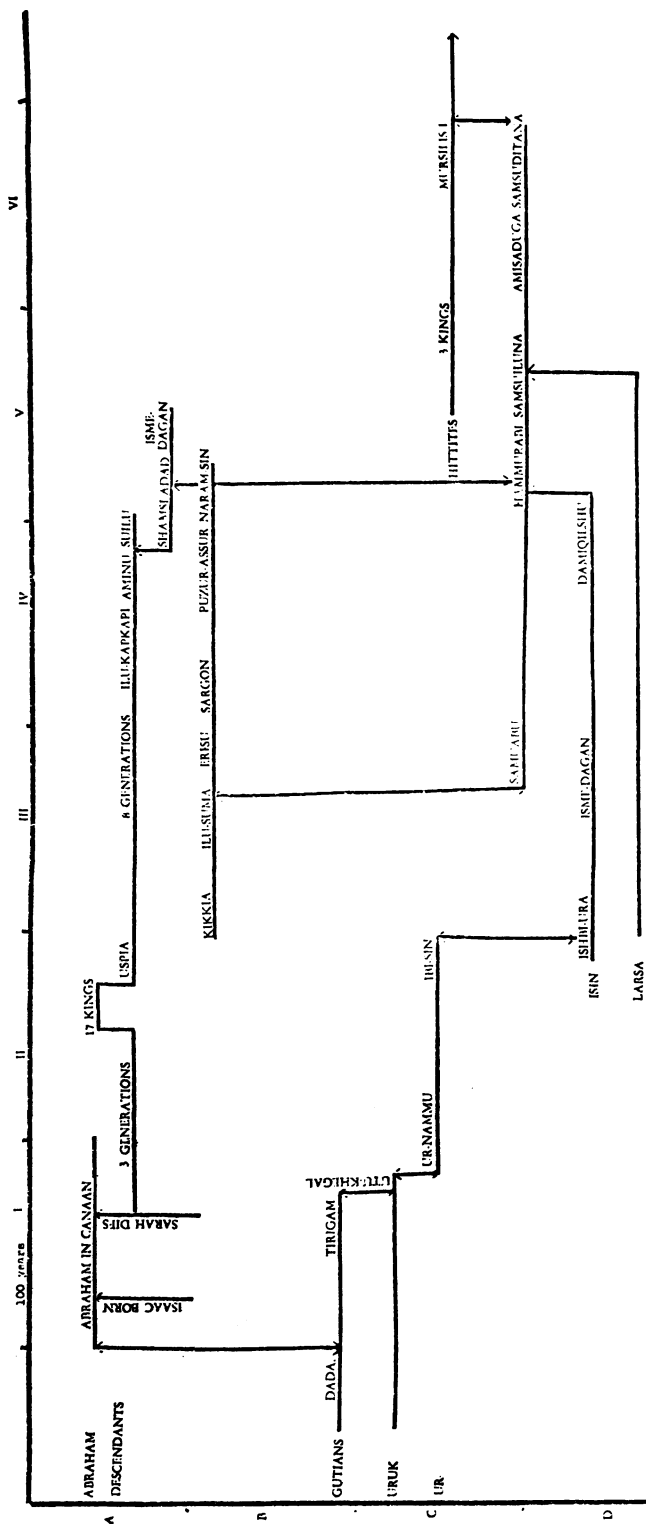
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2. Since Moses is writing at a date much later than that of the incident recorded, he would naturally give the area by its name then current. It is evident archaeologically, that this area had some degree of occupation prior to this time, but not as a political organization.

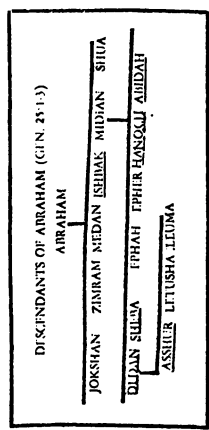
3. The earliest Assyrian dynasty was that founded by Uspia. This was at a notably later time than the dynasty of Sargon of Akkad, and there were other dynasties earlier than that of Sargon.

4. This list has been reproduced in my volume II, pp. 302 and 294.

A CHRONOLOGICAL CHART OF EARLY MESOPOTAMIAN DYNASTIES AS RELATED TO ABRAHAM  
WITH ONE MAJOR ALTERATION IN THE CONVENTIONAL STRUCTURE



1. LUDIA
2. ADAMU
3. IANGI
4. KITLANU
5. HARIARU
6. MANDARU
7. INSI
8. HARSU
9. DUDANU
10. HANU
11. KURU
12. SHABU
13. ABABU
14. TILU
15. ASARAH



teen of these names are stated to have ruled from tents, indicating the very earliest beginnings of a political organization in this area. This does not preclude the existence of an earlier occupation unrelated politically with Assyria. Among these first seventeen names is one rendered Asarah, an obvious equivalent of the name Asshur, who is here identified with the Asshur of Gen. 10:11.

A critical analysis and evaluation of the Khorsabad king list was made by A. Poebel in 1945. The extended analysis was published in the early issues of the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*.<sup>5</sup> Poebel noted that the name Didanu (#9 of the 17) is a rendering from the cuneiform of the name Dedan, grandson of Abraham, an identification now widely accepted by Assyriologists.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Hanu or Khanu (#10) has been recognized as the ancestor of the Khanians. Hanu could then be the same person as Hannock, another grandson of Abraham. Uspia (#16) is a reasonable equivalent of Ishbak, a son of Abraham; and Zuabu (#11) could be the same person as Shua, a son of Abraham, or perhaps as Sheba, a grandson. Josephus notes an additional son of Abraham by the name Surim<sup>7</sup> with the cited comment that from this Surim "was the land of Assyria dominated." Surim could be the same person as Imsu (#7) by a simple reversal of consonant sounds, a situation not uncommon in the transliteration of foreign names into Hebrew. By a similar procedure, Adamu (#2) could be the same person as Medan, a son of Abraham. It is not necessary to conclude that all of these identifications are factual or that all of these seventeen are descendants of Abraham. Sufficient of these can be so recognized to warrant the conclusion that *dynastic Assyria* did indeed have its origin in the descendants of Abraham as one among many other peoples (Gen. 17:5).

According to the Khorsabad list, Uspia (Ishbak) became the founder of the first Assyrian dynasty after some unknown period of divided and contemporary rule by these seventeen named.<sup>8</sup> This dynasty continued to rule as a father-son sequence for eleven generations before there was any break in the line. These are the names numbered 16-27 in the list. It is logical to suppose that such a unification under one ruler would be by one of the older members of the clan, i.e., Ishbak, rather than by Asshur who at this time was a relatively young man.

On Chart I, 210 years are allotted to the reigns of the first ten of these eleven reigns (A). This figure is an approximation, but a reasonable one. The reigns of Uspia and his son Apiasal were undoubtedly brief, since Ishbak at this time must have been nearly 100 years old with sons 65 years

5. Poebel, A. 'The Assyrian King List from Khorsabad' (*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, I, pp. 247ff., 460ff; II, pp. 56ff.)

6. *Cambridge Ancient History*, I, pt. 2, p. 744 (Hereafter, *CAH*).

7. Josephus, F. *Antiquities of the Jews* (Whiston translation), Bk. I, chap. 25.

8. *CAH*, I, pt. 2, p. 745.

or more in age. The reign of Sulilu (11th of the line) may have been brief since his son did not reign. The 9th ruler in the line had the name Ilukapkapi (A-IV), a name that becomes significant in the discussion that follows.

This name, Ilukapkapi, occurs again later in the last but *not* as a ruler. He is identified only as the father of Shamsi-Adad (#39 in the list). Traditionally, this Ilukapkapi, father of Shamsi-Adad, is *not* recognized as the same person as Ilukapkapi in the line of Abraham's descendants. The acceptance of the Assyrian dynasties as representing a sequence prevented such a recognition. It is here held, in deviation from the traditional views, that the two occurrences of this name refer to one and the same person. It follows that Aminu, son of Ilukapkapi in the line of Abraham's descendants, was a brother of Shamsi-Adad (A-IV). Shamsi Adad reigned for 33 years and was followed by his son Isme-Dagan and then by a series of 'nobodies.' Thus both branches of the dynasty through the descendants of Abraham ended in obscurity in the same general era.

By this interpretation of the Khorsabad list, the names between Sulilu (#27) and Shamsi-Adad (#39) must have represented a dynastic line that paralleled that of the dynasty of Uspia. Since there are eleven names in this parallel line, the dynasty started by Kikkia (#28) must have had its beginning at a date not far removed from that of Uspia (B-III). The only names of the dynasty of Kikkia given on the chart are those that have a significance in the later developments of Chart II. Except for Erisu, the reign lengths are not known and must be set to meet such data as are available. It is emphasized that this parallel placement of the dynasty of Kikkia is the *single significant deviation* from the traditional views on Assyrian chronology for the dynasties included in Chart I. It is to be noted also that no dates have been assigned to the time scale of this chart. The problem of dates belongs to Chart II on which further dynasties have been added that provide the bases for assigning dates. We proceed with the development of Chart I.

#### *From Shamsi-Adad Back to Abraham by an Alternate Chronological Route*

It is known that Shamsi Adad died between the 10th and 11th years of the reign of Hammurabi at Babylon (C-IV)<sup>9</sup>, providing a rather exact synchronism between Assyria and Chaldea. The names and reign lengths of the kings of the First Dynasty at Babylon are provided by the *Babylonian King List B*.<sup>10</sup> Hammurabi is credited with a reign of 55 years.<sup>11</sup> The dynasty reaches back from the beginning of his reign to the first king Samuabu, 113 years earlier, and extends 138 years past the end of his reign. The dynasty

9. *Ibid.*, II, pt. 1, pp. 177, 178.

10. This list is reproduced as Table D in my vol. II, p. 300.

11. On the basis of the eponym list of Hammurabi, the sole reign is believed to have been only 43 years. This lower figure is accepted here. The extra years were coincident with the 1st twelve years of his predecessor.

came to its end in the reign of its last king Samsuditana by a conquest by the Hittite king Mursilis I (C-VI).<sup>12</sup> Thus, the names of the kings of this dynasty can be set onto Chart I in their relative positions. However, only those names are thus included which become of significance in dealing with Chart II.

Mursilis I was the 5th in the line of Hittite kings which began with Tadhuliyas. The reign lengths of the Hittite kings are not known.<sup>13</sup> However, we may estimate that the line began during the reign of Sam-suiluna, successor to Hammurabi (C-V). An exact date, even relatively, is not essential to subsequent developments. We shall return to the Hittite kings in dealing with Chart II.

Samuabu (C-III), first king of the First Dynasty at Babylon, is a known contemporary of Ilusuma,<sup>14</sup> third in the dynasty of Kikkia (B-III). Thus the First Dynasty at Babylon is tied by synchronism to both the reign of Shamsi-Adad and to a specific king in the contemporary line of Kikkia.

In the 7th year of Hammurabi, he conquered Damiqilshu (D-V) at Isin,<sup>15</sup> bringing this dynasty to its end. The kings and duration of this dynasty are provided by the *Sumerian King List*.<sup>16</sup> It had a duration of 225½ years, reaching back to its first king Ishbi-Ura (C-II). This Ishbi-Ura had been reigning about 12 years at the time of his conquest of Ibbi-Sin, last king of the IIIrd dynasty at Ur (C-II).<sup>17</sup> Hence the line representing the IIIrd dynasty at Ur overlaps that of the dynasty of Isin by this amount.

The kings of the IIIrd dynasty at Ur and their reign lengths are also provided by the *Sumerian King List*. The dynasty had a duration of 119 years, taking us back to its first king Ur-Nammu (C-I).

Ur-Nammu came into power at Ur as a result of a conquest over Utu-khegal at Uruk (Ereck of Scripture) (C-I)<sup>18</sup> Utu-khegal had been reigning seven years at this time. Utu-khegal, in turn, had come to power by a conquest over Tirigam (B-I), last king of the Gutian dynasty. At this time, Tirigam had been reigning only about a month.<sup>19</sup> The *Sumerian King List*

12. *CAH*, II, pt. 1, p. 300.

13. The synthesized list is given by C. W. Ceram in *The Secret of the Hittites*, pp. 257-260. The dates there given are approximate and based on the traditional chronology of Egypt which are not accepted here. The approximate dates for the Hittite kings in terms of my chronological revision may be obtained from the various chronological charts of volume I.

14. This synchronism is mentioned in the *Sargon Chronicle*. This document has been translated and is provided in Pritchard's *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 266-268, more specifically see p. 267.2.

15. *CAH*, II, pt. 1, p. 177.

16. The *Sumerian King List* has been reproduced in part or in whole by several authors. The writer has used the reproduction by R. W. Rogers in his *History of Babylonia and Assyria*, 6th ed., I, following p. 542.

17. *CAH*, I, pt. 2, p. 613.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 595.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 462.

document states that the dynasty was composed of 11 kings, ruling for a period of 125 years. Since names of Gutian kings now exceed the figure 11, this number has been read to make it 21, an assumption seemingly demanded by the traditional interpretations of the chronology of this era, but which has actually led to confusion of the problem. The early part of this section of the document is damaged. The last five names are readable, the preceding four readable in part, the others are missing. The fifth name back from Tirigam is Dada.

If our reasoning relative to the identity of Ilukapkapi is correct, we have been led by a series of synchronisms and defined time periods back to the era Abraham's entrance into Canaan. The general correctness of the resulting structure (still without dates) is confirmed by Scripture. Shortly after Abraham entered Canaan, four kings of Mesopotamia invaded Canaan and fought a battle with five kings of this western area (Gen. 14:1-3). Among the names of the eastern kings is the problematical name Chedorlaomer of Elam, and the name Tidal, identified in the KJV as 'king of nations.' More recently, it has become apparent that the word translated as 'nations' in the KJV is actually a proper name and should be transliterated as 'Goiim.' It is thus rendered in the SRV. The Goiim have been equated with the Gutians. The identification of this Dada of the Gutians with Tidal of Gen. 13:3 is a reasonable one since the sounds of 'd' and 't' are not distinguished in cuneiform.

This synchronism, however, is not definitive for assigning any absolute date for the entrance of Abraham into Canaan, even as an approximation. The deviation from the traditional views in identifying Ilukapkapi was, at this point in the discussion, only a theoretical alternative to the traditional theory. Furthermore, the 300-year abbreviation of the antiquity of Assyria that results from this alternate interpretation is altogether inadequate for bringing the traditional views into line with the scriptural data.

To attain such agreement, even in approximation, a further reduction of the traditional dates by another 200 years is needed. This follows from the statement in Gal. 3:17 to the effect that 430 years elapsed between the promise to Abraham and the giving of the law at Sinai, shortly after the exodus. No date for the exodus is allowable which would come within 430 years of the traditional placement of Abraham in the 24th century, or even the 23rd. To demonstrate that such a further error of some 200 years has been made in arriving at the traditional chronology of Asshria, we move to a consideration of the more complete Chart II.

### *Introduction to Chart II*

On Chart II, the unit of Chart I has been superimposed using the same time scale. On this time scale, Abraham's entrance into Canaan is dated *tentatively* at 1900 B. C. as the earliest practical date within the limits of

strict Bible interpretation. Vertical lines have been drawn to represent the corresponding dates for the conquest under Joshua, the exodus, and the famine of Joseph. If the evidence demands modification of these dates, such modification is not prevented by the subsequent developments, though it is here believed that the dates as given provide the best basis for the subsequent developments to be noted.

In the presentation of the supporting evidence for this structure, four types of data will be used. There are (1) evidence that the conventional chronology of Assyria and of Chaldea is in gross error, (2) evidence that agreement with Scripture is attained by correction of these errors, (3) evidence that the resulting structure is also consistent with the abbreviated chronology of Egypt as outlined in my published volumes, and (4) evidence that the resulting structure is internally consistent and consistent with the extra-biblical sources.

Other dynasties have been added on Chart II which are involved in this demonstration. These include the Assyrian dynasty founded by Adasi (B-III), the Kassite dynasty beginning with Gandasy (B-IV), the brief dynasty of the proto-Hittites (C-IV), the Egyptian dynasties for the period under consideration (E), that part of the Elamite dynasty known to parallel the First Dynasty at Babylon (D-IV), and the dynasty of Sargon of Akkad (D-I). The Assyrian Merchants (B-IV) were not kings. They are included because they provide the basis for a significant synchronism.

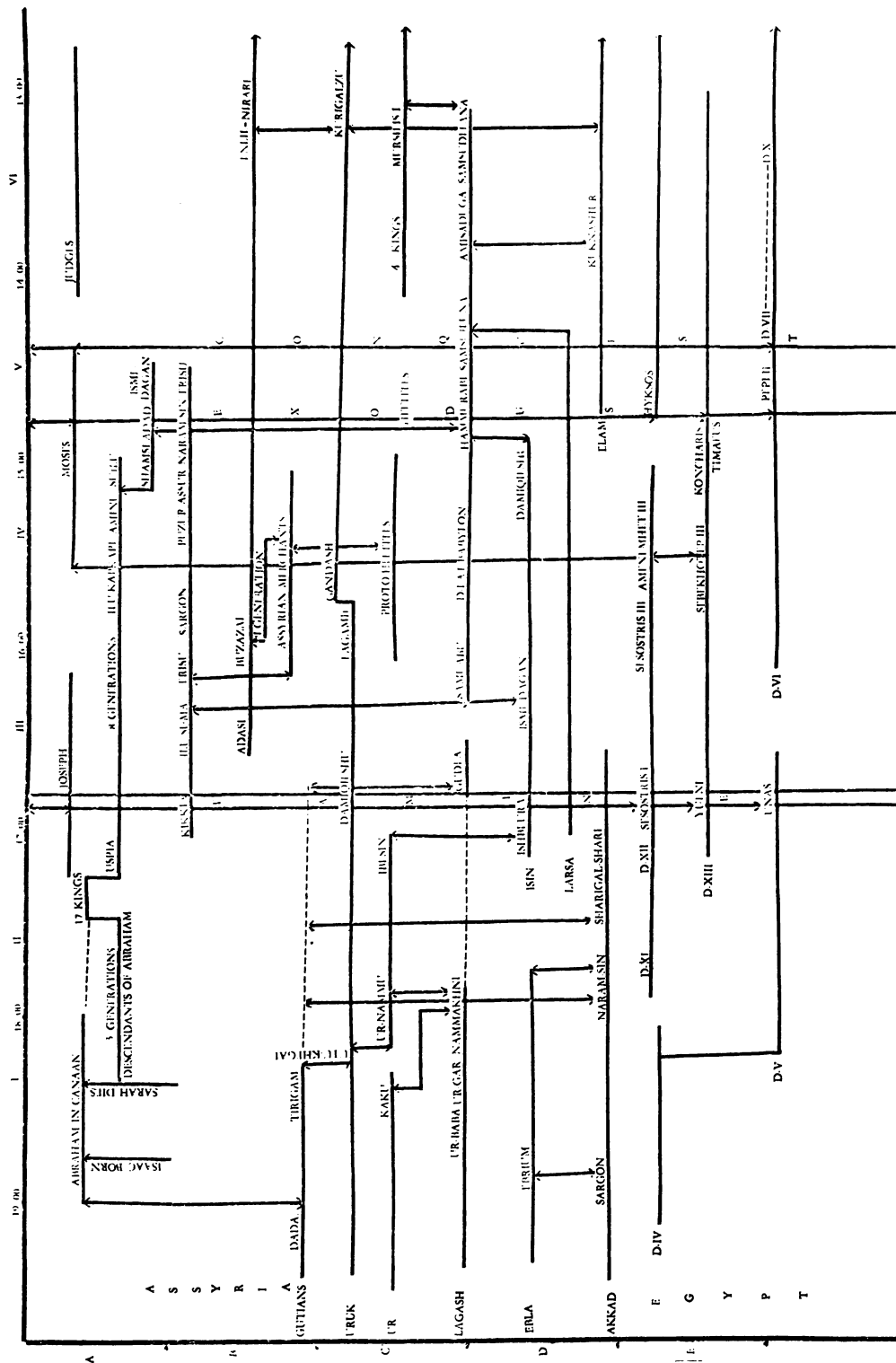
#### *Insertion of the Dynasty of Adasi*

The discussion is resumed with the Assyrian dynasty of Adasi.<sup>20</sup> Beginning with this Assyrian dynasty, the Khorsabad list provides the lengths of the individual reigns of the kings. The 'limnu' system used by the Assyrians which names each year of the reign rather than numbering them, prevents any interpretation of the reign length data other than a sequence, since such an altered interpretation would result in the same year having more than a single name. Such a situation has not been observed. It is thus possible to date the reign of any king of this dynasty on the B. C. time scale by calculating back in time from the established date of a late king of Assyria. By this method, Poebel calculated a date 1648 B. C. for Adasi, the founder of the dynasty. Only the names of those kings which are of significance to subsequent developments are placed on Chart II. These are placed in terms of Poebel's dates. Obviously, then, if it is possible to tie any point of Chart I to a specific date of this dynasty, the entire unit of Chart I will be correlated with the B. C. time scale. Even if such a tie is only approximate, it will serve to distinguish clearly between dates c. 2400 or c. 1900 B. C. for the entrance of Abraham into Canaan.

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20. See reference 4.





When the dynasty of Adasi is set on the chart time scale based on a date c.1900 B. C. for Abraham, it becomes quickly apparent that the dynasty had its beginning some 200 years before the *end* of the dynasties of Uspia, of Kikkia, and of Shamsi-Adad. We are thus provided the clue as to the nature of the further error that has been made in setting up the traditional chronology of Mesopotamia. There are 46 names in the Khorsabad List before that of Adasi.<sup>21</sup> These include the seventeen who ruled from tents, those representing the eleven generations beginning with Uspia, and those in the dynasties of Kikkia and Shamsi-Adad. Traditionally, *all* of these 46 kings are positioned prior to Adasi dated at c.1650 B. C.

It has been possible to retain some semblance of reality to such a construction because of the absence or paucity of evidence of synchronistic value. Even when such exists, it would be lost or disregarded on the basis of the wide difference in time. Any such evidence that appears from the altered structure will then have more than ordinary significance.

We may then recognize two major errors in arriving at the traditional chronology of Assyria of 300 and 200 years respectively. When these are combined, the discrepancy in dating Abraham c.2400 B. C., instead of in the 19th century is accounted for.

### *Difficulties in Correlating Kassite and Assyrian Chronologies*

The traditional chronology is in serious difficulty in having to disregard the *stated* correlations between the Assyrian kings of the dynasty of Adasi and the kings of the Kassites (C-IV). A major point of difficulty rises from attempts to identify the Kassite king who took over control of Babylon after the conquest by the Hittite king Mursilis I. At this time the Hittites were unable to take advantage of their victory and the rule of Babylon fell to the Kassities. It is not known just how the Kassities attained this control. Even the name of the Kassite king remains unknown. It was *assumed* that the Kassite line of kings *began* at this point with the first name, Gandash, of the Kassite line.<sup>22</sup> But this view was quickly in trouble.

Samsuiluna, successor to Hammurabi has his 9th year of reign named from a war with the Kassites.<sup>23</sup> This was nearly a century before the end of the dynasty at Babylon. How then could the *first* Kassite king be ruling a century later? The pressure of this evidence has been adequate for abandonment

21. *Ibid.*, p. 462.

22. This list of the Kassite kings is from the *Synchronistic Chronicle* and reproduced in *ANET* (see ref. 14), pp. 272-274. The document gives the name of the Assyrian king under whom each Kassite began to reign. The first king, Gandas, began his reign during that of Erishu, 9th from Adasi in this dynasty. The identity of the Kassite king who took over the rule of Babylon when the Hittites were unable to take advantage of their conquest is a matter of debate.

23. The limnu names of the years of Samsuiluna are provided in *ANET* (see ref. 14) p. 224.

of this view by most scholars in the field. The shift has been in favor of recognizing this Gandash as the unnamed king in the time of Samsuiluna.<sup>24</sup> But this view is also in severe difficulty. This Gandash is stated<sup>25</sup> to have been a contemporary of Erisu, 9th in the line of Adasi and dated to the era 1570-1550 B. C. How then can he be made a contemporary of Samsuiluna dated at the latest to 1665 B. C., but to c.1730 B. C. by the more generally accepted date for Hammurabi? To meet this gross discrepancy, it has been proposed to move the date for Gandash back not only to the time of Adasi, but a full century earlier than this, thus upsetting completely the calculated date for Adasi and the many known synchronisms between the Assyrian and Kassite kings.<sup>26</sup>

Having taken such liberties with the data as a starting premise, it is not surprising to find the treatment of the history of this era in the recent edition of the *Cambridge Ancient History* introduced with a candid admission that 'this chapter is not concerned with chronology.'<sup>27</sup> The obvious fact that must be recognized is that either the traditional chronology of this era is in gross error, or else the Synchronistic Chronicle document, which as served to provide the very backbone of ancient chronology, requires gross modification. Certainly a construction that does not demand any such rejection of inscriptive evidence should be recognized as a preferred structure.

Logic would suggest that it was not the *first* Kassite king who made war with Babylon in the reign of Samsuiluna. It is more reasonable to regard the Kassite line as having had a notably earlier beginning than in the reign of Samsuiluna of Babylon. Note the simple solution that results automatically with the revised structure of Chart II. Gandash, and the beginning of the Kassite dynasty, antedate Samsuiluna by a full century (B IV-V), and the correlations of the kings as stated in the Chronicle are retained explicitly as given, with Gandash placed after the end of the previous kings of the Sea People. This does not preclude the possibility of even the probability that Adgamil, the last of the Sea Kings may have continued to rule for an extended period of time after the beginning of the Kassite line.

### *Difficulties in the Chronology of Elam*

There remain unsolved problems in the attempts to correlate the chronology of the Kassites at Babylon with those of Assyria and the Elamites. The current views require a series of inadequately supported assumptions.

An inscription was found at Nippur in Babylon which tells of a conquest

24. This view was adopted in *CAH*, II, pt. 1, p. 224.9.

25. See reference 22.

26. See the chronological table in *CAH*, II, pt. 1, p. 820 where this Erisu is dated more than a century later than his stated contemporary.

27. See reference 24.

of Elam by a Kassite king, Kurigalzu by name.<sup>28</sup> A late *Babylonian Chronicle* (P) refers to a 'conflict' between a king of Elam, Khurpatila by name, and a Kassite king, Kurigalzu.<sup>29</sup> The *Synchronous History* document<sup>30</sup> also refers to a Kassite king, Kurigalzu by name, who is a stated contemporary of Enlil-nirari (B-IV) of Assyria (1326-1317 B. C.).<sup>31</sup> This Kurigalzu is a stated conqueror but there is no mention of any conquest of Elam. A Kurigalzu is the father of a Kassite ruler, Kadashmanharbe, who is a stated contemporary of the Assyrian king, Assur-nadinapli (1205-1203 B. C., later than the period included on the chart), but this Kurigalzu is not listed among the Kassite kings; he is only the father of a king.<sup>32</sup> The *Amarna Letters* contain a reference to a Kurigalzu of the Kassites who is the father of Burnaburiash, one of the correspondents of the letters.<sup>33</sup> These letters are currently dated c.1380-1360 B. C., which dates have been challenged by the writer.<sup>34</sup>

The problem in Elamite chronology is that of identifying this Kurigalzu who is in conflict with the Elamites and to date his Elamite contemporary Khurpatila who is mentioned in no other extant source. Does he belong to the reign of Enlilnirari (B-VI), or in the reign of Assur-nadinapli of a later period, or in the Amarna period, or in an era different from all of these?

Attempts to answer these questions have required consideration of the possible significance of much other data. The *Cambridge Ancient History* has adopted the view which would recognize the Kurigalzu, contemporary of Khurpatila, as the Kurigalzu in the reign of Enlil-nirari of Assyria.<sup>35</sup> The writer holds that the revised chronology of Chart II provides the clue to recognition of a placement of Khurpatila in the late 12th century in the era of Tukulti-Urta and his successor Assur-nadinapli with the clear elimination of any relation to the *Amarna Letters* or the incident mentioned in the *Synchronous History*. We note some of the pertinent data to be considered.

A line of Elamite kings is known to have ruled through a period of twelve generations.<sup>36</sup> One Kuknashur of this line belongs to the 7th of these twelve generations and is a stated contemporary of the accession of Amisaduga,<sup>37</sup>

28. *Ibid.*, p. 466.2.

29. *Ibid.*, II, pt. 2, p. 381 and note 8.

30. Several translations of this document have been made. One was by A. H. Sayce (*Records of the Past*, IV, pp. 27ff.).

31. The dates are based on data from the *Khorsabad King List*. See ref. 4.

32. *CAH*, II, pt. 2, p. 29.4; II, pt. I, p. 465.

33. *Ibid.*, II, pp. 314ff.

34. Courville, *Ibid.*, II, pp. 314ff. These dates have also been challenged by Velikovsky (*Ages in Chaos*, chap. VI).

35. The clearest expression of this premise is to be seen in the chronological chart on vol. II, pt. 2, following p. 1039 where the data appear opposite each other in the columns of Babylonian, Assyrian, and Elamite kings.

36. See table in *CAH*, II, pt. 1, p. 272.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 268.8.

next to last king of the First Dynasty at Babylon, (D-IV). This is about 50 years before the Kassites took over control of Babylon. When this dynasty at Babylon came to its end by a conquest by the Hittite king Mursilis I, the Hittites were not able to take advantage of the conquest and the control passed to the Kassites. It is not known how this came about.

With Hammurabi *traditionally* dated to the year 1792 B. C., the accession of Amisaduga belongs to the year 1664 B. C. It has been estimated that this Elamite dynasty then ended c.1520 B. C.<sup>38</sup> But this leaves an enigmatic gap in the Elamite history of some 200 years to this assumed conquest of Elam by Kurigalzu in the time of the Elamite Khurpatila. It was necessary to assume that this Khurpatila was the founder of a new Elamite dynasty. However, the founder of the dynasty placed at this point has a different name as its first king.<sup>39</sup> This attempt to identify this Kurigalzu as Kurigalzu II following shortly Kurigalzu I of the *Amarna Letters* involves a theoretical tracing of the Kassite line of kings through the gap in the *Synchronistic Chronicle* document. This gap begins with Ulamburiash, a contemporary of Puzur Asshur and resumes with a Kashtiliash, contemporary of Tukulti-Urta. But this synthesized sequence of Kassite kings remains theoretical and admittedly questionable at one point in the sequence.<sup>40</sup> This has led to an assumed security which has not been established and which is clearly in error as revealed by the revision of Chart II.

The *Amarna Letters* do not belong to the 13th century as traditionally placed but rather to the 9th century. The Kassite names in these letters then belong also to this later period and are not to be identified with Kassite kings of the earlier period. There is ample evidence that the Kassites continued to occupy ruling positions in this later era.<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately, there is a further gap in the *Synchronistic Chronicle* at this point where further information is desirable. However, the complete failure of the *Amarna Letters* to provide the expected support for the view that the letters contain the Canaanite version of the conquest under Joshua, and the failure of Egyptian history for the preceding era to provide the proper background for the exodus and oppression provides adequate evidence that Egyptian chronology is in gross

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38. *Ibid.*, p. 269.4.

39. The king list gives Pakhir-ishshan as the founder. To meet this anomaly, Khurpatila is regarded as a foreign prince who preceded the beginning of the dynasty. *CAH*, II, pt. 2, p. 381.1

40. *Ibid.*, II, pt. 1, pp. 441f. Compare the sequence with that in my volume II, p. 310. The proposed placement of Agum III as the first king belonging in this gap in the *Synchronistic Chronicle* is plausible. It is the manner in which the Kurigalzu of the Kadashmanharbe of the 13th century is maneuvered into the sequence from Karindas to Kurigalzu that is without adequate support.

41. Such Kassite names continue to appear in the later *Synchronistic Chronicle*. Nabonidus refers to a Burnaburiash who was 700 years after Hammurabi, a date which cannot be made to agree with the current dates for the Amarna Letters (E. A. W. Budge, *Books on Egypt and Chaldea*, IX, p. 154, citing British Museum 85-4-30, 2, col. ii., 11, 20-24).

error.<sup>42</sup> And if Egyptian chronology is thus in error, then so is Chaldean chronology and the date for Hammurabi in error. Ammisaduga then belongs to the early 14th century, not the 17th, and the 12th generation of Elamite kings continues past the reign of Enlil-nasir and his contemporary Kurigalzu.

Khurpatila then belongs after the end of this Elamite dynasty. A portion in the era of Tukulti-Urta meets this demand. And while a satisfactory picture of the history of this era has not yet been attained<sup>43</sup> there can be no doubt that the Elamites are a source of trouble in this era. Furthermore, the *Babylonian Chronicle P* has a recognized origin in this era.<sup>44</sup> This is the document that refers to a conflict between Kurigalzu and Khurpatila, and this is the era of the Kurigalzu who is father of a Kassite king though he was not a king himself, at least he is not included in the king lists. The Chronicle refers to him as a king, but this title may have been regarded as valid for reasons not now apparent.

This interpretation could not be entertained traditionally because of the misplacement of the Amarna Period and the erroneous date for Hammurabi.

### *The Paradox of the Hittites Eliminated*

The Hittites of Scripture have their home in the southern reaches of Palestine and were there from the time of Abraham (Gen. 25:9). The Hittites of archaeology were 'rediscovered' with their home in the mountainous region of Anatolia (Asia Minor). To meet this discrepancy, the Hittites of southern Palestine were regarded as a migrant off-shoot from the main settlement in Asia Minor. The failure to find one scrap of cultural evidence in southern Palestine with any resemblance to that of the Hittites of Anatolia stands to negate completely such an explanation.

Not only so, the Hittites in Anatolia are given an origin in the mid 18th century B. C. The Hittite king list has been synthesized and comes to its end about 1200 B. C. <sup>45</sup> Yet *both* Scripture and the secular sources<sup>46</sup> continue to refer to Hittite kings capable of making war, down as late as the 9th century with references still appearing in the 7th century. This anomaly has been explained on the basis of an unexplained gap in the archaeology of this people for the 500-year period between 1200 and 700 B. C.

Gurney, in his treatment of this problem, refers to the situation as a 'paradox,'<sup>47</sup> and surely this is the correct term. This paradox is provided the

42. The demonstration of the veracity of this statement comprises the main thrust of my published volumes. Specific points may be followed by reference to the index at the end of volume II.

43. *CAH*, II, pt. 2, pp. 441ff.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 286.9.

45. See ref. 13.

46. II Kings 7:6; Luckenbill, *Ancient Records* I, par. 599, 600; II, 30, 35, 62, etc.

47. Gurney, O. R. *The Hittites*, p. 59.

simplest and most obvious sort of an explanation when it is recognized that the problem is a chronological one. When the chronology of Mesopotamia is abbreviated by this 500 years by correction of the two errors previously described, Hammurabi's date is reduced from the conventional figure of 1798 B. C. to the early 15th century. As noted above,<sup>48</sup> the dynasty of Hammurabi came to its end by a conquest of Babylon by the Hittite king Mursilis I. This Mursilis I is the fourth in the line of Hittite kings. While the reign lengths are not known, it is evident that the line began late in the reign of Hammurabi, or more probably in the reign of his successor Samsuiluna. As indicated in Chart II (C-V), this is perhaps 30-35 years *after* the conquest of Palestine by the Israelites under Joshua. At that time, the biblical Hittites were driven out of Palestine (Josh. 3:10) and those who did not elect to resist the Israelite invasion were permitted to find a new home for themselves along with other expelled peoples. The Hittites of Anatolia should then be related to the Hittites who were driven out of Palestine.

This leaves the problem of a completely different culture by the Hittites of Anatolia from that found in the Hittite area of southern Palestine. Archaeology comes to our aid here. It is now universally recognized that the Hittites of archaeology, as revealed from the beginning of their king list, represent an amalgamation with an Indo-European people who came into Anatolia either from Europe or from the Lake Van area to the northeast.<sup>49</sup> This people were evidently in Anatolia when the biblical Hittites migrated to this area. This people are currently referred to as the proto-Hittites. After a period of conflict with other peoples and later with the biblical Hittites, the true Hittites emerge. This people now has the culture of the proto-Hittites but the names of the kings are Hittite. The merger is indicated archaeologically by the pictorial inscriptions from the later period which reveal two distinct types of physiognomy and dress.

A late Hittite king fought a war with the Egyptian king Rameses II. This king is also traditionally dated to the 12th century. But the demand for an abbreviation of Egyptian chronology forms the basis for my published volumes. In these volumes, an abbreviated chronology of Egypt has been proposed which, in contrast to the traditional structure, leaves the unique incidents of biblical history in proper backgrounds. Rameses II and this war with the Hittites belongs to the 8th century, not the 12th. This war ended in a draw which was settled by treaty. The Hittite line continued for another century. There is no paradox with the Hittites.

### *The Problem of the Ebla Tablets*

The problems raised by the recently discovered tablets at Ebla cannot be

48. See ref. 12.

49. Gurney, *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 19.

divorced from the total problem of Mesopotamian chronology. The content of these tablets has raised expectations that these tablets will provide a final answer to the date for Abraham, and at the same time provide a final answer as to whether or not the chronological data of Scripture are dependable, or whether these data have been misinterpreted in arriving at a date for Abraham in the early 19th century as deduced from Gal. 3:17 and confirmed by Gen. 15:16.

The tablets contain reference to Sargon of Akkad (D-I). This provides unequivocal proof that the letters belong to the same era as that of Sargon. This Sargon is traditionally dated to the era 2400 B.C. If this date is valid, then the tablets also belong to this same era. The tablets also contain reference to the cities of the plain mentioned in Gen. 14:3, which include Sodom and Gomorrah, thus indicating a date earlier than their destruction in the time of the incident of Gen. 14:1-3. But these references in the tablets do not define the time on the B.C. time scale for Sargon, or for Abraham, or for the cities of the plain. Cities are known to have existed for periods of 600 years or more. As far as these data are concerned, the tablets could belong to the era 2400 B.C. or 1900 B.C.

However, Freedman has recently reported a conversation with one of the investigators at the Ebla site.<sup>50</sup> In this conversation, the investigator is said to have recalled the existence in the tablets of the *name* of the king of Gomorrah ruling at that time as Birsha, the same name as that given in Gen. 14:3. If this is correct, then it is certain that the Ebla tablets belong to the era of Abraham. While the Bible critic may elect to reject the biblical data which define the date for Abraham in the early 19th century, this evidence, if correct, should settle the problem for the orthodox Old Testament student, scholar, or layman that Abraham *and* the Ebla tablets, *and* Sargon of Akkad all belong to the 19th century, not to the 24th. The remaining question is whether or not there is any factual evidence which prevents such a late position for the dynasty of Sargon of Akkad. It is here held that there is no factual evidence which prevents such a dating, and that there *is* evidence that the chronology at this point is in severe difficulty. The following data to this end are noted.

The site of Lagash (C) through much of its history, was not independent of the rule by kings of other sites. The exception was during the period of three successive kings, Ur-Baba, Ur-Gar, and Nammakhni by name (C-I). During the reign of these three kings, Lagash attained a position of high level of prosperity and independence.<sup>51</sup> This brief period was brought to an end by a conquest of Nammakhni at Lagash by Ur-Nammu<sup>52</sup>, first king of

50. Freedman, D. N., 'The Real Story of the Ebla Tablets.' *Biblical Archaeologist*, Dec. 1978, pp. 143ff.

51. *CAH*, I, pt. 2, p. 458.9

52. *Ibid.*, p. 459.



the IIIrd dynasty at Ur (G-I). The period of rule by these three kings thus extends back in time from some point in the 18-year reign of Ur-Nammu.

Now the reign of Gudea at Lagash was also characterized by an even higher level of prosperity and independence than during the reigns of these three kings. Not only so, this construction program of Dugea included construction at the site of Ur.<sup>53</sup> The problem has been that of finding a place for this Gudea in the history of Lagash.

There is no evidence of any such prosperity prior to Ur-Baba. Hence Gudea hardly precedes Ur-Baba. But neither can he follow Nammakhni, since Lagash was conquered by Ur-Nammu of Ur, bringing to an end this period of prosperity. Yet it is equally impossible to find a place *within* the period of these three kings, since Gudea certainly had a reign of some length. The enigma is of such significance as to warrant a quotation from the treatment of this problem in the recent edition of the *Cambridge Ancient History*.<sup>54</sup> "The emergence of Lagash to a period of high prosperity is marked by the reign of Ur-Baba. . . . Unlike his successor Gudea this governor makes no boast of having sent abroad for the stone to make his statues, but he was not merely a local magnate, for a daughter of his was priestess of the Moon-god at Ur and dedicated an inscribed base there. . . . Another daughter was wife to a subsequent ruler named Ur-gar, but a better-known member of the family was Nammakhin, another son-in-law, who was also the grandson of one Kaku. . . .

"Nammakhni did some building in Lagash, and a few other monuments bear his name, but like certain others his reign is best known from its end, for he was the victim of another conqueror Ur-Nammu, founder of the Third Dynasty at Ur. . . . The synchronism, interesting in itself, gives rise to a difficult historical problem, for if Nammakhni was a predecessor of Gudea, as supposed, it would be necessary to regard Gudea himself as ruling during the time and under the sway of Ur-Nammu and the sovereignty of Ur; but the degree of independence which the inscriptions of Gudea display, the complete absence from these of the slightest allusion to Ur, and to any overlord, and their actual presence at Ur itself make such a dependence hardly conceivable. Yet there seems to be no room for his reign apparently of some length, in the years between Ur-Baba and the rise of Ur-Nammu. . . . he informs us, in one of his long inscriptions, that he sent a military expedition against the districts of Anshan and Elam, smote them and dedicated their spoils to his god Ningirsu. . . . Only once did the temple receive a foreign booty, but an immense area was laid under contribution for the fine building materials—timbers of various kinds both from the east and from the west. . . . There is reason to believe that part of Gudea's reign

53. *Ibid.*, p. 459.

54. *Ibid.*, pp. 459, 460.

fell in the period after the final defeat of the Gutians. . . .”

If one will but recognize the demands of the data, there is only one place to put this reign of Gudea, and that is where it is placed on Chart II, namely, *after* the end of the IIIrd dynasty at Ur (D-III). Why then was it not possible to recognize such a position for Gudea? The obvious reason is that of the pressure of an erroneous chronology of the Gutians as related to their contemporaries. With the Gutian supremacy regarded as coming to its end with the conquest of Utu-khegal,<sup>55</sup> it was hardly possible to recognize Gudea as having had a major part in their demise when placed at the end of the IIIrd dynasty at Ur. But the basis for presuming that the Gutian supremacy ended with the conquest by Utu-khegal rests in turn on the placement of the dynasty of Sargon back in the 24th century. Except for the reign of its first king, this dynasty of Sargon actually *encompassed* the total period of the IIIrd dynasty at Ur, and even extended in a very weakened state beyond this point as indicated on Chart II. This arrangement allows that it *was* Gudea who brought to an end the supremacy of the Gutians and yet allows also his building operations at Ur and his stated conflicts with the successors of Sargon.<sup>56</sup>

Evidently the remnants of this dynasty of Akkad continued almost to the beginning of the First Dynasty at Babylon. Ilusuma, a contemporary of Samuabu, first king of the First Dynasty at Babylon, records that he forced Ismi-Dagan of Isn (D-IV) to allow the Akkadian traders access to his city. If it be argued that two such dynasties as those of Sargon and the IIIrd at Ur could not be contemporary, it need only be noted that the evidence indicates something less than predominance of the dynasty of Sargon after his death, and also the fact that the two sites were not necessarily in proximity. The location of the site of Akkad has not as yet been found.

### *Mesopotamia and Egypt*

There are no specific and direct synchronisms between Mesopotamia and Egypt for the period here under consideration. It is the absence of such that has made possible a seeming consistency between the traditional chronologies of Egypt and of Mesopotamia. There is one indirect *situation* synchronism between the two areas which has a degree of significance. The territory of Syria was of interest to kings of both areas who had inclinations of an empire. It is hardly credible that the same territory was under the control of the kings of both Egypt and Mesopotamia at the same time. It has been reasonably deduced that dynasty XII must have come to its end prior to accession of Hammurabi at Babylon.<sup>57</sup> This situation holds for the chronology of Chart II. (C, D IV)

55. See ref. 18.

56. As with the subsequent kings (Naram Sin, *Ibid.*, I, pt. II, p. 454, and Sharigalshari, *Ibid.*, 455).

57. Albright, W. F. 'A Note on the Chronology of the Second Millennium B.C.' *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 126, pp. 24-26.

This is significant in itself, since the dynasties of Egypt for this era were condensed by about half a millennium, while the dynasty of Adasi in Assyria remains intact back to the mid-17th century, the condensation is this area belonging to an earlier era. Despite the difference in the nature of the chronological alternations in the two areas, it is of peculiar interest that the relative positions of dynasty XII in Egypt continues to hold for the First Dynasty at Babylon, which in turn is securely tied to the chronology of Assyria at the time of Hammurabi.

The Hittities are tied by synchronism to both Babylon and Egypt, the synchronisms continuing to hold. In addition, however, the Hittites are now also in agreement with Scripture and with Assyria, a situation of difficulty in the traditional views. Obviously, the difference is in the revised date for Hammurabi.

A further indirect synchronism holds between the two areas through the intermediate of Josephus and Scripture. The entrance of Abraham into Canaan finds a proper background at the opening of the pyramid Age of dynasty IV. This agrees with Josephus who states that it was Abraham who taught the Egyptians mathematics and astronomy.<sup>58</sup> This knowledge was imperative for the planning and construction of the Great Pyramid at Giza.<sup>59</sup> But this is also the era of Dada of the Gutian dynasty and the era of Sargon and the Ebla Tablets, both of which reflect the era of Abraham.

### *The Assyrian Merchants at Kultepe*

The Assyrians maintained a trading post at Kultepe in Anatolia during the reigns of Erisu, Ikuna, and Sargon of the dynasty of Kikkia (B-III).<sup>60</sup> These traders left much inscriptional data comprising what are now known as the *Kultepe Tablets*. Most of the contained data have reference to trade transactions and are of no chronological value. However, there are a few references to this Erisu and his grandson Sargon. Thus the trading post, estimated as having had a duration of about 70 years, was contemporary with these kings. There is also a reference in the tablets to Anittas, second and last of the proto-Hittite kings. A gap of 75-100 years is traditionally recognized for the period between the last of the proto-Hittite kings and the first of the Hittite kings, a gap which is retained by the structure on Chart II.

By the revised structure of Chart II, the dynasties of Kikkia and of Adasi ruled in parallel, the dates on the B.C. time scale for the latter being calculable from the *Khorsabad King List* data. Thus, by this construction the Assyrian Merchants belong to the 16th century, not the 19th as currently held. Further confirmation of the correctness of this position will now be introduced.

58. See Ref. 7.

59. This concept has been developed in successive chapters of *The Secrets of the Great Pyramid*, by Peter Tomkins, chapters IX to XVI.

While the reign lengths of the kings of the dynasty of Kikkia are not known for the most part, the individual kings can be set approximately, since it is recorded that Ilu-summa was a contemporary of Samuabu, first king of the dynasty of Babylon (D-III).<sup>60</sup> If a synchronism were available between the dynasties of Kikkia and Adasi, or between the Assyrian Merchants and the dynasty of Adasi, this would serve to confirm the correctness of the entire arrangement as shown, and fixed to the B. C. time scale. Such a synchronism is here proposed between the Bazazai in the Kultepe Tablets<sup>61</sup> and the same name as the 5th in the dynasty of Adasi (B-IV).

Ordinarily, such a name-synchronism could not be regarded as solid except as other evidence confirms the identity since a name is not necessarily unique to a single individual, or even of a prominent individual. The evidence to this end is limited but significant. This name has been recognized as an unusual one, with occurrence limited to an era not far removed from that of Sulilu, last of the line of the descendants of Abraham (A-IV).<sup>62</sup> To this, may be added the fact that the names in the two sources now fall essentially opposite to each other on the time scale which is the same revision that eliminates the paradox of the Hittites.

Admittedly, the occurrence of the name in the *Kultepe Tablets* does not identify this person as a king. However, "It is a further characteristic of all the royal inscriptions of this period that the kings do not use the title 'king' (*sarrum*), but call themselves '*issiakkam*' . . ."<sup>63</sup> Ikhun and Sargon of the same period are at times mentioned with only the title 'priest-prince.' "<sup>64</sup> Even if a non-identity is granted, the synchronism is still significant in bringing into the same period the use of this odd name and both in the general era of Sulilu.

### Conclusion

As was found true of a proposed and abbreviated chronology of Egypt, so it is now found that Mesopotamian chronology can be similarly abbreviated. Agreement with Scripture is maintained, yet there is a simultaneous solution to problems not related to Scripture. The Hittites retain a position in line with biblical data, and the era of Abraham agrees with both Scripture and the Ebla tablets. There is no need to deviate from the stated relations between the Kassites and the Elamites, the Assyrians and

60. *CAH*, I, pt. 2, pp. 708ff.

61. Compare *Ibid.*, p. 710.6 with the 5th name after Adasi in the Khorsabad list. The name has been variously transliterated as Bazzaiiu (Poebel), Bazaia (Pritchard), or Bazuzu (*CAH* I, pt. 2, p. 735).

62. The significance of the synchronism lies in the oddity of the name and its limited occurrence within a narrow time range. *Ibid.*, p. 735.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 754.9.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 755.1

the kings of the First Dynasty at Babylon.

The errors in setting up the traditional chronology of Mesopotamia can now be clearly defined. Two errors, with a combined magnitude of 500 years, are recognized, both being of the same nature as those involved in dealing with the chronology of Egypt, namely, the faulty assumption of dynastic sequence. When corrected, Sargon of Akkad is brought into line with the era of Abraham in terms of the Scripture and the evidence of the Ebla tablets.

This does not *prove* that the Bible is totally dependable, either historically or in its chronology. The belief in a divine origin remains a matter of faith. But whatever view one may entertain as to the origin of these writings, their relegation to the level of the Greek legends can only be a matter of prejudice. The Scriptures are far more straightforward than anything to be found in the Greek legends. It is obviously the continued reference to a participation of a supreme power in the affairs of men that is objectionable.

It is the Old Testament scholar who persists in attempts to meet the problems of archaeology by re-interpreting the obvious meaning of Scripture to meet the demands of popular archaeology who is now on the defensive. In so doing, he is surrendering the ultimate basis for his belief, a belief based on an historical incident that is superhuman but not provable. This incident is inseparable from the chronology of Scripture.

When conservative Old Testament scholars and their followers moved away from the XIXth dynasty exodus placement, this was done to avoid having to surrender the validity of I Kings 6:1 with its 480-year period between the exodus and the fourth year of Solomon. To now abandon Gal. 3:17 with its 430 years from the exodus back to Abraham is inconsistent and should not be entertained as a basis for acceding a more remote date for Abraham. By making such a move, the conservative Bible scholar is left in a most precarious position as far as retaining any rational defense of his evaluation of Scripture. There was no need for any such compromise to meet the facts of Egyptian history or the facts of Palestine archaeology. It was only the theoretical interpretations that required corrections. Neither is there any need for such compromise in dealing with the chronology of early Mesopotamia.

# No Close Encounters

JAMES B. JORDAN

**CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND** has been drawing large crowds in towns across the country. As a result of this film and to a lesser degree of **STAR WARS**, there is a renewed interest in flying saucers, or Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs).

It would be well for us to pause for a few moments to consider why the Western World in the post World War II era has become so enamored with the UFO phenomenon. We shall consider three aspects of it in this article—intellectual despair, cultural mythology, and demonic charade.

As Christians we know that every person born into this world is born with an innate knowledge of the God Who created him or her. The Bible teaches that all men not only have a capacity to know God, but that in a sense they actually do know Him.

They know Him in His absolute power and divine nature (Rom. 1:20), and they know Him in His absolute holiness and righteousness (Rom. 1:32). They not only have the moral law of God written on their hearts, but the penalties of the law as well: “they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things (homosexual acts) deserve death . . .” (1:32).

The reason that all men know God is that they are confronted by God at every point of their experience. God created the world, and thus the impress of His character is on everything in the world. If you listen to the music of Beethoven and of the Beatles, you can tell the difference, because the imprint of Beethoven’s character is on his music and the imprint of the Beatles is on theirs. In the same way, the imprint of God’s character is on all of His creation.

We are not often consciously aware of this imprint simply because God’s creation is the only creation there is. If the only music in the world were Beethoven’s, we would not notice Beethoven’s character in the music; instead of calling it “Beethoven’s music” we would just call it “music.” In the same way, God’s imprint is on all creation, even if we are not actively conscious of it. Thus, Romans 1:20 says that all men know God because they see His hand in all that has been made.

Also, since *man* is the image of God, men cannot escape being confronted by God whenever they encounter people—others as well as themselves. Romans 1:19 tells us that their own consciences tell them about God. Even if they close their eyes to block out the world and other people, the imprint

of God is on their personalities; and so even in willful blindness they cannot escape their knowledge of God.

Finally, they cannot escape the knowledge of God because God is Himself omnipresent, and thus God constantly forces Himself upon the consciousness of every man (Rom. 1:19b).

This fact is basic to all human psychology. Without taking it into account, *nothing* can be truly known concerning human motivation. Here is why: according to Scripture, the principle motivation in the heart of every non-Christian person is the motivation to suppress this inescapable knowledge of God (Rom. 1:18). This motivates *every* thought and action of unbelieving man.

Man is continually inventing mechanisms by which he hopes to suppress this inescapable knowledge of his Creator and Judge. One mechanism is activity; by keeping always busy man can avoid being reminded of God. Another is religion: by erecting a false god or gods, man can block off knowledge of the true God.

Another mechanism is suicide; man thinks that by killing himself he can escape being reminded of God, but the truth is that "if I make my bed in hell, behold! Thou art there." (Psalm 139:8).

One of the great methods of modern man which he uses to suppress his innate knowledge of God is scientific theory—in particular the theory of evolution. Evolution is a religious theory, whose *sole* design is to suppress the inescapable knowledge of the Creator by inventing an alternative explanation for the existence of the world.

The facts as found in the surface of the earth strongly support the Christian belief in a universal Deluge and recent creation; but these facts are warped and twisted to fit the religious conviction that the universe must be continuously self-created; that is, evolving.

The theory of evolution is as old as sin. It was the belief of all the cultures of the ancient world. The Sphinx is half man, half animal. Pan and the satyrs and other gods of ancient Greece and Rome were also half man, half animal. The Egyptians believed that the sun interacted with the mud of the Nile to bring forth the world.

This is not different from the modern view that the energy of sunlight interacted with primeval matter to bring forth life. Modern scientific evolution is simply an attempt to use Puritan science to back up anti-Christian religion.

The history of modern scientific evolution is important for our consideration of UFOs. Over the last one hundred years, the time required for the world to evolve to its present state has been constantly extended in the evolutionary religion. According to scientists espousing this theory, the world has grown from a few hundred thousand years old to many billions of years old!

More and more time is needed by these men to explain how the world evolved to its present degree of complexity. Even so, the mere passage of time does not provide an adequate explanation of why things change, and why they supposedly become more complex.

Another great problem for evolution is the fact that the fossil record, as evolution interprets it, contains great gaps. Not only is there no missing link between man and ape, but there are no links at all!

As a result of this dilemma, following World War II the evolutionary religion has been in crisis. Many pedantic scientists simply ignore the problems and continue preaching their religion as if nothing were amiss.

Increasingly, however, young and thoughtful scientists, those possessed of the capacity for independent reflection, are devising strange new theories to explain the problems of evolution. A few have become Christians, but most have not.

Two popular theories have emerged as corrections to traditional evolution. The first is the possibility of tremendous catastrophes in the history of the earth, which explain the great gaps in the fossil record. There are now several journals devoted exclusively to research in catastrophism.

The second possibility is that the evolution of the planet earth has been guided by super-intelligences from outer space. This view was set forth in the popular movie 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY. It is also presented in the books of von Daeniken and a host of popular paperbacks.

Although most professional scientists do not hold to this view, it is surprising how many actually do. Among educated people who are not professional scientists, the percentage is much higher!

Intellectual despair over the religion of evolution, therefore, is one thing enhancing modern interest in UFOs. Another form of intellectual despair has to do with the collapse of liberal optimism.

For a while during the last century it was believed that, because of the doctrine of evolution, man was becoming better and better and the world was headed inevitably for a paradise. World War I changed some people's minds regarding that belief, and World War II and the Cold War situation of the post War period pretty much killed optimism in the minds of a great many thinking people.

Again, some of these people became Christians, putting their hope in God for the future, but many did not. Among those not responding to the Gospel there is a great hope that somewhere in outer space there are beings who have learned to live in peace, and who will teach us how to as well. This is the message of CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND. *Thus, intellectual despair over the future of mankind has led to a great interest in UFOs.*

The second component in the UFO religion is what we may call cultural mythology. In any society there is a religious texture, containing the more intellectual forms and the more popular forms. Thus, in the Middle Ages,



the intellectuals focused their attention on fine points of theology which were of no interest to the layman. Popular religion was characterized by worship of Mary and of the saints, replete with miracles, low morals, and superstition.

In non-Christian religious textures there inevitably develop popular mythologies which are not taken seriously by the intellectual end of the religious spectrum. Thus, in ancient Greece, the intellectuals did not believe in the gods, but in a general "First Cause." The intellectuals in Hinduism also do not take seriously the stories of all the gods, but demythologize these stories to find the "great truths" they contain.

One side effect of popular mythologies is that they give rise to superstitious phenomena. If we went back to ancient Greece, we could find people who claimed to have seen many of the gods. Perhaps a shepherd boy fell asleep, but was awakened to see Pan and his cohorts dancing in a nearby wood. Similarly, medieval religion was replete with appearances of the Virgin and of the saints.

Do these things actually happen? For the most part, no. What happens is that some person who firmly believes in the popular mythology sees something he does not understand and immediately interprets it in terms of his preconceived notions.

Thus, the Greek shepherd boy may see some rustling in the leaves. He knows that Pan and his cohorts live in the woods, so it clicks in his mind that he has seen Pan. In the ensuing days and hours, his experience is embellished in his mind, and as the excited villagers ply him with questions about his experience, their suggestions make the story take on more and more color. The same type of thing happened over and over again in the Middle Ages.

The religion of modern America is science. Science is believed to be the answer to every ill and the solution of every problem. The great contemporary heroes of America are scientific astronauts. As we can see then, at the popular level a mythology has arisen, a scientific mythology.

For the gullible American, flying saucers from outer space are the equivalent of Pan and his cohorts. When people see things in the sky they do not understand they immediately ascribe the phenomena to a scientific cause: visitors from outer space. Thus, the interest in UFOs is constantly being restimulated by cultural mythology.

The third component in the rise of the UFO religion is a demonic charade. Not all flying saucer encounters are solely imaginary. Some are staged by fallen angels for a very carefully worked out purpose; to reinforce non-Christian religious beliefs.

As long as Americans think that flying saucers really do land on the earth and interfere with electricity, they will not become orthodox Christians. Satan and his angels readily transform themselves into angels of light to

reinforce heresies and non-Christian religions. Satan is wise enough not to permit this to happen too often. It only occurs often enough to keep the fires of unbelief burning brightly. People's imagination will do most of the work.

The demonic element in UFO religion can be seen readily by a cursory glance at any of the vast literature of UFOism. Many of those propagating these beliefs tell us that beyond the earth there are concentric circles of existence. They say that after death we all pass through these circles on our way to perfection; and they refer to Jesus Christ as a man who had gone through many of the circles and who had reached a high stage of perfection, and was sent back to earth to teach us a better way to live. (Note that this is pure moralism: justification by works.)

Now, this is exactly the same as the teaching of Theosophy, of Spiritualism, of Rosicrucianism, and of all other occult groups. The reason the teaching is the same is that all these groups have their source in the demon world. The reader should note that the idea of progression through spheres toward perfection is a form of evolution.

Thus UFOism is here to stay, at least for a while. It is thoroughly non-Christian. There is no record of a Christian ever having encountered a flying saucer directly, though some Christians ignorantly think they have seen them in the sky. (What they have seen, for the most part, are flaming meteors called fireballs, or exploding meteors called bolides.)

Well, what about CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND? Is it a sin for Christians to go to such a movie? That depends on the reason they are going. Some people, such as myself enjoy watching special effects. I am a musician, and I enjoy art which flows through time more than art which stands still in space.

I enjoyed the flow of special effects in 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY, and I enjoyed the flow of special effects in CLOSE ENCOUNTERS.

In the same way, I enjoy the music of Beethoven, although I despise the anti-Christian philosophy he worked into much of his music. I enjoy the music of Bach much more than that of Beethoven, because Bach was a Christian.

As a Christian, I can enjoy and appreciate under "common grace" the artistic achievements of non-Christians. If, however, you do not particularly enjoy this type of art, you probably would do well to save your time and money and miss CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND. The *message* of the film, as opposed to its artistry, cannot be appreciated by a Christian.

### III. CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGICAL TRENDS

## Theological Double Talk

P. RICHARD FLINN

Early in 1979 an important article appeared within the pages of *Theology Today*—important not only because of the subject matter, but also because of the author. It was written by Donald G. Bloesch, professor of theology at the Theological Seminary of the University of Dubuque, Iowa, and was entitled “Crisis in Biblical Authority.”<sup>1</sup> The author openly confesses himself to be a conservative evangelical; he is currently completing a two volume project in systematic theology, entitled *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*. The magazine *Christianity Today* judged that the first volume was the most notable systematic theology to appear in the past year.<sup>2</sup> What Bloesch tells us about Biblical authority, then, is important, for it will give us some insight of the direction of evangelical theology in the next few years. This author assumes that the reader has not read Bloesch’s contribution, and so an attempt is made to reproduce the thought of the original article and to interact with it.

Dr. Bloesch begins in a laudatory fashion by recognizing that biblical faith will only return when the divine authority and inspiration of the Bible is properly recognized. The Bible must be defended against higher critics whose presupposed naturalism rules out the supernatural. But it must also be defended from its “friends” who absolutize the biblical world view and hence make the Bible incredible to the modern mind.<sup>3</sup> A middle way is needed, one which will properly restore an authority to the Bible and will enable infallibility and inerrancy to be posited rightly of the Bible. The author sets out to give us this middle way.

To present his case, Bloesch differentiates among three basic approaches to Scripture, entitled respectively the sacramental approach, the scholastic approach, and the liberal-modernist approach. The 1st is most quickly dismissed—it is least important for our purposes. It is not germane to what the author is attempting to accomplish—that is, provide a framework whereby authority can properly be restored to the Bible. Into this last category he places men such as Schleiermacher, Troeltsch, J. A. T. Robertson,

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1. Donald G. Bloesch, “Crisis in Biblical Authority,” *Theology Today*, January 1979, pp. 455-562.

2. Donald Tinder, “Key Books of '78: Theology and Apologetics,” *Christianity Today* 23 (March 1979), p. 32.

3. Bloesch, *op. cit.*, p. 455.

and Bultmann. The division between the categories of the scholastic approach and the sacramental approach, however, is more problematic, because those identified as conservative evangelicals can be found in both.

In the scholastic category are placed men who adopt that approach which sees revelation as the “disclosure of a higher truth” which is nonetheless in continuity with rational or natural truth.<sup>4</sup> Those in this category regard the Bible as a book of propositions which are directly accessible to reason, and as a book which contains no errors in any respect.<sup>5</sup> Into this category men such as Turretine, Warfield, Schaeffer, and Montgomery are placed. We note that presumably this is the group of enemies of the Bible who actually destroy its authority by holding to a rationalist view of inerrancy. These supposedly make the Bible incredible.

The middle category, those who hold to the sacramental approach, is the one in which Bloesch wants to be found. These can be characterized as follows: they hold that revelation is not the Bible; rather, revelation is God in action. Scripture or the Bible is the primary channel or medium of revelation.<sup>6</sup> We observe that Bloesch wishes to make a distinction between revelation and Scripture—this is pivotal. He places within this group those, who, in his opinion, make a similar distinction. What sort of distinction exactly will become obvious as we proceed. In this category Scripture is said to have two sides—a divine side and a human side. The divine makes the human its instrument.<sup>7</sup> In this category we find Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, Bavinck, and Kuyper.

It is worth observing that this procedure works as a sort of “reverse poisoned well.” Immediately all readers will want to place themselves in the sacramentalist category. After all, who would wish to take a position of Scripture that departed from this list of auspicious names! But before we react too swiftly, it will repay us to exercise some degree of discernment. It should not faze us if Bloesch wishes to claim Calvin, Augustine, and Luther as his mentors on the matter of Scripture. After all, every bastard who wants to receive the approbation of, and entrance into, genteel society will do so by claiming noble parentage of one sort or another. Theologians are no different. We must remember that Bloesch seeks acceptance in genteel evangelical society. He could only do so with any appearance of credibility if he was prepared to identify himself as being part of the Augustinian *paradosis*. Would we not, in the very nature of the case, expect him to claim Calvin and Luther as his own? Before we evangelicals warmly gather around to extend the hand of fellowship, however, let us pause and pursue

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4. *Ibid.*, p. 456.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*, p. 456.

7. *Ibid.*

the matter a little further, lest we be afflicted with the syndrome of the embarrassing advocate.

In the second section of his paper, the author turns to one who appears, as we shall argue later, to be his real mentor—Karl Barth. He suggests that it was Barth who succeeded in recovering the sacramental character of Scripture. Barth speaks conservative evangelical language when he says that revelation is the “divine content of Scripture, a content that can only be apprehended by the interior witness of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>8</sup> Now, when someone begins to speak in this fashion the question that immediately comes to one’s mind is the nature of the relationship that exists between the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the content of the Scripture. Does the Holy Spirit witness *to* the Word, the Scripture—to its authority, its meaning so that the testimony of the Spirit cannot be divorced from the actual text, or is the testimony of the Spirit *from* the text to something above and beyond the text, which the text, in the nature of the case, cannot contain? We suspect that for Bloesch it is the latter alternative, and our suspicions are not astray. It is he who has already suggested that there is to be a distinction made between revelation and the words of Scripture. He gets closer to the mark when he writes that although revelation comes through Scripture. . . . “this does not mean that the words of Scripture are directly revealed (as in the scholastic approach) but that Scripture embodies the truth that God desires us to hear.”<sup>9</sup> In other words the revelation *in* Scripture is not coterminous with the meaning of the words of Scripture in their syntactic, grammatico-historical setting, but is something beyond, above those words. The testimony of the Holy Spirit takes us *from* the text to the real hidden meaning.

Does this then mean that we are reduced to rationalism of a subjectivist stripe? Bloesch says, “no!” He argues or asserts that although the *revelatory* content of the Scripture can only be apprehended by the interior witness of the Spirit, this does not obviate cognitive revelation. Revelation does have cognitive content, he insists.<sup>10</sup> Now the word “cognitive” used by the author to describe revelation is of interest. It means to know in the widest possible sense—intellectually, rationally, through sensation and perception. It is not a knowledge which comes from intuition or emotion, or connotation. The interior witness of the Spirit to Bloesch is not subjectivist, it is cognitive.

We will follow this a little further. We see that Bloesch is seeking to return the church to the authority of the Bible—that is, to the authority of the revelation that comes through the Bible. We are entitled to inquire how this revelation will function as an authority in the church. If revelation is

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8. *Ibid.*, p. 457.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 458.

10. *Ibid.*

not the words of Scripture, but comes consubstantially with the words of Scripture, how does the church apprehend that revelation and submit to its authority? Bloesch has endeavored to reassure us that this revelation is cognitive: it would seem that we are entitled, then, to expect that this revelation can be reduced or accurately reflected in propositions, in formal truth statements. This would seem to follow from the assertion that revelation is cognitive. Once this revelation has come, and has been reduced to propositions, properly reflecting its cognitive epistemic status, how can these propositions be authenticated as being genuinely revelatory, and so, the final rule of faith and practice? We can set forth the problem more clearly, perhaps, by placing it on a mundane level.

Let us assume that Mr. Black is studying his Bible sacramentally and through the interior witness of the Spirit, revelation comes to him consubstantially with the text he was actually studying. Mr. Black hastens to reduce or translate this revelation into a propositional form, and then he commits it to paper. He can, of course, do this, because, as Bloesch insists, the interior witness of the Spirit has brought cognitive knowledge. Now, let us assume further that Mr. White is studying the same passage sacramentally, and revelation comes to him, which he reduces to propositions. But, to our great consternation, we discover that the revelation given to Mr. Black actually denies and contradicts that given to Mr. White. Which, then, is the true revelation? How will the true revelation be authenticated? What external authority will be appealed to for authentication? The church? Further testimonies of the Spirit—leading to the problem of how that testimony will be authenticated—and so, to infinite regress? The greater intellectual acumen of one theologian over another?

The problem is now clearly before us. Bloesch wants to return to *biblical* authority and the intellectual paraphernalia he imports to do the job includes making a distinction between the words of Scripture and revelation. But, now that he has made the distinction, it would seem that he is on the horns of a dilemma: either this revelation is subjectivist so that it depends for its authority upon the connotation of the individual, or it is objective, and its authority is dependent upon man. Either way, *biblical* authority is lost, human autonomy is maintained. And all this to escape the *rationalism* of the scholastics!

Are there any ways out of this dilemma? There are a number of possibilities. Firstly, Bloesch could opt for the possibility that both Mr. Black and Mr. White had authentic revelation. The fact that these two revelations do not agree with human rationality is not at all problematic. After all, it is only the rationalist who wants to submit God to the canons of human rationality. Now it is certainly true that the human mind can never comprehend God. The incomprehensibility of God is at the very foundation of orthodox Christianity. The human can never comprehend the divine,

although the human can know the divine as the divine reveals Himself. That is, we *apprehend* God, but not *comprehensively*. But this is not to say that God Himself is irrational. Rationality has to do with order, reason, forethought, plan, design, law and control. Over and over the Bible asserts that God is eternally, infinitely rational, and that the whole universe is rational for it conforms to His predetermined, sovereign plan. There is no autonomy for the second causes. There is no possibility outside of God. There is no non-being. There is no chaos. There is no chance. The universe is absolutely rational, for it conforms to the plan of God in everyway. It is this absolute rationality that the human mind cannot fully comprehend, but because man is stamped with the image of God, human rationality reflects and corresponds to divine rationality.

If we would hold that the two revelations upon the same text of Scripture are contradictory because God is irrational, and that whenever He speaks to man, it is idolatrous to expect a revelation that would conform to or reflect our own rationality, then we have departed from the orthodox doctrine of God. If, however, we assert that the two revelations are only apparently contradictory, and this because our finite minds cannot comprehend the infinite rationality of God, then the notion of rationality is functionally useless. There is no written, infallible, fixed, objective Word to establish whether Mr. White or Mr. Black, or both, are talking nonsense. In a very important, functional sense, irrationality is ultimate.

There is the additional possibility, of course, that Bloesch would reject the notion that Mr. Black and Mr. White could reduce or reflect their respective revelations in propositions. I am inclined to suspect that it is here that the author would attempt to counter. However much he may like to speak of revelation being cognitive, it is doubtful whether he thinks it can accurately be reflected in propositions, for "the finite cannot bear the infinite."<sup>11</sup> But if this be the case, then I really do not know what he means when he says that revelation through the interior witness of the Spirit is cognitive. Subjectivism remains. Revelation does not only carry no more weight than the intuitive experience of the knower, but it has no relevance or meaning beyond the intuitive experience of the knower. Where now is Calvin, Bavinck, Kuyper, and Augustine, we may ask?

But having said all this, we have not yet arrived at the heart of the problem. The real question is why is Dr. Bloesch unable to allow that the divine revelation be tied to the very words of Scripture, so that the meaning of the words, in their syntactic, historical setting, is understood to be the very meaning of God? Why must a distinction be made between the words of Scripture and revelation in, upon, around, and beyond those words? We begin to approach the answer to this question, when we see the author

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11. *Ibid.*, p. 457.

taking up the question of organic inspiration, in which he seeks to explain how the divine and the human interrelate in Scripture. In revelation we have an encounter of God with man, the infinite with the finite. In the very nature of the case the human record of that encounter cannot contain the fulness of the infinite. The Bible, then gives a human, a *limited* witness to God. "The Bible is the Word of God in human clothing," he writes, "the revelation of God transmitted through human imagery."<sup>12</sup> The human imagery, the human clothing limits and restricts the revelation of God. There must be a dichotomy between Scripture and revelation, argues Bloesch, for Scripture cannot contain the full revelation of God. Revelation comes through Scripture, as the Spirit brings a divine-human encounter, whereby one rises above and beyond human limitations and is enabled to encounter and comprehend (presumably) unmediated deity. That this is his evident meaning appears through the following quotation:

Yet the human concepts do not capture the full impact and significance of what is given in revelation. Commenting on John the Apostle, Augustine explains: "Because he was inspired he was able to say something; but because he who was inspired remained a man, he could not present the full reality, but only what a man could say about it." *At the same time, we can know this reality when the Spirit of God acts in and through the written witness.* "The Word of God indeed is as sharp as a two-edged sword," says Jonathan Edwards, "but it is so only through the co-operation of that Spirit that gave the word. The word alone, however managed, explained, confirmed, and applied, is nothing but a dead letter without the Spirit."<sup>13</sup>

The reason that Scripture cannot contain the revelation of God is that as a written and human media it is inadequate. The Spirit lifts us up from these human limitations and gives a direct encounter with God. The Medieval quest for the Beatific Vision is evoked—the encounter with God where all human thinking, theologizing, ratiocination would cease.

But, and here is the rub, the Medieval Beatific Vision taught that man was moving up the chain of Being, so that, leaving behind human limitations, the pilgrim became a semi-divinized creature. It is our contention that Bloesch has made the same fundamental theological error. The error is so fundamental, so basic that one is almost too embarrassed to attribute it to Dr. Bloesch. But, as we carefully consider this article there does not seem to be any other conclusion. The author has made the error of confusing two types of inability: a metaphysical inability, and an ethical inability. This becomes evident as we consider the juxtaposition of quotations from Augustine and Edwards as they have been reproduced above.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 459.

13. *Ibid.*, Emphasis mine.



Augustine is affirming the truth that lies at the basis of all Reformed and orthodox theology—namely, that of the separation between the Creator and the creature. Because of this metaphysical distinction between the being of God and the being of man, orthodox theology has confessed that God is unknowable in His essence. We can only know Him as he chooses to reveal Himself to us. We can only know him in terms of our metaphysical reality: that is, in terms of our human limitation, concepts, thoughts, and so on. This is so because we will ever remain creatures, we will ever remain human. Man, therefore can never comprehend or present the full reality of God. Even John, when he was inspired, did not change or metamorphose into a higher being. Consequently, John could not present the full reality of the vision of Christ. He could only present what *man* could say about it. The inspiration of the Spirit so superintended his human thinking that it was both an accurate portrayal of God, yet one apprehensible to man.

Orthodox religion holds onto Augustine's representation with fervency. If the full reality could ever be known or presented, man would be divine; if the reality presented demands an escape from human creaturely limitations if it is to be understood, then man must cease to be man. The fact that John could only speak in human terms is ever defended by orthodox theology, for we ever remain human, with human minds and creaturely limitations. The metaphysical inability of man to comprehend God in Himself, which is an application of the distinction between Creator and creature, is one of the hallmarks of orthodox theology. But, at the same time, while teaching that God can only reveal Himself to man using human concepts, history, expression, and thought, orthodoxy also maintains that He does so without error. Because God is omniscient, He is not only able to, but actually does, reveal Himself in human terms in a way that is an absolutely accurate representation of Himself. But we do not imagine that this representation is the full story. Nor do we seek the full story. It is beyond us for we ever remain humans, creatures. This removes the difficulty that Bloesch sees—that of equating the words of Scripture with the revelation of God. Revelation remains the very words of Scripture. The fact that they are human words does *not* obviate their being equated with revelation; rather it actually ensures it. Revelation can *only* come in human words for men always are, and *always will remain* human.

It is these human, metaphysical, creaturely limitations which Bloesch insists must be overcome if man is to know God. Man must be taken out of man, by the Holy Spirit. He must be lifted above man, as it were. We remember that the hallmark of all pagan thought is the collapsing of the Creator-creature distinction, on the one hand, and the divining of man, on the other. This pagan lust, which has been with man from the Garden of Eden, has been taken by Dr. Bloesch and made the very cornerstone of his "evangelical" theology.

Probably the most subtle and devious trick, however, if we may speak in such strong language, is that Bloesch cites Edwards and Calvin and other orthodox divines to justify or legitimize his own particular brand of paganism. Orthodox divines consistently confess that man has an inability with respect to Scripture and revelation, but that this inability is an ethical inability not a metaphysical inability. When this distinction is made, then it becomes obvious that either Bloesch has made a fundamental, basic theological error, or he is practising academic deceit.

For the Reformers, Scripture remained a dead letter without the ministry of the Spirit, not because it was not the revelation of God, but because without the ministry of the Spirit, the Word only touched the ears, it never touched the heart. Regeneration came only by the Spirit; the Spirit quickened and gave life. The regenerated man could then discern Scripture from a spiritual standpoint and it ceased to be a dead letter. Notice that in this construction it is the heart of man that has changed, not the Scripture. This becomes clear if we be allowed to cite Calvin, as he disputes with those who have abandoned Scripture and "fly to revelation;" in other words, with those who have entered a dichotomy between Scripture and revelation. He writes:

They censure us for insisting upon the letter that kills, but in this matter they pay the penalty for despising Scripture. For it is clear enough that Paul there (II Cor. 3:6) contends against the false apostles, who indeed, in commending the law apart from Christ, were calling the people away from the benefits of the New Testament, in which the Lord covenants "to engrave his law in the inward parts of believers, and to write it in their hearts." The letter, therefore, is dead, and the law of the Lord slays its readers where it both is cut off from Christ's grace and, *leaving the heart untouched, sounds in the ears alone*. But if through the Spirit it is really branded upon hearts, if it shows forth Christ, it is the word of life "converting souls . . . giving wisdom to little ones," etc.<sup>14</sup>

It is clear that the ministry of the spirit is to write the *word* upon the heart, not to take the human and raise him to new heights of encounter with the divine. The Bible remains dead, not because of its weakness or inadequacy apart from the ministry of the Spirit, but because of the deadness of the human heart. This exegesis of Calvin is according to the clear and obvious meaning of his words; moreover, it is consistent with the teaching of the Reformers generally. We regret that Bloesch has misconstrued this point.

This article began with the assertion that Dr. Bloesch's work was significant.

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14. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), I, ix, 3.

As we have analyzed his doctrine of the authority of Scripture, we have come to see that at root it calls for a subjectivist autonomy, restoring the authority of man, not that of the Scriptures. In addition, it incorporates fundamentally pagan motifs into its construction. But the real significance of the article is the representation that the doctrine of Scripture found therein is conservative, evangelical and consistent with Christian orthodoxy as it has come to us down through the centuries.

I have endeavored to show that this is not the case at all. Rather, what we have in Bloesch's work is a translation for the American theological scene of Karl Barth's modernism. As such it is neither conservative nor evangelical. One wonders why Bloesch insists that he be regarded as a conservative evangelical. But then again, evangelical society is a genteel and respectable society in the American milieu. And the moral of the story is clear: genteel society must ever be wary of bastards claiming noble lineage.

## **IV. BOOK REVIEWS**

*The Squeeze*, by James Dale Davidson. New York: Summit Books, 1980. 281 pp., \$12.95.

Reviewed by Tommy W. Rogers

America's middle class is being steadily impoverished. The impoverishing process is the result of mechanisms which, abstract and invisible, have nevertheless been long operative. We are, in effect, now experiencing Keynes' "long run," and the result at the gut level—the experiential level where human beings in real places rejoice and fear, hope and calculate—is that a terrible squeeze in being put on the middle class American. Long the object of hate and vituperation of the opinion molding industries, the broad-shouldered tax-paying American middle class has long carried burdens of the world, from European defense to financing of socialism at home and abroad, burdens which never were rightfully ours to carry.

The American middle class, Davidson asserts, is being caught in the vortex of a squeeze fueled largely by a system which encourages transcendental capital claims (use of the rules of political or legal coercion to confiscate the product of others or sequester advantage at others' expense). Acquiescence is to a large degree fostered by what Davidson describes as "the information deficit," wherein we simply cannot know the wide range of phenomena which politics or economics describes. The dozens of systems with which everyone must deal in his workaday life are not only multiplying their demands for cold cash, they are simultaneously increasing the volume and complexity of the information which must be mastered to cope with them. "Politicians, bankers, bureaucrats, lawyers, doctors (sic) [physicians], tax

collectors, and other are like vampires preying on the ignorant. Most people cannot act nimbly enough to escape through tax loopholes. They do not know where they are. They cannot cross-examine the propositions upon which the doctor (sic) and the hospital bill and treat them. They cannot penetrate the murk of bureaucracy or speak the special, exploitative language of the lawyer. This is very much a part of what ails America" (p. 25).

People of the Western world, the author asserts, are being steadily impoverished not only in spite of political gestures toward prosperity, but also because of them. As politics dominates more and more of life, the information deficit upon which society operates increases. The professions have so augmented their incomes through legislation, regulation, and litigation that the law has itself become a public enemy. The political rules under which society operates have become the most significant variable in determining what rewards people may obtain and keep in their workaday activities. Unable to comprehend developments around us in all their particulars, they are reduced to a few emotionally defined attitudes, and public policy becomes primarily a matter of partisan labels, stereotypes, and buzz words. Davidson is on target that we need to look beyond the illusions of politics. In most cases the task of a citizen trying to preserve the quality of his life in terms of political selections among the major parties of non-difference "is akin to that of a child trying to spell with the wrong blocks. He can never get it right."

Davidson contends that we need to recognize that *politics is as much of a route to personal wealth as is production*. Where there is opportunity to obtain higher rewards through profiting from political decisions, most people (including professional and trade associations) seek to do so with vehemence. That political action is not self-interested action is an absolute illusion. It is *not* true that politicians and bureaucrats operate outside the economic structure as something akin to neutral "referees" or "arbiters" of unbridled economic competition. On the contrary, they are participants in the competition, just like everyone else. Their interest is *not* commensurate with the public interest. The bureaucrat himself is enhanced by an increased severity of whatever the problem toward which his attention is directed.

...Every productive enterprise that bureaucracy bankrupts, every productive job that it destroys, puts another individual in a state of dependence on its succor. The more the bureaucracy botches its missions, the more it subordinates or destroys alternative institutions, the greater the demand for its services....The politicians who authorize and fund this nonsense are reelected in record numbers by a public exhausted to a point of gratitude for small favors (p. 221).

We have created or have allowed to be a created a system which we do not understand, a system of bureaucracy which hurts and hinders, and wherein transcendental capital is becoming the most desired and ardently sought of property interests. We have, as Davidson phrases it, "turned self-interest against the public interest by giving millions of persons incentive for imposing hurt on others" (p. 221).

Davidson's revolutionary counsel is that Marxism should be turned inside out to create an "ideal of social organ-

ization which reflects a high esteem for what is truly social in human relationships and places the pursuit of private interest into a context which rebounds to the public interest." This requires abandonment of the practice of placing the rules of society within the reach of egotistical manipulation, thereby preventing the damage inflicted upon society "through the evolution of transcendental capital that converts the *rules* into private *means* of some individuals, to be employed for their own purposes" (p. 265).

Such a task would involve a long range effort to make all laws apply equally to everyone. The rules would be made public as opposed to their being *de facto* economic assets attainable by the politics of greed. As Davidson points out, the rules must be made public rather than allowed to become the special province of favored groups, trades, statuses, classes, and professions who are thereby enabled to attach transcendental capital claims against those who are not favored by the rules: "...they must be organized so they are not economic assets enabling some individuals to perform certain actions that are not legal for others. Only by freeing the laws from private ownership in the economic sense can we really put the primordial, even instinctual, human disposition to self-interest to fully social use. As long as we have institutions that provide for private ownership of the capital value of the rules, it is a logical necessity that we create incentives for some individuals to harm the public in pursuit of their particular private gain" (p. 266). Examples include educational credentialing (which, it might be added, not only adds to the costs extorted from the public by the activity which sequesters itself from competition, but inevitably *lowers* the substantive content of the *education* itself; this process in its extreme magnification of incompetence probably having no clearer illustration than the education racket itself, of

which the contentless and substantively worthless "doctorate in education" is an epitome of the metastasis), as well as penalties for "unauthorized practice" (from professions like law and medicine, which have been notably successful in utilizing the rules so as to sequester transcendental capital rights against the public, to trades and services from real estate merchandising to barbering to carpentry), and the land-use planning schemes of our time which sound so trendy, enlightened, and environmentalish, but which represent the use of political power for plunder by the transcendental capital gains inherent in tight regulations for construction and the bureaucratic control of land use.

Even the most casual observer cannot help but be confronted with the visibly escalated importance of transcendental capital. Transcendental capitalization and the politicization of life are tandem processes, for, in the political society wherein government is doing "good" things (by alleged intent), the "public interest" and the quest for "justice" (which boils down to efforts to secure transcendental advantage at the expense of others) combine in the search for privilege, benefit, and favor through the political process and the political influence system.

The denouement is a society of corruption: corrupt in initiation (ethic of theft and redistribution in favor of those who establish or have established in their behalf symbiotic relationships with government distributive processes; the primary difference in "conservative" and "liberal" administrations in this regard being in the nature of rhetorical gesture and symbolic affectation, with the "conservative" administrations appearing somewhat less rapacious in identifying with the more extreme and mendicant voices at the overt level of recognized "welfare"); corrupt in practice; and corruptive in influence and effect.

The purpose of CETA, HUD 235,

BEOG and similar ilk—stripped of the vocabularies of motive in which their alleged aims, purposes, and objectives and intent to do good are couched—is the furtherance of corruption. True enough, they are "social programs for the poor and minorities" in that they deliver some consciousness raising and estovers such as lunches and breakfasts to school children or the aged. They also supply organizational activity and positions by which a number of specialists in nonproductivity are able to make it—vehicles, attache cases, new suits, and all—via the government influence system (the servicing of which increasingly becomes a major thrust of governmental effort). Without question, they foster strategic cultivation of indices of disadvantage, achieve an intensification of envy, and reinforce notions of the practicality and legitimacy of using the political process to make this envy good against others. They do provide a forum for perceived self-interest (particularly a dehumanizing class interest, or, more precisely, an interest group interest) for effectuating the politics of greed and envy (and, from some cooperative quarters, the politics of guilt, wherein it is professed intent rather than result and effect which is determinative of value). They do achieve some considerable delivery of perquisites such as tuition and gratuities (BEOG) at the expense of others whose product is confiscated and distributed by government largesse—but *the real and underlying purpose is the furtherance of a system of governmental dependence and governmental initiative.*

The messianic programs to obtain "justice" (and create injustice for those who do not happen to be women, black, or mexican speaking, etc.) *do* accomplish their latent and underlying intent, but not, of course, their *expressed* intent, which is not their underlying purpose to begin with. They are destructive of that which the bureaucracy (and the liberationists who deify gov-

ernment as redistributive agent) hate most—viability, independence, and self-initiative apart from the bureaucracy and its syncretic relationship with overarching government to whom the body, soul, life, mind, and product of all belongs and whom all must worship (render tribute, and agree with, acquiesce to, and support) to obtain allotments from its beneficence.

The worst thing that could happen for agencies of good intent and messianic motive would be success in their avowed aims (i.e., if amelioration of the problems to which they direct attention should occur in spite of their efforts). They contribute to the magnification of ills to which they are ostensibly opposed and, by deadly serious application of the logic of what A. H. Hobbs (a sociologist, yet not a liberal, which makes the people wonder) has expressed as the Orwellian Reversal, contend that the very intensification of problems subsequent to their ministrations rightly calls for commensurately intensified effort on their part.

To those under the superstition of government, if people are to live in better housing, or to attend college at more luxuriant levels than they would be will-

ing and/or able to obtain for themselves, etc., it must be done through government largesse, not independently from and free of government. Freedom from dependence is the ultimate sin and social system failure to the entrepreneurial specialists in non-productivity.

One does not have to be long acquainted with governmental funding programs to recognize that the governmental apparatus operates by fiction. Planners, among other things, are specialists in fiction. While most know themselves to be operating in fiction, it is the fiction which becomes real by definition and practice. To be up-to-date is to be up-to-date in this season's repertoire of funding buzz words. *Grantors, grantees, and planners operate by a mutually acceptable deception.* CETA, for example, is *not* a program to provide training wherein the benefactors, being unemployable before the "training," are thereby enabled to become employed in productive activity. While such objective is rhetorical cover, it is not the operational thrust. It is not measured by and does not expect to be measured by success in persons made employable (as minimal exposure to CETA counsels will make clear).\*

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\*A very mild but indicative example of the author's experience occurred with respect to a grant application reviewed shortly after entering state government service. This particular grant was reviewed by the state Council on Children, an organization whose primary role was to establish public kindergartens through extra-legislative funding and thereby supply a constituency demanding of their continuation when the initial funding was withdrawn. It was reviewed by persons of professional qualifications and position, i.e., professors, state higher learning trustee board members, high level state employees, whom, one would think, in evaluating grant proposals, would at the least require internal consistency. The rationale was that of a program to prevent delinquency in a particular county. Statistics were cited showing the number of juveniles in the county, the incidence of delinquency, and the desirability of reducing the delinquency. However, the proposal itself was for a baby sitting agency in cooperation with the state women's college for mothers attending the college. While this may have been entirely justifiable in its own right, the grant nowhere intimated that its purpose and substantive goal was to provide a nursery service for a few fortunate mother-students (and of course a kind of lab observatory for the early childhood education division of the college). The program had no relationship, even by the most tenuous route, to its ostensible justifying rationale. It seemed remarkable that hardly anyone questioned the discrepancy. The point is not to belittle the program mentioned, but to indicate that a worthy program should stand of its own worth, rather than worth be attributed by its supposed ameliorative effect on a problem to which it has no reasonable relationship and on which it clearly will make no impact. In fact, in terms of probable worth and likely minimal damage, this program was probably more meritorious than

The only purposeful attribute which distinguishes this program from one of dropping funds from a helicopter over chosen communities is the benison derived by the direct benefactors of the delivery process,\*who are much more in number than those who would be required to pilot and service helicopter drops. It also establishes an umbilical syncretism with educational institutions and other brokers of saleable software (legal services, "outreach," advocacy, consciousness raising and other government sponsored activity which would be unable to carry its own weight).\*\*Thus, advocates rely on redistribution and allocation of confiscated funds via government favor, and often by which government mounts an assault on the values and convictions of the people from whom the funds are taken. Naturally, the advocates are people of great social conscience and concern, and are favorable only to "sensitive" politicians. The process is thoroughly corruptive of the principles of republican virtue and good government which are necessary to sustain a limited system of government that is restricted,

under whatever rationale, to biblical limitations on governmental reach. *Such restrictions, in the period of atrophy of self-limited government and the drift to omnipotent government, are seen as great evils to be overcome.* The overcoming of such hindrances to implementation of messianic government is viewed as a major task of public education at all levels. Many of the dramatic judicial decisions which have brought forth such great accolades from the servants of leviathan (and made possible largely because their purveyor, as late recent Chief Justice Warren illustrates par excellence, was philosophy-less, and highly adaptable to politicization of the judicial role, and willing to infect the Constitution with precedents derived from his opinion as to desirable policy and trendy development) are honored precisely because they implemented articulations which emaciated the boundaries of that compact as initially agreed upon by the States.

Transcendental capital corrupts metastastically. It brings a heightened intensity to the public arena as the loci

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most. *The planner, however, operates by a mutually understood and constitutively accepted (normatively legitimized) system of fiction.* As long as the underlying and latent purpose is good, and as long as the avowed purpose is suitable, the activity generating program is good. A bad program, which would not pass muster, would be, for example, a proposal to assist in the detection of welfare fraud, of any sort. "Outreach" and recruitment of welfare clients, however, would be appropriate mobilization. *Funding by fiction is the norm of planning as usual—and it is very, very big business.*

\*Along with the establishment of a structure which will be self-generating of more of this activity, and creation of a significant core of "professionals" in servicing of the grants capable of making a more saleable demand for continuation of the activity than could be made for repetitive helicopter drops of greenbacks.

\*\*The co-opting of potential opposition by providing a self-interest benefit to potential opponents is illustrated in the tremendous power bloc supportive of the food stamp program. This program permits those favored with food stamps to make grocery purchases at whatever prices grocers may be selling as opposed to the former commodity program which merely distributed high quality food staples. Most of the programs of great escalation have built into them significant payoffs in the form of fare to the businesses (from retail merchants to apartment owners to creative financiers to institutionalized money changers) which ostensibly appear to be the most pristine of free enterprise activity. This, rather than the more raucous welfare advocates opting for recognized welfare, is a far more portent factor in the general acceptability of the welfare state. The welfare state, like the mistress always behind the scene but never officially recognized, is the seductive paramour of the most respectable of free-enterprise benefactors.



and forum from which treasure may be derived. *It makes control of the rules more important than production itself.* It distorts activity and energy into the entrepreneurship of influence and adaptability to the maze of favor which the uninitiated cannot hope to maneuver, complete with the coterie of so-called "not-for-profit" corporations to launder and filter confiscated funds available only to "private not-for-profit" agencies in government service (so altruistic, so magnanimous in purpose in contrast to profit gouging entities) and profit making entities which contract to provide the services to corporations which own the land and rent the property to the "non-profit" activity in a siphoning system which provides great reward from a source which is not readily apparent. Such mulcheting is not restricted to socialists specializing in "social action," but by "free enterprising" entities as well.

Support for "free enterprise" frequently turns out to be support—not for "free enterprise" in principled practice, but support for profiting by private entities enjoying sequestered favor through socialistic activity wherein government provides the funds, contracts, requests for services, gratuities, and subsidies from which privately owned providers obtain entitlement to profits. Much better for private ownership to avail itself of the rake-off of government guaranteed rents than for government to build and operate the complex itself (listen to the "free enterprisers" howl about private versus government efficiency if their pipeline to the public trough is questioned). The "inefficiency" which is so often lamented among capital and service brokers (from construction contractors to creative financiers of welfare service providers to bankers to others whose success depends on the velocity of real estate activity) is restricted to that "inefficiency" which precludes the private enterprisers from a cut on activity which

is essentially government in thrust (whether rightly or wrongly an appropriate field of government endeavor).

Whatever the effect of socialized medicine may be in terms of the patient-practitioner relationship, one reason to fear its implementation is because of the opportunity it will provide persons of knowledge, position, and enabling capital to attach their interests to public provisioning systems. The nursing home racket, and the provider frauds in medicaid and medicare, should be particularly instructive. In these arenas, as in others, "free enterprise" has too often come to mean private capturing of profit from governmental activity.

A system which is corrupt in its initiation, practice influence, and effect, will, by its presence, be an occasion of metastasizing the corruption. *It creates opportunities not otherwise extant, so that we may expect influence peddling and similiar scandals to be increasingly characteristic of political figures as well as of the operators as well as of the direct beneficiaries of programs.* By providing an occasion for the reward of evil, it will create its own brokerage, promotion, and supportive constituency. The more complicated its provisions, and the more dependent its beneficiaries and service delivery functionaries, the greater the necessity for administrative, interpretive, informational, "planning," and other personnel specializing in minutia.

The public loses—but the politicians, bureaucrats, and specialists in nonproductivity benefit. And those who would live quiet lives in all godliness and honesty are brought more and more into a social system of increasing dependency on someone else's favor, frequently that of a faceless bureaucracy which, by its nature, will fold, spindle, and mutilate. The independence which provides for the potential of uncontrolled autonomy is the enemy of the bureaucratic/social service/welfare state, for such a status points in the direction of evil

from the perspective of the state—the status of being uncontrolled.

The Christian is enjoined to seek a governmental structure in which he may live a quiet life in all godliness and honesty. This goal necessarily imposes restrictions on governmental structure. It also implies a principle to limit government and whereby its structure may be measured. It requires a subordinate state. It was just such a subordinate state that constitutional government was designed to effectuate. Free, to the constitutional generation, meant freedom *from* arbitrary government. Political law was law to limit law, not teleological law to create what ought to be. Thus, state potential for exercise of hubris and pride and undue exaltation was limited.

Without limitation, and following its natural course of development, government will expand beyond measure. *In seeking to pursue perfect justice, it will become the agent of theft, and the arena in which "justice" by coercion and theft is achieved.* Its aim for perfectedness requires its own exaltation of mission. The status of being uncontrolled—of having the maneuverability in which to implement scriptural injunction, is a status which is warred against by the exalted state. When the civil religion becomes one of syncretic humanism in an aura of religiosity, the result is a "cheap grace" without redeeming effect. Thus, for example, we may have a "born again" cult by association with a religious form but without the Christian fruit (discernment, obedience) of a renewed mind.

The principle of limitation of government to biblically circumscribed proportions needs to be recaptured in the preaching of contemporary churches and in their educational ministry. The thrust of the opinion guiding media (including public education at all levels, along with much sectarian effort) is directed toward certifying a vision of exalted government whose purpose is

the doing of good things, and a unified world government which will enable good things to be done even better on a more universal scale.

From the perspective of the liberationist ethic, the purpose of government is to do good things. To think otherwise is to favor evil by keeping government from preventing chicanery and exploitation, or is to reflect an evil attitude by denying the munificence and the potential of positive government. Or, to some, it is to negate biblical principles such as expression of "love" or promotion of "peace" by failing to support redistribution or detente. Such is the moral discernment of much preaching and teaching. *Covenant people are not to bid goodspeed to the deification and exaltation of government.* Government, to the covenant people, must be viewed in biblical terms of government, as itself subject to government as ordained by God. Government, rightly, is component, and limited in its capacity to do mischief. If government is not component, then it is total in potential waiting only suitable occasion for its exercise of sovereignty.

The doctrine of liberation through positive government efforts involving coercion, theft, and redistribution of spoils and tribute, makes a fetish of the fact of government activity itself. If government is mobilized on behalf of some favored category, neither the latent effect nor the "unanticipated consequences" (even if reasonably uncontested as to latent effect, such as the deleterious effect of the minimum wage law on persons marginal to the labor market) are taken into the calculus. Consequences are frequently disregarded if the *intent* is to mobilize positive government to do good. The objects of favor pre-empt consideration of those who are not the direct objects of the busybodies fervor. Unions and other entities whose transcendental claims are benefitted by the minimum wage partially

because of its deleterious effect on others—from those other workers mulched out of part of their product to pay the higher prices to those forced into idleness and dependence—disregard the effects on those who are harmed. While unions derive benefit from the increased wage scale (which hurts those below them *en masse*), the imposition of an ever increased minimum wage (forced idleness program) is presented as a quest for moral justice. Proponents find emotional release in support as if they were performing a moral act. At the same time, opponents are condemned for their motive as well as fact of opposition.\*

From the perspective of benefactors of transcendental capital, it is better to have one person paid six dollars for drafting a kudo than for three people to be paid \$2.00 each. Therefore, kudo drafting must be accomplished only by those privileged by inheritance (craft union), or education (almost all ac-

tivities), or rules which prevent "unauthorized practice" or which enforce a "union scale" wage. Better for two people to be dependent on welfare and government provisioning, advocacy, retraining, service delivery, resource mobilization, and recruitment into service of the desired political motif, and adding their voice to the demand for expressions of concern on behalf of those unemployed who could beautifully and with moderate profit draft kudos except for the rules, and on behalf of those who, because of the rules, are unable to afford purchases of the product. Ironically, the kudo drafter who is enriched is generally not resented, perhaps because of lack of understanding.\*\* The kudo concocter who, by the structuring of the rules, is able to attach himself to transcendental capital claims above the market value of his product, will be a staunch advocate of positive government. Kudo Concoctors Amalgated will provide educational

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\*If there is a greater cacaphony it is retired military articulating why their attachment to emoluments not only should be royally extended, but why the attachment itself should provide passage into expanded forms of welfare and waiver of requisites which those of less royal claims have to meet. Perhaps the moral is that socialistic beneficence creates an attitude of dependency which greatly expands one's range of claimed entitlement. Or, so one may tend to become convinced on hearing benefactors of military retirement munificences (which may not have required any more intrinsic honor than does cooking hamburgers for twenty years at Greasy's Fast Food Chain, nor caused one to be subject to the danger which working people battling freeway traffic face daily, for much less lucrative rewards and transcendental capital claims) explain why such status itself should entitle them to jobs, exemptions, welfare, and heroic considerations. The notion that one should do for and provide for oneself seems to be atrophied by experience in a system wherein transcendent claims are so expansive and unrealistic in terms of the lot of the average working person; rather, obtaining desired status or privilege seems to become conceptualized as a matter of meeting some transcendently bestowed entitlement. Thus, jobs, grades, exemptions, or whatever special privilege sought appears to be provided, as conceptualized by the military retiree. On the basis of whether he can pull the right string to demonstrate his entitlement, thus opening the leeway for continual pressing and presentation of his military experience as sufficient reason for whatever it is that he desires.

\*\*A significant feature of Davidson's book is that he focuses explicitly on the information deficit, the uninformative nature of political discourse, and the resulting difficulty for the average person in developing a realistic understanding of the way the world operates. The illusions of politics severely distort economic perception. We have not adapted general economic understanding to recognition of the role of transcendental capital. However, recognition of the use of transcendental capital through the political process is essential to understanding the squeeze which is being put on that much maligned of men—the American middle class, who in William Graham Sumner's term, constitutes the "forgotten man" who is so readily ignored when politicians gather to determine what "society" ought to do.

and financial support to mobilize help for the disadvantaged by government activity as true spokesman of the catholic public interest.

The symbiotic relationship is one of like spirit and practical interest with the politicians and the specialists in non-productivity and brokerage of social services for whom political machinations provide the arena for plying their trade. The politician obtains increased influence to wield and wherewithal to bless the objects of chosen interest. He has a built in promotional constituency of similar interest ready to attest to his progressivism and concern over the correct issues (confiscation and redistribution via liberationist ethic, a concern ostensibly on behalf of those who are defrauded by the transcendental capital privileges bestowed by positive government), a savant who can, without blinking or blushing at his dishonesty, simultaneously express lament over the market basket price of kudos, and advocate more regulation in the "public interest." He is distinguished from "conservatives" by a more enlightened view that "government should care and can help." Since he operates on the basis of humanist perception and morality, he is rational and relevant from the humanist value structure. His principles are not in enmity with Babylon.

*Continuation of current declines in purchasing power will cut the average family's real wealth in half by 1985.* That many no longer expect to end their lives in better material condition than they began represents a reversal of the

central fact of the American experience. Only as capital began to accumulate were the seeds of the modern doctrine of progress sown and people learned to expect more of tomorrow than today.

It is not greater intellect, nor harder work, but the successive employment of ever more capital which has been the basis of the unprecedented prosperity and the ever-improving quality of life in the modern age. As long as capital accumulation continues, it is a fair assumption that the general material conditions of life will improve. The fact of contemporary economic life is that the average citizen's capital is *not* accumulating; rather, the average citizen's capital is being consumed with such massive dis-saving or consumption of capital that it presents a peril of the first magnitude for American life.

The impoverishing trends have been accumulating momentum over the years, but the process has been largely abstract and invisible. Now their accumulated effect has become apparent, and are readily reflected in the decline of general optimism over the future. Davidson lays some of the contributing factors within the reach of explanatory principles. His analysis is one which should be studied by ministers and teachers. The American middle class, despised and ridiculed by the intelligensia as it is, is really an expression of the hope of mankind—the hope for a better life in opportunity to establish modest prosperity, to borrow John Donald Wade's diction in describing the American experience, between the rocks and the roots of the trees and will

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\*This classic distinction between "conservatives" and good guys was provided by a national news commentator during the 1976 election who explained the ideological difference between the vice presidential candidates in that one was a "conservative" whereas the other believed "government should care and can help." However, the point made supra needs to be emphasized. "Conservatives" are not necessarily opposed to the utilization of transcendental capital through control of the rules to favor the objects of their interest. Davidson is explicit that the rhetorical and political allegiances which have brought the Western world to a status of being steadily impoverishment and of capital depletion (to a large extent as the result of political gestures) are distorting alliances whereby the particular developments around us are reduced to a few emotionally charged categories toward which we already have defined attitudes.

the whole in perpetuity to oncoming generations. Survival of the middle class requires what Davidson aptly labels as a new American Revolution against the growth of transcendental capital.

Davidson points out that *when it becomes necessary to quadruple the amount of paper money which passes through one's hands every decade, just to break even can mean only a lower standard of living*. The average person, who survives by selling his services for dollars, is bound to lose. "With production unrewarding, and productivity declining, it is hard to see how we shall suddenly produce enough new wealth to satisfy the already existing claims on future purchasing power. We have been misled by monetary manipulation into abandoning our tools and spending more than we earn. Someday there will be a reckoning that could make the already great costs imposed by monetary manipulation seem trivial" (p. 82).

*Government theft by taxation is a major reason the American standard of life is declining*. Already, the government is taking the position that dollars which it does not steal are government "expenditures." The popular illusion that taxes are lower than they are testifies not only to the reluctance of the public to think clearly about the burdens of politics, but also to the skill of those politicians who disguise the tax burden and thereby reduce the political costs of tax impositions.

....While many people believe that Congress has frequently lowered taxes, the opposite is true. Inflation is ratcheting people into ever-higher tax brackets, and the federal-income tax take from the average family has been greatly enlarged....Even when you get a raise under conditions of inflation, your actual spending power could go down. Yet you must pay higher

and higher taxes, just as if your increased income represented a real gain in purchasing power (p. 89).

Even as the decay of the quality of money engenders a decay in productivity compounded by wage and price controls, the product which we do manage to buy is likely to be made of inferior materials—from decreased raisins in the oatmeal cookies to reduction in the quality of hen feeds which has resulted in thinner shelled eggs with less yolk. Only when there is an overall depletion of capital and the income of the average person falls is there a general epidemic of shoddy goods, incompetence, and inadequate service such as is encountered today. As inflation reduces the value of the dollar, quality is reduced. Among the results listed by Davidson: reduction in candy bar size and ingredients (one company having reduced the size of a simple milk-chocolate bar fourteen times in the last two decades); increased telephone malfunction; shoes of lower quality leather, soles attached by glueing rather than stitching, and cheaper substitute materials; odd size bottling and disguised packaging; downgrading of the quality of fresh meats; reduction of inventories (such as ripe tomatoes as opposed to tomatoes which have the shelf life of a mop handle); reduction of sheets in toilet paper rolls; poorer coachwork in vehicles; reduced vehicle warranty coverage; reduced quality of driving surfaces; poorer construction of mobile homes and of conventional homes; greatly inferior mail service. In sum, "the squeeze upon the quality of life in America is real. It is created by the growth of transcendental capital and aggravated by inflation. The plunder of the industrial sector has caused industrial decay and an inevitable decline in the quality of products we use and the services upon which we depend" (p. 120).

The huge government expenditure on education has been accompanied by a

decline in learning. Imports of capital equipment, such as power machinery, have increased more than twice as fast as exports. New growth companies have been forced increasingly to turn to foreign investment from Japan and Germany to obtain needed venture capital. Political efforts to mask the consumption of productive capital have created new bureaucratic enterprises, expanding the access to transcendental capital for millions and at the same time further tightening the squeeze upon production. Loss of millions of productive jobs has been masked by the creation of millions of new government posts sponsored by well-advertised rationales and justifications. These obfuscatory campaigns have, Davidson points out, generally had the effect of engrossing the entire public policy agency—dominating the news and absorbing what attention most people could devote to consideration of what is happening to the world.

Without discounting that medical practitioners often perform useful services (whose princes Davidson somewhat irritatingly refers to as “doctors” as if there were some relationship between being a doctor, e.g. possessing an earned doctoral degree, and being a prince in the medical vocation, or as if “doctor” were a job like lawyer or Indian Chief rather than a status irrelevant to vocation), the fact is that the extraordinary incomes of today’s health practitioners is provided by their claims to transcendental capital. Evidence abounds that access to the more successful medical techniques could be achieved by freeing them from monopoly control. The mysteries of medicine are generally easily mastered; nevertheless, monopolization of health services has caused patients and citizens to be subjected to costs far greater than the value of the services rendered.

The difference between medicine as a productive aid to healing and

the current system of monopoly privilege is important and enormous. The one contributes to individual autonomy and enhances the quality of life of the average person. The other creates a transcendental capital asset out of the pain of the ill and injured. Their dependency upon the medical establishment, induced by that establishment through its political power, has become the basis of a plundering of production which reduces the average person’s quality of life (p. 156).

Lawyers have laid a similar claim to transcendental capital. “Just about anyone who can read and formulate a sentence has the competence to perform most lawyerly tasks” (p. 190). Granting to lawyers the “exclusive advantage of commerce” through power to prohibit “the unauthorized practice of law” is said to have contributed to the “scrambling of life’s expectations.” Davidson asserts and makes a good argument for the position that there is an inverse relationship between the prosperity of lawyers and the development of productive capacity. Lawyers, through their their claims to transcendental capital, are said to be thereby enabled to obtain outrageous sums for things people could do for themselves in the absence of artificial preventatives.

The housing squeeze, the bureaucratic squeeze, the energy squeeze, are examined by Davidson as routes by which vested interests have expanded their private interests at the general expense of the public. The energy crisis, for example is said not to be “crisis” of energy at all, but a crisis of inflation and political policy. At a time when oil reserves are greater than ever before, Davidson states, “consumers face imminent shortages of petroleum products, along with threats of rationing, mandatory business closings, and more. Washington bureaurats are even threat-

ening your freedom to drive your automobile when and where you please. Support is building in Congress for mandatory measures to enforce additional sacrifices upon the public and require you to 'do your part' to solve a crisis that the politicians created in the first place" (p. 225).

Steps toward the needed new American Revolution suggested by Davidson include: balance the budget; restore sound money; reduce taxes; break the professional monopolies; reduce housing regulations; abolish future government pensions and limit government service; abolish the department of energy; practice tax resistance (which helps reduce, not increase, tax rates).

Davidson does not write with intended scriptural purpose. It is often overlooked that scripture has much to say about personal and corporate ethics and commercial systems. The Bible does not commend money taking by transcendental theft, nor by transactory injustice. Most preaching dealing with economic issues has been extremely shallow, whether from a modernist-humanistic-Marxist perspective or from quarters opposite, although the latter have generally been more in line with the biblical precepts of justice. The scripture does *not* condone ill gotten gain. It does *not* condone business-as-usual if business as usual denies the laborer his hire, if the poor and widowed are exploited. Unfortunately, church membership has not necessarily been an indication that the law-word of God has circumcised hearts. There has been much justified and often expressed condemnation of the "conservative" religious ethos for what has often appeared to be automatic endorsement of business policy. Moralizing has often been of the level which a moron would instinctively deflect, i.e., government is undesirable because, without government restrictions, everyone could become a Henry Ford. Nonsense!

However, conservatives have generally been more in line with biblically derived sentiment than has the liberal ethic of building the kingdom of God through the expansion of Marxism. Nor do most persons understand that there is a great gulf fixed between free enterprise as an operative principle and the aims, objectives, and interests of monopoly capital.

Rhetorical assertion that eulogizes free enterprise or calls attention to "our divinely inspired constitution" will not suffice, accurate though the assessment may be. There must be substantive content to understanding, not adoption of slogans without understanding. Otherwise they become, not successful pedagogical agents, but honorific symbols which perish when challenged by the freshman economics or social science professor. Christian education must provide substance—why, how, on what basis, for what reason, from what perspective, with nutritive depth. There must be a grounding in the philosophical principles from which assessments are made, otherwise judgement will be tossed about without rudder or keel.

Redeemed men, with renewed minds, are to be the salt of the earth. It is because professed believers have lost their savor, because their hearts and minds have not been circumcised by the law-word of God in its full range of authority and applicability, that the Western world has descended to the shape it is currently in. We have, as Gary North somewhere expressed it, prodigally expended our moral capital. There is a great deal in Davidson's *The Squeeze*, and it needs to be understood. The value of this book is not polemical, but substantive. It is a statement of principles which set the crisis of the middle class within a graspable perspective. *Attention must be paid to what is happening to the American middle class.* We must, for the sake of the American Dream, Davidson writes, act to free America from the squeeze that

has gripped what is best in American life to the point of suffocation. The survival of the progressive way of life and of the middle class itself, Davidson argues, is at stake. So, it may be added, is the immediate opportunity to live quiet lives in godliness and honesty.

The cause of Christian dominion requires a restoration wherein the covenant blessings rather than the curse of disobedience can be realized. It is the issue of choice of whom we will serve: this man or Caesar, God or Baal. It is the choice of diligent application of the whole commandment to the full round of life and the totality of existence; it is rejection of rebellion. It requires application of *sola scriptura* and the principles derived therefrom to all areas wherein God has spoken. Unfortunately, much of our evangelical zeal, rather than equipping us to every good work, has hardly gone beyond shallow-root efforts at criminalization of sin. We have swallowed economic camels and politically derived social camels; we have enshrined theft as national policy. *We have practically deified collective covetousness and in the process have, as a practical matter, reified the state as implementive instrument of rebellion and greed.* It is not a sign of vital godliness rather than civil religion that the act of ritual school prayer (merely gesture and symbol) mobilizes more concern than issues of godly substance, i.e., the right to godly stewardship of the little ones placed in our charge. That ritual prayer should be offered by heathen conducting heathen indoctrination in a Molochian enterprise should be regarded as the pivotal issue is illustrative of the extent to which syncretism has invaded evangelical thought-form, and the extent to which evangelical civil religion is satisfied with a whited sepulchre if given symbolic gratification.

Davidson does not reason from a covenant or Christian perspective. Politically, his approach may be

described as dominated by the libertarian perspective. Therefore, it is a contrast to the Politics of Manipulation—the use of government to do good by getting the people elected who will do good things through positive government. The libertarian principle, *inter alia*, does seek to maximize individual freedom from the coercive power of the state. As such, it provides maneuverable room for freedom to implement Christian life-style without state harassment. It also offers maneuvering space for implementation of life-styles which are restricted by the criminalization of sin. This is not the place to diatribe on insufficiencies of the libertarian perspective. It may be noted, however, that limitation of the coercive power of the state by the *principle* that government should not do for others what they can do for themselves and is not to do to others what they do not want done to themselves—including exercising dominion of body, conscience, and spirit, whether preventing consumption of laetrile or heroin—while preventing Christians from doing some things they might like to do with civil government, also prevents civil government from invading the Christian conscience with respect to implementation of a Christian lifestyle.

There is much in the programs of the libertarian nurture which is worthy and to which the covenant person may profitably and openly bid godspeed. The Christian is *not* looking out for number one. The Christian is not seeking to coerce, control, intimidate, or demonstrate the spirit of Ignatius Loyola. But, in the current state of things, much selfishness is exercised through control of the rules via government. Much teaching, and, indeed, practically all reasoning about the proper role of government, is bottomed on getting persons of the right sensitivity into position to effectively implement the supposedly proper role of government of doing good things. The libertarians,



perhaps more than any politically conscious group, recognize that a primary need is for government to get out of the way. *Government is vested interest with all the perjorative implications that term should connote.* The "public interest," in the sense of governmental and bureaucratic interest, or the interest of those who obtain favor from the

benison of positive government, is often a conspiracy against the public, as Davidson makes quiet clear. This is the type of literature that influences the libertarian ethic. It is important literature. It is worthy literature. *The Squeeze* represents common grace from which covenant people may profit withal. It should be pursued.

# **PUBLICATION SCHEDULE**

## **Volume VIII**

Volume VIII (1981) of *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction* will feature symposiums on "Social Action" and "War and Revolution." Manuscripts dealing with either topic are now being reviewed for publication. Anyone wishing to submit a manuscript for consideration would be wise to clear the topic in advance with the editor. Manuscripts should be between 20 and 40 pages in length, typewritten and double-spaced. A *Manuscript Style Sheet* for *The Journal* is available from the editor or directly from Chalcedon. It is imperative that each writer consult this style sheet before submitting a final draft of any manuscript. If accepted, *The Journal* will pay the author \$75 upon publication. Shorter manuscripts (under 15 pages) receive \$35. Book reviews (5-10 pages) receive \$10; books dealing with the symposium's topic are preferred. Suggestions concerning the reprinting of important documents or published articles, if accepted, are worth \$20, if accompanied by a clear photocopy of the recommended piece.

Manuscripts suitable for publication in the sections on "Christian Reconstruction" and "Defenders of the Faith" are always given careful consideration, as are suggestions for reprinting. Again, it is wise to clear the topic in advance with the editor. Summaries of dissertations are acceptable.

### **Deadlines:**

**Social Action                      June 15, 1981**

**War and Revolution      Sept. 15, 1981**

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# THE MINISTRY OF CHALCEDON

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Chalcedon [kalSEEdon] is a Christian educational organization devoted exclusively to research, publishing, and to cogent communication of a distinctly Christian scholarship to the world at large. It makes available a variety of services and programs, all geared to the needs of interested laymen who understand the propositions that Jesus Christ speaks to the mind as well as the heart, and that His claims extend beyond the narrow confines of the various institutional churches. We exist in order to support the efforts of all orthodox denominations and churches.

Chalcedon derives its name from the great ecclesiastical Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), which produced the crucial christological definition: "Therefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man. . . ." This formula challenges directly every false claim of divinity by any human institution: state, church, cult, school, or human assembly. Christ alone is both God and man, the unique link between heaven and earth. All human power is therefore derivative; Christ alone can announce that "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). Historically, the Chalcedonian creed is therefore the foundation of Western liberty, for it sets limits on all authoritarian human institutions by acknowledging the validity of the claims of the one who is the source of true human freedom (Galatians 5:1).

Christians have generally given up two crucial features of theology that in the past led to the creation of what we know as Western civilization. They no longer have any real optimism concerning the possibility of an earthly victory of Christian principles and Christian institutions, and they have also abandoned the means of such a victory in external human affairs: a distinctly biblical concept of law. The testimony of the Bible and Western history should be clear: when God's people have been confident about the ultimate earthly success of their religion and committed socially to God's revealed system of external law, they have been victorious. When either aspect of their faith has declined, they have lost ground. Without optimism, they lose their zeal to exercise dominion over God's creation (Genesis 1:28); without revealed law, they are left without guidance and drift along with the standards of their day.

Once Christians invented the university; now they retreat into little Bible colleges or sports factories. Once they built hospitals throughout Europe and America; now the civil governments have taken them over. Once Christians were inspired by "Onward, Christian Soldiers"; now they see themselves as "poor wayfaring strangers" with "joy, joy, joy down in their hearts" only on Sundays and perhaps Wednesday evenings. They are, in a word, pathetic. Unquestionably, they have become culturally impotent.

Chalcedon is committed to the idea of Christian reconstruction. It is premised on the belief that ideas have consequences. It takes seriously the words of Professor F. A. Hayek: "It may well be true that we as scholars tend to overestimate the influence which we can exercise on contemporary affairs. But I doubt whether it is possible to overestimate the influence which ideas have in the long run." If Christians are to reconquer lost ground in preparation for ultimate victory (Isaiah 2, 65, 66), they must rediscover their intellectual heritage. They must come to grips with the Bible's warning and its promise: "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he" (Proverbs 29:18). Chalcedon's resources are being used to remind Christians of this basic truth: what men believe makes a difference. Therefore, men should not believe lies, for it is the truth that sets them free (John 8:32).

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