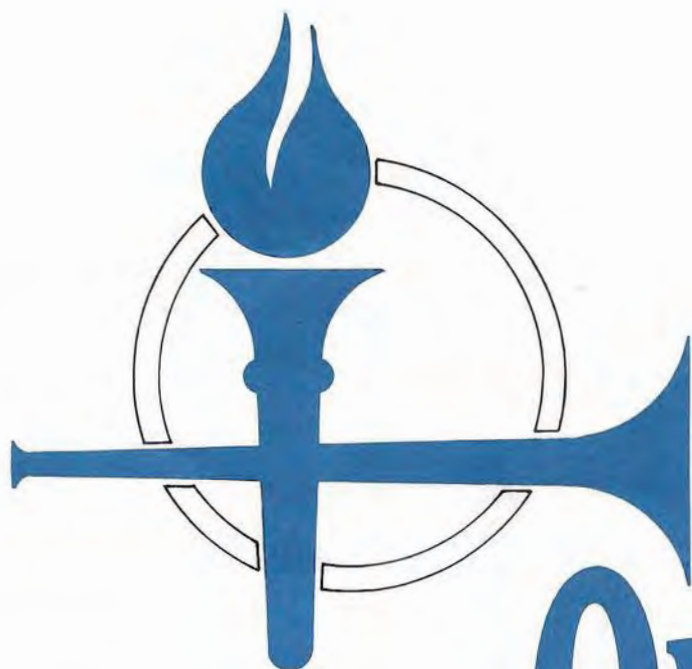




Outlook

*devoted to the exposition
and defense of the
reformed faith*

Stewardship Rights

Case Against Evolution

Children at the Supper

MARCH 1988

THE MESSIAH BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." "Yes, it is as you say," replied Jesus. "But I say to all of you: in the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One, and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy."

Matt. 26:63-65

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The trial of Jesus before Annas and Caiaphas was very slow. Little progress was made at first. They searched the crowd for witnesses, they considered the testimony of two men regarding the temple, and they asked Jesus several questions which He did not answer. But He *had* to be put to death. Concerning that they were determined. The high priest therefore resorts to a final method of procedure. He will place Jesus under oath regarding His identity and claims.

Placing Jesus under oath implied that up to this time they were not completely sure about the truth of His statement. With an oath one is placed as it were in the very presence of God, and then surely is expected to tell the truth. For Jesus this was very painful. Didn't He always live in the presence of God, His Father? He was always very conscious of telling the truth. All His words were oaths as it were. All the scorn that He later had to endure was no worse than this, "I charge you under oath...."

Jesus submits to the authority of

the high priest. He recognizes the office of the high priest as of the Lord. "Yes, it is as you say" was the reply. These Jews as leaders of course claimed to believe in the Old Testament. The implications of His answer are that He is the Shiloh of Jacob, the Son of David, the Promised One.

These words of Jesus bring Him to the very climax of His revelation to Israel, the Church of that day. This oath, with the subsequent payment on the cross as the Son of God will bring about the last meeting of the Sanhedrin. Soon the veil of the temple will be rent and before God the Sanhedrin will be dismissed.

But following this dark night will come the break of a new day, the most important and momentous of all earthly days, Good Friday. And Good Friday will be followed by the resurrection and then the ascension and Pentecost. And He will be Lord of heaven and earth but also judge of all people.

The clock strikes twelve. The judgment of the world has come. They will condemn Him exactly because He confessed to be the Son of God.

This is the confession Jesus had made in all of His ministry. Again and again He taught and proved with miracles that He was Divine, God's own son. But in the mind and hearts of these godless rulers of Israel and the church this is blasphemy. Neither heaven or earth can tolerate such spiritual profanity. He must die.

And Caiaphas rends his clothes. Such acts were considered to be symbols of grief. According to Law this was forbidden to the high priest. He

MEDITATION

John Blankespoor

was not supposed to have his eyes bent to the earth, but raised towards heaven. Aaron, for example, was not allowed to mourn when his two sons died, struck down by the Lord on account of their sins. The high priest always had to hold the dignity of his office. But at Jesus trial laws are disregarded; Caiaphas rends his clothes, pretending to be intensely grieved by such blasphemy in the body of God's people. What a sham!

Jesus "came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:11). Not only the "people of God," but God Himself (behind the official declaration of the high-priest) sentenced Jesus to death. According to Caiaphas He was guilty, because He had blasphemed, but according to God, because He had taken the blasphemy of others upon Himself. When Jesus made the greatest of all confessions, the "church" openly rejected and condemned Him. This was before the world. A father will punish his children in his own home. But this is different from doing it in public before the world. Here Israel disowned the Promised Messiah before the whole world. This sentence of the high priest no doubt weighed more heavily on Jesus than the death sentence of Pilate. Pilate saw this man's death as a way out of a difficult situation, Caiaphas declared it an act of justice before the holy Judge of heaven and earth. For Pilate, the peace of Caesar might not be disturbed; for Caiaphas the peace of God would be taken away if He were not killed.

In this hour of darkness the "church" condemned the Son of God.

When such verdicts are given in the court room all is often quiet. On the announcement of the death sentence people may quietly leave the court room. Here they linger. Much worse than that, they spit in His face to show their hatred. When little children in a fit of anger act in this way they may be reprimanded. Here grown-ups, "church" leaders know no such limits. They hit Him with their fists and struck Him with the palms of their hands. And no one restrained them. As if this were not enough, He was blind-folded. The crowd hadn't forgotten that He claimed to be a prophet. That claim was mocked first by Israel, next by the world of heathendom in Pilate, then by the false brother, Herod, a descendant of Esau, and finally at the cross by all of the crowd together. "Who struck you?" they asked. Man, fallen man, even when he seemed "refined," did this—even the "church" of that day! In the deepest sense, God brought all this suffering upon His own Son.

No one defended Jesus. He did not try to defend Himself, even though the greatest injustice was done. All proper procedure and court room decorum was completely ignored. Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures, "As a lamb is led to the slaughter, He opened not His mouth." He was willing to "take" it all—to go the way that was necessary to make payment for the sins of His people.

He would "save His people from their sins." He would redeem us from the curse, even though it cost Him His life.

Look at Caiaphas the high priest, with rent clothes. Look at the people—leaders of the church, members of the Sanhedrin, elders and scribes, reject and hate Him. It is more fitting to look at ourselves, and "rend" not our clothes, but our hearts! The end of Caiaphas, the earthly high priest, was the torn garment, but the beginning of being found in Jesus is a broken and a contrite heart." Such hearts God does not despise.

Later Pilate would say, "Behold the man." But the Word says to all believers, "Behold your Savior"—and see the love of your God.



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THE DECLINE OF EVANGELICALISM IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

R. J Sheehan

The winds of rationalism swept through Europe in the eighteenth century's "age of enlightenment" chilling the souls of men and giving birth to atheism, scepticism and Deism. But in England and Wales, through the mercy of God, light and warmth returned to the hearts of many in the Spirit-empowered "Methodist" revivals, and faith seemed again to be "on the march."

The prospects for religious growth and progress as the nineteenth century dawned seemed very encouraging. The revivals of the eighteenth century had given evangelicals a sense of the reality and power of God. Most of the denominations were dominated by evangelicals. These evangelicals were largely, although not entirely, inclined away from hyper-Calvinism and desirous of making great advances in missionary work overseas and gospel ministry at home. Evangelicalism seemed strong and its future looked glorious.

Whatever divisions there were among the evangelicals over Calvinism, baptism, eschatology, etc., the evangelicals were easily distinguished by their common religious

experience and their view of Scripture. "Bound up inextricably with every phase of the religious experience of evangelicals, an experience that touched their lives at every significant point, was the Bible - a Bible that was not merely a source book for the early history of their religion, but a Bible that was the authoritative and infallible Word of God. Faith in the Bible was to the early evangelicals as fundamental as faith in God, and they made little distinction between the two. The inerrancy of the Bible was so intimate a part of their religious thought and life that a denial of it seemed to threaten the destruction of the faith itself."¹

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, therefore, English evangelicalism looked to be an inevitable enemy for the theological rationalism of the Higher Critical movement that was beginning to sweep through the German universities and churches. It did not seem possible that the rationalistic view of the Scriptures as an ordinary book that could be questioned, contradicted and reconstructed could ever find acceptance with those who identified

Scripture as the infallible, inerrant, inspired Word of the living God. Yet by the mid-1890's, "all of the major non-conformist bodies had survived the shock of higher criticism without schism. The new approach to the Bible had been accepted by the overwhelming majority of non-conformist leaders."²

Not only had the non-conformist leaders capitulated but virtually all the theological institutions. By 1891, "a close if unofficial surveillance was imposed upon potential candidates for positions in the Old Testament field in British Universities, and only those who displayed proper respect for the canons of critical orthodoxy were appointed to academic posts."³

Outside the universities, "the new approach to the Bible . . . was taught in all the leading non-conformist colleges. Any Old Testament teacher who repudiated the new criticism was nothing more than an anachronism by 1895."⁴ This process continued in the twentieth century, so that by 1932 a modernist "gloried in the fact that there were no colleges left adhering to the position of the old evangelical confessions."⁵

The question that we must ask is: how did the Higher Critical view of the Bible manage to overcome the evangelical view in such a short time and in such a powerful way? We shall consider six of the contributory factors:

1. The Legacy of the "Age of Enlightenment"

Whereas it might have seemed to the evangelical world that the eighteenth-century revivals had swept away the infidelity of the rationalism of the earlier part of the eighteenth century, the rationalistic principle had simply been suppressed and not destroyed.

Rationalism had sought to remove mystery, miracle and antinomy from religion and to set fact and reason over against feeling and faith. It was accepted that the Bible contained some facts but that much of it had to be accepted only by faith. Pure rationalism accepted "the facts" only and rejected "the beliefs." In its religious form this rationalistic approach meant the making of a distinction between the beliefs of the Bible which a person might desire to believe without proof and the statements of the Bible which had to be supported by evidence or else be rejected. The seeds of the dichotomy between "the Christ of faith" and "the Jesus of history" were beginning to enter religious consciousness based on the claims that the Bible contains two differing kinds of materials, namely, the historical record and the theological interpretations.

Some of the evangelicals of the nineteenth century began to maintain "the theology of the Bible" with great tenacity whilst accepting that the history, geography and science of the Bible could be mistaken. The Bible, they believed, was infallible in theology but errant in fact. The higher critical method could, therefore, be applied to the Scriptures and a reconstruction of "the facts" could be legitimately attempted. Thus the history of the Bible could supposedly be understood in terms of the theory of evolution and the Book's basic central message remain unchanged.

The evangelical public learned higher criticism not from atheists and sceptics but from men who upheld the basic theology of the Bible but not its factual inerrancy. "The men who led England into a critical view of the Bible were men known for their theological orthodoxy".⁶ As long as a man preached the "gospel" he could find acceptance in evangelicalism. Many people found relief in being able to keep the great truths of the gospel whilst having to make no defense of the passages in the Bible that are difficult to harmonize or explain.

2. The Revival Emphasis on Experience

One of the effects of the eighteenth-century revivals was to turn men from mere head-knowledge of Scripture and the creeds to a heart-knowledge of the God revealed therein. The preaching of the utter necessity of rebirth focused attention on religious experience. In the years following the revivals the tendency was to *put emphasis upon a person's religious experience rather than his belief*.

Experience-conscious evangelicals had little time for creeds. Their emphasis had not originated in a conscious desire for a creedless Christianity but this was its tendency. It was precisely that danger which had opened the door to Deism in the early eighteenth century and had enabled it to gain victories. At the end of the last century Robert Shindler warned evangelicals of the lessons from history,⁷ and C. H. Spurgeon pleaded for a creed distinctive enough to exclude the rationalists from non-conformist denominations, but failed to get a hearing in the anti-creedal atmosphere of his day. "The pietistic quality of the revival put primary emphasis on individual Christian experience and valued correct doctrine only as a means to the creation of such experience. As a result evangelicals would tolerate almost any divergence in doctrine provided the individual concerned was known to have a fervent evangelical experience, and above all if his ministry

awakened the same experience in others". Evangelicals had a "general lack of interest . . . in theology."⁸

C. H. Spurgeon noted the tendency to accept any doctrinal statement as long as the person who made it was, "a clever man and a good-natured brother."⁹

The nineteenth-century evangelicals argued against creeds for a "freer" view of Scripture on the grounds of freedom of conscience and the Protestant rule of the right of private interpretation. By rejecting creeds altogether — or accepting only such creeds as were sufficiently vague to mean little — the advocates of the higher-critical view of the Bible ousted the evangelicals from their dominant position in the denominations with hardly a fight.

3. The Revival Emphasis on Unity

One of the consequences of the eighteenth-century revivals was to unite evangelicals in a common faith and in a mutual desire to work together in missionary and evangelistic activity as well as in theological education. The desire for unity had not always been able to be realized during the revivals because of the contentions between the evangelists over the doctrines of grace. The eighteenth-century preachers had not been able to resolve this question. The nineteenth-century evangelicals generally gained unity by abandoning or modifying their Calvinism.

A study of the eighteenth-century advance of Deism makes it clear that it made least advance where Calvinism was strongly maintained.¹⁰ C. H. Spurgeon stated, "We believe that Calvinism has in it a conservative force which holds men to vital truth."¹¹ In reviewing the nineteenth century, the neo-orthodox writer W. B. Glover acknowledged, "Where Calvinism had been supreme, its decline left a theological vacuum."¹²

Not only did the decline of Calvinism with its high view of scriptural authority make the higher critical view more easily accepted, but other doctrines began to be debased also. "The awful sternness of the Calvinistic God gave place to milder ideas

which may be summed up in the popular phrase "the Fatherhood of God". *The emphasis on God's love and mercy went so far as to call in question the time honoured doctrine of eternal punishment*".¹³

The friends of higher criticism soon understood the antipathy towards Calvinism amongst many nineteenth-century evangelicals. Consequently when conservative evangelicals attacked the higher critics, they retorted by accusing them of Calvinism, and the general evangelical public accepted the charge. Constantly C. H. Spurgeon had to protest against this diverting ploy. "The present struggle is not a debate upon the question of Calvinism or Arminianism but of the truth of God versus the inventions of men."¹⁴

It is, however, undoubtedly true that if the Calvinists had maintained their strength within evangelicalism in the nineteenth century the higher critics would have had a more difficult task capturing evangelicalism. As it was, "the theological uncertainty that accompanied the dissolution of Calvinism made the non-conformists less able and less anxious to defend traditional views from new views."¹⁵

4. The Subtlety of the Attack

The Christian church has often been able to defend itself much more easily from attacks from outside its ranks than from within its own number. Attacks from apparent friends are always less expected and more difficult both to detect and oppose. We have already noted that many of the leading advocates and friends of higher criticism had a reputation for gospel preaching.

The friends of higher criticism were often very cunning. They described their theology as, "broad and full"¹⁶ rather than "narrow and limited" like that of the Calvinists. James Dann attacked ministers who were unorthodox in doctrine but stayed in the churches to undermine the faith.¹⁷ That this happened is beyond dispute. W. B. Glover approved of this subversion. He wrote

of, "the tendency of some who were in advance of the general movement of opinion to hide their more unorthodox views from the public. This was unquestionably an instance of sound political sense."¹⁸ This ethically questionable procedure undoubtedly was successful in fooling the evangelicals in general.

The cunning of the higher critics was also seen in their concentration on the Old Testament. It was far easier to question this historicity and accuracy of Jonah than of our Lord. (Evangelicals still sometimes put the words of Jesus in red and the rest in black!) A full frontal attack on the gospels had to follow the undermining of the Old Testament, not precede it.

The decline of Calvinism also led to the promotion of worldliness. C. H. Spurgeon commented, "The fact is that many would like to unite church and stage, cards and prayer, dancing and sacrament."¹⁹ In this atmosphere of "freer" life-style, conservatism in theology was not likely to prosper. Loose living and loose theology were not unconnected. To accept higher criticism was to be in fashion. To maintain the old evangelical doctrine of Scripture was to be an anachronism.

5. The Blunders of the Conservative Evangelicals

With hindsight, it is possible to see that the conservative evangelicals made two major mistakes in their opposition to the higher critical movement. First, they paid so much attention to declaring their opposition to it, especially in the earlier part of the nineteenth century, that, "the orthodox attacks on the critics ... were one of the chief means by which a knowledge of higher criticism was disseminated in England".²⁰

Closely related was the second mistake. The conservatives did not take the higher critics seriously enough. "In 1880 it was still possible for orthodox Bible scholars in England to consider higher criticism as the temporary form taken by infidelity and Germany and confidently to predict the scholarly victory of tradition".²¹ C. H. Spurgeon dismissed the teach-

ings of Julius Wellhausen as, "calculated only to befool those who are ignorant,"²² as late as 1887!

The consequence of this under-estimation of the higher critical movement, until it was too late to reverse the trends, was that some of the opposition to the higher critics rose little above anti-German rhetoric and little real attempt was made to answer the critics at a theological level. W. B. Glover recognized the lack amongst the English conservatives of an equivalent to the Princeton theologians to defend their cause.²³ The conservative attack was led by comparatively untrained pastors and in the eyes of many, as in the eighteenth-century Deist controversy, "more attention was paid to learning, scholarship and oratory than to godliness, orthodoxy and evangelical zeal."²⁴ So the higher critics won the day.

6. The Blunders of the Evangelicals in General

The less conservative evangelical leaders must bear the weight of the blame for the victory of higher criticism. It is clear that many of them put more value on maintaining unity and harmony than on the truth. They sold their heritage for a reputation of big-heartedness. C. H. Spurgeon warned them to no avail. "On all hands we hear cries for unity in this and unity in that ... It is easy to cry, 'A confederacy' but that union which is not based on the truth of God is rather a conspiracy than a communion."²⁵

Many of the evangelicals showed a sad lack of discernment. They saw an acceptance of higher criticism as a means to further their scholarly reputations. In this way the Baptist John Clifford won an accolade for his, "broad interpretation of Evangelicalism, his appreciation of the work of Biblical scholarship, his resolute opposition to blind conservatism, his repudiation of the antagonism between Religion and Science so often proclaimed by some in our church."²⁶ However, he was also responsible for opposing the stand of C. H. Spurgeon and enabling the higher critical takeover of

the Baptist Denomination. Men praised him for his modernity but history condemns it as compromise.

In fact, while full weight must be given to the failure of many to see the real danger of higher criticism and its detrimental effects on evangelicalism, it must sadly be said that a charge of cowardice has to be levelled against many of the evangelicals of the nineteenth century. The nineteenth century saw three groups within the evangelical churches: the conservative evangelicals; the higher critics, and "a great mixed multitude who from various causes decline to be ranked with either of them".²⁷ It was this "mixed multitude" who would not side with either the old evangelical view of the Scripture or with the new view of Scripture, who held the key to the decline. They would not discipline error and so they were overwhelmed by it. The consequence of their indecision and cowardice was that whereas, "The early nineteenth century saw a quickening of religious life all over Europe . . . when the nineteenth century closed Christianity was at a low ebb."²⁸

Most nineteenth-century evangelicals had a view of love to others that meant the abandonment of or compromise on truth. But as C. H. Spurgeon correctly observed, "To part with truth to show charity is to betray our Lord with a kiss."²⁹

Some Conclusions

1. That "The first step astray is a want of adequate faith in the divine inspiration of the sacred Scriptures . . . Where ministers and Christian churches have held fast to the truth that the Holy Scriptures have been given by God as an authoritative and infallible rule of faith and practice, they have never wandered seriously out of the way. But when, on the other hand, reason has been exalted above revelation, and made the exponent of revelation, all kinds of errors and mischiefs have been the result."³⁰ Our doctrine of scripture is, therefore, not a matter of minor importance.

2. That Calvinists have historically left the doctrine of Scripture least of all those who have departed from it. Therefore, Calvinism is an important safeguard against heresy.

3. That the basis of unity cannot be merely a shared spiritual experience or shared evangelistic zeal. A man who is converted and is a means of conversion to others can be more dangerous to the health of the churches than an outright heretic if he mixes his zeal for the gospel with defective views of Scripture and half-heartedness about other major doctrines.

4. That a false sense of Christian love can lead people to a total lack of discernment in which they treat wolves like sheep and maintain alliances with those who are enemies of the gospel. This is to the inevitable detriment of the churches.

5. That worldliness and looseness are inevitably companions of theological disinterest and looseness.

6. That evangelicals have to take their opposition seriously at a theological level and not merely respond by abuse. The absence of a theological answer to the higher critics gave the evangelicals the appearance of theological ignorance.

7. That the ministers often become corrupt before the people. "As a general rule laymen were slower in accepting higher criticism than the ministers."³¹ Even as late as the 1890's, "there remained large numbers of laymen and some ministers who never accepted the new criticism even in principle."³² But, with the pulpits of their churches hijacked, the people were left to rot, with blind guides leading them to nowhere worth going.

8. That the dismal history of English evangelicals from 1900 to 1950 cannot be understood apart from this background of nineteenth-century compromise and failure. The present, comparatively healthier state of evangelicalism is closely connected to the "revival" of Calvinism. All the present gains, however, could be rapidly lost if the lessons of the past are not remembered.

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STEWARDSHIP RIGHTS

Stephen M. Arrick

Any acceptable method of giving should preserve and promote the stewardship rights of the individual believer and member of the Church. Read II Corinthians 8 and 9 and ask yourself if the Quota System as it is understood and practiced in the Christian Reformed Church acknowledges or violates the stewardship rights of the believer outlined there.

Right #1 - Generosity

Our first right is to be generous. In II Corinthians 8:1-7 the Apostle Paul uses the Macedonian churches as THE model for all churches. Their joy, despite their extreme poverty, prompted a generous response to the needs of the gospel ministry and the kingdom.

Apparently, no prescribed or dollar amount was necessary. They generously and voluntarily gave beyond their ability, pleading for an opportunity to share in the ministry of the gospel!

Does the quota method, as commonly understood and employed, encourage generosity? Absolutely not! In practice, it stifles generosity for many and creates a hardship for many others. Institutions and agencies should applaud the day that quotas are abolished. Not only would it bring our giving practices as Churches and denomination closer to the Scriptural pattern, but gifts would undoubtedly increase. As long as quotas are perceived as a bill, or assessment, people will naturally absolve themselves of their duty by paying the minimum. After all, when was the last time you sent the gas company an extra \$5 just because they were doing such a great job? Bills are bills and gifts are gifts. The idea of a free-will (Spirit constrained) gift encourages the believer's right to give to the work of the Lord generously.

Would the Apostle Paul have given the Macedonians and Corinthians a dollar amount per family

without first and foremost informing them of their rights and responsibilities as believers? Of course not. First of all, it is doubtful that the Apostle would ever have employed a quota method. Secondly, it is unthinkable that he would have them give blindly towards a dollar figure. Every gift should be for a published cause along with information concerning the purpose, activities, and particular needs of that cause. In II Corinthians 8 and 9 Paul is describing such a particular cause.

Far from compelling to give, no matter how lacking the Corinthians were in giving, the Apostle Paul himself would not command them to give. "I am not commanding you (to give), but I want to test the sincerity of your love" (II Cor. 8:8). Compelled, coerced, required giving was not in the Apostle's vocabulary. Believers cannot be Scripturally compelled to give to any cause. That is our right in spite of the decisions of popes, councils, and synods. It is our

right, because it was given to us through the Scripture by Christ. That matter belongs in the realm of "the conscience before God."

Right #2 - Equitability

Our second right is to give in an equitable manner. Fairness is essential in giving. Churches differ from one to another as dramatically as do individuals, in their economic ability. The one thing the Apostle Paul wished to avoid was to lay a burden upon a church or individual that constituted an economic hardship. He says, "Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed but that there might be equality" (II Cor. 8:13).

An annual denominational quota approaching \$500.00 a year is hardly an equitable arrangement. In most churches parents are already paying thousands of dollars a year for Christian education and a thousand or so for the running of the local church. As an "average" member told me after reading the average income of a CRC household, "Whose average? It seems that the Christian Reformed Church is turning into a rich man's Church." Another man, when told that he didn't have to pay his full quota, said "What do you think I am. A charity case? I'll pay."

Generous and willing gifts are what God expects. We have the right to expect a system of giving to be equitable. If, through our own generosity, we experience a hardship, that should be our decision and blessing. Even though quotas are "recommended amounts" they still express an expectation that is understood by most to be a requirement. You pay your quotas or someone else will. But does the quota system, as presently understood and employed, promote and preserve equitable giving? Not in its present state. Synod, to its credit, has recognized the presence of certain individuals and churches, who because of their economic inability, are at a disadvantage in meeting quotas. Student families, lower income families and single parent families, when they are found in significant numbers, may be exempt from quota requirements.

But this does not adjust to the inequity of recommending the same

dollar amount per family. Why should any family be absolved of the opportunity and responsibility of giving towards denominational causes? That is a decision that should not and Scripturally cannot, be made for them. It is their right to give, not to a bottom line, to a cause as the Lord has laid it upon their hearts and has provided.

The quota system, as presently understood and employed, violates both the believer's right of generous giving and the right of equitable giving. One man's generosity is another man's stinginess. All economic classes should be encouraged to give in a generous and equitable manner toward the causes and needs presented to them.

Right #3 - Accountability

Our third stewardship right as believers is accountability. The Apostle Paul assures the Corinthians that they "want to avoid any criticism by the way we (they) administer this (the) liberal gift." This accountability consisted of both doing what was right in the eyes of the Lord and the eyes of man. Paul realized the important principle that must be kept in mind in all giving: "Where the buck starts is where the buck stops."

This accountability must go far beyond the provision of a detailed, duly audited financial statement listing receipts and disbursements. The believer exercises a sacred trust when giving to causes. In the Christian Reformed Church, that trust is exercised on their behalf by boards and assemblies. We trust boards and assemblies not only to be fiscally responsible, but more importantly, doctrinally responsible. These are the two "bottom lines" for which churches, agencies and institutions must give an account. How did they handle their financial riches and how did they handle their spiritual riches? The two are inseparable.

If boards and assemblies are not holding Churches, agencies and institutions accountable, then the trust placed in them by the believer and giver has been broken and the believer must exercise his right in the pew by not perpetuating the error with an uninterrupted flow of financial support. In a confessionally united Church, gifts are to be

directed toward the purpose of fostering and honoring that confessional unity. Money is not a disembodied symbol. It is one of the ways we give ourselves in service. We should no more give money to an institution working at cross purposes with our creeds and confessions that we should roll up our sleeves and assist them in their endeavor.

When ministers, assemblies and members allow institutions to work at cross purposes with the stated doctrinal and practical purpose of the Church, it affects the stewardship unity once enjoyed by all. A quota system, once only unbiblical, now becomes nearly impossible.

In a confessional Church, when there is a breakdown in doctrinal and practical unity, giving becomes an extremely personal matter. There can be no more "general funds" from which come all local and denominational expenses. Local budgets and causes have to be separated from classical and denominational budgets and causes, because the right and the responsibility for giving ultimately resides with the individual believer. Most churches already run a two-track system in which the first offering is for the general fund and the second for designated causes. The present development requires only that we be consistent, establishing the local operating budget and designating a second envelope or offering towards a specific classical or denominational cause.

I grant you that certain people would exercise their right not to support some institutions and agencies. That is their right, for good reason or bad. That is their right, even if a quota system is in place. But, the present understanding and employment of the quota system violates that right of the believer to exercise accountability in Christian stewardship.

If the Christian Reformed Church wants to tolerate a plurality of biblical and theological, doctrinal positions and practices, then it must tolerate and provide for a plurality of methods of giving.

Refusal to do so places the believer or Church in a position of not giving at all, devising a system which allows for the expression of the

believer's scriptural rights, or of leaving the denomination. It is wholly unconscionable that a denomination would place its members in the position of having to leave because its method of collecting funds violates the believer's rights at every point.

Often when the believer exercises his and her office responsibly, they are accused of breaking faith and unity. They are, however, duty-bound to give only from Scriptural principles, never out of loyalty, custom, or ignorance. The truth of the matter is that the only guilty parties are those who gratefully receive the support of a confessional body and then use that position and privilege to promote their own practical and doctrinal agenda. Punishing the believer who cannot give because of scruples of conscience is like spanking the child who is trying to pick up the pieces of a broken vase and allowing the culprit to get off scot free.

Right # 4 - Willingness

Our fourth right of stewardship is to give willingly. Paul says that "if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have" (II Cor. 8:12).

Calvinists don't like the word "free-will." When applied to salvation it means one thing. When applied to giving it means quite another. Call it "Spirit compelled" if you wish. The idea is the same. Believers have a scriptural right to resist compelled giving and an obligation to willingly give.

Does the quota system as presently understood and employed promote and preserve even this most basic of stewardship rights? No. Quotas are understood as a bill, an obligation, in many cases taking priority even over the health and welfare of the local Church. A local Church may need a new building, a computer, a part-time secretary, an additional staff member, a youth worker, or an expensive new program, but quotas come first and so inflate the bottom line of the Church budget that the local Church cannot objectively consider its needs. "We can get along. But, you know, they need another secretary in the fund-raising department of the Board of such and such."

When the denominational machinery gets virtually everything it asks and, as a result, the local Church is demoralized and paralyzed, something is badly out of whack. There must be another, better way. Even if a person does wish to give above the local and denominational quota, the local Church takes the excess and pays the quota of someone who isn't giving. Ironically, the only way for the conscience-bound believers to get around quotas, since quota causes are not presently designated in second envelopes or offerings, is to give only to designated offerings and to forward separate gifts to agencies and institutions of their choice. That is the only way to reduce the total of the general fund so significantly that, in the end, the local Church will have to pay its bills first and the denomination will get the rest.

This present practice is unfair to the local Church, because if members could look at their local operating budgets minus quotas, they would be encouraged to plan more aggressively and give more generously. It is also unfair to many agencies and institutions. All of them now suffer a shortfall because the quota system will not allow the believer to give "without compulsion" to causes he deems worthy or unworthy.

Right # 5 - Personal Responsibility

Our fifth right of stewardship is to be personally responsible for the management and disbursement of God's gifts. We are responsible and we must take responsibility for where and how our gifts are spent.

The Apostle Paul does not tell the Corinthians to throw all of their money in a pot and then to let the elders and deacons decide how much goes here or what goes there. He says, "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (II Cor. 9:7).

That little phrase "each man" is extremely important. Not only did Paul not want anyone to give with even the hint of reluctance or compulsion, but he recognized that every believer is responsible for what each gives to, and how much each gives.

Does our present understanding

of quotas and the way the system is employed promote and preserve the principle of personal responsibility? Only if we allow it to. If we are giving to a money figure, a dollar amount, without being conscious of the cause and the need, we are violating this principle. If the system does not allow us to designate our gifts to specific causes and allow us to "decide in our hearts," then the system should be immediately changed. Ignoring of a better and more biblically faithful way, if known, constitutes personal and corporate disobedience. "To the one who knows to do good, and does not, to that one it is sin" (James 4:17).

I don't believe that those who invented the quota system realized what it one day might become. To them it was a simple and convenient way to solve a complicated problem. They could not have foreseen the dramatic escalation of denominational causes and their ever increasing "needs"! They did not anticipate the increasing toleration of doctrinal and practical plurality in their confessionally unified Body. They did not realize that one day the system designed to preserve unity would be the reason why many people are finding no option but non-payment of quotas or leaving the denomination for conscience sake.

We are often reminded that our quota system is the envy of many other fund raising organizations. Yet, I don't see them lining up at the door to adopt that method for themselves. Many people know that very few Christians would tolerate such a system for very long.

Yet in the CRC this is the only way we know. It is the way with which we grew up, and that makes it right. Wrong! It is right, not if it works, but if it is according to the Word of God. In II Corinthians 8 and 9 God instructs the believer that in giving, he has rights and responsibilities too! Let's find a way that preserves our rights to give generously, equitably, accountably, free-willingly, and with personal responsibility.

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Jelle Tuininga

CHILDREN AT THE LORD'S SUPPER

Synod of 88 will be faced once again with the issue of children at the Lord's Supper. The matter was before the synod of 86, but it was decided to give the entire matter back into the hands of the (enlarged) committee. Synod of 86 was presented with a majority and minority report, and the same will be true for the upcoming 88 synod. Only this time things are reversed: the minority position in 86 (that children should be admitted to the Lord's Supper without public confession of faith) is now the majority one. Six members sign the majority, three members the minority. I am disappointed at the switch in position on the part of some who signed the majority report in 86. A number of comments are in order.

1. I find the majority report exegetically weak and very unconvincing. If there are no more compelling grounds for making such a drastic change in our position than this committee advances, then we had better leave things as they are. The minority report does better exegetical work and points out some of the weaknesses in the majority report.

2. The majority report suffers from a majority inconsistency. It wants to "have the cake while eating it" at the same time. On the one hand, it states that children may come to the Lord's Supper "because of their inclusion in the Covenant of Grace," while on the other hand it says that "participation in the Lord's Supper is an act of faith."

Now I submit that you can't have it both ways. It's one or the other. We baptize children not on the basis of their faith, but on the basis of God's promises. If the same holds true for the Lord's Supper (and at times the report seems to say so), then participation has nothing to do with an act of faith. Three members of the committee sense the inconsistency and want to do away with recommendations that speak about a discerning faith. (They are mistaken, however, in saying that these recommendations don't flow from the body of the report: they do. The report itself is inconsistent.)

Synod will have to deal with this inconsistency head-on. For that is really the issue at stake. If partaking of the Lord's Supper is (also) a response on the part of the participant to what God has done for him in his baptism (as is clear from the Scriptures and our Confessions), then we don't need a major change in our present practice. Some young people come to that mature faith at an early age, some at a later age. There is room for flexibility. Our present practice lends itself easily to such flexibility. Each consistory can determine on its own when a young person has a genuine discerning faith.

If, however, partaking of the Lord's Supper has nothing at all to do with faith or spiritual maturity (as three members of the majority appear to believe—one of whom already expressed that in his minority report in 86), then we have a dif-

ferent ballgame altogether. And then we need a radical change of the rules for the game. But before we do that, we had better be sure we know what we are doing, and that the Scriptures and the creeds can back us up. So far there is no evidence of that at all. None whatsoever. This constitutes a major flaw in the majority report.

3. It should be clear to everyone (including the committee members) that if we believe that covenant membership alone gives one access to the Lord's table, we will have to make a rather major change in our confessions. The Belgic Confession states that "we receive this holy sacrament in the assembly of the people of God, . . . making there confession of our faith and of the Christian religion" (Art. 35). A. 76 of the H. Catechism states that to eat the crucified body and drink the shed blood of Christ is "to embrace with a believing heart all the sufferings and the death of Christ." In Q. & A. 81 we confess that the Lord's Supper is "for those who are truly displeased with themselves for their sins and yet trust that these are forgiven them for the sake of Christ," and A. 82 further states that this sacrament is only for those who show themselves to be godly in their confession and life. That language is not open to misunderstanding. Let's keep one thing clearly in mind: A drastic change in our practice as suggested above also involves an overhaul of our confessional standards. There is no way

around that. I find it amazing that the majority report does not even mention this. How could they overlook such an important matter? It is so abundantly clear from the Scriptures and our confessions that coming to the Lord's table involves a confession on our part. It is itself a confession of our faith, as the Belgic Confession says. How can anyone call that into question? How can they fail to see the difference between the two sacraments? It is all a mystery to me.

4. I believe those who advocate admitting very young children to the Lord's Supper are quite unrealistic and out of touch with real life in the congregation and in the catechism room. They ought to teach a relatively indifferent and rambunctious class of 15 yr. olds for a season. I think that would do more to change their views in a hurry than anything else. Most of the catechumens themselves are wiser: they have no desire or intention to make public confession of faith (except perhaps in order to get out of catechism). Theory is often so far removed from practice, and that is the case here.

What is more, the view advocated would, in the words of a Dutch theologian, place a "time-bomb" under the practice of making public

confession of faith. After all, they already have the main thing: access to the Lord's table. Why worry about the rest? And pity the poor consistory who has allowed young children to come for years to the table, but are now faced with rebellious and delinquent teenagers who couldn't care less about the Lord's service (I'm not now speaking about the majority, thank God). How would a consistory go about reversing that which they have first allowed? And how would they justify allowing the children of some parents to come, but denying others? Can you imagine the hassle — with no objective standard (confession of faith) as is now the case? We are "opening a can of worms" indeed.

5. The members of the majority report fall into the trap of biblicism. Scripture says nothing about the practice of young people making profession of their faith, they say. Are they looking for a text which says that? Where is a text which spells out the procedure of an adult becoming a member of the church? Acts simply says the Lord added to the church those who were being saved. How did that happen? Where is a text which says that infants must be baptized, and where do you read of such a particular instance? But

does that mean it didn't happen? Let's not get ridiculous. The Bible is not a church order, and we should not be looking for that either. Nevertheless, passages like Deut. 6:1-9, Joshua 4:1-7, 20-24, Ps. 78:1-8 and Eph. 6:1-4 make clear that there was a training process whereby parents and the larger believing community instructed the younger members so that in due time they too might take up their responsibility among God's people. Just precisely what form that "graduation" took is immaterial. To say that the Bible doesn't spell out the necessity and legitimacy of such a practice (and so we need a committee to study the matter) is quite absurd. Pretty soon we'll need committees to study every aspect of our ecclesiastical practice. In doing so we are pressing the Bible into a mold which is foreign to its own purpose.

I sincerely hope that synod will not adopt the recommendations of this majority report. Not only does it contain a lot of sloppy exegesis and work, but it would be very detrimental for the church and its well-being. We ought to go in the direction of the minority report and then leave the matter as it is. Our present practice is Biblical and adequate to deal with any exceptions that might arise.

SHOULD COVENANT CHILDREN TAKE PART IN THE LORD'S SUPPER?

This controversial question raised in 1984 faces the coming June CRC synod. A study committee presents two reports, each of 31 pages, one representing a majority of 6, the other a minority of 3. The conclusion

of the majority and the introduction of the minority reports show that the first was made a "majority" only by trying to combine contradictory views on the point under discussion, since 3 of the 6 members express

some dissent from their report. The committee was really divided into 3 minorities, each view being supported by 3 of the 9 members! The majority report favors opening the Lord's Supper to children, but half

hold that (1) they should be admitted just because they are in the covenant regardless of their age or ability to understand, and the other half hold that (2) they should be admitted only on demonstration of their faith. The minority report argues that (3) the Bible's explanation of the Lord's Supper in 1 Cor. 11 as "in remembrance" of Christ, "discerning" His Body, and "proclaiming" His death, requires that children confess their faith before being admitted to the supper. If one asks what is the difference between the second view, held by half the majority, and the third expressed in the minority report, the answer appears to be that though half of the majority believes the consistory should be assured of the faith of the child, this should not require a public confession of it. In fact the majority wants another committee appointed to study why covenant children should have to make a public profession of faith at all.

The Majority Report

The Majority Report, although trying to bridge a disagreement on whether or not children must show any indication of personal faith, wants to have the Lord's Supper opened to them. Its study of the history of the question, with much of which the whole committee agrees, at the same time at some points shows that it is not so much trying to make an objective study as building a case for admitting children to the supper. Although it is "commonly assumed" that admitting children goes back to the ancient church, this "cannot be documented until the third century A.D." After a quotation from Augustine we are informed that in the ancient church, including children "is thought to be common, though not universal." Although in the Eastern medieval church this has been the practice, the Western Church moved toward the view of Aquinas that faith and discretion were necessary. On this matter, Calvin wrote that the Supper was "only for those who are capable of discerning the body and blood of the Lord, of examining their own conscience, of proclaiming the Lord's death, and of considering its power" (Institutes

4:16.30), and this is shown to be the opinion of virtually all of the Reformers and of the Reformed churches. "Requiring a public profession of faith or confirmation has continued in most of those churches to the present" (p. 5).

The Report cites as reasons for admitting children (1) their inclusion in the covenant and (2) their evident participation in the Passover. (3) Despite the 1 Corinthians 11 requirement of faith, it argues for including them to nourish this faith, citing (4) "Jesus' attitude toward the faith of children, coupled with the current understanding of faith in child development," (5) of "the faith-nurturing" of the Supper (6) and of the "intellectualization of Christianity" since the 11th century (p. 6). The Report cites the 1970 decision of the United Presbyterian Church to admit children, but notes also the Reformed Church of America's 1984 rejection of such a proposal because of its failure to sufficiently emphasize personal commitment to Christ and confession of faith. The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) in 1978 admitted children, and the OPC, PCA and Reformed Ecumenical Synod are studying it. "In summary" the report sees this as "not an evangelical versus nonevangelical issue" but one in which "people fully committed to the inspiration and authority of Holy Scriptures are found on both sides." Although there is some confusion on the matter, this seems to suggest that we assume what the committee has to prove.

The Report's case for admitting children to the Supper relies heavily on identifying it with the Passover in which its lengthy Biblical Study says that it is "rooted" (p. 7) and of which it is said to be "the pattern." "The Passover underwent many changes to become the 'Last Supper' Passover of the New Testament." Some of these are said to be "specifically commanded by God" and others "were introduced due to historical circumstances or theological emphasis" (p. 10) and the following study apparently tries to determine which is which and therefore normative. "Jesus transformed the Passover meal into the Lord's Supper" (pp. 14, 15).

Although 1 Corinthians 11 with its requirement of self-examination "across the years has borne the weight of the case against admitting small children to the Lord's Supper," the committee declares, "it does not appear to be a conclusive or even valid argument." Some of the committee agree that where a child "cannot discern the difference between the Lord's Supper and other...eating and drinking, a child may not come to the Lord's table," but others argue that Paul was speaking only of those able to make such distinctions, not to children. "To find anything in this passage that would keep very tiny children from the table, or even infants, is to shift the ground of the argument from the ethical to the physiological, and Paul does not intend for his words to be used in this way" (p. 19).

Having declared debatable or invalid this Biblical teaching, the report turns to the theological argument that God's covenant includes children of believing parents who are therefore entitled to the Lord's Supper as well as to Baptism. If one stresses God's promise he will tend "to include children and perhaps even infants, in the celebration," "entailing the danger of encouraging presumption and destroying the discipline of the church. If one stresses the obligations of God's covenant, he will tend "to exclude children until they have made public profession," entailing the danger of children thinking themselves outside of Christ and His covenant, and encouraging Baptist and Arminian views (p. 24).

Although promoting admitting children to the Lord's Supper, the report recognizes "the danger that spiritually immature parents might think it would be 'cute' for their children to partake" or "would view the Supper as magical," and to prevent such a result, suggests requiring new parents to take a short course of training (p. 27). The report recognizing the radical change of its suggestion that admission to the Supper no longer require public confession of faith and its "potential for becoming divisive," counsels patience in dealing with the issue. It recommends, (1) admitting children to the Supper because of

their inclusion in the Covenant of Grace, (2) since this is an act of faith, admitting those who show they can and desire to remember and proclaim the Lord's death, (3) to make necessary change in the Church Order, (4) have a committee study the Biblical warrant for and meaning of public profession of faith, and (5) not put this change into effect until reaffirmed in 1990.

The Minority Report

The Minority in its introduction points out that the other report for admitting children tried unsuccessfully to bridge a crucial difference among its members. Half favored admitting them regardless of age simply because they were included in God's covenant. The other half believed that they must show evidence of faith before being admitted. The result is unavoidable contradictions in their report. Although the minority was reluctant to follow a separate course, it believed that the church is better served by unified advice to follow "the biblical principle that covenant children are brought to the Lord's Supper when they confess their faith." The minority agrees with the rest that "Only those who 'belong to Christ and thus are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise' (Gal. 3:29) should be admitted to the Lord's Supper" (p. 3), but it must strongly disagree with the half of the majority who say that this is the *only* biblical requirement. The Bible requires faith for admission. Participants must "discern the body of the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:25, 26) and "remember" and "proclaim" His death. In obvious reference to the other report, it observes that "although helpful...indirect reference from other biblical passages and argumentation from theological assumptions ought never to be permitted to obscure this rather clear scriptural instruction regarding the faith required to join the Lord's Supper with blessing" (p. 5). The report cites the Heidelberg Catechism's Belgic Confessions' echoing of the biblical requirement.

It notes the obvious difference between Baptism and the Lord's Supper, their "different purposes and different applications within the believer's life." While baptism is "a mark of the new birth," the Lord's

Supper "is a nourishing event" (p. 6). Taught that "the church baptizes infants on the basis of the covenant which includes children," "sometimes Reformed Christians forget that the church baptizes children of believers because of specific biblical commands to do so (Acts 2:39; 16:31)." "There is no parallel biblical command to bring children and whole households to the Lord's table," but the contrary requirements "to discern, remember, and proclaim Jesus Christ" in it.

The report observes that this is far from a "new" issue in church history. Calvin on this point was not merely following tradition, but opposed Augustine with whom he usually agreed. "It is unfortunate that the majority report overlooks the one era in church history when a significant segment of the Reformed churches did separate profession of faith from access to the sacraments," the disastrous experience of the New England Puritan churches with the "Half-way Covenant." They too were going to view the sacraments as "converting ordinances," designed to create faith rather than only confirm it. Despite good intentions, this contributed to the decline of those churches which were soon "filled with nominal Christians."

The report expresses its distress that the majority relies "on indirect evidence and theological conceptualization because the Bible does, in fact, give direct teaching regarding the role of the Lord's Supper in the covenant." It goes on to direct attention to Exodus 24 as an overlooked and "key passage for understanding the Lord's Supper," since this was cited by our Lord in instituting it, "This is my blood of the covenant." "Any simplistic notion that somehow the Lord's Supper is just a new version of the Passover...really ignores...Jesus' own testimony when he instituted" it. It is the "new covenant in Christ's blood" (pp. 9, 11). The majority (in trying to identify the Lord's Supper with the Passover) "has not done justice to the discontinuities between Old Testament practice and New Testament fulfillment." "The Bible never calls the Passover an atonement." "When Jesus Christ came, he established a 'new' (Heb. 12:24) and 'better' (Heb. 7:22) covenant which

replaced the Mosaic." While the Passover and other Old Testament feasts "can illumine the meaning of the Lord's Supper..." "the Passover cannot determine its practice." "The apostle Paul never mentions the Passover while giving instruction regarding observance of the Lord's Supper." "Hebrews never once compares Jesus to the Passover lamb." "The virtual equivalence...sometimes drawn between the Passover and the Lord's Supper cannot be maintained." Against the motion that one needed to merely assent to whatever the church taught, the Reformation had to stress the need to know in whom and what we must believe (Romans 10:9). An "informed faith" and confession was necessary. Thus our Church Order came to stress that admission to the Supper must involve public profession of faith. The report raises a serious objection to the majority recommendations because "they set up a separate category for admitting church members to the Lord's Supper, a category which apparently cannot be used for admitting others." That must lead to real difficulties in evangelism, as well as other problems that will certainly arise in the confusion about who may and who may not participate in the Supper. Thus the report highlights the "weakness of separating profession of faith from admission to the Lord's Supper and thus exempting children of church members from standards for admission to the Lord's table which would continue to be applied to all other believers." The committee would remind us that the only changes which will be truly helpful must be those supported by Scripture. It proposes 4 pastoral guidelines. These include (1) that admission of covenant children to the Lord's Supper be on the Lord's own conditions of faith that discerns, remembers and proclaims His body. (2) Consistories require a profession of faith on the part of all who partake. (3) Because the Bible establishes no specific age, covenant youth be encouraged to make a profession of faith as soon as they show a faith that can discern, remember and proclaim the body of Christ. (4) This profession for admission to the Lord's Supper is an expression of faith and not

necessarily an acceptance of adult responsibilities in the church.

Some Conclusions

What will the synod do with these 2 reports? An inclination to favor change and "pluralism" may make the majority recommendations, despite their inherent contradictions look attractive. But consider some objections highlighted in the reports.

1. The clear teaching of especially 1 Cor. 11 that we must "remember" Christ, "discern" His body and "proclaim" His death in the Supper plainly forbid the innovation.

2. That Biblical teaching has been decisive for virtually all Reformed churches since the Reformation.

3. The majority proposes, to a greater or less degree, to let arguments from covenant membership of children of Christian families overrule the stated Biblical require-

ments. We may not let our speculations overrule God's Word.

4. The minority shows that the elaborate effort to equate the Supper with the Passover is invalid. The Lord said, "This is the new covenant in my blood."

5. To argue that qualifications for baptism must also apply to the Supper ignores the Bible's plain distinction between the two and its differing requirements for them.

6. The majority argument of the educational value of having children learn by participation ("We learn by doing, not doctrine") is letting a mechanistic educational theory of child development overrule the Bible.

7. The reported disastrous experience of the Netherlands churches and that of the New England Puritans with such a "Half-Way Covenant" which promoted the apostasy of those churches, warn against it.

8. The majority's suggestion of special classes to prevent children's participation because it is "cute" or because of superstitious "magical" notions about it anticipates the kind of confusion it will encourage.

9. Trying to maintain two contradictory and discriminatory standards for participating in the Lord's Supper in the same congregations must create hopeless disorder.

10. Such a discriminatory double standard must encourage a false dependence on baptism for salvation and prove to be a real obstacle to effective evangelism. The Bible knows no two ways of salvation (2 Cor. 5:20).

11. The proposed practice will eliminate what we have left of church discipline.

12. As the majority anticipates in recommending delay, accepting its recommendations will further divide our churches. PDJ

(Psalm 8; cf. Heb. 2: 6ff.)

BASIC BIBLE TEACHINGS—III. What Is Man?

1. Created "in God's image."

The Bible begins by informing us that, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and after outlining that creative work, brings us to its climax in God's creating man "in his own image" in order to "have dominion" over all of the creation.

The 8th Psalm states the question, "What is man?" which centers the whole area of Bible teachings we now review. It raises that question in the light of the unimaginable size of the universe which God created. "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained;

what is man...?" (vv. 3, 4). Isaiah 40 also calls attention to those vast created heavens (v. 26), saying men are "like grasshoppers" (v. 22), and "the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and...as the small dust on the balance...before Him are as nothing, ...less than nothing and worthless" (vv. 15-17).

2. The Image Lost

When man in his pride, following the devil, rejected his Creator whom he was to resemble, he "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds, and four-footed beasts and creeping things. There-

fore God also gave them up" to all kinds of wickedness and vice that destroy them and their society (Romans 1:23, 24, 26, 28). And so "Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Ephesians 4:17-19). Thus man, whether a primitive pagan or a modern intellectual, debases himself from being a God-like creation, to living and acting as a mere animal,

("The Naked Ape," was one writer's characterization), or to becoming an inanimate machine! (The evolutionary theory is this kind of misinterpretation of the universe and man.) Thus as the Psalm (49:12, 20) said, "Man who is in honor, yet does not understand, Is like the beasts that perish."

3. What is This Image?

The Bible begins setting the record straight by informing us of our creation "in God's image." What does this mean? We must not think of this image as physical likeness (like the ancient Greek imagery or modern Mormon views). Ephesians 4:17-24 teaches us that, in contrast with surrounding pagans, the believer in Christ is to "be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and...put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness." Similarly, the ("twin") letter to the Colossians (3:10) says that the believer in Christ has "put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him." Thus the Bible teaches that the "image of God" which is being "renewed" in the believer involves "knowledge," "righteousness" and "holiness" — his capacity to know, serve and love God.

Since this "image" is "being renewed" in the Christian, it was evidently lost in man's revolt against God. In fact, our Lord told the Jews who rejected him, that, although they claimed to be children of God, they were children of the devil, whose actions they imitated (John 8:44)! That raised the question whether in the life of the non-Christian that "image of God" has been totally lost. Although some Christians have believed that non-Christians have totally lost that image, the Bible evidently teaches that the reality is a little more complicated. Genesis 9:6 decreed the death penalty for murder, "for in the image of God He made man." This applied to mankind in the violent world since the flood. Similarly James warned (Christians) (3:9) against cursing "men, who have been made in the similitude of God." Thus man, no matter how fallen, remains human, "made in the image of God," but

misuses and misdirects his human capacities (to know, serve and love) to his own destruction. He needs radical restoration and renewal to be saved.

Christ Restores the Image.

Christ, the Divine Son of God in a deeper sense than any other man, "the express image of His person" (Hebrews 1:3), came to bring about this restoration and renewal of man.

We recall that Psalm 8, after pointing us to the enormity of the created universe, states that small and insignificant man was made to "have dominion over" it. Hebrews 2:6ff., commenting on that Psalm, shows us that the inspired song about God's creation faces us with a riddle, for, no matter what man's achievements may be or become, we certainly do not see him dominating the whole of creation (v. 8)! In fact, he, despite, (or through) his efforts, again and again becomes the victim! The only way in which we may see the creative destiny of man announced in Psalm 8 fulfilled, is through the work of Jesus Christ, the Savior. He, as the rest of Hebrews 2 explains, at the enormous personal cost of becoming man and dying for the sins of His people, is making it come true. Thus "the author of their salvation" is "bringing many sons to glory" (v. 10). "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman...to redeem...that we might receive the adoption as sons" and sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts. Thus each believer in Christ is to be "no longer a slave but a son,...an heir of God through Christ" (Gal. 4:4-7).

God's Covenant

Man was created "in the image of God" to live as his "child" in a family relationship with God, knowing, serving and loving Him. That relationship the Bible often describes as a "covenant" (mentioned some 300 times in the Bible and sometimes translated "testament"). In man's revolt against God that relationship was broken, but the Bible, the "Book of the Covenant" or "Testament," is both the account and means of God's reestablishing the relationship. In Gen. 17:7 God told Abraham, "I will establish my covenant between Me and you and

your descendants after you in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you." Abraham must train his children in this faith in God in order that his promise may be realized (18:19). Galatians 3:6ff. explains how Christ came to make this promise come true, so that "those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham" (v. 9). Thus the gospel promise still goes out to believers in Him and their children (Acts 2:39), whom they must "bring...up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

The Covenant of God is a living family relationship with Him. As that all-important relationship, it is revealed and defined (like a "contract," Gal. 3:15) by a Book, the Bible. That Bible is itself called the Covenant or "Testament." Its 2 parts must not be separated, but belong to the one full revelation of God's Good News to us of salvation through faith in Christ, the New fulfilling the promise of the Old (Jer. 31:31-33; Heb. 8:8-13). We must believe and obey that Word which guides and preserves us as His children in His covenant family (Rev. 22:18, 19), anticipating eternal joy in His fellowship (Rev. 21:3, 4; 22:3-7).

Questions:

1. How must we deal with present "scientific" (biological, psychological, sociological) views of man? (Cor. 2:8; 1 Tim. 6:20, 21; Eph. 4:17-24).
2. What does our "creation in God's image" mean?
3. What did sin do to this "image of God" and how does Christ restore it?
4. Does the non-Christian still have "God's image"?
5. Are there any differences between men and women as created, and restored "in God's image?" (Gal. 3:13, 14, 26-29; Eph. 4:22-24; 5:22-25; 1 Tim. 2:11-3:2.)
6. What is God's "covenant" with us and whom does it include? What does it require? (Hosea 6:7; Gen. 17:7; Acts 2:38, 39; Gal. 3:7, 9; Rom. 5:12, 19; Gen. 18:19; Eph. 6:4.)
7. What is the difference between the Old and New Testament (or Covenant)? (Jer. 31:31-33; Heb. 8:8-13; Gal. 4:1-7) PDJ

John H. Sietsema

A CASE AGAINST THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION

It may be said reasonably that Charles Darwin was one of the first scientists to present a coherent and organized case for the theory of evolution. For Darwin evolution meant the emergence and development of complex forms of life from the simplest forms of life. To state it baldly, the amoeba eventually became man through unmeasured aeons of time. For Darwin the interplay of chance and time would be the means for evolution to occur in organic forms of life without any over-arching thought or purpose guiding the process. Let it be said emphatically that Charles Darwin presented his ideas of evolution as a *theory*, not as a final *truth*. He was hoping that other branches of science would validate his theory, such as geology, paleontology, zoology, and botany. He, himself, sought to strengthen his case from the studies of homology and embryology.

Readers of the *Outlook* should be informed that Darwin in his own day was vigorously opposed by other noted Christian scientists, such as Louis Agassiz, Carl Linnaeus, and George Cuvier, who were anything but minor leaguers in the field of science. Sadly enough, it was the seminaries in the late 19th century that capitulated to this theory of evolution and sought an accommodation with this theory by means of theistic evolution.

This writer would like to list the various arguments that can be made against the theory of evolution as Charles Darwin conceived it. Today godless scientists who see the fallacies in Darwin's concept of evolution have contrived other forms of

evolution, but in doing so they are changing the rules of the game as well as pouring other definitions into the word "evolution." However, them I shall ignore. My list arises out of the reading that I have done over the past five years from about fifteen books and numerous articles.

1. Biologically Darwin and his followers sought to find the missing link, that is, the transitional forms of life between the simpler life forms and the more complex life forms. However, most evolutionists today admit that none have ever been found. The cupboard of biology remains bare for the thoroughgoing evolutionists.

2. Transitional forms of life (the missing links) would have evolved only through a process of mutation. However, in laboratory experiments scientists have found mutations to be invariably harmful and deleterious to the organisms. To state it another way, a hundred foul balls have never resulted in a homerun.

3. The geological columns containing the fossilized remains of simple and complex life forms are a theoretical abstraction. None have ever been found that duplicate exactly what the evolutionists envision in their own minds. Often more complex life forms have been found at the base of a mountain; whereas, the simpler forms were found at the higher elevation. One's belief in the "Flood" story of God's Word would account for these variations of the geological columns.

4. The evolutionists deny the Flood story of God's Word, and yet nearly 200 flood accounts have been reported in other cultures and races

that duplicate the Biblical account in its essential details. The Flood story nearly up to Darwin's time was accepted as the basis for all the great geological changes on the earth. One must remember that the Flood was almost as destructive in its results as God was creative in the Creation week. God's wrath was fully poured out then. So destructive was the Flood that the Apostle Peter in his epistle compares God's final judgment in the end time to the Flood.

5. The genetic pool of each species of mammals tends to deplete. Each breed of dog artificially bred loses some of the potential qualities of the original breed of dog. The Great Dane was bred about 400 years ago in Germany for the purpose of hunting boars; nevertheless, the Great Dane has a life expectancy of only about eight years, which is about half or at most two-thirds of that of other breeds of dogs. Thus, this fact denies the upward ascent of biological organisms, which is a corollary of Darwin's theory of evolution.

6. Evolutionists say that things improve and become better. Yet the Second Law of Thermodynamics says that things eventually deteriorate. One's car gets rusty; his home eventually needs a new roof; and the lights in the house in time burn out. Man's supply of oil and coal, which are sources of energy, will become exhausted. Man, himself, dies; and few there are whose ages exceed the Biblical three score and ten. The Earth's atmosphere is losing its ozone layer, and the carbon-dioxide emissions from cars and factories is creating a "greenhouse" effect, so raising the Earth's temperature by

eight degrees in fifty years - according to scientists' projections. All this, thus, goes contrary to the theory of evolution.

7. The Earth is the only heavenly body containing all the known elements. If one accepts the Big Bang theory, why, then, is the Earth the only body containing all the known elements?

8. To initiate life forms from the chance chemical interplay of certain elements has been proved to be statistically impossible, whether viewed from the standpoint of time or space. One scientist has calculated that the odds of one molecular life form arising from pure chance interplay of required elements is the number 10 squared 40,000 times. To get some idea of what this means, simply multiply 17 by itself 17 times. Even with this small number, the final will be in the trillions. Added to this fact is the fact that the most simple life form, such as the amoeba, has a complexity of a large city.

9. When the astronauts were ready to go to the moon, their greatest fear was landing the lunar module on the moon. Believing in the evolutionary hypothesis, the space agency spent nearly a billion dollars to enable the lunar module to land on the moon. They feared the great depths of dust that they believed had accumulated over aeons of time from meteorite fallout. However, the astronauts encountered no problem at all. This argues for a short age of the moon.

10. Astronomers have discovered that the sun is actually shrinking in size. This is quite understandable, since anything that expends energy, whether it be heat or light, will deplete itself. Yet the rate at which the sun is shrinking rules out any possibility that it has existed for billions of years; since with such a length of time the sun by now would have become a "burned out" star.

11. If man has lived for a million years on this planet, why, then, is the present population of the earth only near five billion? Bear in mind the unbelieving scientist denies the fact of the universal flood. No matter what level of population increase one assumes, however small, over a million-year span there would hardly be any space for man to stand on today. This, too, argues for a young

earth as well as for the veracity of the flood which destroyed the whole human race save for eight.

12. Why are there presently thousands of animal carcasses in the perma-frost of northern Siberia? In the 18th and 19th centuries men made a living collecting the ivory tusks from mammoths encased in the ice. Some of the animals were so well preserved, that dogs have eaten the flesh of these animals with no ill effects. The evolutionists' theory of "uniformitarianism" could never permit this. According to uniformitarianism events on this earth occurred regularly and evenly, apart from any cataclysmic or catastrophic occurrences. However, in our West there were about thirty million buffaloes in the 1850's; yet, one would be hard pressed to find any remains of these buffaloes today since even the bones - the most durable part of the buffaloes - have been weathered away, all in keeping with the process of uniformitarianism. The encased mammals in the permafrost of Siberia argue for a catastrophic event some time in the past; while the absence of buffalo remains argues against uniformitarianism.

13. In Texas in certain riverbeds human footprints have been found in close proximity to those of the dinosaurs. This removes the assertion that dinosaurs existed millions of years before man. Why do certain evolutionists become extremely upset when they are confronted by this fact? Why? This fact simply erases their time tables of events on this earth.

14. Whole trees have been found embedded in coal veins. These trees would not be in this condition if one accepts the idea that millions of years were needed to form the coal beds. Also, laboratory tests have shown that oil can be made in a matter of hours; thus, it is not mandatory that oil or coal require millions of years to be formed out of peat. Too, in California the complete skeletal remains of a whale were found encased in the fossil remains of a simpler marine life form. This argues also for a catastrophic event in the past - the Biblical Flood.

15. This history of evolutionism in the last hundred years has shown that some evolutionists, so entranced

by the theory of evolution, will falsify their finds so as to give validation to their belief. There have been a number of hoaxes foisted on the public by certain proponents of evolution. If the theory of evolution is so plausible, why then these ruses?

16. The Bible clearly states that God provided light on the first day without the presence of the sun, which was created on the fourth day. God did such, so that man would know that God is the ultimate source of all light. Nevertheless, early civilization, such as the Egyptians, who forsook the one true God, worshipped the sun as god. It is well to remember in the new creation there will be no sun nor moon to provide the light.

17. Why is it that some planets have moons that rotate (spin) and revolve (forward motion) in opposite direction from other moons of the same planets? How could chance provide such diverse actions?

18. Michael Denton in his book *Evolution, A Theory in Crisis* explains very graphically that changes in a particular organism, say the fish, so as to become an amphibian can not be made in small steps or degrees. Small changes in one part of the anatomy of the organism demand immediate and instantaneous changes in other parts of the anatomy of the organism. Denton uses a simple but understandable illustration with the automobile. If the size of the cylinders of the motor is increased, then an immediate change in size of the pistons and rods must also be made. There is no room for half-way measures, be it in a live organism, or an inert mechanism like the car motor. Thus, mutations are thoroughly ruled out.

19. Clear thinking demands that alterations and variations within certain species can at best be considered micro-evolution, never macro (major)-evolution, because the species still remain what they are. The many varieties of finches that Darwin observed on a particular isolated island were still finches. The finches never altered enough to become eagles, let alone crossing over into another genus, such as the mammals. It is questionable whether it is correct to regard an adaptation by a certain species of life as being an ex-

ample of evolution. The moths in England changed their coloration when the air became polluted because of smoke emissions from factories. True, there was adaptation, but it was NOT evolution; since the moths still remained moths.

20. The evolutionist, because he is made in the image of God, expresses sanity and rationality in both his actions and thinking. Like all other men, he exercises wisdom, prudence, planning, and judgment. When he drives his car, he has a certain destination in mind, and he is constantly making correct decisions to avoid accidents and collisions. Yet, strangely enough, he will use various instruments, such as telescopes and microscopes — the products of design and purpose — to substantiate his view that all things happen by chance, which would have to include even the very instruments that he is using.

His evolutionary outlook is a stance of faith in "chance." One that believes that a tornado passing through a junkyard could assemble all the strewn parts, numbering into the thousands, into one complete, ready-to-go automobile.

Let the reader realize that it was godless men like Karl Marx, John Dewey, Sigmund Freud, and Nietzsche who most readily accepted the theory of evolution. And why? First, it negates God. Without God there is no place for absolutes in the affairs of men. Without the Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount, man is free to do whatever he wishes, since in such a scheme of things (evolutionary thought) man is answerable to no one but himself. Kant's "categorical imperatives" become feeble blowing into the violent gusts of unrestrained human selfishness and bestiality.

Darwin's theory of evolution carried out Kant's denials — or perhaps skepticism — of the noumenal (that which is above and beyond the physical, and which can not be proved or ascertained by physical means) to the nth degree. Evolution denies the need for anything above nature. The God of this universe becomes an unnecessary appendage — an unwanted hypothesis in the affairs of men. However, as Jesus warned, if you remove the first occupant of the house (this universe), then the house

vacated will become inhabited by other less desirable spirits (the demons of the Evil One). And this has been proved true in our own day, for Western man without God is fully involved in occultism and eastern religion. This Gary North and Dave Hunt prove in their books *Unholy Spirits* and *The Seduction of Christianity*. As John Calvin wrote, God placed into the hearts of men the seeds of religion, that is, the need for the noumenal. Man's heart and mind want that which is above nature and beyond nature. For the true believer, it is God; whereas, the unbeliever will consult with the spirits (occultism).

In conclusion, let it be said most clearly that an acceptance of the theory of evolution leads to many undesirable things: first, a denial of God, then a denial of absolutes to guide men in the affairs of life, and finally a futile search for meaning in the very things that are an affront to God.

21. The decay of Earth's magnetic field is measurable and exponential. However, this rate of decay precludes any long age of the Earth, since with a five billion years age of the Earth, the magnetic field would have been 200 million times stronger than now, which would exceed that of most intense magnetic fields of stars presently.

22. Within the solar system there exists interplanetary dust which is being cleared out by the light of the sun. A span of 10,000 years has been calculated necessary for the sun to clear out this dust. The fact that there is still a large residue of this dust argues for a younger universe than that claimed by evolutionists.

23. Scientific inquiry is valid and applicable only to reproducible events; therefore, it has no jurisdiction whatever in questions of origin or destiny, which by their very nature are one-time events. Surely scientific inquiry may gather evidence about beginnings, but such evidence is subject to interpretation which is wholly dependent upon the mind-set of the interpreter.

24. Since natural processes are destructive of complex patterns, they are, therefore, a poor explanation of these patterns. Thus the evidence as stated in No. 23 just above becomes

in part suspect. (*Origins and Destiny* by Dr. Robert Gange)

25. In quantum physics it is said that non-living matter contains 235 bits of information, a protein 1,500 bits, but the simplest one-cell bacterium 1,000,000 bits of information. So to say that random chance and accident could have produced life even in this simplest form is to defy not only all statistical odds but also the most elementary logic and common sense. (Dr. Robert Gange)

26. Each year a small number of meteorites reached the Earth's surface. This being so, a vast number of meteorites should be embedded in the Earth's geologic column if the Earth is thought to be millions or billions of years old. However, the geologic column shows a paucity of meteorites. This argues for a young Earth (*It's A Young World After All* by Paul D. Ackerman)

27. Comets are heavenly bodies that orbit the sun. Their life-terms are short on the cosmic scale. Over the centuries many have been observed and recorded. However, if the solar system is billions of years old, none should then exist today for with the passage of such vast time, the comets would all have been dissipated. (Paul D. Ackerman)

28. It is thought by evolutionists that all the satellites of the planets should be cold and inactive since they would have been cooled down through the aeons of time. Yet Io, a moon of Jupiter, was observed to have an active volcano when the Voyager satellite passed by it. (Paul D. Ackerman)

29. Any increase in the complexity and design of a physical entity in ratio to disorder (the chaotic) becomes astronomical in number. Examples of disorder would be wind-blown leaves in a yard or water-washed sands on a seashore. Michael Denton in his book *Evolution, A Theory In Crisis* provides a simple but clear illustration of this fact: In the alphabet there are twenty-six letters. Forming three-letter combinations, one can make 17,000; however, only 500 of them — one in thirty-three — form words with meaningful contents. Forming twelve-letter combinations will run into the billions; yet only a minute fraction of them will form words. In a word

then, increased complexity of order can be achieved only by over-arching intelligence guided by purpose.

30. In the biological realm of nature many organisms live in a symbiotic relationship, even though the organisms are of different phylas or

families. Either one dies eventually with the death or absence of the other. How can evolutionists explain the evolvement of these organisms from different phyla when a necessary and an immediate symbiotic relationship is imperative for the sur-

vival of either? (*Flaws In The Theory Of Evolution* by Evan Shute)

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PROFESSOR MACMILLAN ON OUR SPIRITUAL DEFENSES

Matt. 3:15-4:11

Testing characterizes the whole life of the Christian. Each is called to unremitting warfare when enlisted under the banner of the Prince of Peace. There are many adversaries, especially Satan. Paul could say, "I have fought the good fight." We are involved in war, not by the prince of evil, but by God, a war waged in the interest of righteousness. He said, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman...." It is not true that the Christian is led by the nose by Satan, but the war is in God's purpose to establish righteousness, and we are therefore always on the winning side—"more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (2 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 8:37). We see this manifested in the life of Christ, "the representative man," the "second man" from heaven, heading a mankind redeemed by God from the wreckage of man fallen. We are "with Him" as we hear Him say (in Heb. 2:13), "Behold I and the children God has given me." Our attention is focussed on Christ's defenses as He went into the wilderness to be tempted, for these defenses are the only defenses available also to us,

the Holy Spirit and the Word which He inspired. Christ in temptation uses nothing not available also to us.

We notice first the timing of the temptations. They came immediately after His baptism. He was baptized with the baptism of sinners (despite John's hesitation because it seemed inappropriate). He had to become just like us—though without sin (Heb. 4:15), "made...sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21). "He came so close to sin, as it were, John Murray used to say, that you couldn't 'put a razor between Him and it.'" At the beginning of His public ministry He, in His baptism, was identifying Himself with all those whom He came to redeem. Now, on Him as their new representative head, the Holy Spirit comes down to seal His union with His people, and the voice of God says, "This is My beloved Son"—that sonship effects our sonship—and He is "filled with all the fulness of God!"

What a blessing it is to know the fullness of the Holy Spirit, to be sealed by the Spirit of Promise forever into union with Christ. Don't let over-reaction to the charismatic movement lead us to undervalue the power and work of the Spirit. We

need the anointing and power of the Holy Spirit in preaching, rather than academic degrees, to move the nation toward God.

Now notice what happens when the Holy Spirit comes upon Him. We are being told today that the anointing of the Spirit will free us from problems and guarantee success—your wife will become pretty, your car will run well, your bank balance will improve, your deacons will become nice and all the elders will work as they never did before. But observe where the Spirit leads the Son—and the sons of God. The Spirit led Him into the wilderness where there was nothing to eat for forty days, there to be tempted of the devil! How often have the charismatics told you that? That is what happened to the Savior. Why should we expect anything different? Listen to the Bible, instead of to charismatic claims. Notice who is the General in control, organizing the field of battle and setting up the lines of conflict. It is not Satan, but the Holy Spirit. Christ "learned obedience through the things which He suffered." The Holy Spirit may lead to strange and difficult, and

sometimes lonely places. Ministers are often lonely, and our Lord was lonely as we will never be. He was led into the wilderness — which is a “garden gone wrong.” Man went wrong, God cursed man and the world became a wilderness. The leading of the Spirit does not always produce “warm feelings” — don’t be misled by subjectivism. Where God blesses, Satan is not far away. And he works, not by “permission,” but by the “determinate counsel of God.” When Job was tested, God rejoiced in him, saying, “Behold my servant.” We are tested because Christ came to live in us by faith, and the battle is really the Lord’s. Be thankful that the Holy Spirit does not forsake us in temptation. The Lord said of His people, “No one shall pluck them out of my hand.” And He reassures us that “all things work together for good to those who love God.”

Adam in Paradise succumbed to temptation. The Second Adam in the wilderness blasted because of sin, having come to redeem God’s world, had to stand in the ultimate place of God’s curse to be cursed. Mark tells us that He was “with the wild beasts.” There are none in

Paradise. Was He petting them? Rather they were there to threaten. Don’t go into a zoo unless they are tied. His surroundings were typical of our conflict. Thank God that “this world is not our home.” “We, according to His promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Pet. 3:13). We are to be assured that in tests we are going nowhere where Christ has not been before us.

Look at the devil’s thrusts, “If you are the Son of God....” What audacity and stupidity, assailing what God has attested. That is the way he always assaults — “Was it real?” God said, “This is My beloved Son!” The devil said, If you are the Son, prove it!” Hugh Martin observed that Satan was not attacking Jesus’ eternal Sonship, but His sonship in human nature. He always attacks also our sonship, seeking to get us to act in contradiction of it. No wonder we have a charismatic movement! He says, “If you are a son, show it. Let’s have a miracle.” Jesus didn’t answer, “Yes, I’m the Son of God and I don’t have to turn the stones into bread....” He said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds

from the mouth of God.’ ” He “trusted in God.” We must ask God to give us patience in testing. Jesus had the Spirit, also our great guarantee. We have the Lord, our High Priest, who intercedes for us in heaven and, above all, we have the Word of God. If we would study more closely the work of the Holy Spirit in Christ, we would much better understand His work in the Christian believer. Our Lord’s teaching about the Holy Spirit in John 14-16 is basic to our understanding the role the Spirit takes. And the Lord in meeting the temptations, appealed to the book of the Bible that has been the particular butt of Liberal attack, Deuteronomy. He closed the mouth of Satan with the word of God that would choke him. “Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.” We need to pray to use the “sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.”

This summarizes the last of the three lectures of Rev. Douglas Mac-Millan of the Free Church of Scotland in Edinburgh, Scotland, at last May’s Banner of Truth Conference at Calvin Theological Seminary. PDJ

J. Tuininga

CATCHING MORE MEMBERS

We are seeing examples of desperate attempts to get people into the CRC, even if that means compromising the gospel. I cite one more example of a similar nature: The synod of 87 adopted a proposal by the Board of Home Missions “which would prayerfully aim at a total membership in the CRC of 400,000 by the year 2000.” The aim of getting the gospel out to more and more people is laudable, but is this

the way to do it? One delegate at synod warned about getting caught up in “the numbers game.” Another asked, “Where is the Holy Spirit in all of this?” We ought to listen again to the late Dr. Eldersveld:

I’m afraid that our preaching is not going to be like that of those early followers of the Way if we are thinking only about those whom we hope to win. This modern concern about the number

of converts can have a disastrous effect upon evangelism. Are we being caught up and swept along by the spirit of the age in which everything is measured by statistics? Are we merely trying to popularize the gospel, to make it more acceptable, so that we can get more people in the church? What are we preaching for? Only for decisions?....

You can't help wondering about the whole idea of setting up a goal like that: let's get a million souls for Jesus Christ! Is evangelism first of all a matter of arithmetic? Is it geared to a policy of numerical success?.... What does the number have to do with the real purpose of evangelism?

Not only do we set the number, but we also like to tell the Lord what *kind* of converts we would like: there has to be a proper proportion of "third world ethnic" peoples. The Board of Home Missions decided in '86 "to seek to increase especially the number of Asian, Black, and Hispanic new church development ministries." We also need a certain amount of these people in leadership roles in the denomination. Talk about "reverse discrimination"! As the editor of this magazine wrote recently: "The Lord's gospel does not have a race label and we have no right to stick such labels on it." A recent survey of CRC membership by the Inter-Agency Advisory Council of the CRC revealed that almost 98 percent of the respondents were white. "Given the fact that the CRC in recent years has tried to make itself more multi-racial, this was a disconcerting finding, said Schreuder" (quoted in *Chr. Renewal*). So we're going to tell the Lord how many members we want, but also of what race they have to be! I find the whole affair quite disconcerting and unworthy of the gospel. As if we can decide who shall and who shall not belong to the church. One would not expect this from a Reformed church. As one respondent (in the above-mentioned survey) put it: "It seems to be that the CRC of late is more interested in appealing to all people and views than in maintaining the integrity of the Word." Well said.

What is revealing about this whole matter is that it comes precisely at

the time when we as a church are becoming less distinctive and more worldly and are more and more letting the world squeeze us into its mold (to use Philips' translation of Rom. 12). In the words of one of those surveyed, "we are making very little impact on today's Sodom-sick generation." Is that perhaps because the "salt" is losing its power? Think of the synodical decisions in recent years regarding entertainment (movie attendance, dance) and women in office (feminism). Look at what's happening to Sunday observance and attendance at the second service, and the lack of leadership in this regard from our official church paper and leaders.

Has the Christian Way become too much like our modern highways?....I'm all for them, and I suppose you are too. But is real Christianity a superhighway in this world? Perhaps one reason why we are not being persecuted is that our Christianity is not the kind that would ever provoke any persecution. Is it possible that nobody bothers us because we never bother them? Do we just go along with the world in all its evils, just keep still, and probably even find pious arguments to justify our silence? It's a lot easier that way, but is it Christianity? (Eldersveld) I'm reminded of the words of the song:

What you are speaks so loud that the world can't hear what you say; they're looking at your walk, not listening to your talk, they're judging by your actions every day. They'll accept what they see and know you to be; they'll judge from your life alone.

That fits in with what the Bible says too: "that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16; 7:21; cf. also Q. & A. 86 of the H. Catechism).

Some years ago the Rev. Alvin Hoksbergen wrote a couple of articles in *The Banner* under the title, "Dangerous Trends in Evangelism." Some of the things he said then bear repetition today:

Our denomination's concern about its declining membership is not in itself wrong, but what is questionable is the direction we are

taking in our concern. We hear very little about self-examination to discover if we are faithful and true to the Head of the Church as we witness to Him. Instead, we hear much about a declining membership and a low figure in our evangelism statistics....

We have adopted the approach taken by the American industrial complex and applied that to the church and its ministry. Accountability and goal-setting become the big words. We need growth, and if we do not get it, we must consider ourselves as less than healthy.... This is the direction we are taking, a direction that makes sense for a business venture in the North American structure of economics, but a direction that is totally out of step with the biblical principles that are to govern the life of the church....

During a period of declining numbers, the first priority of the church is not an attempt to reverse the trends, but rather a serious examination of its ministry.... But regardless of the response, a faithful church will work daily to remain faithful and it will wait patiently and expectantly upon the Lord to "add to their number day by day those who are being saved."

In the words of the Rev. Schlissel, it's not a matter of evangelism or defending the faith: it is both. If, while the ship of the church is rescuing lost sailors at sea, there is danger that the ship gets torpedoed, we better be concerned. For if the ship gets hit, she goes down herself and she won't rescue anyone else either.

"The 1988 U. S. Ministers' Conference sponsored by Banner of Truth will be held at Calvin College and Seminary May 24-27, 1988.

"Speakers include Dr. John R. deWitt, Professor W. Robert Godfrey, Dr. O. Palmer Robertson, Pastor Jim Marshall, Pastor Glen Knecht and Dr. Donald Leggett.

"Registration information may be obtained by contacting the Conference Secretary, P.O. Box 621, Carlisle, PA 17013."

Cecil Tuininga

ORDER IS BEAUTIFUL

There is beauty in order, for God is a God of order. There is order in nature, and we speak of its laws, for Scripture tells us God made it so (Job 38:33, Jeremiah 31:36). In Psalm 148:6 we read concerning the heavenly bodies that, "He set them in place for ever and ever; he gave them a decree that will never pass away." These time-keepers never lose a second; they move as God has ordered them.

God has ordered man's life too. He has established His laws for us and says of them, "Until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished." He demands that men obey His laws. Where this is done, there is the beauty of an ordered life. Where that is not done, chaos reigns, for sin produces chaos. It is the breaking of God's laws and therefore the destruction of all that is beautiful. A lawless society is self-destructive!

Accordingly, Scripture demands that when God's people gather for worship everything be done "in a fitting and orderly way" (1 Cor. 14:40). To that end the whole structure of the congregational life is ordered by God. He calls and has His officers ordained to be "watchmen" over the flock. These men are to be able to rule well, beginning with their own families, and able to teach. They are charged to see that all things are done orderly and decently, in harmony with God's will.

This is often forgotten in some of our congregations today. One is baffled and saddened by some of the practices among us. We have a Church Order to guide consistories and congregations, but some consistories and ministers act as though it did not exist. For example: the church calls for ministers to solemnize marriages "with appropriate admonitions, promises, and prayers, as provided for in the official form" (Church Order Article 69,b). In

many marriages today the couple writes its own form. In one case, the couple also took care of the entire solemnization and when they were finished, the minister declared them husband and wife. This is one way of saying that the congregation really has nothing to do with the forming of a covenant home and that a minister is needed because the law requires it. To top it off, a communion service was held at which the bridesmaids served the elements.

In another marriage one of our ministers solemnized it together with a Roman Catholic priest. To top it off, he joined in the celebration of the Mass afterward. One wonders how a couple can answer the questions of our prescribed form of marriage in such a case. Or whether perhaps, also in this a compromise was reached with the Catholic priest. The Roman Catholics are rather scrupulous about marriage in the Catholic faith, also when a member of their church marries one of

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Our life is like a book untold,
Each leaf that's read, a year,
And every page that we unfold,
A new year doth appear.

But each new leaf that we have turned
Leaves another year behind.
What's planned ahead can ne'er be learned —
The past may but remind.

Each simple word that's written down
Is like a single day,
The letters are the seeds we've sown —
Life's tasks along the way.

And as we read between the lines
We find a blot or two.
The tear-stained ones we see are signs
Of the trials we've been through,

Of sins we have been sorry for,
Which Christ has blotted out,
Which made us love Him even more
And trust without a doubt.

But we also see the sunshine there
Among the grief and pain;
Which we will reap each time we share
The happiness we gain.

And when this "Book of Life" is done
And every page complete,
We must account for everyone
Before the judgment seat.

So through the years that God may send,
Resolve to live anew.
Try hard our sinful ways to mend;
Pray Christ to guide us through.

Our Book of Life

by Anne Vander Wall Beukema

another church. Surely such compromises ought not to take place among us.

Another example is even of a more serious nature. In one of our churches a minister of the United Church of Canada was allowed to conduct one of the services. This in itself is a violation of Church Order Article 53. But this happened to be a female minister. Needless to say many members went elsewhere for this service.

These are some extremes. Other practices should also be mentioned. Synod of 1961 issued a strong warning against "so called 'Youth Services'" (Acts of Synod, 1961, p. 98, 99). One of the grounds given was (4) "It may be true that at the present time only small children are being excused from listening to the preaching of the Word. The argument is that such preaching is beyond their mental capacity. But it is likely that after a few years this same argument would be extended to older children as well. The argument is fallacious. Our children must be made to realize that they should attend the church services, and espe-

cially, too, the preaching of the Word, because they as well as their parents belong to God's covenant and to His Church. They are to realize, already at an early age, that they, too, should be found in their heavenly Father's house, where God's people are gathered together." The warning then sounded has become a reality. Churches have Sunday School for grades 1 to 6. The argument is exactly what is mentioned. They get instruction on their level of understanding. Beside that, in many cases they are dismissed with a special prayer for a blessing on their instruction. All objections to this unreformed practice fall on deaf ears.

Beside this, one can mention a host of other strange practices that violate good order. Some congregations have what is called a "service participant." I think that is a good thing if ordained officers, especially elders, lead that part of the service which includes the prayer of confession, assurance of pardon, God's will for our lives, etc. But this part of the service is given to various members of the congregation, including

women. There is also what is called "The service of Praise," which is actually a song service. Various members conduct that, including women, and some of them use it to get in short sermonettes. These things ought not to take place in our services. They are a violation of what actually comprises a well-ordered service.

Such examples as these show how we are losing all concept of proper, well-ordered-according-to-God's-will worship services, and of what it means to be united as covenant homes into a covenant family (congregation) of God. Our forefathers gave special attention and thought to this. So should we. By our rather mad pursuit of change we are losing a precious heritage. Let us hold to that which is good and never change unless we are convinced that what replaces the old is better. May our God guard us in our covenant heritage.

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