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## BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

J. G. VOS, Editor and Manager

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of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America  
(Crown & Covenant Publications)  
7408 Penn Avenue • Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15208

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This project is made possible by the History Committee of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America ([rparchives.org](http://rparchives.org)).

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**BLUE  
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LIFE**

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VOLUME 3

JANUARY - MARCH, 1948

NUMBER 1

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“The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto Him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of Him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God’s part, which He hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.”

**The Westminster Confession of Faith, VII.1**

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A Quarterly Publication Devoted to Expounding, Defending and Applying the System of Doctrine set forth in the Word of God and Summarized in the Standards of the Covenanter (Reformed Presbyterian) Church.

Subscription \$1.50 per year postpaid anywhere.

J. G. VOS, Editor and Publisher

R. F. D. No. 1

Clay Center, Kansas

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## GOD'S APPOINTED DAY

(Author unknown. Adapted)

Some glorious morn — but when? Ah, who shall say?  
The steepest mountain will become a plain,  
And the parched land be satisfied with rain.  
The gates of brass all broken; iron bars,  
Transfigured, form a ladder to the stars.  
Rough places plain, and crooked ways all straight,  
For him who with a patient heart can wait.  
This first creation, shaken, troubled sore,  
Shall yield to that which stands for evermore.  
There shall be no more curse, nor death, nor pain,  
But that which stands unshaken shall remain.  
These things shall be on God's appointed day,  
When this first heav'n and earth shall pass away.

“For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God”—Hebrews 11:10.

“And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain”—Hebrews 12:27.

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea”—Revelation 21:1.

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Mine be the pomp and glory,  
And Thine be Calvary!  
Give me the ease of living—  
The scourge, the thorns, for Thee!

Ah, how we prate of treading  
The path the Master trod—  
Laurel and gold our portion:  
Thorns were the crown of God.

Say, can we call Him “Saviour”,  
We, with our place and pride?  
Hast Thou dominion o'er us,  
God of the spear-pierced side?

And if thou bear no wound-prints,  
For Him thou hast not died,  
Prate not! Nor boast thou love Him  
Ere thou art crucified!

(Author unknown)

Learn to give, and thou shalt bind  
Countless treasures to thy breast;  
Learn to love, and thou shalt find  
Only those who love are blest.

Learn to give, and thou shalt know  
They the poorest are who hoard;  
Learn to love, thy love shall glow  
Deeper for the wealth outpoured.

Learn to give, and learn to love;  
Only thus thy life can be  
Foretaste of the life above,  
Tinged with immortality.

Give, for God to thee hath given;  
Love, for He by love is known;  
Child of God, and heir of heaven,  
Let thy parentage be shown.

(Author unknown)

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“We owe therefore to Him that we are, that we are alive, that we understand: that we are men, that we live well, that we understand aright, we owe to Him. Nothing is ours except the sin that we have. For what have we that we did not receive?”

Augustine of Hippo.

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## Sketches From Our History

### CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH THROUGH THE AGES

#### CHAPTER I THE CHURCH STRUGGLES WITH ARIANISM

(Continued from last issue)

Although the orthodox doctrine of the true deity of Jesus Christ had been vindicated at the Council of Nicaea in the year 325, the Arian heresy was still far from disposed of. Indeed, the real controversy about the deity of Christ took place after, rather than before, the Council of Nicaea. Arianism now became more prevalent and powerful than before, especially in the eastern regions of the Roman Empire. It was a period of excited and long-continued controversy, involving not only what may be called "church politics", as in connection with the election of bishops, but also the secular politics of the Roman Empire.

The doctrinal controversy about the deity of Christ was intertwined with the personal histories of Arius and Athanasius, the champions of the contending doctrines. The prominent bishops Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea, although they had themselves—somewhat reluctantly—accepted the Nicene Creed, began to use their influence against the doctrine that Christ is of the same substance with God the Father. Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, who had also accepted the Nicene Creed, tried to maintain a position midway between Arianism and orthodoxy, a position which came to be called **Semi-Arianism**.

Influenced by Eusebius of Caesarea and others, the emperor Constantine began to think more favorably of the Arians. Arius himself made a vague confession, and was recalled from exile. Alexander, bishop of Alexandria in Egypt, where the controversy

had originated, died in the year 328, after which Athanasius became bishop of Alexandria and the recognized leader of the orthodox party in the Church. When Athanasius steadfastly refused to reinstate Arius in his former good standing in the Church, he was charged with disturbing the peace of the Church by false accusations. Following trial by two councils, in both of which the Arian sentiment predominated, Athanasius was found guilty, deposed from his office, and banished by the emperor to Gaul (France) in the year 336.

In the year 335 a council held in Jerusalem took up the matter of Arius' standing in the Church, and found him not guilty of heresy. Arrangements were made for him to be formally received back into the communion of the Church at Constantinople, but the evening before this was to take place, Arius suddenly died. He was over eighty years old. His death made little difference in the controversy, which continued under the leadership of others.

In 338, after two years of banishment, Athanasius was recalled from his place of exile, and enthusiastically received by the people of Alexandria. In 339 a council of bishops held at Alexandria declared in favor of the doctrine of the Nicene Creed. But still the controversy continued, and in the eastern regions of the Roman Empire Arianism was dominant. The emperor Constantius (son of Constantine the Great) was a thorough Arian. Soon Athanasius was deposed again, and fled for refuge to Rome.

In 346, Athanasius was ordered restored to office by the emperor Constantius. During the decade that followed Constantius called a number of councils which issued declarations in favor of a "moderate" form of Arianism. On the basis of the decrees of these councils, the emperor tried his best to force Arianism on the Church in the western part of the Empire. Prominent bishops who adhered to the Nicene Creed were deposed from office, including Hosius of Cordova in Spain and Hilary of Poitiers in Gaul (France). Athanasius himself was forcibly ejected from the cathedral of Alexandria while conducting divine service, by the soldiers of the emperor, and an Arian named George of Cappadocia was made bishop in his place (356 A.D.). The controversy between the two parties became extremely bitter, and this bitterness was of course greatly increased by the tendency of the Arian party to rely on political and military power rather than to depend on spiritual measures.

Arianism, in the modified form of **Semi-Arianism**, had now gained an apparent victory in all regions of the Roman Empire. It seemed for the time being that the cause of truth had been lost. The outlook became so dismal that even the aged bishop Hosius of Cordova was persuaded, by imprisonment and threats, to sign one of the creeds issued by the heretical party. Hosius however later repented of this wavering from the truth, and unequivocally rejected Arianism before he died.

The heretical party, having apparently gained the victory, now began to dispute among themselves, and this, in the providence of God, made way for the final victory of the orthodox faith in the deity of Jesus Christ. They soon divided into two sub-parties, both of which were opposed to the Nicene Creed, but which differed from each other. The Nicene Creed affirmed that Christ is **of the same essence with God the Father (homo-ousios)**; the extreme Arian party, like Arius himself, insisted that Christ is **of a different essence from God the Father (hetero-ousios)**; while the Semi-Arian party, trying to occupy a middle position, asserted that Christ is neither of the same essence with God the Father, nor yet of a different essence from God the Father, but **of like essence with God the Father (homoi-ousios)**.

These disputes between Arians and Semi-Arians continued for a number of years. Several councils were held in attempts to bring about unity between the two groups, but without success. The em-

peror Constantius tried to settle the matter by his imperial authority, but this also failed. He died in 361, and this finally opened the way for the real and permanent victory of the true doctrine of the deity of Christ.

Constantius was followed by Julian the Apostate (361-363). Julian hated Christianity in any and all forms, and adopted the policy of tolerating all Christian sects and parties, thinking that so they might neutralize each other. Accordingly, he recalled the orthodox bishops, including Athanasius, from their exile. Now that political support was withdrawn from the Arian and Semi-Arian parties, the true doctrine could contend against heresy on its own merits. The victory of orthodoxy over Arianism and Semi-Arianism was slow but sure. First in the western section of the Church, and later in the eastern part, the truth was vindicated in a series of Church councils which were held to consider the matter. This victory of the orthodox faith was greatly assisted by the preaching and writing of three bishops of Cappadocia, namely Basil, Gregory of Nazianzum and Gregory of Nyssa.

In the course of time the Semi-Arian party came to approach more closely to the orthodox faith, which of course greatly weakened the Arian cause. In 380 the emperor Theodosius I, an adherent of the Nicene faith, issued an edict requiring universal acceptance of the orthodox doctrine, and threatening punishment against heretics. This action on the part of an emperor cannot of course be justified on the basis of sound principles, any more than the pro-Arian actions of previous emperors can be justified. The punishment of heresy by civil penalties is certainly unwarranted and unscriptural. But we are dealing with the history of the early Church, not with our own day; and we must remember that the whole conception of the relation between Church and State had not yet been clarified at that time. Indeed, it is far from wholly clear even today.

In 381 the second ecumenical (universal) council was held, at Constantinople. After the withdrawal of some thirty-six Semi-Arian bishops from the council, there remained about 150 bishops in attendance, all of them being from the eastern part of the Roman Empire. Like the Council of Nicaea in 325, the Council of Constantinople was attended by the emperor in person. This council did not adopt any new creed, but reaffirmed the Nicene Creed with certain minor changes and one noteworthy addition, a statement affirming the deity of the Holy Spirit. Later in the Latin or western Church the word **filioque** was added to the

creed, so as to affirm that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father **and from the Son**. This addition was never accepted by the eastern or Greek Church, but apart from this one difference, the revised Nicene Creed issued by the Council of Constantinople has become the heritage of the universal Christian Church. The decrees of the council were ratified by the emperor and made binding upon all churches by public law. Thus Arianism was finally disposed of as a heresy threatening the faith of the Christian Church in the Roman Empire. Arianism continued to exist for some two hundred years among the tribes beyond the limits of the Empire, including the Goths, the Vandals, and others. These people, having been evangelized by Arian missionaries, naturally held the Arian faith, though more by reason of circumstances than as the result of real conviction concerning the question at issue.

Although the controversy between Arianism, Semi-Arianism and the orthodox Christian faith has often been represented as a strife about words, "theological hair-splitting", and the like, we should realize that this was no dispute about trifles. Between orthodoxy and Semi-Arianism—not to mention Arianism proper—there is a cleavage that cannot possibly be bridged or ignored. What was at stake in this controversy was precisely **the true and proper deity of the Lord Jesus Christ**, which is just another way of saying that what was at stake in this controversy was the very existence of Christianity as the only true religion and the power of God unto salvation. The creeds adopted by the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople affirmed the deity of Jesus Christ in unequivocal language. Both Arianism and Semi-Arianism involved a belief that Christ is something less than God in the true and proper sense of the term. Scoffers have often ridiculed the early champions of orthodoxy because of their insistence on the Greek term **homoousios** and their determination not to accept the Semi-Arian rival term **homoiousios**. It has been said that this was a strife about one letter, and that the narrowest letter of the alphabet. But that one letter, the Greek iota, makes the difference between affirming that Christ is of the same essence with the Father, and saying that he is of a similar essence to God the Father—the difference, that is to say, between saying that Christ is **truly God** and saying that Christ is **like God**. If a question were to arise about whether a certain gem were really a diamond, or merely similar to a diamond, no one would say that such a dispute was merely a foolish strife about words. To distinguish between metal that

is really gold, and metal that is merely like gold, is anything but "hair-splitting". Similarly, the question of whether Christ is truly God, or only like God, is not "hair-splitting", but a question of absolutely basic importance, which must be settled right if there is to be such a thing as real Christianity in the world. For there is no such thing as being **almost God**. Christ is either of the same essence as God the Father, or there is no true Mediator between God and sinful men, and consequently no saving Gospel for sinners.

The following is a translation of the Nicene Creed as revised and adopted by the Council of Constantinople in the year 381. This should be compared with the form adopted by the Council of Nicaea in 325, which will be found in "Blue Banner Faith and Life". Volume 2, No. 4, October-December, 1947, pages 143-144.

"We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.

"And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all the ages; Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made; of the same substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was made flesh by the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; who was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and ascended into the heavens, and is seated at the right hand of the Father, and shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; of whose kingdom there shall be no end.

"And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified together, who spoke through the prophets.

"In one holy catholic and apostolic Church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen."

(The expression "and from the Son" (*filioque*) was inserted after the words "who proceeds from the Father" in the paragraph dealing with the Holy Spirit, by a council of the western Church held at Toledo in Spain in the year 589. This addition to the creed caused much controversy between the Latin and Greek Churches).

## THE SCOTTISH COVENANTERS

### Their Origins, History and Distinctive Doctrines

(Selections from the book with the above title, by J. G. Vos, published by the author in 1940)

#### PART II

#### THE HISTORY OF THE COVENANTERS

##### CHAPTER I

##### THE PERIOD OF PERSECUTION, 1660-1688

#### 1. Legal Enactments Affecting the Church of Scotland.

The Earl of Middleton was a Scottish nobleman who had served as an officer both in Covenanting and Royalist armies. After the Restoration, King Charles II appointed him as his Commissioner in Scotland. Middleton called a Parliament, which met on January 1st, 1661, and was later known by the name of the "Drunken Parliament". The members of this Parliament were chiefly persons known to be "Malignant" or opposed to the Covenants, and the Parliament proved to be a very pliable and subservient legislature. The acts passed by this Parliament were an utter subversion of the constitution of the Church and State of Scotland, and had the effect of changing Scotland from a limited to an absolute monarchy.

The first act passed by the Parliament concerned the organization and membership of the Parliament itself, and contained a form of oath of allegiance of a very ensnaring nature. In the title of the act, this form of oath is called "an oath of parliament" but in the body, of the act itself, it is called "an oath of allegiance"; and the form of oath itself was in fact an oath of allegiance, with an added sentence to be used when sworn by members of Parliament. The form of oath was as follows: "I, for testification of my faithful obedience to my most gracious and redoubted sovereign Charles, king of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, defender of the faith, do affirm, testify, and declare, by this my solemn oath, that I acknowledge my said sovereign, only supreme governor of this kingdom, over all persons, and in all causes; and that no foreign prince, power, or state, nor person civil or ecclesiastic, hath any jurisdiction, power, or superiority over the same: and therefore I utterly renounce and forsake all foreign jurisdictions, powers, and authorities; and shall at my utmost power defend, assist, and maintain his majesty's jurisdiction foresaid,

against all deadly (sic), and never decline his majesty's power or jurisdiction, as I shall answer to God". The sentence to be added by members of Parliament was: "And I shall faithfully give my advice and vote in every thing that shall be propounded in parliament, as I shall answer to God."

It will be noted that the teeth in this form of oath are in the words "over all persons, and in all causes". The first phrase, "over all persons", if it meant that all persons in the kingdom were subject to the civil magistrate in civil matters, was quite legitimate and even necessary; but if it meant what Charles II probably meant by it, that the King was supreme above even the Parliament, the courts and the law of the land, then the phrase was subversive of the civil and religious liberty of the people of Scotland, and utterly contrary to the coronation oath which Charles II had taken at Scone in 1651. But the second phrase was even more subversive; the King was indeed supreme over all persons, if these words were rightly understood; but the King could not be supreme "in all causes" without being supreme in ecclesiastical causes as well as in civil. This doctrine of the supremacy of the King in ecclesiastical causes, thus laid down in the form of the oath of allegiance, was the planting of that bitter root of Erastianism which was destined to cause Scotland so much suffering and distress during the years that followed.

Another act of the same Parliament declared that "the king holds his crown from God alone". The Parliament of 1661 thus endeavored to clear the way for the absolutism of Charles II. It was not enough that the King be recognized as the ordinance of God; he must be recognized as the ordinance of God entirely irrespective of the choice of the nation or of his responsibility to the nation.

The crowning piece of legislation enacted by this meeting of Parliament was the Act Rescissory, by which all the acts of Parliaments since the year 1633 were at one stroke repealed. The Act declared all those parliaments to have been "pretendit Parliaments", annulled "all acts and deids past and done in them", declaring these to be "henceforth voyd and null". The effect of this Act was the undoing of all that had been done to make Presbytery the lawful government of the Church of Scotland; this was obviously done in order to clear the



way for the re-establishment of Episcopacy and Erastianism. The legal sanction of everything that had been accomplished by the General Assembly of 1638, the Assembly of the Second Reformation, was thus abolished by the "Drunken Parliament".

On December 12th, 1661, the Privy Council issued an order forbidding presentations of candidates for installation as ministers to be addressed to Presbyteries, and directing Presbyteries not to admit ministers on presentations directed to them. In January, 1662, the King addressed a letter to the Privy Council in which he forbade all meetings of ecclesiastical judicatories except those held by the Episcopal prelates according to law. Thus was Presbytery, as a practical system of Church government, outlawed in Scotland.

Parliament met again on May 8th, 1662, and proceeded to make legal provision for the restoration of the prelatic form of Church government in a law entitled "Act for the Restitution and Reestablishment of the Ancient Government of the Church by Archbishops and Bishops", which was passed on May 27th. The Act Rescissory of 1661 had repealed the acts of all Parliaments held after 1633; the act of May 27th, 1662, went further and repealed the Great Charter of Presbytery of 1592. In the preamble of the act it was stated that it was an inherent right of the crown to order the external polity of the Church, by virtue of the King's supremacy in causes ecclesiastical.

The same meeting of Parliament ratified the appointments of bishops and archbishops which had been made, and invited those prelates, in the King's name, to take seats in Parliament. On June 11th a law was passed which had the most serious consequences for the ministers of Scotland. This law declared that all ministers admitted to charges since 1649, when the rights of patrons had been abolished, had no right to their positions, and their parishes were vacant. But every such minister who should obtain a presentation from a patron, before September 20th, 1662, and submit to collation by the bishop of the diocese, should hold his position as if he had been installed in that way at his entry. By the same law the patrons were ordered to grant presentations to ministers, already pastors of Churches, who should apply for the same. This law provided the legal basis for the act of the Privy Council which soon followed and which resulted in hundreds of ministers leaving their Churches for conscience' sake.

By another act of the same Parliament (1662), called the "Abjuration Act", it was declared that "those oaths, the national covenant, as sworn and explained 1638, and afterward, and the solemn league and covenant were, and are in themselves unlawful oaths, and imposed against the fundamental laws of the kingdom". Since Charles II had publicly professed his acceptance of both covenants at his coronation at Scone in 1651, it would appear that the Parliament of 1662 declared that the King himself had taken "unlawful oaths" which were "against the fundamental laws of the kingdom". This Act of Parliament required all persons holding offices of public responsibility in the kingdom to take an oath of abjuration by which entering into covenants, taking arms against the King, the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant were all declared to be unlawful.

It may be noted at this point that Charles II not only renounced and violated the covenants which he had signed, but actually had the offensive documents burned by the common hangman, which was done at London on May 22nd, 1661, and repeated in Scotland at Linlithgow, May 29th, 1662.

Two later legal enactments remained to be mentioned. The first of these was passed November 16th, 1669, and was called the "Assertory Act." This law declared "That his Majesty hath the supreme authority and supremacy over all persons and in all causes ecclesiastical within this his kingdom; and that, by virtue thereof, the ordering and disposal of the external government and policy of the Church doth properly belong to his Majesty and his successors, as an inherent right of the crown; and that his Majesty and his successors may settle, enact, and emit such constitutions, acts, and orders, concerning the administration of the external government of the Church, and the persons employed in the same, and concerning all ecclesiastical meetings, and matters to be proposed and determined therein, as they in their royal wisdom shall think fit". This was Erastianism carried to the utmost extreme; it was too Erastian even for the Episcopal prelates. According to Burnet, the purpose of the act was to enable the King to restore Popery whenever he might choose to do so. This law placed the Church of Scotland so completely in the hand of the King that he could at any time establish any heresy or introduce any corrupt practice, without submitting the matter to Parliament or ecclesiastical courts. Charles II had become a pope as well as a king in Scotland.

The other legal enactment which must be mentioned here was the "Test Act" which was passed August 31st, 1681. This law required a special oath of allegiance of every person holding public office. The oath required contains over 500 words and is very complicated. Wodrow calls it "a medley of popery, prelacy, erastianism, and self-contradiction". The person taking this oath must swear that he professes the "true protestant religion, contained in the Confession of Faith, recorded in the first parliament of king James VI" (1567), and at the same time he must swear "that the king's majesty is the only supreme governor of this realm, over all persons, and in all causes, as well ecclesiastical as civil". In this the oath was self-contradictory, because the Confession of Faith referred to taught that Jesus Christ is the only head of the Church, so that any person honestly accepting that Confession of Faith could not accept the

statement that the king is the supreme governor in ecclesiastical causes. The oath also contained an explicit renunciation of the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant, and a promise never "to endeavor any change or alteration in the government, either in church or state, as it is now established by the laws of this kingdom". About eighty ministers refused to take the "Test" and resigned rather than do so. Even some of the bishops objected to such a contradictory and ensnaring oath, although all of them took it in the end. The Earl of Argyle took the "Test" with an explanation, stating "that he took it in as far as it was consistent with itself, and with the Protestant religion". For his he was arrested and tried for treason, and condemned to death. He escaped, however, to Holland, though he was later apprehended and executed in 1635.

(To be continued)

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## Our Church Covenant and Modern Life

(Note: This is the second of a series of sermons on the obligations involved in the Church Covenant sworn and subscribed by the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, May 21, 1871. The other sermons of the series will be published in future issues of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". The editor desires to ack-

nowledge his great indebtedness to the Rev. Frank D. Frazer, whose booklet entitled "Outline Studies in the Covenant" was very helpful in the preparation of this series of sermons. Every Covenanter should read and study Mr. Frazer's excellent booklet, which clearly and convincingly displays the Scriptural character of the obligations set forth in the Covenant of 1871. —Ed.)

### II. THE KIND OF LIFE WE COVENANT TO LIVE

Scripture Reading: Romans 12

The Covenant of 1871, besides a preliminary confession of sins, consists of an introductory paragraph and six sections. This Covenant was adopted in 1871 after long and earnest preparation, and it is recognized by the "Terms of Communion" as binding on the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America today. In order that we may have a bird's-eye view of the Covenant as a whole, I shall present the subjects of the various sections as given in Mr. Frazer's "Outline Studies in the Covenant". These are as follows:

1. We hereby covenant to do our duty to God.
2. We hereby covenant to do our duty to the truth of God.
3. We hereby covenant to do our duty to the nation.
4. We hereby covenant to do our duty to the Church-at-large.
5. We hereby covenant to do our duty to the world.

6. We hereby covenant to perform these, our duties, faithfully.

The second paragraph of Section 1 of our Church Covenant reads as follows:

"Aiming to live for the glory of God as our chief end, we will, in reliance upon God's grace, and feeling our inability to perform any spiritual duty in our own strength, diligently attend to searching the Scriptures, religious conversation, the duties of the closet, the household, the fellowship-meeting and the sanctuary, and will seek in them to worship God in spirit and in truth. We do solemnly promise to depart from all iniquity, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, commending and encouraging, by our example, temperance, charity and godliness."

In the preceding sermon of this series we considered **the Foundation of our God-Centered Life** as this is set forth in paragraph 1 of Section 1 of our Church Covenant. We saw, first, that **God is the starting point of our Covenant**; then we noted that

our Covenant regards man as totally sinful, and that our Covenant accepts God's way of Salvation as our only hope. We saw that modern thought, derived as it is from the non-Christian philosophy of Immanuel Kant and his successors, presents a man-centered faith, a man-centered salvation and a man-centered life, whereas our Church Covenant takes ground directly contrary to this man-glorifying trend of modern thought, and bears witness to a God-centered faith, a God-centered salvation and a God-centered life. Thus our

Church Covenant is based firmly and squarely on the world-view, or philosophy of life and history, of Christian theism, in opposition to the world-view of modern thought which regards man as non-created, independent, and subject to no law or truth outside of himself.

Coming now to the second paragraph of Section 1, we shall see that it deals with the kind of life we covenant to live, and sets forth our aim in life, our power for life and our manner of life.

## I. Our Aim In Life: to Glorify God

"Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him ever" (S. C. 1). Our Church Covenant in speaking of our "aiming to live for the glory of God as our chief end" is setting forth the only true and Scriptural answer to the question: What are we here for? or, What is the purpose of human life? The only right answer to that question is, **For God.**

That is not, however, the answer that is commonly given today, nor is it the answer that has been commonly given by the masses of the world's people through the ages. Concerning the purpose of human life, various answers have been given, but only those blessed with God's special revelation have been able to give the **right** answer to this question. Even the wisest of scholars and philosophers, outside of the realm of God's saving grace, have given wrong answers to the question.

One answer that has been given, and is being given today, is the answer of **Hedonism**. Hedonism affirms that pleasure is the great purpose of human life. This self-centered philosophy is extremely ancient, and perhaps likely to last a long time yet. It is reflected by the Scripture references to those of the heathen whose philosophy of life is summed up in the words "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die" (1 Cor. 15: 32; compare Luke 12:19). This is a crude form of Hedonism, but there is also a more refined form which holds that the "lower" or more sensual pleasures must be curbed or renounced in order that we may enjoy the "higher" forms of pleasure more adequately. The Hedonist is not necessarily a glutton, a drunkard or a dissipated person. He may be a famous artist, a noted musician, a renowned author. But he has the wrong aim in life. His life is self-centered.

Another answer that has been given is the answer of **Humanism**. Humanism regards not one's own pleasure, but the welfare of mankind, as the great purpose of life. Thus Humanism is not self-centered,

but it is still **man-centered**. The difference is that it makes the aim in life to exalt and benefit, not the individual, but humanity in general, our fellow-men. Thus Humanism, like Hedonism, fails to rise above the human level. It begins and ends with man. To the Humanist, as to the Hedonist, God is a means to an end.

The real issue here is **GOD VERSUS MAN AS THE AIM IN HUMAN LIFE**. Scripture represents the true aim in life as the glorification of a Personal God who is distinct from ourselves and transcendent above all created beings. This is the only living and true God, the triune God of the Bible, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Augustine of Hippo well understood the true aim in life when he wrote near the beginning of his "Confessions": "Thou hast created us unto Thyself, and our heart is without rest until it repose in Thee."

We live in a world in which the God-centered aim of life has been generally lost sight of, and the man-centered aim is largely taken for granted. This is true, to a great extent, even of many churches. While paying lip-service to "God", almost their whole emphasis is on the welfare of man. Such churches are, perhaps quite unconsciously, propagating anti-Christian modern thought in terms of the old-time language of Christian belief.

As Covenanters we recognize that the true aim in life is not to benefit ourselves, but to glorify God. In this we recognize ourselves as **creatures of God**. If there is any truth that modern man has willingly forgotten, it is precisely the truth that he is a **creature** and therefore can never be sufficient unto himself. Modern man needs to be reminded constantly, and with emphasis, not only that he is a **sinner**, but also that he is a **creature**. If not so reminded, he will take his own independence and autonomy for granted, and make his chief aim either his own pleasure (crude or refined), or else to serve and benefit humanity.

## II. Our Power for Life: Divine Grace

The paragraph of the Covenant that we are considering continues, "we will, in reliance upon God's grace, and feeling our inability to perform any spiritual duty in our own strength, diligently attend to searching the Scriptures. . .", etc. In this statement we recognize our utter dependence upon the grace of God for power to live a God-glorifying life.

Just as the modern world makes man its aim in life, so it attributes to man himself the power to live the right kind of a life. We are to lift ourselves by our own bootstraps, until this world becomes a paradise of human brotherhood, kindness and good-will. Now our Church Covenant is too firmly anchored to the Word of God to allow room for any such notion. Faithfully following the Bible, our Covenant frankly disclaims any power or ability inherent in ourselves, and attributes all the power to God. Whatever power we have is not our own; it is a gift of divine grace; and we are totally dependent on God for it.

Sinful man is his abominable spiritual arrogance and vain conceit would like to claim an inherent, natural power to live the good life. Thus it is very common to hear people say that if men only know and understand what is right, they will naturally tend to practice it. The old Greek philosophers often held that what humanity needs is knowledge or enlightenment, and that when that knowledge is provided, men will live as they should. The Confucian philosophy of China is founded on a similar belief in man's natural goodness and responsiveness to offered truth. A generation or two ago it was somewhat more common than today to hold forth education as the great remedy for humanity's troubles. Beneath this confidence in the power of education there lay, of course, a non-Christian idea of the natural goodness and perfectibility of human nature. Two catastrophic world wars within a quarter of a century, both of which originated among the most highly educated nations of the world, have done something to dispel this vain confidence in the uplifting power of education as such.

The non-Christian idea of human goodness which we have been considering holds that all of the power to live the good life is inherent in man. Such views make sinful man stand frankly on his own feet in this world, the master of his own fate, the captain of his own soul, sufficient unto himself.

More common in traditionally Christian circles, perhaps, are views which would divide the honors with God, attributing part of the power to live aright to God and part to man. Thus men would share the honor and the glory with God. They would do what the serpent told Eve she could do—become as God. Thus sinful man aspires to be rid of his absolute dependence on God, and to make himself more or less equal with God.

Romanism in teaching that we are saved partly by the grace of God through Christ, and partly by works of merit of our own (or those of the saints placed to our credit), really takes part of the honor and glory from God and bestows it upon man. Thus in the Roman Catholic system, man is never regarded as absolutely dependent upon the grace of God: there are some things that he can do for himself.

Among Protestants, Arminianism in its various forms is a scheme by which part of the power in the salvation of a soul and in the Christian life is regarded as a gift of God, while part of the power is regarded as inherent in man himself. Thus the Arminian tells us that God has done what He can to provide for the salvation of every person in the world, and now it is up to human beings to "take it or leave it" according to their own free will. This doctrine, in its consistent form, regards God as standing aside and looking on helplessly until man, by his own free will, takes the first step in his own salvation. The Bible doctrine of election is "interpreted" to mean that God, from eternity, elected those whom he foresaw would elect themselves by their own free will. Thus according to Arminianism, in the end it is not the grace of God but the power of the free human will that decides the eternal destiny of human beings. This is dividing salvation between God and man, and reserving the all-important first step to man.

Bible Christianity, on the other hand, attributes precisely all the power in salvation and in right living solely to God, none whatever to man. Herein lies the secret of the tremendous unpopularity of the system of doctrine—consistent Calvinism—set forth in our Covenant and Church Standards: it makes man dependent on God at every point. This humbles human pride and self-confidence. It shatters our sinful, proud complacency. When we recognize what Scripture teaches about this matter we realize that we are LOST and dependent on the GRACE of God for every element of our salvation and life.

### III. Our Manner of Life: Obedience to God's Will

The remaining part of the paragraph we are studying deals with the manner of life to which we pledge ourselves in our Covenant. This may be summed up as **obedience to God's will**. We should note well that it is not our own will, nor the will of human society as a whole, but God's will, to which we are to be obedient.

God's will is adequately made known to sinners only by his revelation in the Bible. So our Covenant mentions "searching the Scriptures" first of all. Here again we take issue sharply with the main trends of modern thought. Over against the Christian view that the truth can be adequately known only from the Bible, are two false views which are extremely common today, namely **Rationalism** and **Mysticism**.

Rationalism means dependence on the human faculty of reason. It seeks truth from reason. All who regard science as an adequate source of truth for mankind are really rationalists. Rationalism is contrary to Christianity because it holds that truth is discovered, rather than revealed.

Mysticism does not place its dependence upon scientific research and human reasoning, but upon our own inner consciousness or intuitions. According to Mysticism, truth is felt rather than revealed.

Both Rationalism and Mysticism center in man. Neither rises above the human plane. Neither can be adequate for creatures—far less for **sinful** creatures. We should always remember that even before Adam and Eve fell into sin, while they were still in their original righteousness in the Garden of Eden, God's revelation in nature and in the human heart and conscience was not sufficient for them. Even before they fell into sin, they needed, and received, special, supernatural revelation from God. Even before sin, God approached Adam **directly**, revealed to him the Covenant of Works, and thus provided for his commun-

ion with God. Thus there never was a time when God's natural revelation was really sufficient for human need. God's revelation in nature and in the human heart was never intended to stand alone; it was designed to be the background for a more direct revelation of God, **His Word**, which we possess today in the form of Holy Scripture.

Scripture, even though revealed **through** man, is yet of God. It came from outside this world, from above, from beyond the human race. It is the true, and only adequate, revelation of God's will. Therefore we engage to "diligently attend to searching the Scriptures."

Next, our Covenant mentions the **religious duties of the Christian life**: religious conversation, private prayer, family worship, the prayer meeting and public worship. A somewhat simpler classification of these religious duties is the familiar one of the means of grace: the Word, the sacraments, and prayer.

Following this, the Covenant specifies **moral duties of the Christian life**: to depart from all iniquity, to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, commending and encouraging, by our example, temperance, love, and godliness. We pledge ourselves to godliness as against iniquity, in our daily living.

The religious duties of the Christian life are sometimes called "duties of holiness", while the moral duties are referred to as "duties of righteousness."

Only such a life can be pleasing to God. To such a life we dedicate ourselves by our Covenant. But we should also count the cost. It is not an easy undertaking. It means deliberately resolving to spend all our days struggling against the current of the world and the times. We pledge ourselves to resist and repudiate the trend of our times and we take the program set before us in Scripture for our lives. May we do it sincerely and honestly.

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## Some Noteworthy Quotations

"In a word the sixteenth century conceived man as the creation of God, existing for God and serving His ends; men now are prone to think of God as, if not exactly the creation of man, yet as existing for man and serving man's ends."

B. B. Warfield

"The only propagandism that has ever

won a lasting hold upon men has been the bold proclamation of positive, dogmatic truth, based on external, divine authority; and the only power that can resist the infidelity of our day is the power of consistently concatenated dogmatic truth, proclaimed on the authority of a fully trusted, "Thus saith the Lord." "

B. B. Warfield

"Vain is it to crave reformation in manners where the religion is corrupted."

John Knox

"It is degrading to God to conceive of him as first willing that which he has no power to effect, and then changing his will consequently to the independent acts of his creatures."

A. A. Hodge

"God righteously deals with the sinner according to the measure of his responsibility, and not according to the measure of his sinful inability. It would have been a compromise altogether unworthy of God to have lowered his demands in proportion to man's sin."

A. A. Hodge

"The Lord will guide with His counsels those who follow the teaching of His Word, and wait on Him for further light."

Matthew Henry

"Be it observed, to the honor of truth, that sacred thing, that, if truth be spoken it will hold good, and, whoever may be dis-oblged by it, and angry at it, yet it will keep its ground; great is the truth, and will prevail; what is true will be always true, we may abide by it, and need not fear being disproved and put to shame."

Matthew Henry

"If yours be a flourishing Christianity, there will be no crooks nor zigzags in it. A conscience void of offence will give a gay security to your goings out and comings in. Never meeting the neighbor whom you have injured, nor the man who has aught ignominious to allege against you, haunted by no sense of hollowness, and no forebodings for the future; harboring no bitter feelings, and hiding no sinister designs, you will readily come to the light, and never fear that it will make your deeds too manifest."

James Hamilton

"If you have it in your hearts to take part in the regeneration of the Church and of society, be assured that it will never be in your power to do this. without a serious, humble, and crucified life."

Adolphe Monod

"Theology is taught by God, teaches about God, and leads to God."

Thomas Aquinas

"Oh, one sentence of the Scripture did more afflict and terrify my mind—I mean those sentences that stood against me, and sometimes I thought they every one did—more, I say, than an army of forty thousand men that might come against me. Woe be to him against whom the Scriptures bend themselves."

John Bunyan

## Religious Terms Defined

A few definitions of important religious terms will be given in this department in each issue of "Blue Banner Faith and Life." The aim will be conciseness without the sacrifice of accuracy. Where possible the Westminster Shorter Catechism will be quoted.

**Covenant of Grace.** The covenant made in eternity between God the Father and God the Son as the representative of all the elect, by which the eternal salvation of the elect is fully provided for and infallibly guaranteed, and which was in time revealed to the people of God and put into execution according to the divine plan.

**Salvation.** The work of God by which the elect are delivered from sin and suffering and restored to the enjoyment of God's favor in fulness of life, righteousness and blessedness.

**Redeemer of God's Elect.** "The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever." (S. C. 21).

**Redemption.** Christ's work of meeting all the requirements of God on behalf of the elect, by which He laid the sure foundation of their salvation.

**Mediator.** The Lord Jesus Christ who, as God and man in one person, and by His three offices of Prophet, Priest and King,

brings about complete reconciliation between God and the elect, in accordance with the Covenant of Grace.

**Divine Nature of Christ.** Christ's deity, by which He existed from all eternity as the living and true God, of the same substance with God the Father.

**Human Nature of Christ.** Christ's human soul and body which He took unto Himself when He came into this world to redeem His people, and which will remain to all eternity united with His divine nature in one Person.

**Obedience of Christ.** Christ's perfect fulfilment of all demands of God's law, not only for Himself as a human being, but also all demands of the law involved in the redemption of his people.

**Active Obedience of Christ.** Christ's fulfilment of the requirements of God's law by his perfect life on earth.

**Passive Obedience of Christ.** Christ's suffering the penalty of the broken law of God on behalf of his people, including all his sufferings, but especially his suffering and death on the cross.

**Atonement.** The satisfaction of the justice of God that was necessary for sinners to be forgiven.

**Satisfaction of Christ:** Christ's offering up of Himself a sacrifice to satisfy the justice of God in the stead of each of His elect, so that they can and shall be reconciled to God. (Also called **Vicarious Atonement** and **Substitutionary Atonement**).

**False Theories of the Atonement.** All doctrines of the Atonement which regard the essential nature of Christ's sufferings as something other than a sacrifice offered to God to satisfy His justice on account of sin.

**Resurrection of Christ.** Christ's rising from the tomb on the third day following His death, according to the Scriptures, in the identical body in which He suffered, but glorified.

**Christ's Estate of Humiliation.** "Christ's humiliation consisted in his being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time." (S. C. 27).

**Christ's Estate of Exaltation.** "Christ's exaltation consisteth in his rising again from the dead on the third day, in ascending up into heaven, in sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and in coming to judge the world at the last day." (S. C. 28).

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## Studies in the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly

### Lesson 105

For Week Beginning January 4, 1948

**Q. 114.** What reasons are annexed to the third commandment?

**A.** The reasons annexed to the third commandment, in these words, **The Lord thy God, and For the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain,** are, because he is the Lord and our God, therefore his name is not to be profaned, or any way abused by us; especially because he will be so far from acquitting and sparing the transgressors of this commandment, as that he will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgment, albeit many such escape the censures and punishments of men.

**Scripture References:**

Lev. 19:12. Ezek. 36:21-23. Deut. 28:58, 59. Zech. 5:2-4. Because of the sovereignty, majesty and holiness of God, His name is

not to be profaned or misused.

1 Sam. 2:12, 17, 22, 24, compared with 3:13. Those who dishonor the name of God will surely be punished by God, even though they may escape the judgment of men.

**Questions:**

1. What is meant by affirming that God is **the Lord**?

By affirming that God is **the Lord**, or **Jehovah**, is meant that God is sovereign, self-determined and unlimited by anything outside of himself. (See "Blue Banner Faith and Life", Vol. 2, No. 3, July-September, 1947, page 122). Thus the term refers to the **majesty** and **authority** of God. Because God

is what He is, His name must be handled reverently.

2. What is meant by the words "thy God" in the third commandment?

This expression implies a special covenant relation between God and His people. Although God's authority is of course universal, and His law ought to be obeyed by all men, those who have been brought into the sphere of God's Covenant of Grace can call God **their God** in a special sense, and therefore they are under an added obligation to use God's name in a reverent and right manner. It is wrong for anyone to take God's name in vain; for those living in the sphere of God's covenant, who are called God's people, to do so, is a much more wicked sin.

3. How is the sovereignty of God often disregarded or denied today?

The sovereignty of God, His majesty, His holiness, His absolute justice—all these truths are denied or obscured by the modern sentimental view of God which regards Him as nothing but love and kindness. Such a view of God represents Him as too benignant to be offended by human sin. Such a God could not be indignant when His name is taken in vain. Very different, of course, is the God revealed in the Bible, who is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being and all His attributes, a God of holiness, justice and truth as well as of kindness and love toward mankind.

4. How is the special covenant relationship to God, expressed by the words "thy God", often denied or obscured today?

This truth is denied or obscured by the popular notions of the universal Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man. If all human beings are already the children of God, apart from redemption and adoption, and if all mankind are already brothers in the family of God, then of course the Bible teaching of a special covenant people called out of the world into fellowship with God loses all point and meaning.

5. Why will God not allow those who

break this commandment to escape His righteous judgment?

It is true, of course, that God will not allow those who break **any** of the Ten Commandments to escape His righteous judgment. All of the commandments constitute a unity as the law of God. But because this command not to take God's name in vain especially concerns God's own honor and authority, He has added a special warning that He will not hold those guiltless who take His name in vain.

6. Is it a great sin to take God's name in vain?

Certainly this is a great sin, though of course there are greater and less degrees of taking God's name in vain. The violation of this commandment is commonly regarded as not a sin at all by the world. We should realize that the world's views of right and wrong are far from coinciding with the revelation of God's moral law as we have it in the Bible.

7. Do those who take God's name in vain commonly escape the censures and punishments of men?

Yes. It seems that there is no longer any strong public opinion against profane swearing, and many people of education and social standing do not even regard taking God's name in vain as contrary to good taste—to say nothing about regarding it as morally wrong. Popular literature is becoming more and more tolerant of profanity. Magazines which twenty or thirty years ago carefully excluded profanity from their columns, allow it to appear freely today. We must face the fact that the Christian veneer of our modern culture has been wearing thin. The general breakdown of faith in the authority of the Bible which has resulted from the spread of "critical" views of the Scriptures, is now bearing fruit in a general breakdown in the realm of morals and conduct. The almost unrestrained increase of profane swearing is one symptom of this breakdown. Without a general return to acceptance of the real authority of the Bible, the evil can hardly be remedied.

## Lesson 106

For Week Beginning January 11, 1948

**Q. 115.** Which is the fourth commandment?

**A.** The fourth commandment is, **Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy**

**work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is with-**



**in thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.**

**Q. 116.** What is required in the fourth commandment?

**A.** The fourth commandment requireth of all men the sanctifying or keeping holy to God such set times as he hath appointed in his word, expressly one whole day in seven; which was the seventh from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, and the first day of the week ever since, and so to continue to the end of the world; which is the Christian sabbath, and in the New Testament called **The Lord's Day.**

#### **Scripture References:**

Ex. 20:8-11. Deut. 5:12-15. The sabbath commandment.

1 Cor. 16:1, 2. Acts 20:7. The first day of the week observed by the apostles and early Christians.

Matt. 5:17, 18. No part of God's law can pass away, till all be fulfilled.

Isaiah 56:2, 4, 6, 7. The Old Testament predicts sabbath observance in the New Testament dispensation.

Rev. 1:10. The Lord's Day referred to by name.

#### **Questions:**

1. Is the sabbath commandment a moral law or a ceremonial law?

The commandment to observe the weekly sabbath is a moral law of God.

2. How can it be shown that the sabbath commandment is a moral rather than a ceremonial law?

(a) The fourth commandment itself mentions the fact that the sabbath originated not at the time of Moses but at the creation of the world. Thus the sabbath existed thousands of years before God gave the ceremonial law in the time of Moses. (b) The sabbath commandment is a part of the Ten Commandments, and thus, being found in a context of moral laws, it too must be regarded as a moral law. It would be very strange if the Ten Commandments were composed of nine moral precepts and one ceremonial precept, nine permanent laws and one law of only temporary validity. The Ten Commandments form a unity as a

summary of God's moral law, and if the sabbath commandment is not a moral law, this unity would be broken. (c) Like the rest of the Ten Commandments, the sabbath commandment was not written on perishable material but upon tablets of stone, indicating its permanent validity. All parts of the ceremonial law passed away at the time of the crucifixion of Christ, and if the sabbath commandment is a ceremonial law, then it too passed away, and was not permanent, but only of temporary validity. But the fact that it was written on stone by God Himself indicates that it was intended to be permanent.

3. On whom is the sabbath commandment binding?

Upon all men without exception. As Jesus said, "the sabbath was made for man"; he did not say that the sabbath was made for Israel, but that it was made for man, and not man for the sabbath. Thus it is not limited to any particular class of men, but binding upon the human race.

4. What attempts have been made to limit the obligation to observe the sabbath to certain classes of people?

(a) Some have held that the obligation to keep the sabbath is binding only on the people of Israel or the Jews. (b) Others have maintained that the obligation to observe the sabbath is binding only on Christians, and that those who do not profess to be Christians need not observe the sabbath.

5. How can these claims be answered?

(a) It has been shown above that the sabbath commandment is a moral law. But if it is a moral law, it must be binding on all people without exception. (b) If we say that the fourth commandment applies only to Jews, or only to Christians, why not go on and say that the fifth, sixth and seventh commandments, for example, apply only to Jews, or only to Christians? We must always remember that the Ten Commandments form a unity and may not be arbitrarily broken up. We may not single out one commandment and say that it applies only to a limited group of people, while the rest apply to all mankind. The Ten Commandments must be taken together and we should realize that while they were originally revealed by God to the people of Israel, they form a summary of God's moral law which is binding on all mankind.

6. What is the principle of the sabbath?

The principle of the sabbath is the observance as a holy day of **one whole day in seven in regular sequence.** Whether it is the

first day of the week or the seventh day of the week is not a part of the principle of the sabbath, but a matter determined by other considerations which are set forth in Scripture.

7. How has the principle of the sabbath sometimes been wrongly stated?

It has often been stated that the principle of the sabbath is that one-seventh of our time must be consecrated to God. This is a very faulty and inaccurate statement of the principle, for it would not require the keeping of a **whole day** at any time. On such a basis a person might consecrate to God one hour out of every seven hours, or one year out of every seven years. Or a person might observe the sabbath on a different day each week. As stated in the preceding question, the correct principle of the sabbath is the observance of one whole day in seven in **regular sequence**.

8. Does the fourth commandment require the observance of the seventh day of the week, or Saturday, as the sabbath?

No. It is of course true, as a matter of fact, that the Old Testament sabbath was on the seventh day of the week, but the fourth commandment does not require this. It commands diligent labor for six days, but does not specify what day of the week they are to begin on. The fourth commandment requires that **the seventh day after six days of labor** be observed as the sabbath, but this does not imply that it must **necessarily** be on the seventh day of the week. The requirement of the commandment is met by the Christian practice of working from Monday through Saturday (six days) and then observing the first day of the following week as the sabbath.

9. Why was the Old Testament sabbath the seventh day of the week?

The Old Testament sabbath was the seventh day of the week because of God's example and ordinance at the time of the creation (Gen. 2:1-3). Apart from providing an appointed day for rest and worship, the sabbath served as a reminder of God's work of creation. This truth of creation of course implies that all things, including human beings, are absolutely dependent on God for their very existence. It also implies that human beings are morally responsible to God for their lives. Thus the weekly sabbath, commemorating the creation, was calculated to serve as a continually repeated reminder of man's dependence on God and his moral accountability to God—which is to say that the sabbath was calculated to serve as a constant reminder of the very

foundations of religion and morality.

10. Why is the Christian sabbath on the first day of the week?

The Christian sabbath, or the Lord's Day, is on the first day of the week in remembrance of Christ's resurrection from the dead. Thus it may be said that the Old Testament sabbath commemorated God's original creation, while the Christian sabbath in addition calls attention to God's **new** creation, his great work of redemption in Jesus Christ.

11. Who changed the day of the sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week?

Our Lord Jesus Christ, by the accomplishment of his great redemptive work, brought about the close of the Old Testament dispensation and the opening of the New Testament dispensation of the Covenant of Grace. The change from the seventh to the first day of the week is a part of this change of dispensation. It has been observed that our Saviour was crucified on the **sixth** day of the week, and buried on the evening of the sixth day, and remained in the tomb the whole of the seventh day, and arose from the dead on the first day of the week. Thus Christ buried the Old Testament seventh day sabbath in the tomb with Himself, and left it there, and when he arose he brought with Him the New Testament sabbath which is to be observed on the first day of the week.

12. Did the Roman Emperor Constantine change the sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week?

Although this change of day has often been attributed to Constantine, the assertion is false. The Roman Emperor Constantine in the year 321 issued a decree providing for the **civil** observance of the first day of the week, forbidding courts of justice to hold sessions on that day and commanding the soldiers of the Roman army to abstain from their ordinary military exercises on that day. But the observance of the first day of the week as the Lord's Day goes back far earlier than the time of Constantine, as is evidenced by the New Testament and other early Christian documents.

13. How long is the sabbath to be observed on the first day of the week?

Until the end of the world. This follows from the fact that God's revelation through Christ and the apostles, which we call the **New Testament**, is God's **final** word to the human race until the end of the world. Since the completion of the New

Testament, God has remained silent and has not spoken directly to the human race, nor can any new revelation be expected until that day when our Lord Jesus Christ shall come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.

14. Will the sabbath be observed in heaven?

While the Bible says nothing directly on this subject, the teachings of Scripture concerning the difference between this present age and the age to come imply that sabbath observance as we know it will not exist in heaven. Rather, we may say, heaven will be one unending sabbath. Scripture teaches that there will be no temple in heaven (Rev. 21:22), and of course there will be no need of the Bible in heaven, for the redeemed shall see God's face (Rev. 22:4). There will be no weariness or need of special times of rest in heaven, for in "the life that is life indeed" the most intense activity and the most perfect rest can exist together. It is true that the sabbath existed **before** man's fall into sin, and therefore complete deliverance from sin would not mean that the sabbath must necessarily pass away. Rather, Scripture informs us that "there remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God" (Heb. 4:9, ARV), that is, **the sabbath rest of eternity**. Thus in eternity the sabbath which was instituted at the creation will not be abolished, but **fulfilled** in the eternal sabbath rest of God's redeemed.

15. What differences exist among

Christian people about the obligation of sabbath observance?

As mentioned above under question 3, some hold that the obligation to observe the sabbath is limited to Jews, or limited to Christians. Those who say that it does not apply to Christians distinguish between the sabbath and the Lord's Day, and hold that the Lord's Day has no connection with the fourth commandment. There are also great differences about **how** the sabbath is to be observed. Obviously the question **whether** the sabbath must be observed must be settled before anyone can discuss **how** it ought to be observed.

16. Is it important for the Church to teach the obligation to observe the sabbath?

Certainly this is important. The fact that various differences of opinion about the sabbath exist among Christian people does not mean that the Church may neglect what it regards as the teaching of God's Word on this subject. Nor does the fact that careful sabbath observance is contrary to the spirit of the present age mean that the Church may tolerate disregard of the sabbath among her members. While recognizing that many earnest Christian people differ from us in their interpretation of the Bible with respect to the sabbath, we should adhere faithfully, both by profession and by practice, to the obligation of sabbath observance as set forth in our Church standards, which we believe to be an accurate interpretation of the Scriptures.

## Lesson 107

## For Week Beginning January 18, 1948

**Q. 117.** How is the sabbath or the Lord's day to be sanctified?

**A.** The sabbath or Lord's day is to be sanctified by a holy resting all the day, not only from such works as are at all times sinful, but even from such worldly employments and recreations as are on other days lawful; and making it our delight to spend the whole time (except so much of it as is to be taken up in works of necessity and mercy) in the public and private exercises of God's worship: and, to that end, we are to prepare our hearts, and with such foresight, diligence and moderation, to dispose and seasonably dispatch our worldly business, that we may be the more free and fit for the duties of that day.

### Scripture References:

Ex. 20:8. The sabbath to be kept as a holy day.

Ex. 20:10. Ex. 16:25-28. Neh. 13:15-22. Jer. 17:21, 22. God requires abstinence from ordinary work on the sabbath day.

Matt. 12:1-13. Work of necessity may be performed on the sabbath day.

John 9:14. Luke 13:14-16. Work of mercy may be performed on the sabbath day.

Isa. 58:13, 14. Luke 4:16. Acts 20:7. 1 Cor. 16:1, 2. Isa. 66:23. Lev. 23:3. The duty of positive observance of the sabbath day by worship of God.

Ex. 20:8. Luke 23:54-56. Ex. 16:22-29. Neh. 13:19. The duty of preparing for the sabbath by arranging our worldly business beforehand.

### Questions:

1. What two kinds of sabbath observance are required by the Scriptures?

The Word of God requires both **nega-**

**five** and **positive** observance of the sabbath.

2. What is meant by negative observance of the sabbath?

Negative observance of the sabbath means abstaining from those things which ought not be done on that day.

3. What is meant by positive observance of the sabbath?

Positive observance of the sabbath means doing those things which it is our duty to do on that day.

4. How does the Catechism speak of the negative observance of the sabbath ?

The Catechism affirms that the sabbath is to be observed by a holy resting (a) from sinful works; (b) from worldly employments; and (c) from worldly recreations.

5. What is meant by a **holy** resting?

This means not merely resting, or abstaining from work, but resting with a religious motive, as an element of obedience and service to God. We are not merely to rest, but to rest as a form of devotion to God.

6. How much of the sabbath is to be devoted to God by abstinence from work and ordinary recreations?

"All the day", that is, **the whole** of the sabbath day is to be so devoted to God.

7. Does the sabbath run from sunset to sunset, or from midnight to midnight?

This is a matter which is indifferent in itself. The Jews reckoned their days from sunset to sunset, and their sabbath accordingly. We count from midnight to midnight. The sabbath should be reckoned in the customary way of reckoning other days.

8. Besides religious duties, what forms of work are legitimate on the sabbath?

Besides religious duties, **works of necessity** and **works of mercy** are legitimate on the sabbath.

9. What is meant by "works of necessity"?

Strictly speaking, works of necessity are works which cannot be avoided, or cannot be postponed until another day. If a house catches fire, the blaze must be extinguished immediately; this is a work of necessity, and does not violate the sabbath. Domestic animals must be fed and watered; cows must be milked; such tasks are necessary because they cannot be postponed; they do not violate the sabbath. Even work

which might be postponed may properly be performed on the sabbath, if it results in eliminating other and greater work on the sabbath day. If fifteen minutes spent repairing an automobile will save two hours' time that would be required to drive to church with a team of horses, or to walk to church, it is legitimate to repair the automobile, because this will result in the least total amount of work on the sabbath day. There must of course be some allowance for differences of opinion among Christian people about what constitutes a true work of necessity on the sabbath. Some things are regarded as necessary by conscientious Christians of the present day, which in times past would perhaps not have been considered necessary. The Bible teaches the **principle** that works of necessity may be done on the sabbath, and gives some examples of the application of this principle. But the Bible does not provide a ready-made definition of a "work of necessity", such as could be applied to all cases. By inference from the teachings of the Bible we may say that a work of necessity is (a) that which cannot be postponed; or (b) that work which results in eliminating the greatest possible amount of work on the sabbath day.

10. What is meant by "works of mercy"?

This means work done chiefly not with a motive of financial gain, but because of sympathy and compassion for human suffering. Physicians and nurses may properly care for the sick on the sabbath day, and of course they are entitled to compensation for such work, but what makes such work legitimate on the sabbath is not the element of profit, but the element of relieving suffering. To visit the sick is certainly proper on the sabbath, provided it is done with a right motive.

11. What should be our principal occupation on the sabbath?

The public and private exercises of God's worship.

12. What are the public exercises of God's worship?

These are the services of the Church, including the regular services at which the Word of God is preached, and also other Church meetings, such as Sabbath Schools, Bible study classes and prayer meetings.

13. What are the private exercises of God's worship?

The private exercises of God's worship are: (a) individual, such as personal Bible reading and prayer; (b) family, including family worship, religious instruction of chil-

dren, religious conversation, and the like.

14. In order to observe the sabbath aright, what preparations must we make?

(a) We must prepare our hearts, that is, think about the sabbath and its duties, privileges and blessings, beforehand, so that we will be in a worshipful frame of mind on the Lord's day. (b) We must adequately attend to our worldly business beforehand,

so that we will be free on the sabbath day, not only from worldly business itself, but from unnecessary thought and worries about our worldly business. If we have to drive an automobile to attend Church services, we should see that it is properly provided with gasoline and oil on Saturday, so that this will not have to be done on the Lord's day.

## Lesson 108

## For Week Beginning January 25, 1948

**Q. 118.** Why is the charge of keeping the sabbath more specially directed to governors of families, and other superiors?

**A.** The charge of keeping the sabbath is more specially directed to governors of families, and other superiors, because they are bound not only to keep it themselves, but to see that it be observed by all those that are under their charge; and because they are prone oft-times to hinder them by employments of their own.

### Scripture References:

Ex. 20:10. The fourth commandment addressed especially to heads of families.

Josh. 24:15. The responsibility of the head of a family to lead the family in serving the Lord.

Neh. 13:15, 17. Persons in positions of prominence or authority have an added responsibility to keep the sabbath day holy.

Jer. 17:20-22. Kings and civil rulers have a responsibility for the right observance of the sabbath day.

Ex. 23:12. Deut. 5:14, 15. Servants or employees are entitled to their sabbath rest, and not to be deprived of it by employers requiring the performance of unnecessary labor.

### Questions:

1. On whom is the sabbath commandment binding?

The sabbath commandment is binding on every individual human being in the world, as well as on all governments, organizations, corporations or other associations of human beings. There is not a person in the world, individual or collective, which has any right to disregard or violate the command to "remember the sabbath day to keep it holy."

2. What class of people are under an added obligation to obey this commandment?

"Governors of families, and other superiors", that is, persons whom God has placed in positions of authority in family, Church or State, are under an added obligation to obey this commandment. The general truth that greater authority involves greater responsibility holds good in the matter of sabbath observance as in other matters.

3. How are heads of families to see that the sabbath is observed by the members of their families?

Heads of families are to see that the sabbath is observed by the members of their families, first of all, by themselves setting a good example of sabbath observance, regarding the sabbath not as a burden but as a delight, and observing it cheerfully and consistently; in the second place, by instructing those under their authority in the obligation and duties of sabbath observance; in the third place, if necessary, by using their God-given authority and **forbidding** worldly activities which would violate the holiness of the sabbath day.

4. It is possible for heads of families to be too strict in requiring sabbath observance?

It is possible, of course, to be unreasonably strict about the manner of observing the sabbath. However it seems probable that in our own time such extreme strictness is very rare. The tendency today is just the other way, in the direction of toleration of carelessness and disregard for the sanctity of the sabbath. It would be well if there were a greater degree of strictness about sabbath observance today. Of course some allowance must be made for little children; they cannot be expected to observe the sabbath in exactly the way adults should; yet even young children should be made to realize that there is a difference between the sabbath and other days, and that ac-

tivities which are proper on ordinary days are wrong on the sabbath.

5. What kind of activities should be excluded from family life on the sabbath?

While some activities may perhaps be classed as "doubtful", the following are unquestionably wrong on the sabbath day and should be excluded: studying day-school lessons; reading ordinary books and magazines; reading newspapers; listening to radio broadcasts of any kind (with the exception of orthodox religious broadcasts); playing ordinary games, whether indoors or outdoors; writing ordinary letters to friends or relatives, or other persons; conversations about financial or business matters; ordinary social visiting; common picnicing; attending public amusements or athletic events of whatever type.

6. If all these activities are forbidden on the sabbath, will not the day prove to be a burden rather than a joy?

This depends on whether we love God or not. If our love is for the world and the things of the world, of course any conscientious sabbath observance will prove to be an unwelcome burden. But if the supreme devotion of our life is our love to God, we will welcome the opportunity and privilege of turning aside from ordinary affairs to devote the sabbath day to worshipping God and seeking his kingdom and his righteousness in a special way.

7. In addition to religious worship, what activities are proper on the sabbath day?

Besides the duties of religious worship, and works of necessity and mercy, the following forms of activity are certainly proper for the sabbath day: reading the Bible and orthodox Christian literature; reading and telling Bible stories to the children; playing various Bible games; writing letters with a view to winning souls for Christ, comforting the afflicted, encouraging weak Christians, etc.; all proper forms of evangelistic activity; listening to orthodox religious broadcasts on the radio.

8. What special responsibility rests upon ministers and other Church officers in the matter of sabbath observance?

Ministers and all other Church officers should set a good example of consistent and conscientious sabbath observance before the members of the Church, and should bear witness to the teachings of the Bible on this subject as occasion may require.

9. What special responsibility rests upon civil rulers, or State officials, in the matter of sabbath observance?

Government officials should (a) observe the sabbath carefully themselves, lest they become a scandal to the people; (b) protect the sanctity of the sabbath by appropriate civil legislation against gross and open violation of the day; (c) oppose and remove all laws and government requirements which interfere with the proper observance of the sabbath on the part of any of the people.

## Lesson 109

## For Week Beginning February 1, 1948

**Q. 119.** What are the sins forbidden in the fourth commandment?

**A.** The sins forbidden in the fourth commandment are all omissions of the duties required, all careless, negligent and unprofitable performing of them, and being weary of them; all profaning the day by idleness, and doing that which is in itself sinful, and by all needless works, words, and thoughts, about our worldly employments and recreations.

### Scripture References:

Ezek. 22:26. The omission of a duty is itself a sin.

Acts 20:7-9. Inattention during divine service may result in falling asleep.

Ezek. 33:30-32. Careless, negligent and unprofitable performing of religious duties.

Amos 8:5. The sin of profaning the sab-

bath by being weary of it, and wishing it were past.

Mal. 1:13. The sin of regarding public divine worship as a weariness.

Ezek. 23:38. The sabbath is especially profaned by doing that which is in itself sinful, that is, something which is sinful no matter when it is done.

Jer. 17:24. 27. Isa. 58:13, 14. It is wrong to profane the sabbath by unnecessary works, words or thoughts about our ordinary affairs.

### Questions:

1. Which of the Ten Commandments forbids the sin of laziness?

The fourth commandment, which commands us to work industriously for six days of every week.

2. Why is "careless, negligent and unprofitable" performing of sabbath duties sinful?

Because God requires of us not merely formal or technical obedience to his law, but a spiritual devotion and obedience to all his commandments. A merely formal observance of the sabbath is hypocrisy.

3. Why is it wrong to be weary of the sabbath, and wish it were past?

This attitude of mind is wrong because it is the product of a selfish, worldly heart that finds no joy or satisfaction in the things of God.

4. Why is it wrong to profane the sabbath day by idleness?

This is wrong because God created us active, intelligent beings. A plant or a tree serves to glorify God by simply keeping alive and continuing its normal growth. But human beings are not plants nor trees; they are living souls created in the image of God. God, who is himself intensely active, cannot be honored by human idleness, and especially not by idleness on the sabbath day.

5. Is it wrong to take a nap on the sabbath afternoon, or to take a walk in the open air?

No. Taking a nap, or a walk in the open air, provided they are kept within the bounds of reasonable moderation, are to be regarded as **works of necessity**, and they may be as necessary to bodily health and mental alertness as to eat breakfast, dinner and supper on the sabbath day. Reasonable care of our bodies on the sabbath is not wrong.

6. Is it wrong to enter into an agreement to buy or sell something, on the sabbath day?

Certainly this is wrong. There are those who think it would be wrong to buy or sell on the sabbath, but not wrong to enter into

an agreement to buy or sell something, provided the actual transfer of money and property takes place on some other day. Actually, of course, to enter into a contract, whether oral or written, is itself an act of worldly business, and wrong on the sabbath day.

7. Is it wrong to sit in church and plan out our business for the following week while the sermon is being preached?

Of course this practice is sinful, though in its nature it is a secret sin which only God and the one who practices it can know. There is a popular idea that we are not responsible for our thoughts, but the Bible emphatically teaches that we are responsible for our thoughts as well as for our words and our actions. Moreover it is possible by effort and self-discipline to gain control over our thoughts so that they do not wander where we do not want them to go. Of course the power of the Holy Spirit is needed to do this successfully.

8. What present-day conditions indicate a prevalent disregard for the sabbath?

(a) The obvious and gross commercializing of the sabbath by the world, including "Sunday" movies, sports, and secular radio broadcasting; (b) The increasing number of Christians who repudiate the very principle of the sabbath, claiming that it was intended for the Jews only; (c) The general carelessness about the sabbath even on the part of Christian people who profess to believe in the principle and obligation of the sabbath. **The sabbath situation at the present time is very bad**, and only a genuine revival of true religion, together with sound instruction about the obligation of sabbath observance, can reclaim the sabbath and restore it to a place of honor in the modern world. Civil legislation alone cannot accomplish this, though it has its place in preventing gross sabbath desecration. There must be a real revival of true Christianity, or the sabbath will be lost beyond recovery.

## Lesson 110

## For Week Beginning February 8, 1948

**Q. 120.** What are the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment, the more to enforce it?

**A.** The reasons annexed to the fourth commandment, the more to enforce it, are taken from the equity of it, God allowing us six days of seven for our own affairs, and reserving but one for himself, in these words, **Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work:** from God's challenging a special propriety in that day, **The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God:** from the

example of God, who **in six days made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day:** and from the blessing which God put upon that day, not only sanctifying it to be a day for his service, but in ordaining it to be a means of blessing to us in our sanctifying it; **Wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.**

### Scripture References:

Ex. 20:8-11. (This question being an analysis of the reasons annexed to the fourth

commandment, no Scripture references except the commandment itself are required).

**Questions:**

1. How many reasons are annexed to the fourth commandment?

Four: (a) The equity of God's allowing us six times as much time for our own occupations as we are required to devote to worshipping Him; (b) The special claim that God makes to the sabbath day; (c) The example of God Himself in resting on the seventh day, following the six days of creation; (d) The blessing which God has placed upon the sabbath day.

2. What is meant by the word "equity"?

It means reasonableness or fairness in a matter involving two or more parties.

3. How has God shown fairness in the sabbath commandment?

By allowing us six days of the week for our own occupations and enjoyments, and only requiring one day to be devoted solely to Him in a special way. Thus God does not require of us something that would be impossible. If we had to spend all seven days in worshipping God, we would have no time for earning a living, nor for the recreation and social life which are necessary for our bodily and mental well-being.

4. If only one day of seven is to be devoted solely to the service of God, may we do as we please on the other six days?

Certainly not. We are moral agents and are responsible to God for our words, thoughts and deeds at all times. But the sabbath day is reserved solely for the service of God, whereas on the other six days we are to glorify God **indirectly** by laboring and doing all our work. Our ordinary life and occupations should be directed to the glorifying of God, certainly; but the sabbath is set apart for glorifying and serving God in a direct and special manner.

5. What is the meaning of the expression, "God's challenging a special propriety in that day"?

In modern language, this means, "God's claiming that day as His special property."

6. Does God have the right to claim the sabbath day as His special property?

Yes, for He is our Creator and Lord. God is sovereign, and therefore He is free to claim whatever He wishes of any of His creatures.

7. Why is breaking the sabbath a form of stealing?

Because the person who breaks the sabbath, by taking it for his own use, steals something which belongs especially to God; he appropriates God's property, the sabbath day.

8. Why did God rest on the seventh day after the six days of creation?

Certainly not because God was weary from His task, nor because He needed the rest for Himself, for God is almighty, and the work of creation was no effort to Him; but in order to give an example, and lay down a religious principle, for the human race to take note of and follow.

9. How does the example of God in resting the seventh day show that the sabbath is not only for the Jews but for all mankind?

It shows that the sabbath originated at the creation of the world, not merely in the time of Moses when God gave special laws to the people of Israel. The sabbath was established by God thousands of years before the time of Abraham, who was the first of the people of Israel.

10. What special religious meaning is involved in the example of God resting on the sabbath day after His work of creation?

See Hebrews 4:9, 10. The sabbath rest into which God then entered became the type or example of **the eternal rest of the people of God in heaven.**

11. Will the sabbath rest of God's people in heaven be a condition of idleness?

No. Heaven will be a state both of the most perfect rest and also of the most intense activity. Only because of sin is rest incompatible with activity. In heaven there will be no fatigue, no weariness, no need for recuperation of physical or mental powers, because the curse will have been forever abolished. See Rev. 4:8 ("and they rest not day and night . . ."); Rev. 21:25 ("There shall be no night there").

12. What is the blessing which God has placed upon the sabbath day?

In the first place, the sabbath day is blessed by being set apart as a day for God's service. In the second place, it is an appointed means of blessing to us, and we will find it so if we observe it as God intended, in a reverent, conscientious and spiritual manner.



## Lesson 111

## For Week Beginning February 15, 1948

**Q. 121** Why is the word **Remember** set in the beginning of the fourth commandment?

**A.** The word **Remember** is set in the beginning of the fourth commandment, partly, because of the great benefit of remembering it, and being thereby helped in our preparation to keep it, and, in keeping it, better to keep all the rest of the commandments, and to continue a thankful remembrance of the two great benefits of creation and redemption, which contain a short abridgement of religion; and partly, because we are very ready to forget it, for that there is less light of nature for it, and yet it restraineth our natural liberty in things at other times lawful; that it cometh but once in seven days, and many worldly businesses come between, and too often take off our minds from thinking of it, either to prepare for it, or to sanctify it; and that Satan, with his instruments much labor to blot out the glory, and even the memory of it, to bring in all irreligion and impiety.

**Scripture References:**

Ex. 20:8. The word "Remember" is the first word of the sabbath commandment.

Ex. 16:23. Luke 23:54-56 compared with Mark 15:42. Neh. 13:19. To remember the sabbath day in advance helps us to keep it.

Psalm 92 (Title, "A Psalm or Song for the sabbath day"), verses 13, 14. Ezek. 20:12; 19, 20. Faithful observance of the sabbath enables us to perform all other religious duties better.

Gen. 2:2, 3. Psalm 118:22-24 compared with Acts 4:10, 11. Rev. 1:10. To remember the sabbath day helps us to think of God's two great works of creation and redemption, which form a summary of religion.

Ezek. 22:26. By nature we very easily forget the sabbath.

Neh. 9:14. There is less light of nature for the sabbath than for most other of the Ten Commandments, therefore it is very easy to overlook and disregard the sabbath. Our knowledge of the sabbath depends almost entirely on the Bible.

Ex. 34:21. The sabbath commandment restrains our natural liberty even in matters which are lawful at other times.

Deut. 5:14, 15. Amos 8:5. Worldly business coming on the week-days often takes our minds off the sabbath and keeps us from observing it aright.

Lam. 1:7. Jer. 17:21-23. Neh. 13:15-23. Satan and his servants try very hard to prevent spiritual sabbath observance, and to destroy the institution of the sabbath day.

**Questions:**

1. How many of the Ten Commandments begin with the word "Remember"?

Only one, the fourth or sabbath commandment.

2. What benefits come from remembering the sabbath day?

We cannot really keep the sabbath aright unless we remember it beforehand. If we think of it beforehand, and keep it in mind through the week, we will be in a better state of mind to observe the day as it should be observed. If we never give the sabbath a thought through the week, we will find it very difficult to devote ourselves to the things of God on the sabbath day.

3. How does keeping the sabbath help us to perform other religious duties better?

A spiritual observance of the sabbath day helps to keep us in touch with God. When we are really in communion with God, all other religious duties can be performed more earnestly and willingly. But if we neglect the sabbath, our communion with God will be weakened, and we will be likely also to neglect other duties.

4. What two great works of God does the sabbath day call to our minds?

The works of **creation** and **redemption**, which, as the Catechism informs us, together "contain a short abridgement of religion". These two works of God, creation and redemption, form the subject matter of the whole Bible. The Bible is the inspired record of God's works of creation and redemption. The sabbath day calls these two works of God to our minds, because God instituted the sabbath when He finished His work of creation, and our Saviour Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the first day of the week, which is the Christian sabbath.

5. Why is it especially necessary that we remember the sabbath day?

Because we are very likely to forget it. Any Christian can realize this from his own experience, as well as from the Bible. There is no commandment of God that we are more likely to forget than the command to keep the sabbath day as a holy day.

6. Why is it so easy to forget the sabbath day?

One reason is that the light of nature tells us very little about the sabbath. By the light of nature we could only know that a portion of our time ought to be devoted to God our Creator. We could not know what portion of our time, nor exactly how it ought to be spent. For this information we are entirely dependent on God's special revelation, the Holy Bible. The light of nature may teach people that it is wrong to commit murder, but the light of nature cannot teach us that one day in seven must be kept holy as a day for worshipping God. Therefore it is much easier to forget the sabbath commandment than the command not to commit murder.

7. Why do many people consider the sabbath commandment burdensome and unreasonable?

Because the sabbath commandment restrains our natural liberty in matters which are lawful on other days. To buy, sell, work at our ordinary occupations, engage in sports and other common recreations, are not wrong in themselves. These practices are not sinful on other days of the week; they are wrong only on the sabbath day. But many people are not satisfied with six days of the week for their own business and pleasure; they want all seven. Because the sabbath interferes with this desire, many people consider it unreasonable and burdensome. And those who have this attitude toward the sabbath will be inclined to neglect and forget it.

8. How does the fact that the sabbath comes only once a week make us likely to forget it?

If the sabbath came once every two days, or once every three days, there would not be so many days between sabbaths, and it would not so easily drop out of our mem-

ory. But when there are six days filled with all kinds of business and activity between sabbaths, it is only natural that we tend to forget the sabbath. Therefore it was wise of God to use the word "Remember" in the sabbath commandment.

9. Why does Satan, with his servants, try so hard to break down and destroy the sabbath day?

Satan, with his agents and the citizens of his kingdom, is engaged in an age-long warfare against God and God's kingdom. God's kingdom is a spiritual kingdom and it is defended and propagated by spiritual weapons and methods. The real extension of God's kingdom depends on people being converted to Christ, repenting of their sins, and loving and serving God sincerely and loyally. These things depend chiefly upon the preaching of the Gospel and the public and private exercises of God's worship, such as Bible study, the sacraments, and prayer. These divine ordinances can find but little time on week-days; they are largely dependent on the sabbath day for an adequate amount of time and attention. Satan of course understands this, and he realizes that if he can break down the sabbath, then the preaching of the Gospel and the ordinances of divine worship will be neglected; if the preaching of the Gospel and the ordinances of divine worship are neglected, then God's kingdom cannot prosper; if God's kingdom does not prosper, then Satan's kingdom will not be interfered with; and if Satan's kingdom is not interfered with, then Satan will have a clear track to accomplish his wicked purposes in the world. So we see that the sabbath, far from being an arbitrary or unreasonable command of God, is calculated to accomplish a great purpose and to form a real bulwark against Satan's kingdom and the floods of iniquity. With this thought, we bring our study of the sabbath to a close.

## Lesson 112

## For Week Beginning February 22, 1948

**Q. 122.** What is the sum of the six commandments which contain our duty to man?

**A.** The sum of the six commandments which contain our duty to man, is, to love our neighbor as ourselves, and to do to others what we would have them to do to us.

### Scripture References:

Matt. 22:39. The second table of the law as summarized by Christ.

Matt. 7:12. The "Golden Rule" given

by Christ as a summary of our duty to our fellow men.

### Questions:

1. What part of the Ten Commandments deals with our duty to our fellow men?

The last six commandments, beginning with the fifth, which are commonly called "the second table of the law," deal with our duty to our fellow men.

2. What **attitude** toward our neighbor is

required in the second table of the law?

An attitude of **love** to our neighbor; we are to love our neighbor as ourselves.

3. Is it wrong to love ourselves?

No. Our Lord's statement implies that to love ourselves is right provided it is kept subordinate to loving God, and in balance with loving our neighbor. Self-love is sinful only when it becomes **inordinate**. A love of self that is subordinate to love for God and co-ordinate with love for our neighbor is really a duty.

4. What **action** toward our neighbor is required in the second table of the law?

The second table of the law requires that we do to others what we would have them do to us. Thus more than a mere attitude is required. The attitude of love to our neighbor must be translated into action for our neighbor's welfare.

5. When Christ stated the "Golden Rule", was he setting forth something new and previously unknown?

No. The meaning and substance of the "Golden Rule" is contained in the Old Testament, as Jesus Himself indicated when he added the words: "for this is the law and the prophets".

6. Who is our neighbor?

The parable of the Good Samaritan

(Luke 10:25-37) provides the answer to this question. In brief, our neighbor, for practical purposes, is whatever human being it is in our power to help in his time of need. We are to show kindness not only to those we like, or enjoy associating with, but to those who are in need or in trouble, regardless of who they may be, if it is in our power to help them.

7. How is the "Golden Rule" misused at the present day?

At the present day there are many who say that the Golden Rule is all the religion they need. This is just another way of saying that they have no consciousness of sin, feel no need of a Saviour, and are confident that they can save themselves by their own good life. Such an attitude is the height of spiritual pride, and must be extremely offensive to God, as it despises His free grace in Jesus Christ.

8. Can a person who is not a Christian keep the Golden Rule?

Certainly not. We are not really keeping the Golden Rule unless our motive for keeping it is **love to God** and a desire to do God's will. Those who "keep" the Golden Rule for either selfish or humanitarian reasons are not really keeping the Golden Rule at all. No one can really even begin to keep the Golden Rule until he is born again of the Holy Spirit and a love for God has been implanted in his heart.

## Lesson 113

## For Week Beginning February 29, 1948

**Q. 123.** Which is the fifth commandment?

**A.** The fifth commandment is, **Honor thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.**

**Q. 124.** Who are meant by **father** and **mother** in the fifth commandment?

**A.** By **father** and **mother**, in the fifth commandment, are meant, not only natural parents, but all superiors in age, and gifts; and especially such as, God's ordinance, are over us in place of authority, whether in family, church, or commonwealth.

### Scripture References:

Prov. 23:22, 25. Eph. 6:1, 2. The terms "father" and "mother" in the fifth commandment include our natural parents.

1 Tim. 5:1, 2. Our superiors in age are included under "father" and "mother" in

the fifth commandment.

Gen. 4:20-22; 45:8. Our superiors in gifts are included under the terms "father" and "mother".

2 Kings 5:13. "Father" and "mother" include all over us in authority in the family.

2 Kings 2:12; 13:14. Gal. 4:19. "Father" and "mother" include those in authority over us in the Church.

Isa. 49:23. "Father" and "mother" include those in authority over us in the State.

### Questions:

1. What is the obvious primary meaning of "father" and "mother" in the fifth commandment?

The obvious primary meaning is **our natural parents**.

2. Is the meaning of the fifth command-

ment limited to duties owed to our natural parents?

No. The usage of the terms "father" and "mother" in the Bible indicates that the fifth commandment has a wider scope, including the various classes of persons mentioned in the Catechism.

3. What is meant by "superiors in age"?

This means those who are older than a person.

4. What is meant by "superiors in gifts"?

This means those who have been endowed by God with special ability or skill in any particular department of life, or line of human effort.

5. What is the meaning of the expression "God's ordinance"?

In this question of the Catechism, "God's ordinance" means **God's appointments concerning the exercise of authority**; thus, for example, it is God's ordinance that the Church be governed by ministers and elders chosen by the people but receiving their authority from Christ.

6. In what spheres of life does God's ordinance especially provide for the exercise of authority?

God's ordinance especially provides for the exercise of authority in the three divine institutions which exist in the world, namely, **the Family, the Church and the State.**

**Q. 125.** Why are superiors styled **Father** and **Mother**?

**A.** Superiors are styled **Father** and **Mother**, both to teach them in all duties toward their inferiors, like natural parents, to express love and tenderness to them, according to their several relations; and to work inferiors to a greater willingness and cheerfulness in performing their duties to their superiors, as to their parents.

**Scripture References:**

Eph. 6:4. 2 Cor. 12:14. 1 Thess. 2:7, 8, 11. Num. 11:11, 12. The obligation of parents to express love and tenderness to their children.

**Lesson 114**

**For Week Beginning March 7, 1948**

**Q. 126.** What is the general scope of the fifth commandment?

**A.** The general scope of the fifth commandment is, the performance of those duties which we mutually owe in our sev-

1 Cor. 4:14-16. 2 Kings 5:13. Inferiors, regarding their superiors as parents, are to perform their duties with love and cheerfulness.

**Questions:**

1. What truth concerning positions of authority in human society is taught by this question of the Catechism?

This question of the Catechism teaches us that all positions of authority in human society, whether in family, Church or State, are in some respect like the position of natural parents in the family, and that by reason of this similarity a certain obligation is involved.

2. What obligation rests upon persons occupying positions of authority in family, Church or State?

The obligation to exercise their authority with love and tenderness, or consideration, toward those persons who are subject to their authority.

3. Why does the Catechism add the phrase "according to their several relations"?

This phrase is necessary, because the obligation of an attitude of love and consideration on the part of persons in authority does not cancel all other obligations which may exist in various relationships. The obligation of love and tenderness does not imply that a judge may never sentence a convicted criminal to any punishment, nor does it imply that people shall not be compelled to pay their legal taxes. "Love and tenderness" is not a substitute for the performance of other duties, but rather the attitude with which, and the manner in which, all duties are to be carried out.

4. What obligation rests upon persons who are subject to the authority of others in family, Church or State?

The obligation of performing their duties toward those in authority over them, as to their own parents, with willingness and cheerfulness. Thus God's law requires us not merely to obey legitimate authority in family, Church and State, but to do it with a willing and cheerful attitude of mind, because of our devotion to God.

eral relations, as inferiors, superiors, or equals.

**Scripture References:**

Eph. 5:21. 1 Pet. 2:17. Rom. 12:10. Var-

ious reciprocal obligations in human society.

**Questions:**

1. What three kinds of relationship are possible between different persons with respect to the degree of their authority?

(a) Two persons possessing equal authority may be associated together, as two elders in the same Church. (b) A person may possess authority over another person, as a parent over a child, or a government official over a private citizen. (c) A person may be subject to the authority of another person, as a child to a parent, or a citizen to a ruler.

2. What does the fifth commandment require in these various relationships of human society?

The fifth commandment requires that all obligations in the sphere of human society, including family, Church and State, be performed properly and with right attitudes. The next six questions of the Catechism (127-132) explain this in detail.

**Q. 127.** What is the honor that inferiors owe to their superiors?

**A.** The honor which inferiors owe to their superiors is, all due reverence in heart, word, and behavior; prayer and thanksgiving for them; imitation of their virtues and graces; willing obedience to their lawful commands and counsels; due submission to their corrections; fidelity to, defence, and maintenance of their persons and authority, according to their several ranks, and the nature of their places; bearing with their infirmities, and covering them in love, that so they may be an honor to them and their government.

**Scripture References:**

Mal. 1:6. Lev. 19:3, 32. Prov. 13:21. 1 Kings 2:19. Superiors to be regarded with due reverence.

1 Tim. 2:1, 2. The duty of prayer and thanksgiving for those in authority over us.

Heb. 13:7. Phil. 3:17. We should imitate the virtues and good deeds of those in authority over us.

Eph. 6:1, 2, 5-7. 1 Pet. 2:13, 14. Rom. 13:1-5. Heb. 13:17. Prov. 4:3,4; 23:22. Ex. 18:19, 24. The duty of willing obedience to the lawful commands and counsels of those in authority over us.

Gen. 16:6-9. Heb. 12:9. 1 Pet. 2:18-20. The duty of submission to the corrections of

those in authority over us.

Tit. 2:9, 10. 1 Sam. 26:15, 16. 2 Sam. 18:3. Esther 6:2. Matt. 22:21. Rom. 13:6, 7. 1 Tim. 5:17, 18. Gal. 6:6. Gen. 45:11; 47:12 The duties of loyalty, defence and support of those in authority over us.

1 Pet. 2:18. Prov. 23:22. The duty of patience toward the faults of those in positions of authority.

Psalms 127:3-5. Prov. 31:23. It is God's will that we should be an honor to the government of those in authority over us.

**Questions:**

1. What attitude should we have toward those in authority over us?

We should have an attitude of "due reverence", that is, proper respect, toward them.

2. How is this attitude of proper respect to be shown?

The attitude of proper respect toward those in authority over us is to be not merely an attitude of the heart and mind, but to be shown by "word and behavior".

3. What duty of religious worship is involved in honoring those in authority over us?

The duty of prayer and thanksgiving for them.

4. Are we to follow the example of those in authority over us regardless of their character and actions?

No. We are to imitate "their virtues and graces"; that is, we are to follow their example when we find it to be in accordance with the teachings and requirements of God's Word.

5. What should be our attitude toward the commands and counsels of those in authority over us?

We should have an attitude of **willing obedience** to their commands and counsels provided they are **lawful**, that is, in accordance with the law of God.

6. Is it ever our duty to obey commands which are contrary to the law of God?

No. God's law, revealed in the Bible, is the final standard of right and wrong. No command that is contrary to God's law is really binding on a person. It **may** be our duty to obey commands that are **in addition** to the law of God, but it can never be our duty to obey any command that is **contrary** to the law of God. God's law does not re-

quire us to break God's law by obeying the laws and commands of men.

7. What attitude should we have to the corrections of those in authority over us?

An attitude of "due submission to their corrections"; that is, acknowledging our faults rather than feeling resentful and stubbornly maintaining that we are right, when we are legitimately corrected by those in authority over us.

8. What duties do we owe to the "persons and authority" of those who are set over us by God's providence?

Loyalty, defence and support, the precise nature and degree of these duties being determined by the nature of the relationship in each case. Thus the loyalty which a child owes to a parent is not the same as that which a citizen owes to the State; nor is the defence and support due to a natural

parent the same as that due to the State.

9. What should be our attitude toward the faults and failings of those in authority over us?

(a) An attitude of patience, "bearing with their infirmities"; (b) An attitude of love, "covering them in love", that is, concealing and disregarding their faults, so far as may legitimately be done. Thus we "may be an honor to them and to their government". This must not be taken to imply that all faults or wrongdoing must be concealed and patiently endured. In some cases a higher loyalty may impose on us the duty of protesting and exposing wrongdoing on the part of someone in authority over us. It may be our duty to report wrongdoing to the constituted authorities of Church or State. The Catechism however speaks of "infirmities", which properly does not mean flagrant wrongdoing, but faults or weaknesses of character such as should be borne with patience and covered by love.

## Lesson 115

## For Week Beginning March 14, 1948

**Q. 128** What are the sins of inferiors against their superiors?

**A.** The sins of inferiors against their superiors are, all neglect of the duties required toward them; envying at, contempt of, and rebellion against, their persons and places, in their lawful counsels, commands, and corrections; cursing, mocking, and all such refractory and scandalous carriage, as proves a shame and dishonor to them and their government.

### Scripture References:

Matt. 15:4-6. It is sinful to neglect our duty toward those in authority over us.

Num. 11:28, 29. 1 Sam. 8:7. Isa. 3:5. 2 Sam. 15:1-12. The sins of envy, contempt and rebellion on the part of those subject to the authority of others.

Ex. 21:15. 1 Sam. 10:27; 2:25. Deut. 21:18-21. Sinning against the persons and places of those in authority over us, in relation to their lawful counsels, commands and corrections.

Prov. 30:11, 17; 19:26. The sins of cursing, mocking and other scandalous conduct against those in authority over us.

### Questions:

1. What sin of neglect of duty toward superiors did Jesus accuse the Pharisees and scribes of?

Jesus accused them of encouraging and

justifying neglect of support of a needy parent, on the pretext that the money was consecrated to God as an offering (Matt. 15:4-6).

2. What is meant by the sin of envying at the persons and places of those in authority over us?

This means feeling resentful that God in His providence has given them something which He has not given to us. Envying is really finding fault with God's providence.

3. What is meant by the sin of contempt of those in authority over us?

Contempt means looking down on or despising someone, and consequently disregarding his authority, disobeying his commands, etc. The common phrase "contempt of court" illustrates this meaning well.

4. What is meant by the sin of rebellion against those in authority over us?

Rebellion is contempt carried to the extreme of a downright repudiation of the authority which we ought to recognize and honor. The person who rises in rebellion against those in authority over him no longer claims or pretends to recognize their authority. Thus Absalom rose in rebellion against David who was both his father and his lawful king.

5. What kind of counsels, commands and corrections are to be honored and obeyed?

The lawful counsels, commands and cor-

rections of those properly in authority over us. Thus the commands of a bandit chief need not be honored and obeyed, for he is not properly in authority. Nor are the commands of a government official which are contrary to the law of the land to be obeyed, for such are not **lawful** commands. Nor are any commands whatever that are contrary to the law of God to be obeyed, for nothing that is contrary to the law of God can be lawful, nor may it be so regarded by those that fear God.

6. What is meant by cursing, mocking, etc.?

These terms describe (a) cursing in the strict sense, that is, taking God's name in

vain to wish or pray that evil may come upon the person cursed; or any such sinful wish or prayer, even though the name of God is not actually mentioned. (b) Making those in authority over us, their commands, corrections, etc., the butt of laughter, ridicule, sarcasm, or regarding them otherwise than with seriousness and respect. (c) **Conduct** which speaks louder than words in proclaiming our disregard or contempt of those in authority over us; thus a person may never utter a wrong **word**, yet may curse and mock his parents, or others in authority over him, by his perverse and incorrigible conduct and manner of life. All these evil tendencies bring shame and dishonor upon those in authority, and upon their government.

## Lesson 116

## For Week Beginning March 21, 1948

**Q. 129.** What is required of superiors toward their inferiors?

**A.** It is required of superiors, according to that power they receive from God, and that relation wherein they stand, to love, pray for, and bless their inferiors; to instruct, counsel and admonish them; countenancing, commending and rewarding such as do well, and discountenancing, reproofing, and chastising such as do ill; protecting, and providing for them all things necessary for soul and body; and by grave, wise, holy, and exemplary carriage, to procure glory to God, honor to themselves, and so to preserve that authority which God hath put upon them.

### Scripture References:

Col. 3:19. Tit. 2:4. 1 Sam. 12:23. Job 1:5. 1 Kings 8:55, 56. Heb. 7:7. Gen. 49:28. It is the duty of superiors to love, pray for, and bless those persons under their authority.

Deut. 6:6, 7. Eph. 6:4. It is the duty of superiors to instruct, counsel and admonish those under their authority.

1 Pet. 3:7; 2:14. Rom. 13:3. Esther 6:3. The duty of countenancing, commanding and rewarding such as do well.

Rom. 13:3, 4. Prov. 29:15. 1 Pet. 2:14. The duty of discountenancing, reproofing and chastising such as do ill.

Job 29:12-17. Isa. 1:10, 17. Eph. 6:4. 1 Tim. 5:8. Superiors are bound to protect and provide, spiritually and materially, for those under their authority.

1 Tim. 4:12. Tit. 2:3-5. Superiors must set a good example to those under their

authority, thus glorifying God.

1 Kings 3:28. Tit. 2:15. By a good example, superiors will gain honor to themselves, and maintain their authority.

### Questions:

1. What is the principle set forth in this question of the Catechism?

The principle set forth in this question of the Catechism is that **authority involves responsibility**. There is no such thing as legitimate authority without a corresponding responsibility; and the greater the authority, the greater the responsibility. Those who have been entrusted with authority in family, Church or State are responsible to God for the right exercise of their authority.

2. Is the responsibility of superiors the same in all cases?

No. It varies according to the degree of authority received from God, and according to the nature of the relation involved. Thus the Governor of a state has a different responsibility from the mayor of a city; and the responsibility of a parent in the home differs from that of a minister or elder in the Church. In each case responsibility exists, for authority always implies responsibility. But the degree and nature of the responsibility vary according to the facts in each case.

3. What attitude ought superiors to have toward those under their authority?

An attitude of sincere good-will, which will find expression in love, prayer and blessing, that is, a true interest in and earnest effort to procure their welfare.

4. What is the responsibility of superiors concerning the education of those under their authority?

“To instruct, counsel and admonish them”; that is, to inculcate knowledge, advise concerning problems, and warn against evil, as these functions may be required by circumstances and as they are proper to the particular relation involved. A magistrate in the State, a pastor or elder in the Church, and a parent in the home, all have a responsibility to “instruct, counsel and admonish”, but under different circumstance, and, in part, concerning different matters.

5. What is the responsibility of superiors toward those under their authority who do well?

The responsibility of “countenancing, commending and rewarding” them; that is, regarding their actions with approval, commending their actions in words, and rewarding them in a suitable manner, thus encouraging them in their effort to do what is right.

6. What is the responsibility of superiors toward those under their authority who commit wrong?

The responsibility of “discountenancing, reproof, and chastising” them; that is, withholding approval of their actions, expressing reproof in words, and, if necessary, correcting them for their wrongdoing by suitable penalties.

7. What protection and provision do superiors owe those under their authority?

They owe them whatever protection is required by circumstances, and is in their power to provide, and the provision of “all things necessary for soul and body”. Here again the kind and degree of protection and provision vary according to the nature of the relation involved. The State must protect its people against the lawless violence of criminals at home as well as against the hostile acts of foreign foes. The Church must protect its members against soul-destroying false doctrines and heresies, and against all forms of propaganda that are contrary to the Word of God. The head of a family must protect its members against whatever is wrong, harmful or destructive, in so far as it is in his power to do so. With reference to the provision of “all things necessary for soul and body”, similar distinctions must be made. The head of a family must provide

food, clothing, shelter, medical care, etc., as well as adequate general education and religious nurture, for those under his charge. The responsibility of the Church is chiefly in the spiritual sphere, to provide faithful preaching of the word of God, right administration of the sacraments, and a proper exercise of Church discipline without respect of persons. Ordinarily the Church is not obligated to provide food, clothing, shelter, etc., for her members, but in cases of real need it is the duty of the Church, through the deacons, to provide even these necessities of life to members of the household of faith. As for the State, its obligation consists chiefly in protecting and upholding the freedom and security of the individual, the family and the Church, and in administering public justice, enacting and enforcing just and equitable laws, and providing for the public welfare in times of crisis or emergency. Where parents fail to make adequate provision for the education of their children, the State must undertake this task also, and is responsible to God for the manner in which it is carried out. It is not properly the function of the State to provide food, clothing, shelter, etc., for the people, except under emergency conditions when temporary relief may be imperative. Rather the function of the State, according to the Bible, is to maintain justice, law and order in the social and economic spheres so that the citizen can properly provide these material necessities of life for himself and his family.

8. Why should superiors set a good example to persons under their authority?

By setting a good example, they will glorify God, obtain honor for themselves, and maintain the authority which God, has committed to them. Needless to say, without a consistently good example, persons in positions of authority will not be respected nor will their instructions, counsels, etc., be heeded and obeyed. The government official who is himself guilty of lawbreaking cannot influence citizens to obey the laws; the minister or elder who is guilty of compromise with the sins of the world cannot have a wholesome influence toward godly living among the members of the Church; the parent who lies, swears and loses his temper cannot really teach his children to be truthful, reverent and self-controlled. In each case the failure to set a good example may result in **contempt for authority** on the part of those who are subject to the authority of others in family, Church and State.



## Lesson 117

## For Week Beginning March 28, 1947

Q. 130. What are the sins of superiors?

A. The sins of superiors are, besides the neglect of the duties required of them, an inordinate seeking of themselves, their own glory, ease, profit, or pleasure; commanding things unlawful, or not in the power of their inferiors to perform; counselling, encouraging, or favoring them in that which is evil; dissuading, discouraging, or discountenancing them in that which is good; correcting them unduly; careless exposing, or leaving them to wrong, temptation, and danger; provoking them to wrath; or any way dishonoring themselves, or lessening their authority, by an unjust, indiscreet, rigorous, or remiss behavior.

**Scripture References:**

Ezek. 34:2-4. Sinful neglect of duty toward those under their authority, on the part of superiors.

Phil. 2:21. John 5:44; 7:18. Isa. 56:10, 11. Deut. 17:17. The sin of selfish attitudes or conduct on the part of superiors.

Dan. 3:4-6. Acts 4:17, 18. Ex. 5:10-18. Matt. 23:2, 4. The sin of persons in authority commanding things that are unlawful, or that are not in the power of those under their authority to perform.

Matt. 14:8 compared with Mark 6:24. 2 Sam. 13:28. 1 Sam. 3:13. The sins of counselling, encouraging or favoring inferiors in doing what is wrong.

John 7:46-49. Col. 3:21. Ex. 5:17. The sin of influencing inferiors against what is good and right.

1 Peter 2:18-20. Heb. 12:10. Deut. 25:3. Excessive or immoderate correction of inferiors, even when they are at fault, is wrong.

Gen. 37:28; 13:12-13. Acts 18:17. The sin of careless exposing of inferiors to wrong, temptation and danger.

Eph. 6:4. The sin of provoking inferiors to wrath by unreasonable demands or requirements.

Gen. 9:21. 1 Kings 12:13-16; 1:6. 1 Sam. 2:29-31. The sinfulness of all conduct which results in the breaking down of respect for authority on the part of inferiors.

**Questions:**

1. Why is neglect of the duties required of them, on the part of superiors, sinful?

Because such neglect arises from failure to recognize, or to take seriously, the God-given responsibility which accompanies the authority committed to them. To exercise authority, without recognizing and accepting the corresponding responsibility, is to act **irresponsibly** and is always sinful. James 4:17.

2. What wrong attitude of heart and mind is the source of much wrongdoing on the part of persons in authority?

Selfishness, which if not checked and controlled inevitably leads to the unjust **exploitation** of persons under the authority of others. Persons who are in positions of authority should realize that this authority as not been committed to them for their own selfish enjoyment, that they have a real duty to those under their authority, and that they are themselves under the moral government of God and must give account to Him for their exercise of authority in every case. All selfish use of authority is abuse of authority, and therefore sinful.

3. Give some examples from the Bible of rulers who commanded those under their authority to do things contrary to the law of God.

(a) Nebuchadnezzar's command that all the people worship the great golden image, Dan. 3:1-7. (b) Darius' decree forbidding prayer to any god or man for thirty days except to himself, Dan. 6:4-9. (c) Amaziah's command to Amos not to prophesy in Bethel, Amos 7:10-13. (d) Zedekiah's forbidding Jeremiah to prophesy in the name of the Lord, Jer. 32:1-5. (e) The Jewish Sanhedrin's command to the apostles not to preach in the name of Jesus, Acts 4:17, 18; 5:28, 40.

4. Give some examples from the history of the Church, of rulers who commanded actions contrary to the law of God.

(a) The Roman emperors who persecuted the early Christians, requiring them to render divine honor to the emperor's image, etc. (b) The rulers of Scotland who required the people to renounce the National Covenant, Solemn League and Covenant, to recognize the king as head of the Church, etc. (c) The Japanese government, before that nation's defeat, that required citizens, including Christian people, in Japan, Korea, Manchuria, etc., to bow before Shinto shrines, thus honoring the Sun-goddess, as a pledge of civil allegiance to the State.

5. Give some examples from the Bible

of rulers who demanded of their subjects things impossible for the latter to perform.

(a) The Egyptian task-masters who, in accordance with the orders of Pharaoh, demanded that the people of Israel make bricks without straw being provided for them, Ex. 5:10-18. (b) Nebuchadnezzar's demand that his magicians, etc., declare his forgotten dream, together with the interpretation, Dan. 2:1-13.

6. Why is it especially wrong for superiors to influence those under their authority in favor of what is wrong, or against what is right?

This is especially wrong and wicked because to the ordinary influence which one person exerts upon another, there is added **the weight of superior authority**. It is always wrong to influence another in favor of what is wrong, or against what is right; but when the weight of special authority is added to such influence, the evil is greatly aggravated. Thus for a government official to encourage private citizens in violating the law, or to discourage them in efforts to obey and honor the law, is much more wicked than for a private person to exert similar influence. For a parent to encourage a child to tell lies, or to ridicule a child's effort at honesty, for example, is much worse than for one of the child's playmates to do the same thing. Similarly, for a minister or other Church officer to encourage Church members to indulge in sinful conduct, or to discourage members who are trying to live a holy and consistent life, is much worse than for a private member of the Church to do the same. In the matter of our influence on others, as in other matters, greater authority means added responsibility.

7. Why is undue, excessive or immoderate correction of inferiors wrong?

(a) This is wrong because it is **unjust**, being out of proportion to the offence or wrongdoing in the case; (b) It is wrong because it counteracts and destroys the proper effect of correction, by producing a feeling of injustice and resentment in the person corrected, instead of leading that person to reformation of conduct.

8. Why is careless exposing of inferiors to wrong, temptation and danger sinful?

Every person has a moral responsibility for his neighbor's welfare, but in the case of persons in positions of authority, this responsibility for the welfare of those under their authority is greatly increased. Careless, heedless or indifferent exposing of such persons to injustice, or to moral,

spiritual or physical danger, involves a gross disregard and neglect of God-given responsibility for the welfare of those under their authority.

9. Give some Bible examples of careless exposing of inferiors to wrong, temptation and danger.

(a) Lot, who moved nearer and nearer to the wicked city of Sodom, and finally established his residence within that city, regardless of the moral danger to his family, Gen. 13:12, 13. (b) Joseph's brothers, who sold him into Egypt, thus treating him not only extremely unjustly, but abandoning him to an environment where he would be faced with temptations to idolatry and immorality, Gen. 37:26-28. (c) Ahab, who married the Baal-worshipping Zidonian princess Jezebel, thus exposing a whole nation to injustice, a bad example, and the temptation to compromise with idolatry, 1 Kings 16:29-33.

10. What is meant by provoking inferiors to wrath?

This expression, which is derived from Eph. 6:4, refers to unreasonable requirements, beyond what could properly be expected under the circumstances, or to a harsh, unloving and unduly critical attitude in connection with requirements which are reasonable and proper in themselves. Extreme strictness about minor matters, expecting children to perform a task as perfectly as adults, threatening punishments out of proportion to the seriousness of the offence, are examples of unreasonableness on the part of parents or other persons in authority. Such unreasonableness will naturally have the effect of provoking the persons under authority to wrath and discouragement.

11. Give a Bible example of a person who dishonored himself and lessened his authority by "an unjust, indiscreet, rigorous or remiss behavior".

Nabal, whose very name means "foolish" or "wicked" (1 Sam. 25:25), who though descended from a very godly man (1 Sam. 25:3), possessed of great wealth, and head of a large household, yet was "curlish and evil in his doings", extremely unreasonable toward David's followers, and had the reputation among his own servants of being "such a son of Belial that a man cannot speak to him" (verse 17). Nabal's unreasonableness, ill-temper. intemperance (verse 36) and general folly so undermined his authority and dishonored his own person that even his wife could only call him "this man of Belial" and admit that "folly is with him" (verse 25).

## Blue Banner Question Box

Readers are invited to submit doctrinal, Biblical and practical questions for answer in this department. Names will not be published with questions.

### Question:

Please suggest some good books on the Bible, Christian doctrine, etc., suitable for laymen to read.

### Answer:

In addition to the books listed in previous issues, the following are recommended:

**All About the Bible.** by Sidney Collett. Fleming H. Revell Co., New York, N. Y. This book, which has gone through over twenty printings and has been translated into several languages, is a gold mine of valuable information about the Bible, its origin, language, translation, canon, symbols, inspiration, alleged errors and contradictions, its plan, its science and its rivals. It is written in a simple style, readable and interesting. Unfortunately the author presents two highly debatable theories as probable, even if not undoubted, truth: (a) the "restitution theory" of Genesis 1:1, 2, which holds that between these two verses a period of vast ages of time elapsed (pages 249-255); and (b) the theory that man "like his Maker, is a trinity, as the Scripture teaches, comprising **spirit, soul and body** (1 Thess. 5:23)" (page 230). Neither of these theories has been generally accepted by orthodox Bible scholars, and there are weighty reasons for adhering to the traditional interpretation of Gen. 1:1, 2 and to the common view of man as composed of only two elements, namely body and soul. In spite of these defects, the volume is a valuable one for confirming faith in the reliability of the Scriptures. 324 pages. \$1.75.

**The Acts of the Apostles.** by Frank E. Allen. Can be purchased from the author at Hopkinton, Iowa. This book of over 800 pages is a practical commentary on the book of Acts. It consists of forty-four chapters, each of which opens with an outline of a portion of the book of Acts, followed by a number of brief sections each of which has an appropriate heading or title, and closing with a list of questions on the portion of the book just discussed. The style is clear and readable, and the book is written with real scholarship and at the same time with unwavering fidelity to the truth of the Scriptures. Although this book is a scholarly production, the average adult church member will have no difficulty in

reading, understanding and profiting by it. 828 pages. \$2.50.

**An Introductory Course in Bible Study.** by James McConaughy. American Sunday-School Union, 1816 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia 3, Pa. This pocket size book of 122 pages was originally published in 1901 and used for teaching the Bible to young people in the schools established by D. L. Moody at Northfield and Mount Hermon, Mass. It contains a number of excellent charts outlining portions of the Bible, introductory notes to a number of the Bible books, four outline maps and three diagrams. The principal contents of the book, however, consist of questions on the Bible which the student is to answer after looking up the references which are listed. This little book will prove to be an excellent "Introductory Course in Bible Study", but only for serious-minded persons who intend to devote many hours of effort to an endeavor to gain a knowledge of the contents of the Bible. Those who want material for effortless casual perusal will find this book disappointing, for it challenges persistent hard work. The book adheres quite closely to the history and principal teachings of the Bible, concerning which there is general agreement among orthodox Christians; the author refrains from raising denominational questions. The book is obviously loyal to the full inspiration and authority of the Scriptures.

**Christ or the Lodge?** Committee on Christian Education, The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Room 728 Schaff Bldg., 1505 Race Street, Philadelphia 2, Pa. Dealing chiefly with the Masonic order, this booklet presents a careful and candid examination of the character of the order, and sets forth convincingly reasons why a Christian should not be a Mason. The chief emphasis is placed on the character of Masonry as a false religion. Price 10 cents.

**Does God Want You to be a Lodge Member?** (Tract 127). Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis 18, Mo. This booklet is another good discussion of the question whether a Christian should be a lodge member. Like the booklet listed in the preceding paragraph, it deals chiefly with Masonry and stresses especially the fact that Masonry is a false religion and holds forth a false way of salvation. Price 10 cents.

**Note:** Additional outstanding religious books and tracts will be listed in future issues of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". The listing of a book here is not to be understood

as necessarily implying an endorsement of everything contained in it. Please purchase books through your local bookstore or direct from the publishers; do not send orders to the publisher of "Blue Banner Faith and Life." Ed.

**Question:**

What proof do we have in the New Testament that the observance of the Christian sabbath was to be on the first day of the week rather than on the seventh day as required in the fourth commandment?

**Answer:**

Among other passages of the New Testament, Acts 20:7 speaks of the first day of the week as the time "when the disciples came together to break bread", that is, to observe the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This text seems to indicate that "the first day of the week" was the regular time when the Christians assembled for public worship. A number of other texts (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2, 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 19; 1 Cor. 16:2) refer to the first day of the week in a manner that cannot be explained unless that day was regarded as of special religious significance. The day of the week would not be mentioned unless it had some meaning, or was of some importance. The Christian practice of observing the first day of the week as the Lord's day or Christian sabbath must go back to the days of the apostles, for there is no adequate explanation of its origin at a later time. The idea that the emperor Constantine "changed the day" is without foundation. A practice recognized and observed by the entire Christian Church throughout the world, with the exception of certain minor sects of comparatively recent origin, must be regarded as having existed in the apostolic age **unless a later origin can be positively proved** (which it cannot).

With respect to the "seventh day" in the fourth commandment, the reader is referred to the discussion of the fourth commandment in the "Studies in the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly" in this issue of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". Briefly, the fourth commandment does not specify the seventh day of the week, but the seventh day **following six days of labor**, to be observed as the sabbath. It does not state what day of the week the six days of labor are to begin on.

**Question:**

Please give an opinion on the enclosed tracts, in the "Blue Banner Question Box".

**Answer:**

This query was accompanied by two small tracts on the sabbath, entitled "The First Day of the Week" in the New Testament" and "The Sabbath at Mount Sinai". Both of these tracts are typical examples of "Seventh Day" propaganda. For an answer to this type of argument, the reader is referred to the preceding question and answer, and to the discussion of the sabbath in the "Studies in the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly" in this issue of "Blue Banner Faith and Life."

**Question:**

Is it ever right to marry one who has been divorced? Is it right for both persons of a divorced couple to re-marry? If so, under what circumstances?

**Answer:**

The **Confession of Faith**, XXIV, 5, 6, and the **Reformed Presbyterian Testimony**, XXVIII, 7, set forth what our Church officially holds to be the teaching of the Bible on this subject. The **Confession of Faith** specifies two legitimate grounds for "dissolving the bond of marriage", namely: (a) adultery; (b) "such wilful desertion as can no way be remedied by the church or civil magistrate". Concerning the question of the propriety of re-marriage after divorce, it says: "In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce, and after the divorce, to marry another, as if the offending party were dead." The **Testimony** goes beyond this by expressly stating that the innocent party may re-marry, not only after a divorce on the ground of adultery, but also after a divorce on the ground of wilful desertion: ". . . either adultery, or such wilful desertion as admits of no civil remedy, is a sufficient cause for its dissolution: and after the divorce has been regularly obtained, from the ecclesiastical or civil authority, it is lawful for the innocent party to marry another, as if the offending party were dead."

Concerning the foregoing, it will be noted, first, that our official Church standards recognize two legitimate grounds for absolute divorce, namely (a) adultery and (b) irremediable wilful desertion. Secondly, the innocent party in a divorce granted on one of these grounds may re-marry, as if the guilty party were dead. In the third place, while nothing is expressly said about the **guilty** party in any divorce re-marrying, nevertheless in the face of the express statements that the innocent party may re-marry, the silence concerning the guilty

party must be understood as implying that **the guilty party may not re-marry during the lifetime of the innocent party to the divorce.** Finally, it may be properly inferred from this that if the guilty party does re-marry before the death of the innocent party, such re-marriage involves the sin of adultery and should exclude the offender from membership in good standing in the Church as long as it continues.

The foregoing discussion deals only with the official teaching of our Church on this question. The civil laws of most of the states diverge widely from these principles, many of them allowing absolute divorce for a number of grounds which the Bible and our Church standards do not recognize as valid grounds for absolute divorce. The Church must of course be guided by what it believes to be the teaching of God's Word, not by civil legislation which may be contrary to God's Word. Situations may arise where a divorce is granted by the State, which the Church cannot recognize as a legitimate divorce. Where Church members take advantage of civil legislation to obtain divorces on grounds not sanctioned by the Word of God, the Church must deal with them by the censures of Church discipline.

No attempt has been made in answering this query to discuss the Scripture proofs for the statements of the **Confession of Faith** and the **Testimony**. Many people have had serious scruples of conscience concerning the question of whether absolute divorce, with the right of the innocent party to re-marry, **on the ground of irremediable wilful desertion,** is Scriptural. The problems of Scripture interpretation which are involved in this question, and in the question of divorce in general, are extremely difficult and complicated. The issues have been clouded and confused by a great deal of literature which vastly over-simplifies the problems, and gives the impression that the teaching of the Bible on this subject is perfectly clear and simple and easy to grasp. Such is far from being the case, and the short-cut of over-simplification does not lead to a solid and satisfying knowledge of the truth. A thorough discussion of the subject of divorce, including painstaking and detailed exegesis of Scripture passages, will be found in the series of articles entitled "Divorce", by Professor John Murray, in "The Westminster Theological Journal" (November 1946, pages 31-46; May 1947, pages 181-197; November 1947, pages 1-22; to be continued in future issues of the "Journal"). Published at Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia 18, Pa. Price of each issue, fifty cents.

#### Question:

Did the use of instrumental music in the Old Testament Temple service typify the presence of the Holy Spirit? What verse or verses show this?

#### Answer:

A conclusive answer to this query cannot be given by citing specific verses of the Bible. The best answer is that given by Professor John L. Girardeau in his book entitled "Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of the Church". This book of 208 pages, which was published in 1888, is by far the most thorough and satisfying discussion of the question of instrumental music in divine worship. Incidentally, Dr. Girardeau was not a Covenanter but a member of the Southern Presbyterian Church.

Dr. Girardeau arrives at the true significance of instrumental music in the Old Testament Temple service by a process of elimination. The argument is found on pages 27-79 of the book. Having proved that there were two kinds of worship among the Jews, the one permanent (the synagogue) and the other temporary (the Temple), he reasons as follows: (a) No element of the synagogue worship was typical and temporary. (b) The essential and permanent elements of worship existed in both the synagogue worship and the Temple services. (c) Whatever element of worship was absent from the synagogue and present in the Temple was typical or symbolical in its character. (d) Some of the elements of the Temple service typified Christ (such as the blood sacrifices), some typified the Holy Spirit, and some typified both Christ and the Holy Spirit (such as the washing with water, anointing with oil, etc.). (e) The instrumental music in the Temple services must have been typical in nature, and therefore temporary, as shown by the fact that it was not practiced in the apostolic Church. (f) It must have been typical either of Christ in His person or offices, or of the use of instrumental music in the New Testament Church or of some other outward action, or of the Holy Spirit in His person and offices, or of an effect of the Holy Spirit's work. There are no other possibilities. (g) It could not have typified the person and offices of Christ in any way that we can conceive of. (h) We can think of no way in which it could typify any external action in the New Testament Church other than the use of instrumental music. (i) It could not have typified the use of instrumental music itself, for that would involve the absurdity of a thing typifying itself, the identity of

the type with the antitype, something which never occurs in Scripture. (j) It could not in any conceivable way have typified the invisible person or offices of the Holy Spirit. (k) There remains only one possibility, namely, that the instrumental music of the Temple services typified an effect to be produced by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Thus Dr. Girardeau concludes that "the instrumental music of the temple-worship was typical of the joy and triumph of God's believing people to result from the plentiful effusion of the Holy Ghost in New Testament times" (page 60).

It will be noted that Dr. Girardeau's argument, while it does not consist in a citation of specific "proof texts", is nevertheless strictly a Scriptural argument, which seeks by valid logical inference or reasoning, step by step from recognized Scripture truths, to determine the significance of instrumental music in the Temple worship of the Old Testament. If Dr. Girardeau's premises are admitted—and who shall say that they are not Scriptural?—it will be difficult to avoid accepting his conclusion, for his reasoning is strictly logical. Following his proof, Dr. Girardeau cites Calvin, Thomas Aquinas, Zwingli, George Gillespie and other eminent scholars in support of the position that the instrumental music of the Temple worship was typical and temporary in character. Dr. Girardeau's book has never been refuted; it has simply been by-passed by those who wanted instrumental music in the Church. The book is worthy of being taken seriously by all who are in earnest about knowing what the Scripture really teaches on this question. The author was professor in Columbia Theological Seminary in South Carolina.

#### Question:

How can the command of 1 John 2:15 ("Love not the world") be reconciled with John 3:16 ("For God so loved the world. . ."), Matthew 19:19 ("Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself") and Matthew 5:44 ("Love your enemies")? Is it correct to say that we should love the sinner but hate his sin?

#### Answer:

The solution of the apparent contradiction involved in this query depends upon the fact that the terms "world" and "love" are used in the Bible in various senses. In the original languages of Scripture, various terms are used which are translated "world" in the English Bible, and these are used with various meanings. In the New Testament by far the most common word for "world" is the Greek word *kosmos*,

which is used in two very different senses, as shown by the following examples: (1) **The world of men, regarded as God's property:** Matt. 13:38 ("The field is the world"); Rom. 5:12 ("Through one man sin entered into the world"); 1 Cor. 7:31 ("And they that use this world, as not abusing it"). (2) **The sinful world, regarded as Satan's kingdom:** 1 John 2:15 ("If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him"); John 14:30 ("The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me"); Eph. 2:2 ("According to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience").

In 1 John 2:15, where we are forbidden to love the world, the term "world" clearly means the **sinful world, Satan's kingdom, the world-system that is anti-God.** If a person loves the world in this sense, the love of the Father is not in him. But when we read in 1 Cor. 3:21-23, "For all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's", we are to understand that **the world as God's creation and property** is meant, and it is not wrong to love the world in that sense.

Similarly, there is a difference in the meaning of "love" in various contexts in the Bible. There is a **love of complacency** which takes pleasure in, or regards with delight, the person who is loved. Thus David loved Jonathan, thus God loved Adam before the Fall, thus God the Father loves His only-begotten Son, thus God loves the redeemed clothed with Christ's righteousness and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and thus the Christian should love his Saviour. But there is also a **love of benevolence** which regards with compassion and seeks to help even those who cannot be regarded with complacency or delight. This **love of benevolence** does not imply approval of the moral state of the person loved; it only involves pity or compassion toward those who are sinful and suffering, and a desire to benefit them. In this sense it is written that "God so loved the world" — even this terribly sinful world — "that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In this sense, too, Christians ought to love their enemies; not to take delight in them, or be pleased with them, but to regard them with compassion (even though it may at the same time be a duty to resist their hostile acts by force).

The Christian, whose supreme devotion and loyalty must always be to God, is not to love the sinful, Christless people of the

world with a love of complacency. That is to say, the Christian is not to approve of them in their Christless condition, nor to take delight in those whom God cannot regard with delight. But the Christian should love even the sinful, Christless people of the world with a love of benevolence which pities them in their lost and miserable condition and seeks their salvation. Even though they may not be of God's elect, and their final destiny may be eternal separation from God in hell, yet as long as they are living in this world and that final destiny has not been reached, they are the objects of the general love of God, and recipients of the gifts of God's common grace; and therefore the Christian, too, should love them with a love of benevolence or compassion. To "love the world" in this sense is not wrong; it is a duty.

There is of course a "love of complacency" on the lower or natural level, which is to be distinguished from the "love of complacency" on the spiritual plane. For example, a Christian believer has a husband or wife who is not a believer. In such a case the Christian partner can truly bestow affection on the non-Christian partner, and regard the latter with complacency or delight, but only in the limited natural sense. This could not be the spiritual complacency or delight with which a fellow-Christian would be regarded.

To say that "we should love the sinner but hate his sin" is really to make a **meaningless** assertion. Really, we can only love or hate **persons**. The word "sin" has meaning only when connected with some person or persons. **Sin and righteousness do not exist in the abstract**, but only as moral qualities or acts of persons. There is no such thing as sin without a **sinner**. There is no way of separating the sin from the sinner, putting it somewhere by itself and then hating it. It is not true that God loves the sinner, but hates the sin. The truth is that **God loves the sinner in spite of his sin**. It is also true that **the wrath of God rests on the sinner who is not in Christ**. The wrath of God rests not on "the sin" (in the abstract), but **on the sinner**, the person who is guilty of the sin, and in the case of the person who never comes to Christ, that wrath of God will **abide** on him for ever, in hell, after God has completely ceased to love that person. (John 3:36).

If we raise the question how the love and the wrath of God can rest on the sinner at the same time, we can only say that this is a paradox or apparent contradiction which our human reason cannot solve. But the Bible teaches it. The elect person who

has not yet come to Christ is the object of the love and the wrath of God at the same time, but the wrath is temporary and the love will be eternal. The non-elect, or reprobate, person (who never comes to Christ) is also the object of the love and wrath of God at the same time, but in his case the love is temporary and the wrath will be eternal. These truths are among the deep things of God and we should realize that they cannot be fully explained.

The principal motive of a missionary or other Christian worker must always be love for God and obedience to God. It is wrong to represent "love for souls" or "love for mankind" as the chief motive for evangelism. But inasmuch as there is a true sense in which God loves all mankind, even the non-elect people in the world, it is right that the Christian too should love all mankind, not with a love of complacency but with a love of benevolence or compassion that is sorry for their miserable, lost condition and seeks their welfare. At the same time it must be realized that this love for mankind in general is something quite distinct from the love we should have to our Christian brethren.

**Question:**

Why does the **Confession of Faith** (IV, 2) say that mankind was created with "immortal souls", when we know that man could die, was barred from the tree of life, and 1 Tim. 6:16 says that God only has immortality? Also we are commanded to seek for immortality (Rom. 2:7).

**Answer:**

The words "immortal" and "immortality" are used in more than one sense, just as the words "life" and "death" are used in various senses. In 1 Tim. 6:16, God is called the one "Who only hath immortality", in the sense that only God has original and underived immortality, in and of Himself. No created being could have immortality in that sense; the immortality of created beings, as men and angels, is derived from God their Creator.

Apart from this underived immortality of God, the term "immortality" has three senses in Christian theology, namely (a) immortality of the body; (b) immortality of the soul; (c) the fulness of the resurrection life in the state of glory.

As created by God, Adam and Eve possessed immortality of the body only conditionally. Their immunity to the death of the body was contingent upon their perfect obedience to God in the Covenant of Works. If Adam and Eve had obeyed God, eventually their test would have come to an end,

they would have received the right to eat of the fruit of the tree of life, and would have lived forever; not only their souls, but even their physical bodies, would have been forever immune to death. This immortality of the body they however forfeited when they broke the Covenant of Works by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and in consequence God expelled them from the garden of Eden lest they attempt to take the fruit of the tree of life, to which they had no right (Gen. 3:22-24). Since then, all men have had mortal bodies, subject not only to disease and pain, but to death itself. In this sense our **Testimony** (V, 4) affirms that by the Fall, "Mankind are all now. . . become mortal in their bodies. . ."); that is, mankind has forfeited the immortality of the body which was contingent upon obedience to God in the Covenant of Works.

As created by God, Adam and Eve had "reasonable and immortal souls" (C. of F., IV, 2). The word "immortal" here means **necessarily continuing to exist forever**. It does not refer to the body, and is not contradicted by the death of the body. Rather, the fact that Adam and Eve had "immortal souls" means that even after the death of the body, the soul would live on, or continue to exist, with individuality and consciousness, for ever and ever. This concept of the immortality of the soul is not concerned with the moral state of man, or his obedience or disobedience to God, but merely with the constitution of his nature as a human being. As created by God, the nature of the human soul is to continue to exist forever. This continued existence may be in union with the body or apart from the body; it may also be in the eternal bliss of heaven or in the eternal misery of hell; but whatever its condition, the human soul, once created, cannot cease to exist. In this sense all men everywhere are always immortal, before and after the Fall, before death on earth, and after death in heaven or hell—all are always immortal, and this immortality cannot be forfeited for it is of the essential nature of the human soul; it pertains to the human soul **as such**.

The Christian believer, while still subject to the death of the body, has already received, in regeneration, **the principle of eternal life** (John 6:54, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life . . ."; note the present tense, "hath"). This principle of eternal life implanted in the Christian when he is regenerated, guarantees that he will never perish, but will be raised up in glory and blessedness at the resurrection at the Last

Day. In this sense the Christian possesses immortality here and now. But it must be remembered that the Christian has received only **the seed or principle of eternal life**, not the fulness of realization of it, and therefore he is still subject to the death of the body, and the separation of soul from body in the "intermediate state" between death and the resurrection.

The fullest and highest sense of the term "immortality" (as used of men) is that of the fulness of the resurrection life in the state of glory. This is what the Bible calls "eternal life" in its fulness of fruition. Its root and essence consists in union with God through Christ the Mediator ("And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent", John 17:3). This immortality of eternal life or glory differs from the "immortality of the soul" in that it involves not merely perpetual existence, but **the full enjoyment of the favor of God in complete righteousness, holiness and blessedness**. This the Bible calls "the life which is life indeed" (1 Tim. 6:19, ARV). This is the "immortality" mentioned in Rom. 2:7 (the Greek word means "incorruption"), and which our Saviour Jesus Christ has "brought to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10), and which will swallow up and take the place of our present mortality at the Last Day (2 Cor. 5:4; 1 Cor. 15:53, 54).

#### Question:

How can the statement "Ye are fallen from grace" in Gal. 5:4 be reconciled with the statement of the Larger Catechism (Q. 79) that "true believers. . . can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace"?

#### Answer:

In Gal. 5:4 the apostle Paul writes, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." Now no person is ever **really** justified by the law, as we know from Rom. 3:20 ("Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin"). The Judaizers, against whom Paul argues in the Epistle to the Galatians, claimed that the deeds of the law were necessary for salvation, and for this reason they insisted on circumcision (Acts 15:1). Thus they held Christ's righteousness alone to be insufficient as the ground of the believer's justification, and held that it must be supplemented by works of personal law-observance. In their system, our own practice of "the deeds of the law" forms the key-stone of the arch, without which Christ's



atonement and righteousness cannot avail for our salvation. What this boils down to is, of course, simply justification by works; salvation is no longer regarded as a free gift, but as something that we have to purchase; Christ paid for part of it, no doubt, but still we have to supplement that by paying the balance, and therefore it is not a free gift, but a purchase.

Against this falsification of the Gospel the apostle Paul proclaimed that we are justified solely on the ground of Christ's righteousness, and wholly as a free gift, to which we contribute absolutely nothing, since even the faith by which we receive it is itself the gift of God (Eph. 2:8). For this reason, the apostle affirms that the people against whose error he is arguing "are fallen from grace". This does not mean that they had **experienced** salvation by grace and then lost it at a later time. Their fall from grace was not in the realm of experience but in the realm of **profession**. What they fell from was not **the experience of grace in their own lives but the profession of grace in their system of doctrine**. They fell from a profession of the true Gospel of salvation by grace, to the profession of a false doctrine of salvation by works. There is no reason to believe that the Judaizers against whom the apostle argues had ever really experienced salvation by grace in their personal lives.

The Bible teaches plainly that those who have truly **experienced** the saving grace of God can neither totally nor permanently fall away from it, but shall certainly be saved and inherit eternal life (See **The Larger Catechism**, Q. 79 with its Scripture proofs, and "Blue Banner Faith and Life", Vol. 2, No. 1, January-March 1947, pages 42-44). But the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints does not imply that a person may not fall away from the **profession** of the true Gospel to the profession of a contrary system of religion. It was this kind of "falling from grace" that the apostle Paul wrote of in Gal. 5:4.

**Question:**

Is it wrong to attempt to produce rain by scattering dry ice pellets from an airplane?

**Answer:**

There is really no reason for holding this practice to be wrong, any more than any other way of obtaining water that has been discovered or devised in past times. To drill a well, to purify sea water by chemical treatment or distillation, to build a dam by which water can be retained until needed—all these are artificial methods of obtaining

a supply of good water when and where it is needed. These various methods are as truly artificial as the newly discovered dry ice method of producing rain. In each case there is involved a discovery and utilization of natural laws for the benefit of mankind.

After Adam and Eve sinned against God, God pronounced a curse on the world of nature (Gen. 3:17-19). By reason of this curse, nature became man's enemy instead of his friend, an enemy to be battled with throughout man's life until in the end nature would win and claim man's body to return it to the dust again. Now if this curse which God inflicted had been a total curse, human life would have become impossible, and human history would have ended right then. But such was not the plan of God. God planned to send a Redeemer in the fulness of time, and therefore it was God's purpose that human history should continue through thousands of years. For this reason, God **limited the curse**; that is, He so ordered matters that while nature made human life bitter and difficult, still it did not make human life absolutely impossible. God had placed in the realm of nature the means of mitigating the effects of the curse, so that human life could continue and part of human suffering could be relieved or prevented. Thus by a study of the laws of nature, man was able, in the providence of God, to discover ways of relieving suffering and of making human life more tolerable than it otherwise would have been. For example, by chemical and physiological research the use of anesthetics was discovered, by which pain is prevented and modern surgery made possible.

After God had created man, He gave him a commission to gain as complete control as possible over the realm of nature ("Replenish the earth, and subdue it", Gen. 1:28). This divine commission is rightly understood as involving the whole field of investigation of the laws of nature, and their use for the benefit of mankind. If human research and invention have succeeded in harnessing the mighty cataract of Niagara Falls so that the falling water generates electric current for the use of millions of human beings, this is to be regarded as a partial fulfilment of the commission of Genesis 1:28. If a tremendous dam which impounds the waters of a river makes possible the productive cultivation of hundreds of square miles of land which otherwise would be a barren, useless desert, that too should be regarded as a fulfilment of the divine commission to "subdue the earth". Similarly, the use of dry ice to produce rain, if it can be successfully and economically done, should be regarded as a partial fulfilment of

the divine commission to gain control over the laws of nature.

We should realize that something is not necessarily wrong just because it is strange and new. Many scientific discoveries and inventions have been opposed in times past, but later the opposition ceased and they gained general acceptance. It is not correct to hold that reverence for God and faith in God's providence requires us to abstain from all "artificial" utilization of the laws of nature. Faith in the divine providence is not contrary to the use of proper means. Rather, it would be dishonoring to God not to use all the means which His providence makes available to us.

Also the "artificial" utilization of the laws of nature is much more common than we perhaps commonly realize. A hen that will lay 200 to 300 eggs per year, a Jonathan apple five inches in diameter, hybrid corn that resists drought, an automobile, electric current for light and power—all these and many others that might be mentioned are products of "artificial" utilization of divinely-ordained natural laws. These are not wrong; from one point of view they are the blessings of God's common grace, while

from another point of view they are the results of man's carrying out the divine commission to "subdue the earth".

**Question:**

Is it correct to say that a Church "holds" or "conducts" a revival?

**Answer:**

Certainly not. The word "revival" means the production or bestowal of **new spiritual life**. This may mean that unconverted sinners are "born again" and become new creatures in Christ, or it may mean that Christians who had grown cold and indifferent are brought back to a more spiritual state. In either case, a real revival is a **gift of God, not a work of man**. It is just as improper to speak of a Church "holding" or "conducting" a revival as it would be to speak of a Church raising dead people to life again. A Church may hold meetings for the purpose of evangelism, at which the Gospel of Christ is proclaimed, in the hope that the Holy Spirit of God will apply the Word to the hearts and lives of people and give them new spiritual life. Only the Spirit of God can give life to the spiritually dead, or revive the spiritually lukewarm. The Church's part is to bear witness to the truth of the Gospel.

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VOLUME 3

APRIL - JUNE, 1948

NUMBER 2

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“The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience, and sacrifice of Himself, which He, through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of His Father; and purchased, not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto Him.”

The Westminster Confession of Faith, VIII.5

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## FOUND OF GOD

(Author unknown)

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew  
He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me;  
It was not I that found, O Saviour True;  
No, I was found of Thee.

Thou didst reach forth Thy hand and mine enfold,  
I walked and sank not in the storm-vexed sea;  
'Twas not so much that I on Thee took hold,  
As Thou, dear Lord, on me.

I find, I walk, I love, but oh, the whole of love  
Is but my answer, Lord, to Thee!  
For Thou wert long beforehand with my soul;  
Always Thou lovedst me.

---

Out of the realm of the glory-light,  
Into a far away land of night;  
Out from the bliss of worshipful song,  
Into the pain of hatred and wrong;  
Out from the holy rapture above,  
Into the grief of rejected love;  
Out from the life at the Father's side,  
Into the death of the Crucified;  
Out from high honor and into shame,  
The Master, willingly, gladly came;  
And now, since He may not suffer anew,  
As the Father sent Him, so sendeth He you.

(Author unknown)

Should I climb to worldly fame,  
Gaining honor, wealth and name,  
Should I reach the world's desire,  
And at ease in wealth retire,  
Could my heart in peace abide?  
Would my soul be satisfied?  
Nay, in blindness once my soul  
Sought these for its highest goal,  
Till my Lord revealed to me  
All that He would have me be;  
Then I set the world aside—  
Now my soul is satisfied.

(Author unknown)

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He writes in characters too grand  
For our short sight to understand;  
We catch but broken strokes, and try  
To fathom all the mystery  
Of withered hopes, of deaths, of life,  
The endless war, the useless strife.  
But there, with larger, clearer sight  
We shall see this: His way was right.

(Author unknown)

To know the Christ of God,  
The everlasting Son;  
To know what He on earth  
For guilty man has done:  
This is the first and last  
Of all that's true and wise;  
The circle that contains all light  
Beneath, above, the skies.

Boratus Bonar

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“For what is more consistent with faith than to acknowledge ourselves  
naked of all virtue, that we may be clothed by God; empty of all good, that  
we may be filled by Him; slaves to sin, that we may be liberated by Him;  
blind, that we may be enlightened by Him; lame, that we may be guided;  
weak, that we may be supported by Him; to divest ourselves of all ground  
of glorying, that He alone may be eminently glorious, and that we may  
glory in Him?”

John Calvin

# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

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 VOLUME 3

APRIL - JUNE, 1948

 NUMBER 2
 

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## Sketches From Our History

### CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH THROUGH THE AGES

#### CHAPTER II

##### SIFTING TRUTH FROM ERROR CONCERNING CHRIST

Most readers of "Blue Banner Faith and Life" will be familiar with the Westminster Shorter Catechism's answer to the question "Who is the Redeemer of God's elect?"—"The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever" (Q. 21) This statement, so clear and definite in its language, sets forth what the Church finally recognized as the teaching of the Scriptures about the Person of Christ. But this truth, which the Catechism presents with such wonderful simplicity and precision, was not easily attained by the Church. It was only after prolonged study of the Word of God, much discussion and controversy, and rejection of a number of heresies, that the Church finally grasped the truth concerning the Person of Christ and His divine and human natures.

In the struggle against Arianism, the question at issue was the true deity of Jesus Christ, that is, whether Jesus Christ is God in the true and proper sense of the term "God". That question was finally settled, after prolonged controversy, by the Council of Constantinople, which reaffirmed the Nicene Creed in a slightly revised form. Thereafter there could be no question about orthodox Christianity holding to the true deity of Christ, the doctrine that Christ is of the same substance with God the Father. For all time to come the Church was committed to belief that Jesus Christ is truly God.

This rejection of Arianism was absolutely necessary if the Church was to

confess the truth about Christ. But it was only a step toward the full doctrine of Christ. To affirm whole-heartedly that Jesus Christ is God did not go far enough; it left various other problems undecided. For obviously Jesus Christ is not **only** God; He was born of the Virgin Mary, grew up in Nazareth, walked the roads and streets of Judaea and Galilee, and was crucified and buried outside the city of Jerusalem. Thus it is clear that Jesus Christ is man as well as God, and therefore the Church's doctrine concerning Him must reckon with His humanity as well as with His Deity. What is the relation between Christ's deity and His humanity? Before the Arian controversy there had been but little serious thinking done on this problem; but once Arianism was definitely disposed of, it was inevitable that the Church go through a period of struggle in the effort to define and clarify its faith concerning the Person and natures of the Redeemer. This task involved great difficulty, but was accomplished with remarkable success.

Perhaps we may understand this historical development more easily if we anticipate its final conclusion before taking up the steps which led to it. As finally defined by the Church, there are four main elements involved in the doctrine of Christ. These are: (1) Christ is truly God; (2) Christ is truly man; (3) Christ is only one Person; (4) Christ's divine and human natures are not mixed or blended together, but remain distinct. All four of these elements are necessary for the true doctrine concerning Christ. If any one of them is denied or slighted, the true doctrine is destroyed and a heresy results. Thus Arianism, for

example, denied element No. 1, that Christ is truly God, and for this reason the Church rightly condemned Arianism as a heresy. During the period which followed, the Church faced and refuted one heresy after another, until finally the mathematical possibilities of heretical views on this subject were exhausted. Each heretical view of Christ denied or obscured one or another of the four elements of the doctrine that are listed above.

First came the Apollinarian controversy, which was contemporary with the closing phases of the Arian controversy. It was named after Apollinaris, the learned and godly bishop of Laodicea in Syria, a man highly regarded by Athanasius, and a zealous defender of the true deity of Jesus Christ. Apollinaris, in his zeal for the deity of Christ, failed to do justice to the **humanity** of Christ. He held, in brief, that Christ in His incarnation took to himself a human body and also a kind of principle of conscious animal life, but no rational human soul, the place of His human soul being taken by His divine Spirit. Thus, according to Apollinaris, Christ does not have a real human soul. Therefore Apollinarianism was a heresy, for it held forth a Christ who is less than truly and fully human. This heresy was condemned by two councils held at Rome, in 377 and 378, and also by the second ecumenical council, held at Constantinople in 381.

Next came the heresy called Nestorianism, named after Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople. It had become a watchword of orthodoxy to call the Virgin Mary "**the mother of God**" because she was the mother of Christ, and Christ is truly God. If properly defined, so as to show that Mary was the mother of Jesus who by reason of His divine nature and Person is God, it is theologically correct to speak of Mary as "the mother of God", just as the Bible speaks of "the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). But the phrase "mother of God" is so extremely liable to misunderstanding and misuse that it would have been better if the Church had never used it at all. Now Nestorius was absolutely opposed to calling Mary "the mother of God". In trying to avoid the idea of Mary being "the mother of God", Nestorius virtually denied the real incarnation of the second Person of the Trinity; he virtually denied the Scripture teaching that "the Word was made flesh" (John 1:14). Nestorius taught that the child born of Mary was not Himself really God, but a human being who was "assumed" by God. Thus Nestorianism denied element No.

3 of the doctrine of Christ, namely that **Christ is only one Person**. Nestorianism separated the divine and human natures of Christ so far as to attribute to Christ a **double personality**, regarding him as a divine Person united with a human person. This teaching was condemned as a heresy by the council of Ephesus, A. D. 431. Nestorianism continued to exist as a separate sect, outside the fold of the Catholic Church, and still has some adherents at the present day. To the Nestorian Church belongs the unique distinction of being the first, so far as is known, to introduce the Christian religion to the land of China. Christianity in the form of Nestorianism was introduced to China in A. D. 631, made some progress and persisted for two or three hundred years, but finally disappeared.

Nestorianism was followed by the Eutychian heresy, named after Eutyches, the abbot of a monastery in Constantinople. This heresy was precisely the opposite of Nestorianism. Eutyches taught that Christ was one Person **with only one nature**. Thus he denied element No. 4 of the doctrine of Christ, namely, that **Christ's divine and human natures are not mixed or blended together, but remain distinct**. Eutyches held that the two natures, divine and human, are blended or fused into one single nature, which is a compound or mixture of divine and human. Eutychianism was condemned as a heresy by the Council of Chalcedon (fourth ecumenical council), A. D. 451.

The Council of Chalcedon forms one of the great landmarks of Church history. Like many Church councils of that day, it was not free from the vices of name-calling and dealing in personalities. We believe that in spite of the human sins and weaknesses of the members of the council, the Holy Spirit used it in His work of leading the Church into all truth. Chalcedon, where the sessions were held, was located opposite Constantinople. The number of bishops in attendance is estimated at from 520 to 630, besides other Church officers and laymen. After a number of sessions had been held, the council adopted a confession of faith including the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed and adding a statement of the true doctrine concerning Christ, and rejecting the Nestorian and Eutychian heresies. This statement speaks of "one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, **known in two natures, without confusion, without conversion, without severance, and without division.**" It adds that Christ's two natures, while re-

maining distinct, "both concur in one Person. . .". After this confession of faith was adopted and read, all the bishops present joined in saying: "This is the faith of the fathers; this is the faith of the apostles; to this we all agree; thus we all think." (Schaff, History of the Christian Church, III, p. 746). Question 21 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism is based squarely on the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon, which set forth the orthodox Christian faith concerning the Person and natures of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Two more heresies concerning Christ may be mentioned briefly, namely the Monophysite heresy and the Monothelite heresy. The word **Monophysite** means **one-nature-doctrine**, and this heresy was similar to Eutychianism in rejecting the doctrine of Christ's two natures, and holding that Christ has only one nature. The keynote of this heresy was the saying "God has been crucified", a statement which can be understood in an orthodox sense (as Acts 20:28), but which was far from orthodox when used, as it was, to deny the real integrity of Christ's human nature. The Monophysites themselves were divided into a number of sects, differing in their beliefs concerning Christ's humanity. The history is long and involved, and we shall not enter further into it except to state that Monophysitism was rejected by the Church and the doctrine of two distinct natures, divine and human, was held as the orthodox faith.

The Monothelite heresy may be regarded as a branch or sect of Monophysit-

ism. The word **Monothelite** means **one-will-doctrine**; this party held that Christ has **only one will**, and denied that He has two distinct wills, divine and human, pertaining to His divine and human natures. Monothelitism was condemned as heretical by the sixth ecumenical council (A. D. 680), but continued to exist as a separate sect, and has a small remnant of adherents in Syria and Lebanon at the present day.

To summarize: Arianism denied Christ's true deity; Apollinarianism denied Christ's true humanity; Nestorianism denied the unity of Christ's Person; Eutychianism, Monophysitism and Monothelitism denied, expressly or by implication, the distinct integrity of Christ's two natures, divine and human; the orthodox Christian faith, as affirmed by the Council of Chalcedon and later councils, affirmed **all four** of these basic truths concerning Christ, and thus set forth the true, Scriptural teaching concerning the Redeemer. And this faith is the heritage of our Church, and is set forth in its purity in the Westminster Standards and the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony. The ancient Church's labors to clarify and vindicate the truth about Christ proved long and wearisome, but they were absolutely necessary, and nothing could be more foolish than to represent these controversies as strifes about words or "theological hair-splitting". Far from being "hair-splitting", they were the quarrying from Holy Writ of the foundation stones for the edifice of Christian truth.

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## THE SCOTTISH COVENANTERS

### Their Origins, History and Distinctive Doctrines

(Selections from the book with the above title, by J. G. Vos, published by the author in 1940)

#### PART II

#### THE HISTORY OF THE COVENANTERS

#### CHAPTER I

#### THE

#### PERIOD OF PERSECUTION, 1660-1688

(Continued from last issue)

#### 2. The Ejection of Ministers, 1662.

The Privy Council met on October 1st, 1662, at Glasgow, and passed an act by which they declared that all of the ministers installed since 1649 who had not yet complied with the law by obtaining pre-

sentation by a patron and collation by a bishop, had forfeited their livings, were forbidden to preach, and ordered to remove with their families from the bounds of their parishes before November 1st. According to Burnet, all the members of the Council except Sir James Lockhart were so drunk on that day that they could not consider the matters placed before them.

The order of the Privy Council appears to have been generally obeyed. Patrick Walker, writing after the Revolution, lamented the fact that the ministers were so ready to obey and did not offer more resistance before leaving their pulpits: "Ministers leaving their people, and silence after the unhappy Restoration, was indeed very stumbling and offensive to the Lord's chil-

dren; and several of these ministers that did so lament it to their dying day, and reckoned it among the causes of God's wrath; as Mr. Shields and others sometimes said on fast-days, that the tout of a horn over the Cross of Edinburgh blew most ministers out of their pulpits."

It has commonly been stated that nearly four hundred ministers were driven from their parishes by the Act of the Privy Council. Wodrow states that nearly one-third of the ministers of Scotland were ejected by the act of the Privy Council, and even more if those forced out by later acts be counted in. Grub, an Episcopalian writer, maintains, however, that this is an exaggeration, and comes to the conclusion that "it is almost certain that the number of those who resigned in the end of the year 1662 fell considerably short even of two hundred". He is inclined to accept Burnet's estimate of 350 as the total number of ministers ejected after the Restoration, including those later ejected for refusing to attend diocesan synods. Grub states that in 1651 there were in Scotland 600 ministers who adhered to the Public Resolutions, and that all except about forty of these accepted Prelacy after the Restoration.

When the Privy Council saw how many ministers had suddenly ceased to officiate, they became alarmed, and on December 23rd, 1662, passed a second act, allowing ministers to apply for presentation and collation up to February 1st, 1663. Under the terms of this act, some who had left their Churches returned and resumed preaching; but when February 1st, 1663, came, many resigned rather than submit. Others were deposed for non-attendance at the diocesan synods. Those who resigned or were ejected included some few of the more distinguished Resolutioners, together with practically all of the Protestors. Those ministers who retained their pulpits were required, of course, to submit to Episcopacy. Since the basic difference between the Resolutioners and the Protestors from the beginning of that controversy had been a difference between political expediency on the one hand and strict adherence to principle on the other, it is not at all surprising that most of the Resolutioners retained their pulpits by conforming to Episcopacy, while nearly all of the Protestors forsook theirs because of their adherence to Presbytery.

### 3. Covenanting Conventicles and the Proclamations Issued Against Them.

Many of the ministers who had been ejected in 1662 and 1663 continued to preach, conducting services in private homes and also addressing large audiences in the open fields. These activities naturally displeased both the bishops and the government, and the result was a law passed by Parliament in 1663, entitled "Act for Separation and Disobedience to Ecclesiastic Authority", but popularly known as "The Bishops' Drag-Net". By the terms of this act, to preach without permission from a bishop was regarded as sedition. Persons who failed to attend the stated services of parish Churches were to be fined. This was the first of a series of measures calculated to force all the people of Scotland into conformity to the established Episcopal Church, and in comparison with what was to follow, it was mild enough. The collection of the fines, and enforcement of Church attendance, were placed in the hands of the military, which was a great grievance to the people. Many of the Episcopal ministers, then popularly called "curates", kept rolls of Church attendance and reported absentees to the soldiers.

In 1664 the Court of High Commission was restored. This Court was not authorized by any law, but was simply a creation of Charles II and depended entirely on the royal prerogative. The Court of High Commission had tremendous power and there was no appeal from its sentence. While this tribunal was set up primarily to persecute the Covenanters, at the beginning it was used principally against the Catholics. The methods used by the Court of High Commission resembled those of the Inquisition. The Court consisted of nine prelates and thirty-five laymen, of whom any five, not less than one being a prelate, constituted a quorum. At this time the Court of High Commission could inflict any punishment short of death; many were fined and imprisoned, others banished, and some sold as slaves. It appears that of all the persons tried by the Court of High Commission, not a single one was acquitted, or escaped without suffering some penalty. The restoration of the Court of High Commission was principally the work of Archbishop Sharp, who felt that the actions of the Privy Council were not sufficient to enforce conformity with Episcopacy in Scotland.

In December, 1665, the Privy Council issued a proclamation against conventicles. According to this proclamation, not only



those who preached at conventicles, but also all persons who attended such meetings, were to be regarded as seditious and punished by fines or imprisonment. This measure, however, failed to stop private religious meetings and conventicles; in fact, the conventicles increased rather than diminished.

In the summer of 1670 the Parliament passed a second act against conventicles. All previous measures had failed to stop the "seditious" meetings, and this act, with others passed at the same time, provided legislation intended utterly to suppress all religious meetings not held in parish Churches, and to exterminate those who attended and supported such meetings. Every person was required to give evidence on oath concerning conventicles and those who attended them. The penalty for refusal to testify was fine, imprisonment, or banishment. The oath could be administered at any time, and by any public official. All children were to be baptized in the parish Church before the age of thirty days, and any parent unable to produce a satisfactory certificate of baptism after the expiration of that time limit was liable to be fined one-fourth of his annual income. Marriages were to be performed only by the conforming ministers; persons married in any other way were to suffer civil disabilities. This legislation, while intended to suppress conventicles, failed to do so; the effect was rather to force such meetings to be held in greater secrecy and in remoter places than had been done before. One of the most diabolical features of this iniquitous legislation was that it attempted to force persons to give evidence against their most intimate friends and nearest relatives. It is also worthy of note that by this legislation, death and confiscation of goods was the penalty provided for conducting or preaching at a conventicle. Rewards were offered for the capture of conventicle preachers, and if the preacher was killed in the attempt at capture, the would-be captor was promised freedom from prosecution.

In 1676 letters of intercommuning were issued against about a hundred persons who had been summoned before the Privy Council but had failed to appear. Those intercommuned were ministers, proprietors of land where conventicles had been held, and other persons. The letters of intercommuning had the effect of making it a crime for any person to hold intercourse—even civil intercourse—with the intercommuned. They were placed outside the pale of society and excluded from the benefits and

protection of the law. It was also held a crime to associate in any way with persons who had attended conventicles, and by this ruling it was attempted to cut thousands of Covenanters off from association with their fellow-men. Another outrage was the infliction of fines on the proprietors of lands where conventicles had been held; this was exceedingly unjust as the proprietors might be quite ignorant of the fact of conventicles being held on their estates, and quite helpless to prevent such meetings if they did know about them, for the conventicles were often held in the most remote and inaccessible places.

In April, 1681, a new proclamation against conventicles was issued by the Privy Council in the name of the King. This proclamation ran in part as follows: "Forasmuch as field conventicles, which were in our laws, by the universal consent of all the representatives of this our kingdom, declared to be the rendezvouses of rebellion, are now found, by the undeniable experience of all sober men, to have bred up the unwary commons unto a most atheistical giddiness, to the owning of those murdering principles, which are a reproach to the protestant religion, and inconsistent with the security of every private man, and to the contemning of their own masters and landlords: we therefore. . . do hereby command and ordain, that how soon soever any field conventicle, or other conventicles, understood to be field conventicles by construction of law, shall be kept, the heritor in whose land or house the same is kept. . . shall immediately advertise the sheriff of the shire . . . within three days after the same is kept", etc. Persons attending conventicles unarmed were to be dealt with according to the previous legislation for attending conventicles; those who attended armed were to be dealt with for treason.

In 1685, under King James VII (II of England) a Parliament was held by which still more stringent legislation was enacted against the Covenanters. One of the laws passed declared "That the giving or taking the National Covenant or the Solemn League and Covenant, or writing in defence thereof, or owning them as lawful or obligatory upon themselves or others, shall infer the crime and pains of treason". By another act, the death penalty was provided for being present at a conventicle, as well as preaching at one. Even private family worship was treason if more than five non-members of the family were present. During the year 1685 persecution reached its height and many were put to death by

soldiers, without process or form of law. Six men were shot on sight at one place, because they were discovered by soldiers while in the act of prayer. The fact or presumption of having been at a conventicle was sufficient ground for instant execution without legal prosecution; ensnaring and contradictory oaths and questions were proposed to persons apprehended, and in the event of unsatisfactory answers, or refusal to answer, immediate death by shooting was the outcome.

The conventicle movement reached its height in great gatherings at which the Lord's Supper was administered, in 1677 and 1678. One such conventicle was attend-

ed by 600 armed men and 7,000 unarmed persons. During the early years of the persecution the conventicles were unarmed gatherings for Presbyterian worship; as the laws and regulations against such meetings became more stringent, and were more rigorously enforced, the Covenanters adopted the practice of attending conventicles armed for the purpose of self-defence. They would not use arms to propagate their religion, but only to defend it, and in this they were able to find sufficient warrant for their course in the Bible itself. Their principle was that they ought to obey God rather than men.

(To be continued)

## The Twenty-Third Psalm

By the Rev. Frank D. Frazer

Whence came this rare expression of pure, unmixed faith; of unquestioning, childlike trust; of perfect peace? Here is faith resting on knowledge, strengthened by experience. It has never been ashamed. "I have no want". "I have no fear". "I have my home in Jehovah's house". It is no dream; no make-believe; it is realistic, taking note of the existence of "evil"; of the "shadow of death"; of the presence of "enemies". It must have originated amid the conditions and experiences of this sin-hate-cursed world.

Speculations as to the human penman of this song, or what historical circumstances limited its meaning, are as foolish as they are conflicting, and yield no worthwhile results. For, the Psalms are **prophecy**; **prophecy** in the fullest sense of that term—the declaration of God's eternal truth—for all people of all ages; not merely the foretelling of some particular events. They are prophecy in poetic form, for singing, that all people may more easily remember and repeat them. The Psalms are prophecy, and **"the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of the prophecy"** (Rev. 19:10). The heading here, "A Psalm of David", is undoubtedly correct. David, "the sweet Psalmist of Israel", who, "being a prophet" (Acts 2:30), said, "The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, and his word was on my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2). This is one of those "Spirit-given Psalms, Hymns, Songs", together entitled, **"The Word of Christ"** (Col. 3:16). This is **"the testimony of Jesus"**.

But, Jesus Christ is Jehovah. How

could He say, "Jehovah is my shepherd"? By being truly man as He is God. The conception of Jehovah as **shepherd of men** was expressed long before by Jacob, who spoke of Him as the one "who hath shepherded me all my life long" (Gen. 48:15). And Jehovah Himself said, speaking of His sheep, "I will feed them. . . by the water courses . . . on fat pasture shall they feed. . . I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will let them rest. . . my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, are men" (Ezek. 34:13-15, 31). Jesus Christ was a man.

Since there is a shepherd, we may take the flock for granted, but there is no mention of a flock here. This is the song of an individual. (The first personal pronoun occurs at least once in every line). His confidence is not on the ground of being one of a flock, but of his personal relationship with Jehovah. Only **"in Christ"** may we know such confidence.

Sheep were selected for the sacrifice. Jesus Christ was appointed to be **THE SACRIFICE**. The ancient prophecy reads, "he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isa. 53:7). His forerunner announced Him, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Certainly the man Christ Jesus could say:

1. Jehovah is my shepherd; I have no want.

2. In green pastures he lets me rest;

By quiet waters he leads me.

One proof of the reality of Christ's humanity, given in Heb. 2:11-13, is that, not being ashamed to call them that believed on Him "brethren", **He said**,

"I will declare thy name to my brethren;

"In the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee."  
and again,

"I will put my trust in Him (Jehovah)."

The first quotation is from Psalm 22:22. The second is taken **freely** from any one of many Psalms (e. g., 16:1; 18:2; 36:7, 8; 91:2; etc.); but it is a perfect epitome of Psalm 23, of which every line, every clause, breathes the unwavering trust of one whose heart is fixed, who knows whom he has believed;—a trust too pure, too steadfast, for any sinner to have uttered it of himself. There is the shadow of death, but no shadow of doubt. While human limitations and dependence on God are implied, there is no confession of sin. The only question is, How can such as we sing such a Psalm?

In verse 3, the word translated "re-storeth" is an intensive form of the common verb "**to turn**";—a verb adaptable to all kinds of turning. "He effectually turns my soul". Here it seems to indicate an effective control of the life's direction, rather than mere refreshment of the life. Refreshment is implied in verse 2; here there is an advance of thought. "He directs my life". This same verb is often used for repentance, or conversion, as in Psalm 19:7, "The law of Jehovah is perfect, **converting** the soul." In Lam. 5:21, "**Turn** thou us unto thee, O Jehovah, and we shall be **turned**." While that meaning is not necessary here, it lies at our hand. The word of Christ in the Psalms, when He speaks of Himself, is chosen to apply with equal fitness to those whom He represents. Here the word expresses the fact of God's providential directing of a man's life; for example, of the child Jesus, as is so plainly indicated in the record of Matthew and Luke. So it applies to Him, with whom there was no such thing as going astray, and to us, who "all like sheep have gone astray". Furthermore, "He directs my life" affords a more accurate parallel with the line following:

3. He directs my life:

He guides me in paths of righteousness

for his name's sake. It is all of God's grace for men. Verses 1 and 2 tell of His goodness; verse 3 of His mercy; both of which, as the singer knows, shall follow him all the days of his life.

But paths of righteousness on earth now pass through the dark valley. Instantly he reaches for the comfort which the nearness and certain guidance of Jehovah afford, changing (in verses 4 and 5) from the narrative about Jehovah to direct address; just as, while teaching men **about** the Father, He would, at times, begin talking **to** the Father (John 11:40-42; 12:26-28). It was the natural thing for Him to do.

4. Yea, though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I have no fear of evil, for **THOU THYSELF** art beside me: **Thy** rod and **thy** staff, **they** comfort me.

When the angry crowd forced Him out of the synagogue, out of the city, to the brow of the cliff to cast Him down headlong, "he passing through the midst of them, went his way". When Jews took up stones to stone Him, He challenged them, "For which of my good works do ye stone me?" and then silenced them by quoting a saying of His own written in Psalm 82:6, which they professed to believe (John 10:31-39). When the time came for Him to walk through the dark valley to the other side, He went forth, not as one driven, but as one leading the way, as Himself the Great Shepherd of the sheep, saying, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. . . I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." (John 10:11-18).

5. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:  
Thou dost anoint my head with oil;  
My cup overflows.

"Thou preparest a table before me" was the ordinary expression for providing food and drink, but how wonderful it is when we consider that Jehovah's table becomes for us "the Lord's table", at which all who are "**in Him**" partake of His rich and bountiful provision.

The word for "enemies" here is used frequently in the Psalms. It characterizes them as "oppressors", proud and cruel,

such as persecute for righteousness' sake, without a cause. Accordingly, we see Jesus sitting at meat in Levi's house, while Scribes and Pharisees stand around watching and muttering. But, His "meat" was rather "to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34). And all the while He was doing that, seeking and saving the lost, His enemies were "laying wait for him, seeking to catch something out of his mouth that they might accuse him" (Luke 11:54). When He came to the finish, even though His last cup was filled to the brim with bitterness, He drank it. "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" When the mob with swords and clubs came in the darkness to take Him, He went forth to meet them, and told them twice who He was, before they dared lay hands on Him. They were the ones who were afraid. The Roman judge, though boasting of his power to condemn Him, was still afraid while he did it. On the cross, the rulers and soldiers scoffed at Him; the priests and elders mocked Him; the people railed on Him, wagging their heads, then went away beating their breasts. He said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

6. Surely goodness and mercy follow me closely all the days of my life;  
And I have my home in Jehovah's house forever.

The word here for "anoint" means to make fat, or enrich; it describes a festive, not an official anointing. The speaker declares that the richest, the best, the most honorable, the most joyous is bestowed upon Him, and that in lavish abundance. "He saw of the travail of his soul and is satisfied."

He knew what He was doing. He was providing a cup of blessing, of salvation, and of joy for His brethren, as He said to them: "I go to the Father." "In my Father's house are many mansions. . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2, 3).

In this way we are not reading history backwards, nor reading into the Psalm what is not there. We are reading it as Christ's beforehand declaration of the un-failing faithfulness of God, the Shepherd of His sheep.

If now, by the regeneration of His almighty Spirit and His gift of faith, we are "sons" of God and "brethren" of Christ, we stand with Christ in a similar relationship with God. In that relationship we have a common ground of confidence. And since it is Christ who expresses that confidence in the words of this Psalm, we may thereby learn from Him what our faith should be, and so enter further into the experience of His peace and security, of His freedom from want and His freedom from fear. These things, for which all the peoples are blindly groping today, are not to be found in the kingdoms of this world; they are not the "rights" of sinful men, but **in Christ** we may have them, even here and now. Then with clearer understanding we may, with our whole hearts, sing the very words of His praise as our praise and thanksgiving to God, knowing that it will be wellpleasing to God.

(**Note:** The foregoing article is the first of a series of studies in the Psalms by the Rev. Frank D. Frazer. The series will be continued in future issues of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". Ed.)

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## Our Church Covenant and Modern Life

(Note: This is the third of a series of sermons on the obligations involved in the Church Covenant sworn and subscribed by the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, May 21, 1871. The other sermons of the series will be published in future issues of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". The editor desires to acknowledge his great indebtedness to the

Rev. Frank D. Frazer, whose booklet entitled "Outline Studies in the Covenant" was very helpful in the preparation of this series of sermons. Every Covenanter should read and study Mr. Frazer's excellent booklet, which clearly and convincingly displays the Scriptural character of the obligations set forth in the Covenant of 1871.—Ed.)

### III. HOW WE COVENANT TO ACCEPT THE TRUTH

Scripture Readings: 2 Timothy 4; 2 John

The Covenant of 1871, besides a preliminary confession of sins, consists of an introductory paragraph and six sections. This Covenant was adopted in 1871 after long and earnest preparation, and it is recognized by the "Terms of Communion" as binding on the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America today. In order that we may have a bird's-eye view of the Covenant as a whole, I shall present the subjects of the various sections as given in Mr. Frazer's "Outline Studies in the Covenant". These are as follows:

1. We hereby covenant to do our duty to God.
2. We hereby covenant to do our duty to the truth of God.
3. We hereby covenant to do our duty to the nation.
4. We hereby covenant to do our duty to the Church-at-large.
5. We hereby covenant to do our duty to the world.
6. We hereby covenant to perform these, our duties, faithfully.

The first sentence of Section 2 of our Church Covenant reads as follows:

"That after careful examination, having embraced the system of faith, order and worship revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and summarized, as to doctrine, in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, and Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, and, as to order and worship, justly set

forth in substance and outline in the Westminster Form of Church Government and Directory for Worship, we do publicly profess and own this as the true Christian faith and religion, and the system of order and worship appointed by Christ for His own house, and, by the grace of God, we will sincerely and constantly endeavor to understand it more fully, to hold and observe it in its integrity, and to transmit the knowledge of the same to posterity."

In the second section of our Covenant we pledge ourselves to do our duty to the truth of God. In the present sermon I shall discuss only a part of the obligations mentioned in the sentence of the Covenant quoted above, and shall endeavor to show that **our Church Covenant involves an intelligent attachment to the truth**. I shall seek to show, first of all, that the truth of God forms a **system**; secondly, that we should have an **accurate knowledge** of this system of truth; thirdly, that we should have a **first-hand knowledge** of this system of truth; and finally, that we should have a **wholehearted love** for the truth.

We covenant "that after **careful examination**, having **embraced** the system of faith, order and worship revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and summarized, as to doctrine, in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, and Reformed Presbyterian Testimony", etc., "we do publicly profess and own this as the true Christian faith and religion. . . ."

After careful examination—that means an **intelligent** acceptance of the truth. Having embraced—that means an **attachment** to the truth. Thus our Church Covenant involves an **intelligent attachment** to the truth of God. That is to say, our Covenant requires both a **knowledge** of the truth, and a **love** for the truth.

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#### I. The Truth of God Forms a System

This body of truth that we are to know and love is described as a **system of faith, order and worship**. In this statement, the word "faith" refers to **doctrine**, or what we are to believe. The word "order" refers to **Church government**, or the form of organization of the Church. The word "worship" refers to **the manner of worshipping God**

on the part of the individual, the family and the Church. What we are to believe, how the Church ought to be organized, how God is to be worshipped—these are the elements of the truth which we covenant to accept.

This body of truth is called a **system**.

That is to say, it is not a mere miscellaneous collection of ideas, but a system in which each part is related to all the other parts. Many people today fail to realize that the truth of God forms a system, of which each element is related in some way to all the other elements. Many people tend to think of divine truth as a confused jumble of different items each of which stands or falls by itself. They fail to realize that God's truth is an orderly **system**.

The parts of an automobile form a **system**. You may perhaps have some gadgets on your car that are not part of the system of the car. A container for cigarette ashes is not part of the system of a car. Neither is a radio part of the system of a car. But carburetor, fuel pump, distributor, generator, spark plugs, not to mention crankshaft, drive-shaft, gears and wheels, are all elements of the system of an automobile. Take away one of them, and you do not have an automobile; it cannot be operated. These parts are all absolutely necessary for the operation of a car.

There are also parts that are not absolutely necessary, yet they are essential to comfortable and safe operation of a motor car; for example, a starter-motor, a horn, headlights and taillight. A car can be driven without these parts, yet it cannot be adequately driven. Without them the operation of a car is inconvenient and unsafe. So these parts, too, are essential to a complete automobile. Without them the **system** of the automobile is incomplete.

The human body is a system. Some parts of the human body are absolutely necessary to life; other parts are not absolutely necessary to life, yet they are essential for the integrity of the human body. A person can get along without a hand or foot, but no person can live without a head. Yet two hands and two feet are essential to the normal system of a complete human body.

Now the truth of God as revealed in His Word forms a system. Some elements of this system are **absolutely necessary for salvation**: for example, to believe in the true God, to believe in Jesus Christ as our Saviour. Other elements in the system are not absolutely necessary for salvation, yet they are essential for the completeness of the system as God has given it to us—for example, the correct form of Church government, the right manner of worshipping God.

Now this system in its entirety is derived from the Holy Scriptures. It is not derived from the world of nature, nor from human reason, or the mind and consciousness of man, but from the special revelation of God, the Holy Bible. The Bible of course does not present the truth already arranged in the form of a system. The Bible presents the truth in a progressive revelation through many centuries of human history. But taking the Bible as a whole, the elements of the system are there.

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## II. An Accurate Knowledge of the System of Truth

Our Covenant requires an accurate knowledge of the system of truth. A mere vague feeling or general idea of the teachings of the Bible will not satisfy this requirement. We must have a precise knowledge of the system of truth and of the relation of its various elements to each other and to the system as a whole. We may think of a jig-saw puzzle by way of illustration. When you buy a jig-saw puzzle you get a large box or envelope with perhaps three or four hundred little pieces of cardboard, each with a peculiar shape different from the rest, and each with a small portion of a beautiful picture printed on one side. These three or four hundred pieces of cardboard are all mixed up in the box. Just to look at them you would not see any beauty. They must be put together in an orderly way to see the picture that is intended. Each of

these pieces of cardboard fits into a definite place in relation to the other pieces. Each has its own place and its own importance. The result is an orderly system which portrays a beautiful landscape or some other scene to the eye. But before that can be seen, the pieces have to be fitted together. This is of course a work requiring some pains and trouble. Usually it takes a good deal of time. It may baffle a person completely for a while. Yet it can be done.

The Bible is like that. It presents, not a ready-made system of truth, but the elements of a system of truth ready to be fitted together to form the complete system. Now many people get but little from reading the Bible because they fail to realize that it is intended to set forth, not a mere

jumble of "helpful" statements, but a **system of truth**. They fail to see how one statement of the Bible is related to other statements of the Bible, and how each is related to the Bible as a whole. Consequently when they go to the Bible they are often baffled or confused.

If we were to open a book on geometry or European history somewhere in the middle and start to read, we would naturally be puzzled and confused by what we would read. It would be almost meaningless to us, for we would not be looking at it in its proper framework, namely, the system of which it is a part. But study the geometry textbook from the beginning and get a grasp of its system, and it becomes clear and meaningful on every page.

Of course we do not have to start "from scratch" to form a system of the elements given in the Bible. That would be absurd; we do not do that way with any other subject. In arithmetic and chemistry, for example, we find the systems ready for our use, worked out for us by those people who have lived before our time. And so with the Bible, too. We are not the first people who ever studied the Bible in an effort to discern its system of truth. To return to our illustration, the jig-saw puzzle has already been put together, for the most part, by Christian people who have lived in past times. There remain a few pieces that have not yet been fitted into their proper places, but for the greater part the picture has already been completed.

Now it would be a great waste of effort, and also extremely foolish, to take the almost-completed picture in our hands and say, "I do not want to accept the work of other people; I want to start from the beginning myself; so I will just turn this puzzle upside-down on the table and mix the pieces up, and then start over again to make up my own system from the separate pieces." But that is what the person does who says: "No book but the Bible; I do not want any man-made creeds; just let me have God's Bible and I will do the rest." Such a person wants to do over again, all by himself, what has already taken the

sanctified intelligence and consecrated efforts of God's people for some nineteen centuries. To say the least, such a proposal is rather conceited.

We should indeed study the Bible for ourselves. But we find that the system of its truths has already been formulated for us by godly men in past times. This was a work of many centuries, involving a progressive grasp of the meaning of the Bible, a progressive fulfilment of our Saviour's promise that the Holy Spirit, whom He would send, would guide His Church "into all truth" (John 16:13). Two Spirit-filled men were especially influential in this process: Augustine, who lived some 400 years after Christ, and John Calvin, who lived some 1500 years after Christ. But many others contributed their efforts to it. Then about 100 years after Calvin's time, about 300 years ago, the results were summarized in their most complete and consistent form by the Westminster Assembly of Divines (ministers) in England, in the Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, Form of Church Government and Directory for Worship. As a means of gaining an accurate knowledge of the system of revealed truth, these "Westminster Standards" have never been excelled.

The Westminster Assembly represented all parties of English and Scottish Protestantism except the "high" Episcopalians who were almost Roman Catholic in their views of religion. This assembly of over 150 well-equipped Christian scholars met for more than seven years and held 1163 sessions in completing their work. For industry, patience, and wholehearted devotion to the Word of God, they have never been excelled.

In addition to the documents produced by the Westminster Assembly, our Covenant mentions one more, the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony. This book is an American product, written by ministers and elders of the Covenanter Church in America about 140 years ago. It presents the same system of doctrine as the Confession of Faith and Catechisms, but applies it to particular modern errors.

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### III. A First-Hand Knowledge of the System of Truth

Our Covenant speaks of "careful examination". This means that we are not to rest content with what other people have written or said about the Bible. It will not do to place a Bible on our parlor table and

a copy of the Confession of Faith in the bookcase and say: "There is my religion. I accept it on the say-so of my ancestors, my minister, and my Church". No, each of us must open that Bible and read and study

it for ourselves. We should make a "careful examination" and compare the standards of our Church with the Bible. In other words, we should **make sure for ourselves** that the system of doctrine, order and worship presented in the creed of our Church was not invented by men, but is really the system set forth in God's Word, the Holy Bible.

Now some of us can do this better than others. Some of us are better qualified than others to make a "careful examination" of the Bible and the Confession of Faith and other Church standards. But the point is that all of us should do it **as far as we are able**. Even children should make a "careful examination" as far as they are able. A child memorizes the "Shorter Catechism". He learns there, for example, that "all mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever." Now even a child should understand that that statement of the Catechism is based on the Bible, especially on the history of Adam and Eve as given in the third chapter of Genesis.

There exists today a **great ignorance of what the Bible teaches**. Theological seminaries all over America have to provide elementary courses for the study of what is called "English Bible" because the students who enter the seminaries for training to be ministers, do not know the simple contents of the English Bible; the seminaries which should provide advanced and specialized knowledge have to provide, first of all, the foundation of the elementary A-B-C's of Bible study. In addition to this great ignorance of the simple contents of the Bible, there exists today a **deplorable tendency to accept the doctrines of the Bible on mere tradition**, just because the Church accepts them, without really satisfying ourselves that they are the genuine teachings of the Word of God.

There can hardly be a worse sign in any Church than a tendency of the members to accept whatever a minister says, without weighing it for themselves in the light of the Bible. The Church member who readily swallows whatever a minister says, without any real thinking or Bible study of his own, may get along fairly well for a while, provided he has a minister who is wholeheartedly loyal to the truth. But suppose this Church member at some future time comes under the influence of a minister who is himself confused and uncertain in his faith, or even worse, a minister

who is disloyal to the truth of God, who is seeking subtly to lead people away from the doctrines of the historic Christian faith to "modern" views of religion—then what will be the probable result? The Church member who is in the habit of accepting whatever a minister says, without any careful thinking of his own, will then be in great danger of being led astray from God. And the member who is in the habit of accepting the statements of ministers without question, if he reads unsound statements in popular religious books or magazines, will not be able to detect the spiritual danger. He will be easily deceived by the pious phrases and oily sentimental religiosity of such publications, and will be in dire peril of being slowly and subtly led away from the truth, and thus from God.

Such a Church member will be undiscerning. He will not easily recognize unsound doctrine when he faces it. He will be more influenced by the sound of words or the outward appearance of earnestness and piety than by the real ideas that are involved. Such a Church member will hear a sermon by some minister and think it fine, especially if the minister told some interesting stories and was enthusiastic in his manner of presenting his message. Then this Church member will hear some other minister preach exactly the opposite doctrine, and if this other minister is interesting and enthusiastic, he will think that sermon is fine, too. It happens far from seldom. One minister will preach that all mankind are lost sinners, utterly corrupted and depraved in heart and life, unable to do anything that can please God, and on the road to eternal ruin. Another minister will preach that there is some good in everybody, that nobody is really wicked in heart, that everybody in his deepest heart would like to be good and do good, if we can only find a way to appeal to his better self, to his "higher nature". Needless to say, such a message is contrary to God's Word, and it is the exact opposite of the message I spoke of a little bit ago. But the Church member who takes a minister's word for things, who is not in the habit of studying the Bible and thinking about it for himself, will likely applaud **both** of these conflicting sermons. Or if he is told that they contradict each other, he will perhaps say, "Well, now, that depends on your point of view. If you look at it from one point of view, the first preacher has a case; but if you look at it from another point of view, there is something in what the other preacher said."



No, we are Protestants, not Catholics. We believe in every person **carefully examining** the Bible and the standards of the Church **for himself**, to satisfy himself that the system taught in the Church's standards

is really the system taught in the Word of God. Every Christian should have, not merely an **accurate** knowledge of the system of truth, but a **first-hand** knowledge of the system of truth.

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#### IV. A Wholehearted Love for the Truth

Our Covenant speaks of **having embraced** this system of truth. Now this word "embraced" implies not only an intelligent understanding or knowledge of the truth, but a **real love for the truth**, a real personal attachment to the truth, a real devotion to the truth. It means that we not merely accept it as **true**, but also that we accept it as **something that matters a great deal to us**. In fact we would be willing to make many and great sacrifices for the sake of this system of truth; if need be, in the providence of God, we would be willing to **lay down our very lives** for this system of truth; rather than deny or forsake this system of truth, we would even be willing to be killed as martyrs, or put in prison or a concentration camp, or suffer any hardships whatever.

I said already that there are two bad tendencies in the Church of Jesus Christ today. One is ignorance of the truth. Another is the tendency to be satisfied with a second-hand knowledge of the truth. A third evil tendency of our times is **lack of wholehearted love for the truth**. There is an indifference, a complacency, a formalism, a lack of warm-hearted, red-blooded devotion, in people's acceptance of the

truth today. This is not only true of Protestant Churches in general; it is also true—too true—in the Covenanter Church. We need a love for the truth that will make people righteously indignant when the truth is denied or spoken against. We need a love for the truth that will make us willing to stand up and be counted on the truth's side when it is easy and popular to be on the other side. **We need a love for the truth that will bear witness to the truth without respect of persons, without fear of consequences and without regard to the cost.** We need a love for the truth that comes from a deep reverence, from a genuine **fear of God** in our hearts—a love for the truth that will make us ready to stand up and buck the current of our times and struggle upstream in spite of sacrifices, ridicule and unpopularity. In short, we need a love for the truth that is the product and expression of a real, vital, dead-in-earnest love and devotion to God. Such a love of the truth was characteristic of our Covenanter forefathers in Scotland. Such a love of the truth is required by our own Church Covenant to which all members of our Church are pledged by solemn vows. May the Holy Spirit work in us such a love for the truth of God.

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### Some Noteworthy Quotations

"To wish and struggle for the growth of an external organization called a Church, disregarding the Presence which gives it all its sanctity, is no uncommon fault in some who think that they are actuated by 'zeal for the Lord', when it is a much more earthly flame that burns in them."

Alexander Maclaren

"The power of truth is the greatest power on earth. Next to it, however, is the power of sincere, earnest, and steadfast conviction."

B. B. Warfield

"The human mind is very subtle, but

with all its subtlety it will hardly be able to find a way to refuse to follow Scripture in one of the doctrines it teaches without undermining its authority as a teacher of doctrine."

B. B. Warfield

"Christianity is not a distinctive interpretation of a religious experience common to all men, much less is it an indeterminate and constantly changing interpretation of a religious experience common to all men; it is a distinctive religious experience begotten in men by a distinctive body of facts known only to or rightly apprehended only by Christians."

B. B. Warfield

"We do not hesitate to assert that human writing has reached its highest destiny in the Scripture, even as the art of printing can attain no higher end than to spread the Word of God among all peoples and nations, and among those nations to put it within the reach of every individual."

Abraham Kuyper

"Since Divine revelation directs itself against the mind and inclination of the sinner, sinful tendency could not be wanting, to represent that revelation differently from what it was given."

Abraham Kuyper

"The Word of God is like the sun shining on all to whom it is preached; but without any benefit to the blind. But in this respect we are all blind by nature; therefore it cannot penetrate into our minds, unless the internal teacher, the Spirit, make way for it by His illumination."

John Calvin

"He who properly considers what a grievous thing it is to have offended the justice of God, can enjoy no repose till he has glorified God by his humility."

John Calvin

"Indeed, a Christian man ought to be so disposed and prepared, as to reflect that he has to do with God every moment of his life. Thus, as he will measure all his actions by His will and determination, so he will refer the whole bias of his mind religiously to Him. For he who has learned to regard God in every undertaking, is also raised above every vain imagination. This is that denial of ourselves, which Christ, from the commencement of their course, so diligent-

ly enjoins upon His disciples; which, when it has once obtained the government of the heart, leaves room neither for pride, haughtiness, or ostentation, nor for avarice, libidinousness, luxury, effeminacy, or any other evils which are the offspring of self-love."

John Calvin

"All God's dealings with men have had a covenant character. It hath so pleased Him to arrange it, that He will not deal with us except through a covenant, nor can we deal with Him except in the same manner."

Charles H. Spurgeon

"I believe the man who is not willing to submit to the electing love and sovereign grace of God, has great reason to question whether he is a Christian at all, for the spirit that kicks against that is the spirit of the devil, and the spirit of the unhumiliated, unrenewed heart."

Charles H. Spurgeon

"My good deeds are Thine appointments, and Thy gifts; my evil ones, are my offences, and Thy judgments."

Augustine of Hippo

"Oh, in what accents spake I unto Thee, my God, when I read the Psalms of David, those faithful songs, and sounds of devotion, which allow of no swelling spirit. . . Oh, what accents did I utter unto Thee in those Psalms, and how was I by them kindled towards Thee, and on fire to rehearse them, if possible, through the whole world, against the pride of mankind."

Augustine of Hippo

## Religious Terms Defined

A few definitions of important religious terms will be given in this department in each issue of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". The aim will be conciseness without the sacrifice of accuracy. Where possible the Westminster Shorter Catechism will be quoted.

**Regeneration.** The creative act of God the Holy Spirit upon the inmost personality of a sinful human being, by which the governing disposition of the "heart" is made holy, so that the person can and will repent and believe on Jesus Christ. Also called **the New Birth**.

**Effectual Calling.** "Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel" (S. C.

31). (Note: **Effectual Calling** is a broader term than **Regeneration**; it includes the Spirit's use of the Word to produce conviction, plus regeneration itself, plus **Conversion** or the sinner's response to Regeneration).

**Conviction of Sin.** The troubled state of mind produced in a sinner by the Word and Spirit of God, wherein the sinner is profoundly conscious of being under the wrath of God, morally unclean, and unable to save himself.

**Repentance.** "Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience" (S. C. 87).

**Faith.** An attitude of belief and trust, founded upon evidence which is regarded as adequate.

**Saving Faith.** "Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel" (S. C. 86).

**Temporary Faith.** A kind of faith which has the appearance of saving faith, but endures for a time only, and then passes away, because it does not spring from a heart that has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 13:5, 20, 21).

**Historical Faith.** A kind of faith which has the element of intellectual belief but lacks the element of personal trust; believing in Christ **merely** as a historical person, not as one's own Saviour. (James 2:19).

**Conversion.** The sinner's turning from sin to God, which is the effect of the Holy Spirit's act of regeneration. (Note: **Conversion** always includes **Repentance**; the term **Conversion** is also sometimes used in a broad sense to include both the Spirit's act of regeneration and the sinner's response).

**Forgiveness.** God's act of canceling the guilt of a person's sin, and remitting its legal penalty. Also called **Pardon**.

**Justification.** "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone" (S. C. 33). (Note: **Justification** is a broader term than **Forgiveness** or **Pardon**; it includes not merely the remission of guilt and penalty, but also placing a positive righteousness to the person's credit, and on this basis pronouncing him to be a righteous person).

**Adoption.** "Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God" (S. C. 34).

**Sanctification.** "Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness" (S. C. 35).

**Good Works.** Those acts of a Christian which are commanded by the law of God, and performed by faith as a matter of obedience to the will of God, from a motive of love and devotion to God.

**Assurance.** The consciousness of the absolute certainty of his own present and eternal salvation, to which a believer may attain in the course of time by a right use of the means of grace and by witness of the Holy Spirit in his heart.

**Fruit of the Spirit.** The many-sided holiness of life which is gradually produced in every true Christian by the Holy Spirit's work of sanctification, and which attains its complete perfection at the Christian's death. (Gal. 5:22, 23).

**Gifts of the Spirit.** The capacities or aptitudes for various forms of Christian service which are bestowed upon true Christians according to the sovereign disposition of the Holy Spirit. (I Cor. 12).

**Glorification.** The final stage of the salvation of God's children, by which they are (at death) removed from an environment of sin, and (at the resurrection) delivered from all the consequences of sin. (Rom. 8:23, 30).

# Studies In the Larger Catechism of The Westminster Assembly

## Lesson 118

For Week Beginning April 4, 1948

Q. 131. What are the duties of equals?

A. The duties of equals are to regard the dignity and worth of each other, in giving honor to go one before another; and to rejoice in each other's gifts and advancement, as their own.

### Scripture References:

I Pet. 2:17. Our duty to respect and love our fellow men.

Rom. 12:10. The duty of Christian love and mutual regard.

Rom. 12:15, 16. Phil. 2:3, 4. We are to find joy and satisfaction in honor and advancement that come to others, as well as to ourselves.

### Questions:

1. What does the Catechism mean by the word "equals"?

This does not refer to equality of nature, but to equality of position. Two persons may be equal in nature, but unequal in position. A parent and child are equal in nature, but one is in a position of authority over the other. In human society it is inevitable that some persons be unequal in authority. This inequality of position is God's ordinance.

2. What do we mean by persons being equal in authority?

By this we mean that they are on the same level of authority, neither possessing authority over the other. For example, in an army, while a general has authority over a private, two privates are equals.

3. What is our general duty toward those who are our equals in human society?

We are to regard their "dignity and worth", realizing that like ourselves they are human persons created in the image of God and therefore to be honored and re-

spected because we fear God.

4. What special sins must we avoid if we are to treat our equals with due honor and respect?

To treat our equals with due honor and respect, we must especially avoid the sins of selfishness and pride. Everyone by nature tends to think too highly of himself. We tend to magnify our own attainments, and to minimize those of others. We tend to blame others for their faults and failures, while we find plausible excuses for our own. All this comes from sinful human selfishness and pride. Only by the grace of God in our lives can these sins be overcome.

5. What special duty is involved in the command of Romans 12:15, 16?

The duty of Christian sympathy, that is, being concerned about the affairs and welfare of our neighbor, according to his particular circumstances and needs. We are to rejoice with those who rejoice, and to weep with those who weep; that is, we are to share in or sympathize with the experiences of others.

6. Why should we rejoice in others' attainments and gifts as much as our own?

Because God is glorified by these attainments and gifts, regardless of whether they are our own or some other person's. We should regard everything in life, not from a selfish standpoint, but from the standpoint of God's glory.

7. What special sin tends to prevent our rejoicing in other people's gifts and advancement?

The sin of envy, which causes us actually to be unhappy over the success attained or honors received by someone else. True Christian love and sympathy for others will overcome the sin of envy in our lives.

## Lesson 119

## For Week Beginning April 11, 1948

**Q. 132.** What are the sins of equals?

**A.** The sins of equals are, besides the neglect of the duties required, the undervaluing of the worth, envying the gifts, grieving at the advancement or prosperity one of another; and usurping pre-eminence one over another.

**Scripture References:**

Rom. 13:8. The duty of mutual Christian love.

2 Tim. 3:3. It is wrong to despise those that are good.

Acts 7:9. Gal. 5:26. The sin of envy at the gifts of others.

Num. 12:2. Esther 6:12, 13. The wickedness of grieving at the prosperity or success of others.

3 John 9. Luke 22:24. 1 Pet. 4:15. The sin of usurping pre-eminence over others.

**Questions:**

1. Is neglect of mutual Christian love a common sin today?

This has probably always been a common sin among Christian people, except during seasons of spiritual revival when Christian people have been strongly drawn together by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. During times of persecution Christian people often find their love for one another greatly increased and deepened. On the other hand, our Saviour predicted that a time would come when "because iniquity shall abound, the love of (the) many shall wax cold" (Matt. 24:12). In periods of backsliding, unbelief or apostasy, as the tide of faith ebbs, so Christian love and sympathy are also diminished, and a callous coldness takes their place. It can hardly be questioned that neglect of Christian love is common in America today.

2. What is the effect of the sin of envy on the envious person?

This sin, besides being a grave offense against the law of God, inevitably has a spiritually and psychologically destructive effect upon the person who is guilty of it. The envious person is himself the victim of his own sin, and his personality becomes corroded by envy until he becomes either

sour or bitter. Such a person will be suspicious, resentful, easily offended, difficult to deal with, and a "problem" to his friends and associates. The Scripture calls envy "the rottenness of the bones" (Prov. 14:30). The person who tolerates this sin in his life is playing with an acid which, if not checked, will eat away at his personality until his disposition is ruined and he is wholly dominated by envy. Only the almighty power of God can save a person from such a pitiable state of spiritual bondage.

3. What does the Catechism mean by "usurping pre-eminence one over another"?

This expression does not refer to that pre-eminence of one person over another which exists by reason of legitimately acquired authority, such as the authority of a parent over a child, a magistrate over a private citizen. Rather, it refers to the grasping of authority which does not properly belong to a person. Such a person seeks to dominate others with whom he is really on a plane of positional equality. The adjective which describes this trait of character is "domineering", or, in common slang, "bossy". When one member of a congregation tries to have his own way, and dictate to the rest, that is "usurping pre-eminence". Closely related to this is the sin of meddling in other men's matters, which is forbidden in 1 Pet. 4:15, "But let none of you suffer. . . as a busybody in other men's matters". The Greek word translated "busybody in other men's matters" literally means a **bishop over others**, that is, a self-constituted supervisor of other people's affairs.

**Q. 133.** What is the reason annexed to the fifth commandment, the more to enforce it?

**A.** The reason annexed to the fifth commandment, in these words, **That thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee**, is an express promise of long life and prosperity as far as it shall serve for God's glory and their own good, to all such as keep this commandment.

**Scripture References:**

Deut. 5:16. The promise of long life and

prosperity to those who obey the fifth commandment.

1 Kings 8:25. God's promise to David concerning the perpetual kingship of his descendants.

Eph. 6:2,3. The promise of the fifth commandment reaffirmed in the New Testament.

#### Questions:

1. What promise of God is attached to the fifth commandment?

A promise of long life and prosperity to those who faithfully keep this commandment.

2. What is the effect upon human society of obedience to the fifth commandment?

The general requirement of the fifth commandment being respect for authority in human society, it is clear that where this commandment is obeyed, conditions which make for long life and prosperity will exist. On the other hand, where respect for legitimate authority is lacking, a greater or less degree of anarchy or lawlessness will prevail in human society, and this will tend toward conditions which shorten life and interfere with prosperity. Thus, in the providence of God, obedience to the fifth commandment will bring about a general increase of length of life and prosperity in society.

3. Do individuals who obey this commandment always live long and attain material prosperity?

### Lesson 120

### For Week Beginning April 18, 1948

**Q. 134.** Which is the sixth commandment?

**A.** The sixth commandment is, **Thou shalt not kill.**

**Q. 135.** What are the duties required in the sixth commandment?

**A.** The duties required in the sixth commandment are, all careful studies, and lawful endeavors, to preserve the life of ourselves and others by resisting all thoughts and purposes, subduing all passions, and avoiding all occasions, tempta-

No. We should carefully note the qualification stated by the Catechism: "as far as it shall serve for God's glory and their own good". While it is certainly true, as a general proposition, that obedience to the fifth commandment is followed by long life and prosperity, this does not imply that these blessings are bestowed on every individual who conscientiously obeys this commandment. In a particular case, God's glory and the person's own good may be better served by withholding the blessing of long life, or material prosperity, or both. We must always leave room for the sovereignty and secret counsel of God, in thinking of such promises as this. At the same time we should remember that every child of God has something even better than long life and material prosperity: he has **eternal** life and a **heavenly inheritance**, being made a joint-heir with Christ and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

4. Is it right to seek and pray for long life and material prosperity?

Certainly it is right, provided these blessings are not regarded as our chief aim, but are kept in subordination to the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and provided we seek them only in humble submission to the will of God. It is sinful to grasp after long life and prosperity as if they were our chief end. The Christian must always remember that the life that is life indeed is not the present life, but that of eternity; and that the true treasure is not that of this earth, but that of heaven. This does not involve an attitude of contempt for blessings received here on earth; it only involves a true perspective and a right sense of the relative importance of this life and the life to come.

tions and practices, which tend to the unjust taking away the life of any; by just defence thereof against violence, patient bearing of the hand of God, quietness of mind, cheerfulness of spirit. . .

#### Scripture References:

Ex. 20:13. The sixth commandment.

Eph. 5:28, 29. The duty of preserving our own life.

1 Kings 18:4. The duty of preserving the life of others.

Jer. 26:15, 16. Acts 23:12-27. It is our duty to resist all thoughts and purposes which tend to the unjust destruction of human life.

Eph. 4:26, 27. Passions which tend toward unjust destruction of life are to be subdued.

2 Sam. 2:22. Deut. 22:8. Occasions tending to the unjust taking away of life must be avoided.

Matt. 4:6, 7. Prov. 1:10-16. It is our duty to avoid all temptations which tend toward the unjust destruction of life.

1 Sam. 24:12; 26:9-11. Gen. 27:21, 22. All unjust taking away of the life of any human being is wicked.

Psalm 82:4. Prov. 24:11, 12. 1 Sam. 14:45. The sixth commandment requires a just defence of human life against destruction by violence.

James 5:7-11. Heb. 12:9. The sixth commandment requires patient submission to the will of God as disclosed by God's providence.

1 Thess. 4:11. 1 Pet. 3:3, 4. Psalm 37:8-11. Prov. 17:22. A serene mental attitude and cheerful spirit are required of us by the sixth commandment.

#### Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the word "kill" in the sixth commandment?

In the sixth commandment, the word "kill" is used in the sense of "commit murder". The Hebrew text of the commandment is accurately translated "Thou shalt do no murder". The Catechism rightly interprets the commandment in this sense, as not forbidding killing as such, but **the unjust taking away the life of any person; this is a correct definition of the sin and crime of murder.**

2. What general positive duties are required by the sixth commandment?

"All careful studies, and lawful endeavors, to preserve the life of ourselves and others".

3. What is meant by "careful studies

to preserve the life of ourselves and others"?

This includes every form of human research and planning directed toward the preservation of life. For example, it includes such varied matters as scientific investigation of the causes and prevention of diseases, studies of chemistry directed toward discovering drugs which will save human life or prevent suffering, plans for preventing traffic accidents on the highways, designing lighthouses by which ships can be warned of dangerous rocks, agricultural research by which the productivity of the soil can be increased, and development of swift and efficient means of communication by which quick relief can be brought to the suffering in time of disaster such as earthquake, fire or flood.

4. What is meant by "lawful endeavors to preserve the life of ourselves and others"?

This means all efforts directly or indirectly aimed at preserving human life, excepting such efforts as may be wrong because forbidden by God's moral law. Thus it is our duty to try to preserve our own and our neighbor's life, but not by telling a lie, nor by denying Christ, nor by betraying our God-given responsibility to our country. We may not do evil that good may come, even in order to save our own or some other person's life.

5. In addition to the actual, literal crime of murder, what does the sixth commandment require us to avoid?

Besides the actual crime of murder, the sixth commandment requires us to avoid, resist or subdue whatever tends toward the unjust destruction of human life. Thus we are to resist thoughts and purposes, subdue passions, and avoid occasions, temptations and practices which tend toward such destruction of life. It should be noted that the Catechism prudently avoids attempting to present a list of such occasions, temptations, practices, etc. No such list could possibly be complete, adequate or permanently valid. Some practices, such as duelling, bullfighting, shooting the rapids of the Niagara River in a barrel, clearly and unquestionably tend toward the unjust destruction of human life, and the sixth commandment therefore requires that they be avoided. But there are other practices which might be regarded as doubtful, for example, the attempt to

cross the Pacific Ocean in a small sailboat. The Catechism lays down the principle, but wisely leaves the precise application of the principle to the sanctified common sense of the Christian.

6. What is included in the just defence of human life against violence?

This requirement of the sixth commandment includes the duty of the nation to protect its people against the unjust violence of all enemies, foreign and domestic, as well as the duty of every individual to defend himself and others against violence on the part of law-breakers of all kinds. Thus the sixth commandment involves the right and duty of defensive warfare and of the power of the police in enforcing law and order, as well as the right and duty of defending oneself and other persons against criminal violence whenever occasion may require.

7. Why does the sixth commandment require "patient bearing of the hand of God"?

Patient submission to the will of God, as it is disclosed to us by the events of God's providence, is necessary for our true mental, spiritual and physical well-being. To be impatient or rebellious against "the hand of God" is essentially self-destructive,

for only in submission to God's will, and in harmony with Him, can our true destiny be reached and our true welfare secured. This is involved in the basic truth that human beings are **creatures of God** and their true welfare consists in **union and communion with God**. When Christian people are impatient and rebellious under God's providential dispensations, they dishonor God and injure themselves. The reprobate in hell will to all eternity continue in total, and totally frustrated, rebellion against God and the will of God. When the Christian gives way to impatience and rebellion against God's will, he is conducting himself, to some extent, like the reprobate in hell.

8. Why are "quietness of mind" and "cheerfulness of spirit" required by the sixth commandment?

It is generally known and recognized that a serene mental attitude and cheerful frame of mind tend toward good health and long life. Worry, anxiety and a pessimistic attitude cause a tremendous amount of needless wear and tear on the human personality. The influence of the mind on the body is well known. It is the Christian's duty to face life serenely and cheerfully, in spite of disappointments, sufferings and hardships, in order to glorify God in his body and his spirit, which are God's property and are consecrated to God's service.

## Lesson 121

## For Week Beginning April 25, 1948

Q. 135 (Continued). What are the duties required in the sixth commandment?

A. The duties required in the sixth commandment are . . . a sober use of meat, drink, physic, sleep, labor, and recreations; by charitable thoughts, love, compassion, meekness, gentleness, kindness; peaceable, mild and courteous speeches and behaviour; forbearance, readiness to be reconciled, patient bearing and forgiving of injuries, and requiting good for evil; comforting and succoring the distressed, and protecting and defending the innocent.

### Scripture References:

Prov. 25:16, 27. 1 Tim. 5:23. The sixth commandment requires a sober use of meat and drink.

Isa. 38:21. The sixth commandment requires a proper use of medicine for the re-

lief of suffering and the prolongation of life.

Psalm 127:2. 2 Thess. 3:10-12. Prov. 16:26. Eccl. 3:4, 11; 5:12. The sixth commandment requires a proper and temperate use of sleep, work and recreation.

1 Sam. 19:4, 5; 22:13, 14. Rom. 13:10. Luke 10:33, 34. Col. 3:12, 13. James 3:17. 1 Pet. 3:8-11. Prov. 15:1. Judges 8:1-3. The sixth commandment requires kindness and love in thought, word and deed.

Matt. 5:24. Eph. 4:2, 32. Rom. 12:17, 20, 21. The sixth commandment requires a patient, forgiving and unresentful spirit.

1 Thess. 5:14. Job 31:19, 20. Matt. 25:35, 36. Prov. 31:8, 9. It is our duty to help and comfort those in distress, and protect and defend the innocent from injustice.



**Questions:**

1. What is meant by a **sober** use of meat, drink, etc?

This means a conscientious, careful, temperate use of these things, such as will not have a harmful effect on our bodily health or mental alertness. We should realize that the Bible represents gluttony as sinful, as well as drunkenness.

2. What is the meaning of the word **physic**?

This word in the Catechism means what we call **medicine** today. It should be understood as including not only drugs but all scientific means and methods used to relieve suffering or prolong life.

3. Is it wrong for a Christian to make use of medicine or other scientific treatment to relieve suffering or cure disease?

No. In past times some zealous Christians have maintained that this is wrong, and that a Christian who uses medicine is not really trusting in the power and goodness of God. We should understand that faith in God is not contrary to a use of legitimate means. God has mitigated the curse by placing in the world, for mankind to discover, the means by which human suffering can be alleviated and life prolonged. To refuse to make use of these means because we trust in God involves a mistaken notion of what it means to trust in God. Really our faith in God requires us to use the proper means which His providence has placed at our disposal. What would we think of a farmer who would say: "I will not plow my fields nor plant any seed; I will just trust in God to give me a harvest"?

4. What attitude should a Christian have toward sleep, work, and recreation?

The Catechism presents the teaching of the Bible on this question by stating that the sixth commandment requires "a sober use" of these things. Sleep, work and recreation are all necessary to human life. Without them we cannot have a healthy body and alert mind. But sleep, work and recreation must be kept in balance with each other, and a right proportion of time devoted to each, and all three must be subordinated to the great purpose of human

life, which is to glorify God and enjoy Him. Laziness and slothfulness are sinful, but so is an immoderate and idolatrous addiction to work, as well as the devotion of an excessive amount of time to recreation. Many Christians who would not think of indulging in the common gross forms of intemperance should consider whether they may not be guilty of some of the less obvious forms of intemperance. For a party or social gathering to continue hour after hour until late at night, with the result that those present are tired and unable to work efficiently most of the next day, is a form of sinful intemperance. So is the modern American worship of speed, luxury and financial success. The Christian should cultivate an attitude of conscientious carefulness about all these matters, realizing that he is a steward of God.

5. Why does the sixth commandment require us to maintain a peaceable and kindly spirit toward others?

Because the contrary spirit, that is, an unkind, unreasonable, unloving spirit, will inevitably have a harmful effect both on ourselves and on others. It will disturb our own and our neighbor's peace of mind, and by the influence of the mind on the body, the effect will be to injure, to a greater or less degree, our own and our neighbor's bodily health. Anger, stubbornness, a harsh and unfriendly spirit, and similar attitudes, cannot but have a harmful effect both on the mind and on the body. This is a form of "killing" which the law of God certainly forbids.

6. What is meant by "forbearance"?

This means being willing to suffer some wrong rather than being hasty to stand up for our rights and insist upon justice for ourselves.

7. Why should a Christian have "readiness to be reconciled"?

Because by the amazing love and grace of God the Christian has himself been reconciled to God. Therefore he should be willing, and even eager, to be reconciled to his fellow men as far as possible.

8. Why should a Christian patiently bear and forgive injuries?

Because God has freely forgiven all his

sins. Therefore in gratitude to God the Christian should have a patient and forgiving spirit toward his fellow men.

9. Does the Catechism mean that no matter what others may do, we must bear it patiently, without protest or opposition?

Certainly not. It may sometimes be **our duty**, as well as our right, to seek **justice** from the constituted authorities of Church or State. But even when it is a duty to oppose and seek to restrain the actions of others, we are not to hate them, but to maintain a kindly and forgiving spirit toward them. Especially when the **rights of God** and the **Truth of God** are at stake, it is our duty to stand up courageously for truth and righteousness, without respect of persons. Kindness to men must never induce us to become lukewarm in defence of God's Truth.

10. What is the Christian's duty toward **the distressed**?

### Lesson 122

**Q. 136.** What are the sins forbidden in the sixth commandment?

**A.** The sins forbidden in the sixth commandment are, all taking away the life of ourselves, or of others, except in case of public justice, lawful war, or necessary defence; the neglecting or withdrawing the lawful and necessary means of preservation of life; sinful anger, hatred, envy, desire of revenge; all excessive passions, distracting cares; immoderate use of meat, drink, labor, and recreations; provoking words, oppression, quarrelling, striking, wounding, and whatsoever else tends to the destruction of the life of any.

**Note:** Since a large part of the answer to Q. 136 covers the same ground as the answer to Q. 135, we shall limit our discussion of Q. 136 largely to the questions of the rightfulness of capital punishment, participation in war, and self-defence.

#### Scripture References:

Gen. 9:6. Num. 35:31, 33. The death penalty for the crime of murder commanded by God in the Old Testament.

Rom. 13:4. The death penalty confirmed in the New Testament.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan, as well as the texts cited by the Catechism, teaches us that it is our duty to do what we can to comfort and relieve those in distress, whoever they may be. Our neighbor is the person in need whom we have the power to help. Especially it is our duty to relieve the sufferings and distresses of our fellow Christians, not only in our own Church or community, but anywhere in the world.

11. What is the Christian's duty toward **the innocent**?

By "the innocent" the Catechism means **innocent persons who are in danger of being treated as guilty persons**, or who are already suffering as if they were guilty of some wrong. It is always our duty to protect others against injustice so far as it is in our power to do so. This is true in small matters as well as great, in all spheres of human society, including family, Church and State.

### For Week Beginning May 2, 1948

Jer. 48:10. Deut. 20:1 ff. War is sometimes legitimate, and under some circumstances it may be our God-given duty to participate in it.

Ex. 22:2, 3. Taking the life of another in necessary self-defence is always lawful.

#### Questions:

1. Why are many people today opposed to the death penalty for murder?

It is clear that there is a great deal of opposition to the death penalty today, and that efforts are constantly being made to have this penalty abolished. The background of this situation is the general weakening and abandonment of faith in the Bible as the inspired Word of God, and, as a result of this, the general abandonment of belief that civil government and jurisprudence is a divinely ordained institution. The prevalent opinion today seems to be that civil jurisprudence is founded on human agreement or custom, and that justice is merely what society has found to be for the general welfare. Thus the death penalty for murder is regarded as merely a human custom which has come down from primitive times. If it is only a human

custom, then of course society can change it and substitute some other penalty for it. But if the death penalty for murder is a **divine command**, and if justice is based on **the law of God**, then human society has no right to change it.

2. What reason is given for the ordinance of capital punishment in Gen. 9:6?

"For in the image of God made he man". That is to say, the death penalty is commanded for the crime of murder, not simply because murder is contrary to the general welfare of the human race, but because murder is an insult to God. Murder affronts God by destroying the image-bearer of God. Thus the murderer commits **sacrilege** by failing to regard the image of God in man as something sacred. The real dignity and worth of human life consists in man's bearing the divine image. Adam was created a perfect, though finite, copy or replica of the Godhead, and even today, in spite of the Fall, the image of God exists in man, though in damaged form. Thus the most heinous element in the sin of murder is its contempt for God in the destruction of a human life which bears His image.

3. Is it right for human law-makers to abolish the death penalty for murder?

No. Where the Word of God provides a positive enactment respecting the duty of the State, as in the case of the penalty for murder, it is obligatory that civil laws be in conformity with the revealed will of God. Gen. 9:6 shows that the death penalty for murder is a **divine mandate for the State**, and Rom. 13:4 shows that this divine requirement of the death penalty has not been repealed, but rather confirmed, by the New Testament revelation.

4. Does the Bible, or the teachings of Jesus, forbid Christians to engage in war?

It is generally admitted that the Old Testament does not forbid resort to war upon just and necessary occasion. But those who hold the position commonly called "pacifism" frequently set the New Testament over against the Old, by claiming that the New Testament forbids what the Old sanctioned. In attempting to prove this claim, appeal is usually made to the teachings of Jesus, especially the Sermon on the Mount, and in particular, the "Golden Rule". In this appeal to the teachings of Jesus there are involved two errors: (a) This

method of interpretation takes the teachings of Jesus out of their context in the whole Bible of the Old and New Testaments, and interprets them as if they stood by themselves, or even as if they were in opposition to other parts of the Bible. Of course the truth is that the teachings of Jesus are in perfect harmony with the rest of the Bible, and our standard of faith and life is not simply "the teachings of Jesus", but **the entire Word of God from Genesis to Revelation**. (b) This method does not take all the teachings of Jesus into account, but only certain parts which are regarded as favorable to the pacifist position. These parts, such as the "Golden Rule", are then misinterpreted in the attempt to prove that the use of force to resist evil is always wrong. (Note: Halley's **Pocket Bible Handbook**, 1946 edition, page 445, contains an excellent note on this question). The first Gentile convert to Christianity, Cornelius, was a professional soldier; there is no indication that the apostles required him to renounce military service in the Roman army. When soldiers came to John the Baptist asking "What shall we do?" he did not command them to renounce military service and take up some other mode of life, but merely replied "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages" (Luke 3:14); that is, he commanded them to avoid certain temptations to abuse their military position for selfish ends, but said nothing about an obligation to repudiate military service itself. The Catechism adopts the principle held by the vast majority of Christian people, namely that there is such a thing as **lawful war**. This does not, of course, mean that every war is legitimate, nor that all practices occurring in war can be approved. The Catechism is far from sanctioning **militarism**; it merely affirms that **under some circumstances** it is not inconsistent with Christian duty to participate in war.

5. Why is it right to defend ourselves against unlawful violence?

Self-defence against unlawful violence is always legitimate. It is more than legitimate; it is a moral obligation. Our life is not our own; it belongs to God, and therefore as stewards of God's possessions we are under obligation to preserve our own life, and the life of others, from destruction by criminal violence. The principle that necessary self-defence is legitimate is generally upheld by the civil laws of nations. To claim that the "Golden Rule", or the obligation to love our neighbor, means that it is wrong to kill in an effort at self-de-

fence, is to push loving our neighbor to an absurd and fanatical extreme. The Scripture commands a person to love his neighbor **as himself**; that is, love for one's neighbor is to be kept in balance with a proper

love for one's self. The person who will let himself be murdered by a criminal, without attempting self-defence, loves his neighbor too much, and does not love himself enough.

### Lesson 123

### For Week Beginning May 9, 1948

**Q. 137.** Which is the seventh commandment?

**A.** The seventh commandment is, **Thou shalt not commit adultery.**

**Q. 138.** What are the duties required in the seventh commandment?

**A.** The duties required in the seventh commandment are, chastity in body, mind, affections, words, and behaviour; and the preservation of it in ourselves and others; watchfulness over the eyes and all the senses; temperance, keeping of chaste company, modesty in apparel; marriage by those that have not the gift of continency, conjugal love, and cohabitation; diligent labor in our callings; shunning all occasions of uncleanness, and resisting temptations thereunto.

**Q. 139.** What are the sins forbidden in the seventh commandment?

**A.** The sins forbidden in the seventh commandment, besides the neglect of the duties required, are, adultery, fornication, rape, incest, sodomy, and all unnatural lusts; all unclean imaginations, thoughts, purposes and affections; all corrupt or filthy communications, or listening thereunto; wanton looks, impudent or light behaviour, immodest apparel; prohibiting of lawful, and dispensing with unlawful marriages; allowing, tolerating, keeping of stews, and resorting to them; entangling vows of single life, undue delay of marriage; having more wives or husbands than one at the same time; unjust divorce, or desertion; idleness, gluttony, drunkenness, unchaste company; lascivious songs, books, pictures, dancings, stage plays; and all other provocations to, or acts of uncleanness, either in ourselves or others.

#### Scripture References:

Ex. 20:14. The seventh commandment.

1 Thess. 4:2-8. The duty of purity in heart and life.

Job 31:1. Matt. 5:28. The seventh commandment requires "watchfulness over the eyes, and all the senses".

Prov. 2:16-20; 5:8. Gen. 39:10. The duty of avoiding unchaste company.

1 Tim. 2:9. The duty of wearing modest and inconspicuous clothing.

Eph. 5:3, 4. The duty of purity in speech and conversation.

Matt. 15:19. Sins against purity proceed out of the heart.

1 Tim. 4:3. Mark 6:18. Mal. 2:11, 12. Forbidding lawful marriages, and permitting unlawful ones, are contrary to the seventh commandment.

Mal. 2:14, 15. Matt. 19:5. Monogamy is the divine ordinance of marriage, therefore polygamy is wrong and not sanctioned by God.

Mal. 2:16. Matt. 5:32. Divorce is contrary to the divine institution of marriage, and never to be permitted except on Scriptural grounds.

Rom. 13:13, 14. 1 Pet. 4:3. God's Word requires avoidance of all forms of uncleanness, and separation from all occasions and temptations thereunto.

#### Questions:

1. What is the relation of the seventh commandment to the sixth?

The sixth commandment requires respect for the sanctity of life, whereas the seventh requires respect for the sanctity of sex, by which human life is propagated and continued in the world.

2. What is the general scope of the seventh commandment?

"The seventh commandment requireth

the preservation of our own and our neighbor's chastity, in heart, speech, and behaviour" (Shorter Catechism, Q. 71).

3. What is the cause of violation of the seventh commandment?

The real, basic cause of the violation of the seventh commandment is spiritual, namely, the corrupt, sinful condition of the human heart. Matt. 15:19.

4. What influence in modern life has contributed greatly to violation of the seventh commandment?

Violation of the seventh commandment has been greatly increased by the popular acceptance of a type of psychology which stresses "self-expression", that is, which favors the unrestrained indulgence of natural impulses, regardless of the prohibitions of the law of God and the ordinance of marriage. No doubt many people have carried the implications of this type of psychology much farther than the scholars who originally formulated it intended; no doubt, too, this psychology of "self-expression" has been used by many people as a convenient excuse for indulgence in impure lusts. The result has been a general decrease of opposition to the sins of fornication, adultery, unscriptural divorce and re-marriage, etc. These sins are nothing new; they have existed since very early times (Genesis 34; 38:15-26), sometimes more, and sometimes less common; but today such is the revolt from the moral law of God that these practices are defended, and declared to be not sinful, by many "respectable" people, and even by many who make a profession of religion. We face today a situation in which many well-educated and respected people regard the expression of the sex instinct not as a moral question subject to the law of God, but merely as a matter of personal preference. Thus there are many today who hold that sexual relations apart from marriage are legitimate, that marriage is not necessarily permanent, etc. There has not in the past been such a **justifying** of sexual immorality on the part of prominent people in a country enjoying the light of the Christian religion, as exists in America today. The Samaritan woman who had had five husbands and was living with a sixth to whom she was not lawfully married (John 4:17, 18) was no doubt regarded as immoral in her day; but in America today there are plenty of people who approach, if they do not equal, that record, and yet are regarded

as worthy and respectable citizens. Divorce on unscriptural grounds has become so common that the mass of the people of our country think of it, not as a deep blot on a person's character, but merely as a person's "problem" or piece of "bad luck". To be known as a divorced person (on unscriptural grounds) hardly involves any social stigma in America today. This only shows how far public opinion has moved from the moral standard of the law of God.

5. What can be done to remedy the divorce evil in America today?

The divorce situation in America is extremely serious, yet certainly something can be done about it. This is too big a subject to discuss here in any detail. The following possibilities for improvement may be suggested: (a) Civil laws should be brought into harmony with the law of God on the subject of divorce; the many unscriptural grounds on which divorces are granted, such as "incompatibility", "mental cruelty", etc., should be eliminated. Some of them may be justifiable as grounds for judicial separation, but not as grounds for absolute divorce with the right of re-marriage. Christian people should seek to have civil laws brought into harmony with the requirements of God's law on this subject. (b) The Church should clearly and emphatically proclaim the teachings of God's Word on this subject. Such is the prevalent ignorance of the Scriptures today that there are even Church members who do not know what the Bible teaches about marriage and divorce. (c) The Church must faithfully enforce its discipline in the case of members who have been divorced without Scriptural grounds, and especially in the case of re-marriage by either party in such a divorce, or by the guilty party in a divorce granted on Scriptural grounds. Those who flagrantly violate the law of God by taking advantage of lax civil legislation certainly have no right to claim the privileges of membership in good standing in the Church of Jesus Christ, until they manifest satisfactory evidence of repentance and amendment of their life.

6. Are impure books and magazines more common, and more evil, today than in former times?

There can be no doubt that, in the United States at least, this is the case. Indecent reading matter and pictures have become commonplace, especially during the years since the first World War. The un-

clean, subtle suggestiveness of many contemporary books and magazines is extremely offensive. Some well-known popular books and magazines are not fit for the library table of a Christian family. There is at least one widely read woman's magazine which abounds in material calculated to break down the Christian standard of sexual morality. It can no longer be taken for granted that because a book or magazine is published by a well-known firm and endorsed by prominent people it must be decent and harmless. In this situation, serious-minded Christian people should be careful about their reading matter, and that of their children.

7. What should be our attitude toward the modern dance? Should Christian people participate in dances?

Much could be written on this question. The Catechism interprets the seventh commandment as forbidding "lascivious dancings". That the modern dance, in general, comes under this category, can hardly be questioned by anyone who knows the nature of the modern dance and who knows what the word "lascivious" means. Formerly Christian people generally objected to promiscuous dancing because it tended to lead to immorality; today it can plausibly be argued that many dances are **inherently** immoral, evil not merely in their results, but in themselves; that is, that the act of dancing, as practiced, itself constitutes a sinful indulgence of sexual passion. Needless to say, Christian people should conscientiously abstain from such practices. The reader is referred to an excellent booklet on this subject, entitled "To Dance or Not to Dance", by G. Mahler, published by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis 18, Mo. (Tract No. 141, price 10 cents).

8. What attitude should a Christian take toward the motion picture theater?

Of course Christian people should adopt a serious and conscientious attitude toward the motion picture theater as toward all ethical questions. There can be no doubt that many, if not most, commercial motion pictures, as they exist today, are bad in their effect, especially upon young people. For this reason many earnest Christian people feel that they should totally abstain from attending motion picture theaters at all times and under all circumstances. As this decision is conscientiously made, as a matter of Christian duty and devotion to God, it should of course be re-

spected by all Christian people, even by those who may feel unable wholly to agree with it. On the other hand there are many professing Christians who do not seem to have any conscientious scruples whatever about motion pictures, but who attend practically any "show" whenever they feel like doing so. Such an attitude is not compatible with a conscientious Christian life, and cannot be justified. The reputation of the "movies" being what it is, it cannot be taken for granted that a "show" will be fit for Christian people to see. No Christian should have such a heedless, complacent attitude toward the motion picture theater. Apart from these two attitudes there are many truly conscientious Christian people who are quite aware of the general character of modern motion pictures, and who for that reason very seldom go to see them, who yet do not feel that a Christian could never do so without committing sin. It is clear that motion pictures are not **necessarily** evil; there can be pictures that are clean and wholesome. The conscientious Christian should take the trouble to ascertain the character of the picture before he goes to see it; this can be done in various ways, and should not be neglected. Needless to say, Christian people should **always** pay heed to the teachings of God's Word about questions of this kind, taking care not to become a stumbling-block to any Christian brother (Romans 14:4-7, 14-23; 1 Cor. 8:9-13). We must always be willing to deny ourselves some pleasure, rather than cause our brother to stumble.

9. What does the Catechism mean by "immodest apparel"?

The Catechism states that the seventh commandment forbids "immodest apparel" as sinful. No precise definition of "immodest apparel" can be given; this is a matter for the conscientious decision of every Christian. However it may be said in general that apparel is immodest if it fails to cover the body decently, that is, if it leaves the body exposed to an extent that is likely to occasion impure thoughts in members of the opposite sex. We should realize that lack of modest apparel is emphatically condemned in the Bible: 1 Tim. 2:9; Prov. 7:10, 13. Also the Bible condemns excessively costly, luxurious or conspicuous clothing: Isaiah 3:16-26; 1 Pet. 3:1-4. While religion is primarily a matter of the heart, not of outward clothing, yet vital Christianity will affect even the outward apparel, bringing a person's attire into subjection to the Word of God.

10. Why are vows of perpetual celibacy wrong?

Such vows, which the Catechism calls "entangling vows of single life", are taken by members of many "religious" orders of the Roman Catholic Church. These vows are sinful because they are vows to do something (a) which is not commanded in the Word of God, and (b) for the performance of which we have no promise of help from God. Celibacy is not a more holy form of life than marriage. To remain unmarried may be the will of God for a particular person's life, but no person has any

right to take a vow promising never to marry. According to the Word of God, marriage is the normal life of adult human beings (Gen. 2:18, 24), and therefore celibacy is the exception rather than the rule. In the Middle Ages the Catholic Church reacted strongly against the extreme licentiousness of the Roman Empire, and went to the opposite extreme of setting up asceticism and celibacy as the Christian ideal. Ever since, the Roman Catholic Church has been influenced by this false ideal, and has continued to regard "virginity" or celibacy as a higher and holier estate than marriage.

## Lesson 124

## For Week Beginning May 16, 1948

**Q. 140.** Which is the eighth commandment?

**A.** The eighth commandment is, **Thou shalt not steal.**

**Q. 141.** What are the duties required in the eighth commandment?

**A.** The duties required in the eighth commandment are, truth, faithfulness, and justice in contracts and commerce between man and man; rendering to every one his due; restitution of goods unlawfully detained from the right owners thereof; giving and lending freely, according to our abilities, and the necessities of others; moderation of our judgments, wills, and affections concerning worldly goods; a provident care and study to get, keep, use, and dispose those things which are necessary and convenient for the sustentation of our nature, and suitable to our condition; a lawful calling, and diligence in it; frugality; avoiding unnecessary law-suits, and suretiship, or other like engagements; and an endeavor, by all just and lawful means, to procure, preserve, and further the wealth and outward estate of others, as well as our own.

### Scripture References:

Ex. 20:15. The eighth commandment.

Psalms 15:2, 4. Zech. 7:4, 10; 8:16, 17. The eighth commandment requires justice and honesty in business dealings and contracts.

Rom. 13:7. To fail to render to every man his due is stealing.

Lev. 6:2-5 compared with Luke 19:8. The duty of restitution of wealth wrongly acquired or retained.

Luke 6:30, 38. 1 John 3:17. Eph. 4:28. Gal. 6:10. The eighth commandment requires giving and lending as we are able, to help others in their need.

1 Tim. 6:6-9. Gal. 6:14. The eighth commandment requires moderation in our attitudes and actions toward worldly wealth.

1 Tim. 5:8. Prov. 27:23-27. Eccl. 2:24; 3:12, 13. 1 Tim. 6:17, 18. Isa. 38:1. Matt. 11:8. The eighth commandment requires industrious efforts to obtain, keep and use the means of sustaining our life in the situation in which God's providence places us.

1 Cor. 7:20. Gen. 2:15; 3:19. Eph. 4:28. Prov. 10:4. It is a duty to have a legitimate occupation, and to work regularly at it.

John 6:12. Prov. 21:20. Thrift is a Christian duty.

1 Cor. 6:1-9. Unnecessary lawsuits are to be avoided.

Prov. 6:1-6; 11:15. The Christian should avoid the entanglement of suretiship.

Lev. 25:35. Deut. 22:1-4. Ex. 23:4, 5. Gen. 47:14, 20. Phil. 2:4. Matt. 22:39. It is our duty to try, by just and lawful means, to promote the material prosperity both of ourselves and of others.

### Questions:

1. What is the general scope of the

eighth commandment?

The general scope of the eighth commandment is **respect for the sanctity of property**, just as the sixth enjoins respect for the sanctity of life, and the seventh respect for the sanctity of sex. Property or wealth is created by God and entrusted to man for his use in glorifying and serving God. It is therefore a stewardship committed to man, and for this reason must be respected. Thus the eighth commandment requires, not only that we refrain from stealing our neighbor's property, but that we acquire and take care of our own.

2. Does the Bible sanction the private ownership of property?

Yes. Private ownership of property, in the sinful state of humanity which has existed since the Fall, is necessary for a life that can glorify and enjoy God. Private ownership is not founded on mere human invention or custom, but on the moral law of God. It is definitely sanctioned by the eighth commandment, "Thou shalt not steal", which is meaningless unless there is a divine ordinance of private ownership back of it. Even apart from the Bible, natural revelation teaches all men that stealing is wrong. Those in our day who think that private ownership is evil are profoundly mistaken. The evils they have in mind arise not from private ownership itself, but from **abuses** of private ownership.

3. What should we think of **Communism**, in the light of the Bible?

According to the teachings of the Bible, communism is **wrong in principle**. It is not merely wrong in some of its features or practices, or because of abuses associated with it, but wrong and wicked in its basic idea. If we could imagine a "perfect" state of communism, in which there would be no tyranny, no concentration camps, no secret police, no propaganda or censorship of information, it would still be inherently sinful and wicked. Capitalism violates the moral law of God by evils and abuses which are associated with it; communism violates God's moral law by its very nature and basic idea. The principle of communism is collective ownership of property enforced by the State. This presupposes that individual private ownership is an evil which can be tolerated on a small scale only, as a concession to human nature. This is contrary to the Bible which teaches that

private ownership is a God-given right. The individual human being, as the image-bearer of God, must have the right of private ownership of property and acquisition of wealth if he is to develop his individual personality as God intends, and to glorify God fully in his relationship to his environment. God's image in man involves the implication that man is to have dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:27, 28); but man is essentially an individual, with an individual soul and conscience, individual capacities and abilities, individual hopes and desires. Communism seeks to merge the individual in the mass of humanity, and this involves the sacrifice of essential elements of man's personality as an individual bearer of the divine image and steward of God in holding dominion over a portion of God's creation. For communism assumes that the individual person exists for the sake of the mass, of society; but this is contrary to God's Word which teaches us that society and all social institutions exist for the sake of the individual, in order that the individual may attain the divine purpose for his life and thus glorify God. It is the individual human person that has an immortal soul, a conscience, and the capacity for communion with God; these will outlast this world, and exist forever; they are what impart real dignity and worth to human life. Any system which regards the individual human being as unimportant and seeks to merge him in the mass for the supposed welfare of "society" is basically wrong and antichristian. This applies to compulsory collective ownership of property as well as to other subversions of individual human personality.

4. Did not the early Church practice communism, as recorded in Acts 2:44; 4:32-37 ?

It is true that a kind of "communism" existed in the Church at Jerusalem, but this was entirely different from communism as it exists today. It should be noted (a) that it was **voluntary**, not compulsory, as shown by Peter's words to Ananias in Acts 5:4; (b) that it was **partial**, not total, as shown by the fact that the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, was not sold (Acts 12:12); (c) that there soon arose a murmuring charge that the rations of food were not being fairly distributed (Acts 6:1); (d) that it was only temporary, and was later discontinued, probably at the time of the great persecution which followed the martyrdom of Stephen, when the Christians were scattered from Jerusalem (Acts 8:1-4); (e) that there is no evidence that any such "communism" was set



up in any of the Churches established by the apostles, other than the Church at Jerusalem. Thus it is clear that the temporary "communism" of the Jerusalem Church was not a matter of principle, but of expediency in the face of special existing conditions peculiar to that time and place. It is very foolish, unscriptural and unhistorical to represent this temporary state of affairs in the Jerusalem Church as analogous to modern communism, or as a pattern for Christian people everywhere to imitate.

#### 5. Is Socialism contrary to Christianity?

The word "socialism" is used with such varying meanings that it is difficult to speak definitely of it unless it is first defined so that it can be known precisely what is meant. Marxian socialism, which is the root of modern communism, is certainly contrary to the Christian religion. Yet there is a limited form of socialism that is not contrary to the teachings of God's Word. For the government to operate the postal service, instead of leaving it to the initiative of private persons or corporations, is a form of socialism; yet it cannot be regarded as sinful for the State to engage in this enterprise. In most countries of the world the railways, telegraphs and telephone service are operated either chiefly, or exclusively, by the State. We may consider this wise or unwise, but we can hardly prove that it is contrary to the Bible. However, a line has to be drawn somewhere; it would certainly be wrong for the State to take over and operate all business and commerce. The operation of business by the State should be confined to such activities as the postal service, which are essential to all the people of the country and which for cheapness and efficiency require a nation-wide monopoly. The State should maintain conditions in which private business can be carried on, and should regulate private business in the interests of justice, but should not supplant private

business by competing with it. God instituted civil government to promote the welfare of men by maintaining justice in human society (Rom. 13:4), not to develop into a colossus of collective enterprise in competition with its own citizens.

#### 6. Why is wastefulness sinful?

The Catechism says that the eighth commandment enjoins "frugality" as a Christian duty; that is the opposite of wastefulness. The latter is a sin which is especially characteristic of Americans, and from which the Christian people of our country are certainly not free. In China people have to save every chip of wood and wisp of straw carefully, to use for fuel; in America one can look out of a train window and see pile after pile of old railroad ties being burned just to get rid of them. Many other examples of our habitual wastefulness will readily come to mind. This prodigal habit can no doubt be partly explained by the comparative wealth and newness of our country. But that does not excuse wastefulness. Even if there is plenty more available, it is wrong to waste anything that will sustain or enrich human life, or that has cost natural resources and human effort to produce. Our possessions are not ours to use or waste as we please; they are a stewardship entrusted to us by God, for which we will have to give Him an account. If we do not become thrifty and economical because of conscientious obedience to God's law, the time may come when we will have to practice economy because of sheer necessity. Equally blameworthy with our national wastefulness is our foolishness as a people in spending vast sums of money on unnecessary luxuries, as well as on various forms of self-indulgence which are injurious to body and soul. Christian people should seriously consider whether they are guilty of a fleshly self-indulgence in their use of the wealth which God has entrusted to them.

### Lesson 125

### For Week Beginning May 23, 1948

**Q. 142.** What are the sins forbidden in the eighth commandment?

**A.** The sins forbidden in the eighth commandment, besides the neglect of the duties required, are, theft, robbery, man-stealing, and receiving any thing that is stolen; fraudulent dealing, false weights and measures, removing land marks, injustice and unfaithfulness in contracts be-

tween man and man, or in matters of trust; oppression, extortion, usury, bribery, vexatious lawsuits, unjust enclosures and depopulations; engrossing commodities to enhance the price; unlawful callings, and all other unjust or sinful ways of taking or withholding from our neighbor what belongs to him, or of enriching ourselves; covetousness; inordinate prizing and affecting worldly goods; distrustful and dis-

tracting cares and studies in getting, keeping, and using them; envying at the prosperity of others; as likewise idleness, prodigality, wasteful gaming, and all other ways whereby we do unduly prejudice our own outward estate, and defrauding ourselves of the due use and comfort of that estate which God hath given us.

#### Scripture References:

James 2:15, 16. 1 John 3:17. Neglect of the duties enjoined in the eighth commandment.

Eph. 4:28. Psalm 62:10. 1 Tim. 1:10. The sinfulness of theft, robbery and man-stealing.

Prov. 29:24. Psalm 50:18. Knowingly to receive stolen goods is to become a party to the theft.

1 Thess. 4:6. Prov. 11:1; 20:10. Amos 8:5. Fraudulent dealing, and the use of false weights and measures, are sinful.

Deut. 19:14. Prov. 23:10. To remove landmarks by private action is contrary to the eighth commandment, being a form of stealing.

Psalm 37:21. Luke 16:10-12. Dishonesty, injustice and unfaithfulness in fulfilling contracts or matters of trust are sinful.

Lev. 25:17. Matt. 23:25. Ezek. 22:12, 29. Psalm 15:5. All forms of oppression, or taking advantage of the helplessness of others for our own profit, are forbidden.

Job. 15:34. Amos 5:12. 1 Sam. 8:3. Psalm 26:10. Isa. 35:15. Bribery, being essentially dishonest and unjust, is always wrong.

1 Cor. 6:6-8. Prov. 3:29, 30. Unjust and unnecessary lawsuits constitute a violation of the eighth commandment.

Isa. 5:8. Mic. 2:2. Prov. 11:26. The attempt to establish monopolies of the means of human subsistence is wicked.

Acts 19:19, 24, 25. All occupations which are in themselves unlawful, are contrary to the eighth commandment.

Job 20:19. James 5:4. Prov. 21:6. All ways of enriching ourselves by taking or withholding from others what is rightly

theirs, are sinful.

Luke 12:15. 1 Tim. 6:5. Col. 3:2. Prov. 23:5. Psalm 62:10. Matt. 6:25, 31, 34. Eccl. 5:12. All wrong attitudes toward material wealth are forbidden by the eighth commandment.

Psalm 73:3; 37:1, 7. It is wrong to envy the material prosperity of others.

2 Thess. 3:11. Prov. 18:9; 21:17; 23:20, 21; 28:19. Eccl. 4:8; 6:2. 1 Tim. 5:8. All laziness, idleness, wastefulness and carelessness concerning the acquiring, retaining and expending of material wealth are sinful.

#### Questions:

1. What are the common sins which are obviously forbidden by the eighth commandment?

Theft, robbery, burglary, larceny, embezzlement, receiving stolen goods, using or tolerating unjust weights and measures, and the like, which are so easily understood and so clearly recognized as wrong that extended comment on them would be superfluous. These sins are shown to be wrong, not only by the Bible, but also by God's natural revelation. Instead of taking time for a detailed discussion of these obvious forms of dishonesty, we shall devote this lesson to some of the less easily recognized forms.

2. What is meant by "man-stealing"?

This includes (a) kidnaping persons to be held for ransom; (b) stealing human beings to be held as slaves, or to be sold into slavery; (c) the wicked modern form of slavery called "forced labor" which exists in totalitarian countries, especially Soviet Russia, by which vast numbers of human beings, on one pretext or another, are deprived of their liberty and compelled to pass their days in a miserable existence, without comfort or hope, working for the State.

3. How does modern advertising violate the law of God?

Modern advertising is so permeated with dishonesty that we may wonder how a Christian can participate in some of its common forms. We listen to a radio broadcast and hear a familiar voice telling us all

the reasons why a certain brand of coffee, macaroni or aspirin is the best on the market, superior to other brands, the most for our money, characterized by "extra" advantages and "special" features, etc., etc., and then two hours later we hear the same familiar voice telling us all the reasons why **another** brand of coffee, macaroni or aspirin is the kind we should buy and use with confidence. Of course the broadcaster is only reading a script prepared for him by the advertisers. But the whole process is so obviously shot through with exaggeration, insincerity and half-truth that the listener becomes hardened to this sort of thing and does not take any of it at face value. The same extravagant type of over-statement is prevalent in magazine and newspaper advertising. In America, it would seem, a thing can hardly be offered to the public as "good" and "worth the price". It must be termed "super", "colossal", "magnificent", "marvellous", etc., etc.

Of course there are advertising claims that are downright false. But what is most common is not outright fraud, but exaggeration, half-truth and subtly misleading statements. All advertising which is calculated to produce any other impression in the public mind than that of strict, objective truth concerning the qualities and value of what is offered for sale, is dishonest and therefore sinful. When a common brand of aspirin is advertised with the statement, repeated interminably, that "no other brand of aspirin is purer or gives faster relief", the impression is created that this brand is purer or faster than others; whereas the real truth is that aspirin is aspirin, being controlled by the Federal Food and Drug Act, and among legally sold brands of aspirin, one brand is as pure and as speedy as another. No doubt many Christian people are connected in one way or another with such dishonest advertising practices; they should consider seriously whether their occupation involves violation of the moral law of God.

There is, of course, a legitimate field for advertising. Legitimate advertising (a) will tell the real truth about what is offered for sale, avoiding exaggeration and deception; (b) will not try to create the impression that a product is better than that offered by competitors, unless it really **is** as shown by fairly conducted tests; (c) will not put forth imaginary claims which take advantage of the credulity of the public, such as that a brand of tooth-paste is better than others because it contains a "special" ingredient (which has a high-sounding name but is unknown to the science of

chemistry), or that the flavor of a brand of coffee is enhanced by a "special" secret process, known only to the firm that offers it for sale. Radio, newspaper and magazine advertising is a tremendous business in America today, but it is to be feared that its ethical standards are far from those of the Bible. To judge by present-day advertising we must be a nation of deceivers and deceived, or to state it less nicely, of liars and "suckers". We should think seriously of the relation of this phase of contemporary life to the law of God.

4. What does the Catechism mean by "unjust enclosures and depopulations"?

By "unjust enclosures" the Catechism refers to the practice which at one time existed in England whereby "common" land (owned by the lord of the manor but which other persons had a legal right to use for pasturage) would be "enclosed" or fenced in for purposes of agriculture. Such enclosures would be unjust if the rights of those who were entitled to use the "common" land were disregarded. In the 18th and 19th centuries laws were enacted providing for "enclosures" on an equitable basis for all parties concerned, when more land was needed to raise crops.

By "depopulations" the Catechism means the practice of buying up large tracts of land to form a great estate, and removing the tenants who had been living on it, a form of injustice known in Old Testament times and condemned in Isa. 5:8 and Micah 2:2.

5. What does the Catechism say about **monopolies of commodities**?

The Catechism states that "engrossing commodities to enhance the price" is a violation of the eighth commandment, and therefore sinful. Not every form of monopoly is necessarily wrong; some businesses or services are natural monopolies, such as the postal service, and may be best operated either by the State or by private corporations licensed and regulated by the State. What the Catechism condemns as sinful are monopolies **the purpose of which is to raise prices** by "cornering" the total available supply of a product. This practice eliminates competition and prevents the normal functioning of the law of supply and demand; it creates an artificial shortage or disappearance of the product from the market, in order that those who have established the monopoly can name their

own price and get it because no one else has the product for sale. Such monopolies of commodities, especially of the necessities of life, are so clearly unjust that they are prohibited by civil legislation in many countries.

The principle laid down by the Catechism does not imply that **patent laws**, by which invention is encouraged by the State guaranteeing the inventor a monopoly of the manufacture and sale of his own invention for a limited period of years, are wrong. However the common practice by which large corporations purchase patent rights from inventors, not in order to manufacture the article and offer it to the public, **but in order to prevent it being manufactured and sold by anyone**, is quite another matter. It may well be that this latter practice is essentially immoral and contrary to the eighth commandment; certainly it frustrates the legitimate purpose of the patent laws, which is to promote progress and encourage invention. When corporations take advantage of these laws to prevent progress, and to keep the public from enjoying the fruits of new inventions, it may be that Christian principles require a revision of the patent laws.

## Lesson 126

**Q 143.** Which is the ninth commandment?

**A.** The ninth commandment is, **Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.**

**Q. 144.** What are the duties required in the ninth commandment?

**A.** The duties required in the ninth commandment, are, the preserving and promoting of truth between man and man, and the good name of our neighbor, as well as our own; appearing and standing for the truth; and from the heart, sincerely, freely, clearly, and fully, speaking the truth, and only the truth, in matters of judgment and justice, and in all other things whatsoever; a charitable esteem of our neighbors; loving, desiring, and rejoicing in their good name; sorrowing for, and covering of their infirmities; freely acknowledging of their gifts and graces, defending their innocency; a ready receiving of a good report, and unwillingness to admit of an evil report, concerning them; discouraging tale-bearers, flatterers, and slanderers; love and care of

6. What is "wasteful gaming" and why is it wrong?

By "wasteful gaming" the Catechism denotes all forms of gambling, which are inherently sinful because they involve an attempt to gain wealth without rendering an equivalent value in return. If the gambler wins, he is a thief; if he loses, he is a waster of his Lord's property. The fact that gambling involves an implied agreement to transfer money or property one way or the other as determined by the "chance" fall of dice, etc., does not make it legitimate. A contract to do something sinful is itself sinful. It has been well said that gambling stands in the same relation to stealing as dueling does to murder. Gambling includes "slot machines", raffles, "punch boards", betting, lotteries, games of chance played for money or prizes, various forms of "pools", etc. All of these are essentially immoral, and Christian people should leave them all strictly alone. Gambling is not only a sinful vice, but a fever which grows on a person until he cannot let it alone. The only safe and right course is to have nothing whatever to do with gambling in any form. Of course Churches and civic organizations that sponsor any kind of gambling scheme are beneath contempt.

## For Week Beginning May 30, 1948

our own good name, and defending it when need requireth; keeping of lawful promises; studying and practicing of whatsoever things are true, honest, lovely, and of good report.

### Scripture References:

Ex. 20:16. The ninth commandment.

Zech. 8:16. The duty of maintaining truth between man and man.

3 John 12. Preserving the good name of our neighbor.

Prov. 31:8, 9. Psalm 15:2. 2 Chron. 19:9. 1 Sam. 19:4, 5. Josh. 7:19. 2 Sam. 14:18-20. Lev. 19:15. Prov. 14:5, 25. 2 Cor. 1:17, 18. Eph. 5:25. The duty of speaking the truth in all matters, and especially in matters of public justice.

Heb. 6:9. 1 Cor. 13:7. Rom. 1:8. 2 John 4. 3 John 3, 4. The duty of a charitable es-

teem of others, and concern for their good name.

2 Cor. 2:4; 12:21. Prov. 17:9. 1 Pet. 4:8. It is our duty to be sorry about, and seek to cover, the infirmities of others.

1 Cor. 1:4-7. 2 Tim. 1:4, 5. 1 Sam. 22:14. 1 Cor. 13:6, 7. Psalm 15:3. Prov. 25:23. The duty of maintaining a right attitude toward the good qualities of others, defending them against injustice, and being unwilling to believe an evil report about them.

Prov. 26:24, 25. Psalm 101:5. Both flatterers and slanderers are to be discouraged as dealers in untruth.

Prov. 22:1. John 8:49. It is a duty to defend our own good name in case of need.

Psalm 15:4. Lawful promises must be kept.

Phil. 4:8. It is our duty to study and practice whatsoever things are true, honest, lovely and of good report.

#### Questions:

1. What is the general scope of the ninth commandment?

The general scope of the ninth commandment is the sanctity of truth and honesty in human society, and the duty of maintaining our own and our neighbor's good name.

2. Why is truth to be regarded as sacred?

Truth is to be regarded as sacred because it is an attribute of God, that is, it is a feature of the character of God. God is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His truth. We are told in the Bible that **God cannot lie** (Titus 1:2). God is called the "Lord God of truth" (Psalm 31:5). Similarly, we read that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). Because the Scripture is from God, Jesus could say, "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). The Scripture is "truth", but Jesus Christ Himself is not merely truth, but "**THE** truth" (John 14:6), that is, He is the absolute, ultimate, eternal Truth in person. Because God is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His truth, truth must be regarded as sacred by all His rational creatures (angels and men).

3. How can we explain the prevalence of untruth in the world?

We cannot understand the prevalence of untruth in the world without believing in a personal devil as set forth in the Bible. Just as God is the source of truth, so Satan is the source of untruth, the father of lies (John 8:44). Untruth entered the human race when Eve listened to Satan and believed the devil's lie rather than the truth of God. Satan is described in the Bible as **the one who deceives the whole world** (Rev. 12:9). Satan is also called "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4) and "the prince of this world" (John 14:30) who has nothing in Christ. Satan has a kingdom which he seeks to extend and propagate, a kingdom of untruth. Those who are dominated by untruth are citizens of Satan's kingdom; Christian people who deal in untruth are handling the weapons of Satan's kingdom.

4. What modern system of philosophy violates the sacredness of truth?

The philosophy called "**Pragmatism**", which teaches that the important question is not whether something is true, but whether it works. According to Pragmatism, success is the test of truth. Something is to be accepted if it "works"; we are not to measure things by an absolute standard of truth such as the Bible. This notion has had a tremendous influence in American life, and even the religious life of our country has been greatly affected by it. It has done incalculable harm in breaking down and undermining people's sense of the sacredness of truth and their belief in the existence of such a thing as **absolute, unchanging truth**. Today many people have come to think that truth changes with the times. Many who perhaps have never heard the word "Pragmatism" are under the influence of this philosophy. Those who say that the Westminster Standards were true for the 17th century but are not suitable for the 20th century, for example, have suffered from this spiritual blight. The aversion to doctrine and the depreciating of the importance of sound doctrine which are so common in contemporary American Church life, have resulted largely from this influence. Many people who demand that religion have "a practical emphasis" mean by that, that they want the Church to have **a program of action without a solid foundation of truth underneath it**. We should not hesitate to say that the modern demand for practical action, when coupled with indifference to or impatience of truth, is thoroughly perverse and wicked. Nothing can

be really practical unless it is founded on absolute, unchanging truth.

5. What change must take place in our lives before we can really know and love the truth of God?

By nature we are all deeply prejudiced against the truth, and inclined to doubt or deny the truth, as well as to speak untruth or lies. This state of affairs is to be explained in part by the deceptive activities of Satan, and in part by our spiritual blindness as those who are dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). Because of this, we need to be **regenerated** or "born again" by the almighty power of God the Holy Spirit. This experience of the new birth opens the eyes of the heart and enables a person really to

see and appreciate the truth of God. It is followed by the process of sanctification, one effect of which is to work in the person a hatred of untruth and a love for honesty and truthfulness in his daily life and conversation. Without the Holy Spirit's work of regeneration and sanctification, we would remain the victims and the agents of untruth for ever.

(**Note:** Inasmuch as Q. 145 covers much the same ground as Q. 144, but is somewhat more complete, we shall limit our discussion of Q. 144 to the foregoing questions dealing with the general principles of truthfulness, and shall leave the details of obedience to the ninth commandment to be discussed under Q. 145, in the lessons that follow).

## Lesson 127

## For Week Beginning June 6, 1948

**Q. 145.** What are the sins forbidden in the ninth commandment?

**A.** The sins forbidden in the ninth commandment are, all prejudicing the truth, and the good name of our neighbors, as well as our own, especially in public judicature; giving false evidence, suborning false witnesses, wittingly appearing and pleading for an evil cause, out-facing and over-bearing the truth, passing unjust sentence, calling evil good and good evil; rewarding the wicked according to the work of the righteous, and the righteous according to the work of the wicked. . . .

### Scripture References:

1 Sam. 17:28. 2 Sam. 1:9, 10, 15, 16; 16:3. The sin of prejudicing the truth and the good name of ourselves or others.

Lev. 19:15. Hab. 1:4. The great sin of prejudicing the truth in matters of public justice.

Prov. 6:16, 19; 19:5. Acts 6:13. The sin of giving false evidence, or arranging for it to be given by others.

Jer. 9:3, 5. Acts 24:2, 5. Psalm 12:3, 4; 52:1-4. The great wickedness of knowingly opposing the truth.

Prov. 17:15. 1 Kings 21:9-14. The sin of passing unjust sentence, or delivering an unjust verdict, in the administration of justice.

Isa. 5:20-23. Prov. 17:15. Amos 5:7. All breaking down of the absolute distinction between right and wrong is morally perverse.

### Questions:

1. What is the general scope of the sins forbidden by the ninth commandment?

The general scope of the sins forbidden by the ninth commandment is **whatever is contrary to the truth and to the good name of any person**. That is, the ninth commandment forbids all conduct which in any way, whether by word, by deed, or by sinful silence, interferes with the maintaining of truth between man and man, and with the preservation of the good name which any person justly possesses.

2. Why is it a sin to act in such a way as to injure **our own** good name?

We are to love our neighbor **as ourself**, which implies that a proper love of self is a divinely imposed duty. As each individual bears in himself the image of God and was created to glorify God, the legitimate good name of each person must be preserved, including one's own good name. This obligation must however be kept in balance with a conscientious concern for the good name of our neighbor, and must be subordinated to a supreme zeal for the honor and glory of God.

3. What special form of falsehood is especially wicked?

Opposing the truth, by word, deed or silence, in matters of "public judicature", that is, in the administration of justice in the courts of the State or of the Church.

4. Why is "giving false evidence" sinful?

Giving false evidence in court, and especially giving false evidence **under oath**, or perjury, is sinful because it is contrary to the nature of God, who is Truth; because it is contrary to love for our neighbor, in taking away his rights; because it reduces the divinely ordained administration of justice to a mockery; and because it proceeds from the moral corruption of human hearts depraved by the fall of the race into sin.

5. What is meant by "suborning false witnesses"?

This expression means to engage, employ, or arrange for, persons to appear in a court of justice to give false evidence in order that guilty persons may escape punishment, or innocent persons suffer punishment, or in order that a civil lawsuit may be decided in a manner contrary to what the true facts would require.

6. Is "suborning false witnesses" a common sin today?

While there is of course no way of obtaining any exact statistics concerning such a matter, it seems probable that giving false evidence for money is far from uncommon in America at the present day. One form of this is the false "alibi", where a person is paid money to swear that the person on trial was in another city at the time when the crime was committed, etc.

7. Why is "wittingly appearing and pleading for an evil cause" wrong?

Because it is sinful to try to make the guilty appear to be innocent, or to try to make wrong appear to be right. If a lawyer knows that his client has committed a crime, he may not try to prove the man innocent. In such a case, the lawyer must in-

sist that his client enter a plea of guilty. The lawyer has the duty, however, to see that even a guilty person is not deprived of the protection and civil rights which the law guarantees. He may not try to make the guilty appear to be innocent, but he is bound to endeavor that the guilty shall not be punished beyond what the law requires.

8. What is meant by "out-facing and over-bearing the truth"?

These expressions mean a stubborn, persistent, perverse effort to oppose and defeat what a person knows, in his heart and conscience, is really the truth. Such stubborn opposition to the truth often arises from deep prejudice against the person or institution that is standing up for the truth. Those who have left a strict and faithful Church to join one that is more "inclusive" will often argue stubbornly against the doctrines and principles of the denomination of which they formerly were members. In such cases it is evident that they are not so much zealous for the truth, as prejudiced against a particular denomination and its creed. Stubborn opposition to the truth may also arise from **envy**. Because of a secret envy of the gifts, talents or attainments of persons who are standing up for the truth, others may obstinately and persistently oppose not only the persons, but also the truth they are maintaining. All such conduct is "out-facing and over-bearing the truth" and is very wicked and displeasing to God.

9. Why is calling evil good and good evil a special sin?

Calling evil good and good evil, and its practical application in treating the wicked as if they were righteous and the righteous as if they were wicked, is heinously sinful because it amounts to breaking down or denying the distinction between right and wrong. The distinction between right and wrong is absolute and unchangeable, because it proceeds from the nature of God Himself. Whatever breaks down the distinction between right and wrong is a practical denial of the righteous character of God. We may never forget that God is absolutely good and hates evil.

## Lesson 128

## For Week Beginning June 13, 1948

**Q. 145** (Continued). What are the sins forbidden in the ninth commandment?

**A.** The sins forbidden in the ninth

commandment are. . . forgery, concealing the truth, undue silence in a just cause, and holding our peace when iniquity calleth for

either a reproof from ourselves, or complaint to others; speaking the truth unseasonably, or maliciously to a wrong end, or perverting it to a wrong meaning, or in doubtful and equivocal expressions, to the prejudice of truth or justice; . . .

#### Scripture References:

Job 13:4. Psalm 119:69. Luke 16:5-7; 19:8. The sin of forgery.

Lev. 5:1. Deut. 13:8. Acts 5:3-9. 2 Tim. 4:16. Concealing the truth, and undue silence in a just cause.

1 Kings 1:6. Lev. 19:17. Remaining silent when it is our duty to speak.

Isa. 59:4. Remaining silent when it is our duty to complain to the constituted authorities of Church or State.

Prov. 29:11. Speaking the truth unseasonably.

1 Sam. 22:9, 10, compared with Psalm 52:1-5. Speaking the truth maliciously to a wrong end.

Psalm 56:5. John 2:19 compared with Matt. 26:60, 61. Perverting the truth to a wrong meaning.

Gen. 3:5; 26:7, 9. Using doubtful or equivocal expressions, to the prejudice of truth or justice.

#### Questions:

1. What is the meaning of "forgery"?

In the Bible and the Catechism this word has a somewhat broader meaning than in our common usage today. It refers not only to the falsifying of written documents, but to any use of falsehood in legal charges, contracts, etc.

2. Why is concealing the truth a sin?

Concealing the truth is really the same thing as telling a lie. It is done with the intention of deceiving some person, and is therefore the acting of a lie.

3. Is concealing the truth always a sin?

No. Sometimes it may be our duty to

conceal a matter from those who have no right to know it. Concealing the truth is a sin when we conceal a matter from those who have a right to know it. For example, to keep vital military information from falling into the hands of the enemies of our country is not wrong; rather, it is our duty.

4. What is meant by "undue silence in a just cause"?

This means remaining silent, for private or selfish reasons, fear of reproach, etc., when it is our duty to speak in the interests of truth and justice. For example, it may be our duty to testify as a witness in a lawsuit or court trial; by our refusal or reluctance to do so, justice may be perverted, the innocent suffer punishment, or the guilty escape.

5. Why is it wrong to be unduly silent in a just cause?

Because "no man liveth unto himself"; we have a moral responsibility to God and a duty to our neighbor and to human society, to see that truth and justice prevail, so far as it is in our power to do so. Our personal feelings or convenience must not be allowed to stand in the way of the vindication of truth and justice.

6. Do we have a right to remain silent when iniquity calls for a reproof, or for complaint to those who have authority to act?

No. Although the easy thing is to keep still and say nothing, this is not doing our duty to God and our neighbor. We are to bear witness against wrongdoing as occasion may require, even though it is difficult.

7. What is meant by "speaking the truth unseasonably", and why is it wrong to do so?

"Speaking the truth unseasonably" means speaking the truth at the wrong time, when wisdom or common sense would lead us to wait until a more suitable time. If someone is rushing to catch a train, we should not choose that particular time to talk to him about the salvation of his soul. It would be more tactful and sensible to choose a more suitable time, when the person concerned would be able to give his attention to the matter.



8. What is meant by "speaking the truth maliciously, to a wrong end"?

This means speaking the truth **with a wrong motive, and for a wrong purpose.** Even though what we say may be strictly true, it may be wrong to say it. For instance, if we speak the truth with the intention of injuring some person's reputation, or of stirring up someone to become angry against someone else, such speaking of the truth is wrong.

9. Why is it wrong to pervert the truth to a wrong meaning, or in doubtful and equivocal expressions, etc.?

These are wrong because all of them are only ways of deceiving people. Inten-

tionally to use expressions that can be understood in two different ways, in order to deceive some other person, is just as wicked as telling an outright lie. For example, the minister who was reported to have said "I believe in the divinity of Christ", and then later explained to someone else that he believed in the divinity of Christ because he believed in the divinity of all human beings, was guilty of the sin of breaking the ninth commandment.

10. What is the essential nature of a lie?

The real, essential nature of a lie is **the intention to deceive some person.** Even though what we say may be itself true, if our intention is to deceive others we are really liars in God's sight.

## Lesson 129

## For Week Beginning June 20, 1948

**Q. 145** (Continued). What are the sins forbidden in the ninth commandment?

**A.** The sins forbidden in the ninth commandment are. . . speaking untruth, lying, slandering, backbiting, detracting, tale-bearing, whispering, scoffing, reviling, rash, harsh, and partial censuring; misconstruing intentions, words, and actions; flattering, vain-glorious boasting, thinking or speaking too highly or too meanly of ourselves or others; . . .

### Scripture References:

Isa. 59:13. Lev. 19:11. Col. 3:9. The sin of speaking untruth.

Psalm 15:3; 50:20. The sins of slander and backbiting.

James 4:11. Jer. 38:4. The sin of "detracting", or unjustly speaking evil of another.

Lev. 19:16. Rom. 1:29, 30. Tale-bearing and whispering condemned as sinful by God's Word.

Gen. 21:9. Gal. 4:29. 1 Cor. 6:10. The sins of scoffing and reviling.

Matt. 7:1. Acts 28:4. Gen. 38:24. Rom. 2:1. The sins of rash, harsh, and partial censuring of others.

Neh. 6:6-8. Rom. 3:8. Psalm 69:10. 1 Sam.

1:13-15. 2 Sam. 10:3. It is sinful to misrepresent the intentions, words and actions of others.

Psalm 12:2, 3. The sin of flattery.

2 Tim. 3:2. The sin of vain-glorious boasting.

Luke 18:9-11. Rom. 12:16. 1 Cor. 4:6. Acts 12:22. Ex. 4:10-14. It is wrong to think or speak too highly, or not highly enough, of ourselves or others.

### Questions:

1. Why is it wrong to speak untruth, or tell a lie?

It is wrong to speak untruth, or tell a lie, because this is contrary to the character of God, who is Truth. Satan is called in the Bible **the father of lies**, and the person who tells a lie is using Satan's method instead of doing what is pleasing to God. Besides being an affront to God's holiness, the telling of a lie breaks down the very foundations of human society. It destroys the world's currency of truth by introducing the counterfeit coin of falsehood. If everyone told lies all the time, human society could not exist, for it would be impossible ever to believe anyone. It is only because of the general prevalence of truth-telling that human society can function at all. The liar is a "chiseler" who takes advantage of human society's general reputation for

truthfulness, by telling a lie for his own selfish purposes.

2. What are "slandering" and "backbiting"?

"Slandering" is injuring someone by maliciously uttering a false report about that person. "Backbiting" is an aggravated form of slandering which consists in secretly uttering a false report about some person, behind that person's back. Slandering and backbiting are sinful not only because they involve untruthfulness, but also because they are contrary to a proper love for our neighbor, and concern for his good name.

3. What does the Catechism mean by "detracting"?

The common word used for this today is **disparaging**. It means speaking evil of a person in order to detract from that person's influence or good reputation; to depreciate a person.

4. What is meant by "tale-bearing" and "whispering"?

"Tale-bearing" as used in the Catechism means much the same as the word "gossip" today: a sinful spreading about of reports of the sins and failings of other people, because we derive some personal satisfaction by dwelling on the faults of others. "Whispering" is the most contemptible form of tale-bearing or gossip; it means circulating stories or rumors about some person secretly, in such a way that it is difficult or impossible to trace the rumors to their source and correct them. In past times banks and business firms have been ruined by whispering campaigns conducted against them by unscrupulous persons.

5. Is it always wrong to tell what we know about wrongdoing committed by other persons?

No. It may be our duty to report wrongdoing to the proper authorities. If we know that a child is stealing or destroying property, it is our duty to inform the child's parents. In the case of serious wrongdoing by members of the Church, it may be our duty to report the matter to the officers of the Church who have authority to deal with the offender. If the law of the land has been broken, and it is a matter

of some importance (as where a crime has been committed) it is our duty to report it to the constituted authorities of the government. Reporting a matter to persons in authority is not to be regarded as "tale-bearing" or "whispering". In such a case, the motive involved is not gossip, nor a sinful delight in telling of other persons' faults, but a proper desire that wrongdoing may be stopped and that justice may be performed.

6. What are "scoffing" and "reviling", and why are they sinful?

"Scoffing" as used by the Catechism means **mocking or ridiculing** persons as a way of injuring them or making them unhappy. "Reviling" is what is commonly called **name-calling** today; it means to oppose and injure persons by calling them hard and evil names, contrary to truth, justice and love for our neighbor. When Christian people are laughed at because of their Christian faith and profession, that is "scoffing"; when they are called **hypocrites**, that is "reviling". Scoffing and reviling are always wrong because they are contrary to truth and to love for our neighbor.

7. What does the Catechism mean by "rash, harsh, and partial censuring"?

By "censuring" is meant finding fault with, or passing judgment upon, some other person because of that person's speech or conduct. "Rash" censuring means passing judgment when it is not our duty to do so; "harsh" censuring means going beyond what the evidence warrants, or "jumping to conclusions" in passing judgment on another; "partial" censuring means passing judgment unfairly, or showing partiality, by being prejudiced in favor of, or against, some person. All these forms of fault-finding or passing judgment are sinful because contrary to justice and to love for one's neighbor.

8. Why is misrepresenting the intentions, words and actions of others a violation of the ninth commandment?

Because intentionally or knowingly to misrepresent the intentions, words and actions of others is the same as telling lies about them. This is quite a common sin, but Christian people should be ashamed to be guilty of such conduct. If some person is

prominent in some good cause, we have no right to accuse him of selfish ambition. If someone opposes a particular method of accomplishing some good purpose, we should not jump to the conclusion that he is opposed to the good purpose and in favor of the corresponding evil. This principle is often sadly disregarded, and sincere Christian people are accused of being in favor of various forms of evil because they do not agree wholly with others as to the methods which should be used in combating the evils.

9. Why are "flattering" and "vain-glorious boasting" wrong?

"Flattering" means praising some other person too highly, in order to please that person and gain some favor from him. "Vain-glorious boasting" means praising our own selves too highly, beyond what truth and justice warrant. Both of these practices are sinful because they are forms

of dealing in untruth, instead of depending on the strict truth for accomplishing our purposes.

10. Why is it wrong to think or speak too highly or too meanly of ourselves or others?

All such thinking and speaking is wrong because it is not according to the truth of the matter. We have a duty to others; we have a duty to ourselves also. In both cases it is wrong to have or express an opinion that is either too high or too low. Some Christians have a false humility; they are always speaking evil of themselves, and representing themselves as extremely unworthy. This is wrong, because it disparages the graces and gifts of God which have been given to them. In all cases we should make it our aim to think and speak according to the real truth of the matter.

### Lesson 130

### For Week Beginning June 27, 1948

**Q. 145** (Continued). What are the sins forbidden in the ninth commandment?

**A.** The sins forbidden in the ninth commandment are. . . denying the gifts and graces of God; aggravating smaller faults; hiding, excusing, or extenuating of sins, when called to a free confession; unnecessary discovering of infirmities; raising false rumors, receiving and countenancing evil reports, and stopping our ears against just defence; . . .

#### Scripture References:

Job 4:6; 27:5, 6. The sin of denying the gifts and graces of God.

Matt. 7:3-5. It is wrong to aggravate smaller faults of others.

Prov. 28:13; 30:20. Gen. 3:12, 13; 4:9. Jer. 2:35. 2 Kings 5:25. The sin of hiding or trying to excuse our sins, when we should confess them.

Gen. 9:22. Prov. 25:9, 10. It is wrong unnecessarily to tell the faults or failings of others.

Ex. 23:1. The sin of raising false rumors.

Prov. 29:12. The sin of listening to and countenancing evil reports.

Acts 7:56, 57. Job 31:13, 14. The sin of refusing to pay attention to the just defence of any person.

#### Questions:

1. What is meant by "denying the gifts and graces of God"?

This expression means being stubbornly unwilling to recognize as true and real God's gifts and graces, whether given to ourselves, or to others. Sometimes when it is reported that a certain person has made a profession of the Christian faith, others are very reluctant to believe that that person is sincere, or really converted. When God called Moses to deliver his people from Egypt, Moses was very reluctant to comply, and denied that he had the qualifications needed for the task that God was imposing on him; this amounted to a denial of the gifts and graces of God which had been given to him (Ex. 4:10-13).

2. What is meant by "aggravating smaller faults", and why is it wrong?

This means to represent small faults or failings of others as more serious and more

important than they really are. We are not to call black white, or white black; we must not speak of people's faults as if they were virtues, or as if they were not faults at all. But it is wrong to represent people's little faults as if they were great and serious matters. Our Lord's words in Matt. 7:3-5 should serve to remind us that we all have serious faults of our own, which should have our attention before we undertake to correct the smaller faults in the lives of others.

3. Why do people frequently try to hide or excuse their sins, when they ought to confess them freely?

Ever since Adam and Eve tried to evade responsibility for what they had done, people's sinful nature has led them to try to make excuses for themselves instead of honestly confessing their sins. The sinful corruption of our hearts results in our being filled with pride or "vanity", and the result of this is that we are stubbornly unwilling to confess our sins, or admit our faults. Only the real work of the Holy Spirit can soften our hard and stubborn hearts so that our pride gives way to a true Christian humility, and we become willing to confess our wrongdoing, not only to God, but to others whom we may have wronged in some way.

4. Why is "unnecessary discovering of infirmities" wrong?

By "unnecessary discovering of infirmities" the Catechism means what we commonly call **gossip about other people's faults and failings**. People indulge in such gossip because it gives them a comfortable, self-righteous feeling to dwell on the misdeeds of other people. This habit is wrong, first, because it proceeds from a self-righteous pride; secondly, because it is contrary to a right love for our neighbor, which should make us feel sad when he has done something wrong; thirdly, because it tends toward injustice to the person who has done wrong, for as the story is passed on from person to person it grows and is exaggerated until the wrongdoing may be reported in a manner out of all proportion to the real facts of the case.

5. How can we avoid involvement in the sin of raising false rumors?

Deliberately starting a false rumor in order to injure some person, or to accomplish some unjust purpose, is so baldly and plainly wicked that it should hardly be

necessary to warn Christian people against it. But it is very easy to help a false rumor along after it has once been started by some person. This sin of contributing to the prevalence of a false rumor may be committed either knowingly or unknowingly; we may or may not realize that the rumor is **false**. Before we help to circulate a story which may do harm or deprive some person of justice, we should take the trouble to find out whether it is really true or not (and even if it is true, we should not repeat it unnecessarily). A tremendous amount of harm has been done by well-meaning people who were ready to believe and repeat whatever they might happen to hear to the discredit of some person. This careless habit is contrary both to justice and to love for our neighbor.

6. How do people sin by "receiving and countenancing evil reports"?

By this expression the Catechism does not mean that receiving and countenancing evil reports is **always** wrong. There are those whose official duties involve receiving evil reports, and countenancing them at least temporarily. For example, a prosecuting attorney is bound by his oath of office to do so. It is his duty to listen to such reports, and investigate them in the light of the available evidence, in order that justice may prevail. What is wrong is for persons who have no official responsibility in such matters to **welcome and eagerly listen to** evil reports about other people. This is a form of the sin of **rejoicing in iniquity** which the apostle Paul declares to be contrary to Christian love (1 Cor. 13:6).

7. What induces people to stop their ears against anyone's just defence?

Blind, violent prejudice is the force at work in cases of this kind. This is well exemplified by the attitude of the rulers of the Jews when Stephen presented his defence (Acts 7:57). Similarly the Jewish multitude at Pilate's judgment hall refused to listen to a just defence of Jesus, and demanded that he be crucified (Matt. 27:22-24). So also the mob in the theater at Ephesus refused to listen to the defence of Alexander, and drowned his voice out with their shouting about the goddess Diana (Acts 19:33, 34). Again as Paul sought to make his defence on the stairs of the castle in Jerusalem, the multitude refused to listen to the end of his speech, and violently put a stop to his discourse (Acts 22:22, 23). All of these cases were instances of the operation of extreme prejudice. Such violent

prejudice is not merely the result of ignorance, or misunderstanding, but arises from

the deep wickedness and ingrained depravity of the sinful human heart.

## “Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs”

By the Rev. Frank D. Frazer

(**Note:** The following article was prepared by Mr. Frazer as a reply to a query submitted by a reader of “Blue Banner Faith and Life”. Because of its importance and permanent reference value it is printed here as a separate article, instead of being included in the “Question Box”. Ed.)

### Question:

Will a strict exegesis of Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 apply to the 150 Psalms only, thus excluding all human compositions?

### Answer:

The texts referred to are as follows:

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:18, 19); “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16).

A strict exegesis of these passages requires, of course, that the words in them be taken in the sense obviously intended by the writer, and reasonably to be understood by those to whom the epistles were addressed, not in some other sense they might acquire at a future time.

Controversies within the Church have produced, for us, a sharp differentiation between “Psalms” and “Hymns”, “Psalms” being the accepted name for the God-inspired songs of praise collected in one book of Scripture, while “Hymns” has become the common designation of human compositions for singing in worship. But, so far as the records show, no such difference was attached to these words in the original apostolic Church, and this for the simple reason that, at that time, there were no un-inspired songs used, or to be used, in the worship of the true God. Repeated assumptions and assertions to the contrary have never been substantiated.

The Christian Church had but recently emerged from the confines of the Jewish Synagogue, where **only** the Scripture Psalms were used in the praise service. No

others were available for the praise service of the Church. Note that Paul does not tell his readers to **make** Psalms, Hymns or Songs, but to **sing** them to God, and **talk** of them to men, thus taking it for granted that these things were already at hand; things, indeed, which he regarded as of the greatest importance for Christians. And, while special gifts of the Spirit were promised to meet the needs of the Church (e. g., Eph. 4:7-16), none were promised for the making of songs of praise to God, nor for “singing the gospel” to men.

We know well that the preaching, teaching, and writing of Paul, preserved for us, is based on the Old Testament Scriptures; his constant appeal is to their very words.

In the providence of God, these Scriptures, originally written in Hebrew, were translated into Greek before the coming of Christ. This Greek version, called the Septuagint (often denoted by the abbreviation “LXX”) was available wherever there were Greek-speaking Jews, and they were in all the important centers of the Mediterranean world. It was the only version available in the days of Christ and the apostles. Christ put the stamp of His approval on it by quoting from it. The original Hebrew, of course, remained as the standard, but, outside of Palestine, there were few who could understand it.

Paul wrote to the Greek-speaking Ephesians and Colossians in Greek. He assumed that they had this LXX version at hand, for he quotes frequently from it, and makes many references to it without taking the trouble to state his source. He assumed that his readers would recognize the words he used. In particular, without mentioning his quotations from other books, there are at least twelve quotations from, and direct references to, the Book of Psalms in Ephesians; at least three in Colossians. How do we know this? By the words he used. For instance, in Eph. 4:26, his Greek for “Be ye angry, and sin not” is found word for word in the LXX version of Psalm 4:4, a comparatively unusual, but very striking, rendering of the Hebrew.

Now when we examine the LXX, still used by the Greek Orthodox Church, we find these three words, “psalms”, “hymns”,

"songs". We find them, generally, in place of three Hebrew words, "mizmor" (a psalm), "t'hillah" (a praise), "shir" (a song), without any hard and fast distinctions being observed.

The Greek "psalm", while it usually stands for "mizmor", also stands for "shir", and for "t'hillah". Indeed, the Hebrew title for the whole book is "T'hillim" (Praises), but the Greek title is "Psalms".

The Greek "hymn" is used for "t'hillah" and also for "shir". "Psalm" and "hymn" are both Greek words which we have taken bodily into our language. Yet "hymn" is nowhere used in our English version of the Old Testament, although it is used in the LXX at least 16 times, and the verb "hymneo" (meaning "to sing hymns") at least 13 times; in every instance obviously meaning the songs given of God, synonymous with "psalm" and "sing psalms". The plural "hymns" is frequently used to designate these songs in general, without discriminating. E. g., at the end of Psalm 72 we read, "The hymns of David, the son of Jesse, are ended". In Psalm 100:4 we find "Enter . . . into his courts with hymns". The Hebrew reading of 1 Chron. 16:8 is identical with that of Psalm 105:2; but the LXX translates the first, "Sing to him, sing hymns to him"; the second, "Sing to him, sing psalms to him". In 2 Chron. 29:30 we read that the Levites were commanded "to sing hymns to the Lord in the words of David and Asaph, the prophet; and they sang hymns with gladness".

Many individual Psalms have headings of their own. Some are marked "Psalm"; some "Song". Some have both titles, "A Psalm, a Song"; "A Psalm of a Song"; "A Song of a Psalm". Psalm 65 has both "Psalm" and "Song" in its title, and its first line is, "To thee, O God in Zion, a hymn in befitting". The heading of Psalm 76 reads, "For the Precentor in hymns, a Psalm of Asaph, a Song with reference to the Assyrian".

The Greek word for "song" (ode), occurs, for the most part, in place of "shir", but also for "mizmor". In Psalm 137:3 we read, "There those who took us captive demanded of us words of songs; And those who carried us away (demanded of us) a hymn, saying, Sing for us from the Song of Zion. How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" Here the "songs of Zion" meant, to a Hebrew, "the song of the Lord", i. e., "the song of Jehovah" as written in the book of Psalms. But note that either a "song" or a "hymn" was to be selected at random from these Psalms.

These examples, a few among many, are sufficient to show that **each of the three words in question was applied to the 150 Psalms**. They were applied to the 150 Psalms **collectively**. They were applied to the 150 Psalms **individually**, without discriminating between them. Yet, as any one can see, these three words, "psalms, hymns, songs" are distinctly, etymologically different. Such free interchange of different names for the same thing is permissible only if it does not affect the writer's meaning and the reader's understanding. Therefore, such usage in the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures is **conclusive proof** that there was, at the time of writing, no doubt in anyone's mind as to the exact reference of these words.

That they were applied to the 150 Psalms **only** follows from the fact that no others are mentioned in the entire record as having been used in the temple, synagogue or apostolic Church worship of God. If there were any others, what became of them? Where is any proof that others existed, or were so used?

But, what is the use of so many names for the same thing? Why pile up words? Well, it usually takes more than one word even to begin to define a thing of such dimensions and importance as the **praise** of the infinite, eternal and gracious God. Why is the **law of God** so often described by a group of three terms, such as "testimonies, statutes and judgments" (Deut. 4:45)? Why are prayers called "supplications, intercessions, thanksgivings" (1 Tim. 2:1)? "Psalms, hymns, songs" reveal the different aspects which our praise to God should have, according to the mind of His Spirit.

The word "psalm" refers to the **instrumental accompaniment**, as does "mizmor", for there were musical "instruments of the songs of God" (1 Chron. 16:42), as long as the sacrifice was physical and symbolic. Now, however, **THE SACRIFICE** has been offered; Jesus Christ "offered Himself", "laid down His life", "yielded up His spirit" on the cross, quoting, as He did so, the precise words of the LXX version of Psalm 31:5, "into thy hands I commit my spirit", changing only the tense of the verb to "commit" instead of "shall commit" (Luke 23:46). Now, the Holy Spirit has come to be "in you", believers, that you may **be filled with the Spirit**. He has come to teach you, that you may understand and use His songs **"in all wisdom"**. He has come to put **"grace"** in your hearts for singing to God. So when we sing a "psalm", we are to do so with our **spiritual instruments**, that is, our heart and understanding.

The word "hymn", as also "t'hillah", has to do exclusively with praise offered up to God. When we sing a "hymn" from the Psalm Book, we are to do so to God, not to men.

The Greek word for "song" indicates, as does "shir", the manner in which praise is to be offered to God, namely, by singing. But it was a word used for all kinds of song. The Asians were notably fond of drinking and singing. They had songs for their idol feasts which so often ended in drunken carousals. Hence it was necessary, especially for those just turning from heathenism, to limit "songs" by defining the category to which they, as well as the "psalms" and "hymns" here spoken of, belong, that is, that they are "of the Spirit of God" (2 Sam. 23:1, 2; Matt. 22:43).

The Greek name (*pneuma*) for wind, air, breath, ethereal substance, was used in the LXX for the Spirit of God and the spirit of man. Accordingly, under the continued control of the Spirit, Paul had already adapted a cognate Greek adjective, *pneumatikos*, to his use. This word we translate "spiritual". It is a word almost peculiar to Paul, for of its 26 occurrences in the New Testament, 24 are in his epistles. He applies it (a) to persons, as regenerated by the Spirit; (b) in at least 18 places he applies it to things (gifts, blessings, etc.).

Excluding one doubtful case and the two verses now before us, there are fifteen

places in which he uses this word as indicating, not merely the spiritual nature of the thing (as distinct from the physical or carnal), but, clearly and emphatically, that it exists in dynamic connection with the Holy Spirit of God as author or source; therefore as derived from, or given by, the Spirit.

The one doubtful case is in Eph. 6:12, where he speaks of "the spiritual things of wickedness". In our Revised Version this is interpreted as of "hosts" of wicked persons, of course in their fallen condition. It may rather refer to their power and activities. This is a perfectly proper use of the Greek word, and if it applies to things with which, as everyone knows, the Holy Spirit has no connection except to overrule them, it can occasion no confusion in the reader's mind. Therefore this exceptional case may be set aside.

The remaining 15 places are sufficient to establish Paul's uniform usage of the word, and to fix that meaning here. Therefore, the "songs" here specified are "spiritual", not because they express spiritual thoughts and aspirations, but because they are inspired and given by the Holy Spirit. It goes without saying that the same defining word is to be understood with "psalms" and with "hymns", for "songs" includes them both.

Thus all mere human compositions are excluded.

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## Blue Banner Question Box

Readers are invited to submit doctrinal, Biblical and practical questions for answer in this department. Names will not be published with questions.

### Question:

Please suggest some good books on the Bible, Christian doctrine, etc., suitable for laymen to read.

### Answer:

In addition to the books listed in previous issues, the following are recommended:

**Bible Truths for Young Christians: A Series of Lessons in Preparation for Communicant Church Membership**, by J. G. Vos, Pastor of Hebron Reformed Presbyterian Church. The Covenanter Witness, 1209 Boswell Avenue, Topeka, Kansas. Here are ten short, practical lessons in the

form of question and answer. Each lesson presents a fundamental Bible truth, which anyone looking forward to full Church membership should know, and every Church member should keep in mind. Each question is directed toward a more intelligent acceptance of the matters of faith, or obedience to the matters of duty. Each answer is given in simple, direct language adapted to the understanding of the average child of 10 to 12 years. Many of the answers have one or more Bible texts attached, awakening interest, confirming or clarifying and fixing the truth in the mind. Taken together they furnish a clear outline of what is essential for a Christian to know and believe and do. These lessons are well suited for use in the home, in the Junior Society, and in the pastor's preparatory class. Home religious instruction has been too long neglected; the consequences are alarming. This little booklet is a timely

directive and aid to parents. Just the right thing for Sabbath afternoon. It supplements, for the younger children, without overlapping, Dr. Elliott's "Handbook" and Dr. McKnight's "Young People's Manual". Its use will promote the use of these and other educational literature of the Church. Every Covenanter home should have it. 36 pages. 15 cents per copy; 12 copies \$1.50 (F. D. F.)

**Simple Talks on the Tabernacle**, by D. H. Dolman. Zondervan Publishing House, 847 Ottawa Avenue, Grand Rapids 2, Michigan. This book presents an excellent study of the typology of the Tabernacle. Written from the standpoint of a devout faith in the Bible as the infallible Word of God, it presents a great deal of interesting and valuable material. Here and there a point may seem a trifle doubtful or far-fetched. For example on page 125 the author sees in one of the bars of acacia wood overlaid with gold, the principle commonly called "open communion", that is, that all who profess to be Christians should be admitted to the Lord's Supper without any confessional restrictions. That any such teaching is included in the typology of the tabernacle is highly doubtful; and by failing to distinguish between the visible and the invisible Church, the author over-simplifies the issue of "open" versus "close" communion. This however is incidental to the main contents of the book. Every thoughtful Christian can receive benefit from its pages. 228 Pages. \$2.50.

**Beacon Lights of Grace**, by Richard Ellsworth Day. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S. E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. A series of twelve biographical sketches dealing with characters in the history of the Church, some well known and others less well known, interestingly written and easy to read. In a reference to Spurgeon (page 36) there is an unfortunate distinction between "the five points of Calvinism" and "Jesus at the center" of religion. The center of true religion is not properly Jesus, but **God** (1 Cor. 15:28); the so-called "five points of Calvinism" are **not** a summary of the system of Calvinism, but only five doctrines selected from the system by the Arminians for attack. No system of Christian doctrine gives higher honor to Jesus Christ than Calvinism, yet Calvinism frankly recognizes that true religion must be God-centered, rather than Christ-centered. 169 pages. \$2.50.

**The Bible for Youth**, by C. J. Sharp. Standard Publishing Co., 20 E. Central Parkway, Cincinnati 10, Ohio. The title-page of this little book describes it as a

"text for Junior High or Intermediate and Senior ages", and states that it was "prepared to fit a number of specific needs in Church and public school Bible teaching". The material is well put up, with a number of tables, maps and diagrams. Clearly written from conviction that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, this book is in happy contrast to some materials that have been used for public school Bible teaching. A statement on page 98 seems to imply that the Lord's Supper should be observed weekly. On pages 106 and 107 a "dispensational" view of the origin of the Church is presented, the Church being represented as "started" at Pentecost. This breaks the continuity between Israel and the Christian Church, and is contrary to the Reformed doctrine that the Church originated in the Garden of Eden. On p. 102-3 there occurs a naively over-simplified treatment of denominationalism which seems to imply that denominations are the result of men regarding the Church as their own property and making "changes" in it to suit their own caprice, and that it is quite simple, by avoiding these human "changes", to hold fast to the one true Church of Christ. This is quite mistaken, for denominationalism has arisen, not from men deliberately deviating from Christ's appointment, but because of their sincere differences of belief as to what Christ's appointment requires. On p. 46-8 there occurs a "dispensational" teaching about the relation of the Old Testament Scriptures to the Christian: "The Old Testament was written for guidance and instruction until Christ should come. The New Testament was written for guidance and instruction since Christ has come. In other words, we today live under the New Testament and not under the Old Testament". This confuses **the Mosaic system of ordinances with the Old Testament as a book**, and the erroneous teaching is only partly counteracted by the explanations about the "Value of the Old Testament to us today" on p. 48. The truth is that the entire Word of God in its organic unity is for the "guidance and instruction" of God's people until the end of time, but those ordinances which were peculiar to the Old Testament period, commonly called the ceremonial law, were of a temporary character and have been fulfilled, and thus terminated, by the mediatorial work of Christ. On p. 47 it is implied that the Ten Commandments were part of the law "for God's people until Christ came", and hence that they are not directly applicable to the Christian today. It is added that "The law which was given to lead to or prepare for the coming of Christ had served its purpose. It therefore ended, and its place was



taken by the gospel of Christ which is given us in the New Testament" (p. 47). Also it is implied that "the Lord's Day" is not the Sabbath: "The Sabbath (seventh day) gave way to the 'Lord's Day' (the first day of the week)" (p. 47). Because of these doctrinal peculiarities, this book can be accorded only a limited recommendation. It should be used with due caution concerning the points mentioned above. Where it deals with the historical contents of the Bible, and other general matters, it is excellent. Paper covers, 127 pages. Price 60 cents.

**Why Revival Taries**, by Thomas Ashbridge. Pickering & Inglis, Ltd., 29 Ludgate Hill, London, E. C. 4, England; Loizeaux Brothers, 19 W. 21st St., New York, N. Y. This little book on the subject of spiritual revival has for its sub-title, "God Waits to be Proved". It consists of seven short chapters which are well written and contain excellent Scriptural material. Particularly good, and certainly much needed today, is its frank facing of current irreligion and especially of the prevalence of unbelief in the modern Church and pulpit. Here is no easy-going view of a world ready to come to Christ as soon as the Church adopts some new "method". The author states that "It is a fact not to be denied that for the most part of the present century modernism has held sway in the pulpit. Men and women in the churches have had a grievous wrong put upon them. They suffer, in that they are largely ignorant of the foundation truths of the Christian faith. Their birthright—a free, unprejudiced presentation of the Gospel—has been denied them. A present-day appeal to the Bible misses its mark. That glorious revelation to the masses is the Book of the unknown God" (pages 22, 23). The author also candidly faces the fact that many Church members are only nominal Christians and constitute a liability rather than an asset: "To take the step of cleansing the inner part of the house of the Lord will require courage. It will take deep resolve to be carried into operation in the face of fierce resistance. It will mean the loss of numbers. Would the church really lose if, in many instances, the membership roll were to be closely scrutinized and prayerfully revised? It would mean an immediate gain in spiritual power and blessing" (page 32). To these statements, and many others equally noteworthy, we should say a hearty Amen.

Another excellent feature of this book is that its whole stress is on spiritual life and obedience to God; it does not fall into the error of so much "revival" literature of emphasizing "methods" as the important

thing in connection with revival. The author says: "Revival is the work of God and of Him alone; but His people provide the essential conditions"—a statement which is true, but falls short of the whole truth, namely that the sovereign grace of God, by the Holy Spirit's operation, stirs up His people to seek and prepare for revival. It is unfortunate that at several points in the book an Arminianizing mode of expression appears: "revival depends upon me and upon you" (p. 15); "what we allow the Holy Spirit to do through us" (p. 35); "tight purse strings hinders God" (p. 46). This idea that somehow man must "give God a chance" to send revival seems to characterize nearly all books on this subject. Did Moses "give God a chance" to save Israel from Egypt? Or did God prepare Moses as His own chosen instrument and use him at His own appointed time? In the present book, however, the Arminian tendency seems to be more in the mode of expression than in the basic ideas. It is a good book, and will have a good effect. Paper cover, 60 pages. Price 1 shilling sixpence, or 50 cents.

**Daily Devotions**, a quarterly booklet published by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis 18, Mo. It is a pleasure to recommend this periodical as the best of this type of literature known to the editor of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". The booklet is pocket size and provides a page of devotional material for each day. The readings are interesting and well prepared; more important, they are thoroughly loyal to the orthodox Christian faith. They will be found helpful for private reading, as well as for family worship. As this is a Lutheran publication, there may be an occasional point where the theology differs from that of the Covenanter Church, but the loyalty to the inspiration and authority of the Bible is unquestionable. Covenanters will not agree with the recognition of special days and seasons, such as Lent, which appears in some of the studies, but this need not prevent receiving benefit from the truth presented. At the back of the booklet there are a number of prayers. While we do not believe in reading prayers as an act of worship, the study of these prepared prayers may well help us better to frame our own addresses to the throne of grace. Single copy, 5 cents, postage extra. Two years' subscription (8 issues), 55 cents, postpaid; four years (16 issues), \$1.00. Bulk prices: 12 copies of one issue, 48 cents; 100 copies \$3.50 (postage extra).

**Note:** Additional outstanding religious books and tracts will be listed in future issues of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". The

listing of a book here is not to be understood as necessarily implying an endorsement of everything contained in it. Please purchase books through your local bookstore or direct from the publishers; do not send orders to the publisher of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". Ed.

**Question:**

Does not Q. 191 of **The Larger Catechism** refer definitely to the millennium?

**Answer:**

Q. 191 of **The Larger Catechism** is "What do we pray for in the second petition (of the Lord's Prayer)?" This question will be taken up in detail in due time in "Blue Banner Faith and Life". In answer to the above query, it should be said, first, that the word "millennium" does not occur in the answer to this question of the Catechism, nor anywhere else in the Westminster Standards. Therefore the Catechism does not refer **expressly** to the millennium. Secondly, we may raise the question of whether the **idea** of the millennium occurs in this answer of the Catechism. "Millennium" means, literally, "thousand years". In theology, it is used in certain views of the reign of Christ. These views are divided between views of a millennium **before** the second coming of Christ, and views of a millennium **after** the second coming of Christ; each of these is again divided into the view of a **literal** thousand years, and the view that the thousand years is symbolic of a long period of time. All these various millennial views agree in holding (a) that the millennium will be before the end of the world; and (b) that it will be a state which will fall short of absolute perfection and consummate happiness, since sin, suffering and death will still exist, even though Satan is restrained.

The question is, then, does the Catechism speak of a special reign of Christ, apart from the reign which commenced when He ascended to heaven, which (a) will take place before the end of the world, and (b) which will fall short of the absolute perfection and supreme blessedness of the eternal state? The answer to this question can only be No. The Catechism interprets the second petition of the Lord's Prayer as praying for the destruction of Satan's kingdom, the propagation of the gospel, the calling of the Jews, the salvation of the Gentiles, etc., but says nothing about any special period of time when these are to take place; as a matter of fact all of these things have been taking place ever since

Christ's ascension to heaven, and will continue to take place in the future according to the purpose of God. The only **future** reign of Christ spoken of by the Catechism is not a millennial but an **eternal** reign: "(we pray) that Christ would rule in our hearts here, and hasten the time of his second coming, and our reigning with him for ever". That is, according to the Catechism, in praying for a future kingdom of Christ we are to pray not for the coming of a millennium or thousand-year kingdom, but for the coming of a kingdom **after** the second coming of Christ, which is to endure not for a thousand years but to all eternity. We have been discussing, of course, not whether the idea of a millennium is taught in the Bible, but only whether it is taught in the Catechism. Q. 191 of **The Larger Catechism** should be compared with Q. 102 of **The Shorter Catechism**: "In the second petition (which is, **Thy kingdom come**) we pray, That Satan's kingdom may be destroyed; and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it, and kept in it; and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened". Here again the only **future** kingdom spoken of is **the kingdom of glory**, that is, the absolute, perfect, consummate, eternal kingdom of God, of which we read in 1 Cor. 15:50 "that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God".

**Question:**

Where in the standards of the Covenanter Church do we find a testimony against the modern dance?

**Answer:**

**The Larger Catechism**, Q. 139, interprets the seventh commandment as forbidding "lascivious dancings". If the modern dance can be truly called "lascivious", then it is forbidden by the Standards of the Covenanter Church, in their interpretation of the moral law of God. See the discussion of this matter under Q. 139 in the "Studies in the Larger Catechism" in this issue of "Blue Banner Faith and Life".

**Question:**

In "Twelve Tremendous Themes", Evangelist John R. Rice says that "There is no more command for Christians to keep the Sabbath than there is for Christians to avoid pork"; "Jesus did not teach anybody to keep the Sabbath. The Apostles did not teach the New Testament churches to observe the Sabbath". etc. How can these claims be answered?

**Answer:**

Mr. Rice's view of the Sabbath is, apparently, a common view which regards the Sabbath as part of the ceremonial law and therefore fulfilled and terminated by Christ's atoning work. He cites Col. 2:14-17 as showing that the Sabbath has been abolished and is not binding on Christians.

In answer, it may be said that the weekly sabbath rests (a) upon God's ordinance at the creation of the world; and (b) upon the Ten Commandments as the revelation of the moral law of God. As the weekly sabbath originated at the creation, before the Fall of the race into sin, it could not have been typical of the atoning work of Christ. Nothing which existed before the Fall can be regarded as typical of redemption from sin. Therefore the sabbath as instituted at the creation is not included in the ceremonial and typical "sabbaths" mentioned in Col. 2:14-17, for those "sabbaths" are definitely stated to have been typical of Christ. What the ceremonial law did not originate, cannot be abrogated by the termination of the ceremonial law. There were other "sabbaths" in the Old Testament, besides the weekly sabbath of the creation and the Ten Commandments. This is proved by Lev. 23:32. "Evidently any period of time which was kept as a Sabbath could be called a Sabbath. Not only were the seventh day and the seventh year sabbaths, but also the day of atonement on the tenth day of the seventh month" (Davis, *Dictionary of the Bible*, 1925, p. 665). The fourth commandment was written on stone by the finger of God—on a permanent, imperishable material. Mr. Rice holds that the sabbath was a ceremonial or typical ordinance; but the fact that it forms part of the Ten Commandments creates a presumption that it is a moral precept. Let Mr. Rice find another typical or ceremonial ordinance that was written on stone. He cannot fairly overcome the presumption that the fourth commandment is a moral precept. And if it is a moral precept, it will remain valid and binding until the end of time. The words of John D. Davis are to the point: "The Sabbath was instituted for the benefit of mankind, its obligation lasts as long as man has the same needs as at creation" (*Dictionary*, p. 664). Mr. Rice is mistaken in saying that Jesus did not teach the obligation of sabbath observance; His statement "The sabbath was made for man" (Mark 2:27) implies the principle stated in the last quotation from Dr. Davis, that the sabbath will remain binding as long as man has the same needs as at creation.

**Question:**

Should we pray for a loved one to get well when a reliable doctor says that the person could be healed only by a miracle?

**Answer:**

In praying for bodily healing, and all other temporal blessings for ourselves or others, we may pray only in humble submission to the sovereignty of God. We may pray that if it is the Lord's will the person may be healed. Whether it is the Lord's will, in a particular case, to grant bodily healing, we have no way of knowing in advance. God's promises to prayer do not mean that we can claim temporal blessings except in humble submission to His will. His judgments are a great deep.

Even the most expert physicians sometimes turn out to be mistaken. While we do not believe that miracles properly so-called take place today (that is, events with no cause except the will of God), we know that God is in complete control, by His providence, of all that comes to pass. The laws and processes of nature are wholly in His hands. God can accomplish His purposes of bodily healing, when it is His will to heal, by His providential control over nature. The question is not whether healing is too hard for the Lord, but whether it is according to His purpose. Paul was not delivered from his "thorn in the flesh"; instead, God gave him grace to bear it, and showed him that it had a purpose in his life (2 Cor. 12:7-9). Trophimus was not healed, but left at Miletum sick (2 Tim. 4:20).

**Question:**

Is the Covenanter Church (or any Church) right when it puts its distinctive principles ahead of saving souls? Is not that what our Church has been doing in past history? Would that be the reason we have been declining in membership year after year?

**Answer:**

The answer to this query depends entirely on whether the "distinctive principles" referred to are part of the truth of God or not. Of course no Church has any right to put mere human customs or traditions above the salvation of souls. If the "distinctive principles" of the Covenanter Church are merely human customs or traditions, then the Church has no right to insist on them by requiring acceptance of

them by members. But if the "distinctive principles" are part of the truth and counsel of God, then the situation is quite different. Our Saviour in His "Great Commission" commands His people to "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; **teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you . . .**" (Matt. 28:19, 20). Of course the "all things" here mentioned are not limited to those things spoken by Christ during His earthly ministry; they include Christ's Word through His apostles, and the teachings of the entire Word of God. Now every Church must search the Scriptures and decide what the Word of God requires in the way of obligations of the Christian life and conditions of membership in the Church. Whatever the Church decides is the teaching of God's Word, it must teach and insist upon. Clearly it would be wrong to try to win more souls for Christ by lowering Christ's requirements for discipleship to something easier than what the Bible teaches. If souls are **really** saved, they are saved unto a life of obedience to the Word of God. The Church has no right to proclaim the offer of salvation apart from the duty of obedience. Our Church through its history has insisted upon its "distinctive principles" because of conviction that obedience to the Word of God requires them. Until this conviction is shown to be mistaken, the Church is in duty bound to adhere to its "distinctive principles". We must not seek even so worthy an object as the salvation of souls otherwise than in God's appointed way. If there is doubt and questioning concerning some of these "distinctive principles" today, the Church should bring them again to the test of "What saith the Scripture?" and fearlessly follow the outcome of that test. As for the declining membership of the denomination, that is probably not so simple that it can be attributed entirely to any one cause. No doubt it is the result of sin of more than one kind. Perhaps one reason is the prevalent idea that it is comparatively easy to be a Christian, but hard to be a Covenanter. The truth is, that it is comparatively easy to be a member in good standing in the Covenanter Church, but extremely difficult to be a faithful Christian; for to be a **Christian** involves taking up our cross and denying ourselves in order to follow Christ; it involves a hard-fought, life-long conflict with the world, the flesh and the devil. If people hesitate to become, or remain, members of the Covenanter Church because of the Church's principles concerning voting, Psalmody, instrumental music, secret orders, etc., they should realize that every true follower of Christ

must meet requirements that are much more difficult than these—so difficult, in fact, that the Bible speaks of them as being **crucified** with Christ (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20). Perhaps our Church needs to grasp this truth more fully.

**Question:**

Is it wrong for a man to marry his deceased brother's widow, or for a man to marry his deceased wife's sister; or for a woman to marry her deceased sister's widower, or for a woman to marry her deceased husband's brother?

**Answer:**

The standards of the Covenanter Church regard **affinity** (relationship by marriage as (a) equivalent to **blood relationship**; and (b) continuing even after the marriage has been terminated by death. This is based on an interpretation of Leviticus 18 which regards "thy brother's wife" (vs. 16) as equivalent to "thy brother's widow". The principle stated in the **Confession of Faith** is that "The man may not marry any of his wife's kindred nearer in blood than he may of his own, nor the woman of her husband's kindred nearer in blood than of her own" (XXIV. 4; see also the **Testimony**, XXVIII. 4 and Errors 4 and 5). Thus according to the standards of the Church, the marriages specified in this query are wrong. There has always been some dissent concerning this matter, and the question has long been a controversial one because some have had scruples and have felt that the Scripture texts cited by the standards do not prove the principle for which they are cited. This whole question is at the present time under study in the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, and also in the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (Minutes, 1947, page 26 and 146).

**Question:**

May cousins marry? May a foster brother and sister, reared in the same home but unrelated by blood, marry? Does the same rule that applies to cousins apply in the case of "in-laws"?

**Answer:**

These are general questions, to which only general answers can fairly be given. In all such cases, a Christian is not to allow himself to be dominated by feelings and desires of the moment. He ought to look ahead to possible consequences to all con-

cerned, or to be concerned. He ought to use common sense. The Bible is his rule of conduct; when there is no specific command, he should be guided by the general principles of Christian conduct there given. He ought always to act advisedly, in such a way as to avoid any reproach being cast upon the name of Christ or of the Church. He certainly ought not to marry when such action would be in violation of biological, civil, or Church law.

The law of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, as it applies to these queries, is to be found in the **Confession of Faith** (XXIV.4), and is reaffirmed by the **Testimony** (XXVIII.4 and Errors 4, 5). Here "consanguinity" (blood relationship) and "affinity" (denoted by "in-law") are taken as equivalent in any question of marriage.

In the proposed case of foster brother and sister neither blood relationship nor affinity enters, hence there appears no law against such marriage. (F. D. F.)

(**Note:** If any of our readers knows of a specific case of marriage of first cousins acted upon in any way by the Synod or other courts of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, please send the reference to the minutes so that it can be mentioned in our next issue. Ed.)

**Question:**

Is the "Apostles' Creed" as we have it the same form as that used by Roman Catholics?

**Answer:**

Yes, except for one or two minor verbal differences which arise from different translations from the Latin. The "Apostles' Creed" was not composed by the apostles, and only gradually, in the ancient Church, received the form in which it exists today. However it dates from a time prior to the great errors of Romanism, hence it sets forth the truths which Protestants and Catholics hold in common. Of course there are some differences of interpretation of the statements of the Apostle's Creed, between Protestants and Catholics. With respect to the meaning of the clause "He descended into hell", see "Blue Banner Faith and Life", Vol. 1, No. 8, October-December 1946, p. 159, 160, Lesson 41, Q. 4.

**Question:**

Is it right to go for bodily healing to a minister who claims to have had a special revelation from God and to have been given power to heal through faith and prayer, and who has a reputation of being instrumental

in such healing?

**Answer:**

Any person who claims that through faith and prayer all cases of sickness can be cured is claiming something contrary to the revelation God has given in the Scriptures. For even in the days of the apostles not every sickness or disease of Christian people was healed (2 Cor. 12:7-9; 2 Tim. 4:20). It is right and proper to pray for bodily healing provided we pray in submission to the sovereignty and secret will of God; the fact is that we have no way of knowing in advance that it is God's will to give healing in a particular case. We should avoid any person (a) who claims that healing can be obtained in every case if only enough faith is exercised; and (b) who claims that it is wrong to use means such as medicine and other scientific treatment for curing disease. A proper attitude toward the question of healing will recognize, first, that it may not be God's will in a particular case to bestow bodily healing, and secondly, that the best available scientific treatment should be conscientiously used with the prayer that God will bless it and give healing if it is His will to do so.

**Question:**

What is the "Unity School of Christianity"? Are its publications true to the Bible?

**Answer:**

The so-called "Unity School of Christianity" must be regarded as a false system of religion. An excellent analysis of its teachings by the Rev. T. C. Van Kooten appeared in "The Presbyterian Guardian" for January 10, 1947. This article describes "Unity" as "a religious mail-order house", the leading spirits of which are Mr. and Mrs. Charles Fillmore, with headquarters in Kansas City, Mo. The "Unity" organization does radio broadcasting and also publishes six different magazines, entitled "Unity", "Weekly Unity", "Daily Word", "Progress", "Good Business" and "Wee Wisdom". As for "Unity's" teachings, it appears to be a system of pantheism somewhat resembling "Christian Science". Denying that the Bible is uniquely inspired, "Unity" also teaches the essential unity of God and man, and at the same time denies the personality of God, reducing the Deity to a "Principle" or "Law". "Unity" also denies the unique deity of Jesus Christ, and ascribes divinity to every human being. The reality of sin is denied, along with the

reality of death, as well as the resurrection of the body. The ministry of bodily healing is a central feature of the system of "Unity". So also is its emphasis on worldly success and material prosperity. "Unity" claims not to be a denomination or sect, but merely to set forth "the truth underlying all religions" and to be "critical of none". Actually "Unity" is a heresy of the most dangerous type, and it undermines every Christian denomination by denying or explaining away the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. The literature of "Unity" is very well put up and attractively printed, and presents a kindly and gentle appearance of piety. Truth and error are subtly mixed, and the reader who is not well grounded in the true doctrines of Christianity may easily be deceived by "Unity's" show of religious knowledge and wisdom. When subjected to thorough analysis in the light of the Bible, "Unity" appears in its true light as a soul-destroying false system.

**Question:**

What did Paul mean in Phil. 3:11, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead"? Did Paul have any doubt about the resurrection?

**Answer:**

Certainly the apostle through whose pen the Holy Spirit gave the Church the 15th chapter of First Corinthians did not have any doubt about the resurrection. As for the meaning of Phil. 3:11, Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's comment on this verse is good: "If by any means: not implying uncertainty of the issue, but the earnestness of the struggle of faith (1 Cor. 9:26, 27), and the urgent need of jealous self-watchfulness (1 Cor. 10:12)". We may compare Acts 27:22-25, 31. The angel of God had told Paul "God hath given thee all them that sail with thee". Paul believed this promise and on the basis of it said to the people on the ship: "there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship". Yet later when the sailors were trying to escape with the boat, Paul said to the Centurion and soldiers: "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved". Did this statement imply doubt of the reliability of God's promise that there would be no loss of life? Certainly not; it only implied that it was extremely important that the sailors' plan to escape be frustrated. So in the Christian life, the certainty of the resurrection and of eternal life for the believer is not any excuse for slackening his efforts, but rather the contrary.

**Question:**

What will the resurrection mean to the believer, if when we are absent from the body we are present with the Lord? What more can we have when our bodies are raised up at the resurrection?

**Answer:**

It is true that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23), yet according to the teaching of the Bible this is not the highest blessedness which the redeemed shall attain. Man is a composite being, consisting of body and soul, both of which are essential to a complete human personality. As long as the human body remains under the power of death, the work of redemption is not yet complete (Rom. 8:23; Eph. 4:30). The soul can live apart from the body, and in the case of believers this is to be "present with the Lord", but the Bible represents this "intermediate state" as a **period of waiting** and as short of the consummate blessedness which the resurrection of the body will bring. Only the redemption of the body from death and its glorification in the likeness of Christ's resurrection body can bestow that complete, harmonious integrity of the human personality which is necessary for the highest state of blessedness. Accordingly it is the uniform teaching of the Scriptures that the ultimate object of our hope is the resurrection of the body and the eternal kingdom of God which follows it (Matt. 13:41-43; Rom. 8:18-25; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 2 Cor. 5:1-4; Phil. 3:21). On the other hand, the "intermediate state", in which the soul is separated from the body, is represented as a state of peace, rest, happiness, being present with the Lord, and **waiting for the consummation of the work of redemption** (Rev. 6:9-11; 14:13). Christ's work of redemption is a complete work; it includes the bodies as well as the souls of His people. The human soul is created to live in union with a human body, and only in such union can the highest bliss and glory be experienced. The Christian dead who are "present with the Lord" already have something "far better" than the sufferings and struggles of the present life; but the fulness of glory to be received at the resurrection will far exceed the blessedness of the "intermediate state".

**Question:**

How important is the Lord's Supper? Is it true that God sometimes removes by death those who partake of this sacrament in an unworthy manner ("For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and

many sleep", 1 Cor. 11:30)? We have special services in preparation for the Lord's Supper; what is their real purpose, and do they really fulfil the purpose?

**Answer:**

**The Larger Catechism.** Q. 168-175, gives a very careful and detailed discussion of the Lord's Supper, which will be taken up in due time in "Blue Banner Faith and Life". Meantime, a brief answer to the foregoing questions may be given. The Lord's Supper is not essential to salvation, but as it is commanded by Christ, it is of very great importance for obedience to His will. In 1 Cor. 11:30 the terms "weak", "sickly", "sleep", are understood by some scholars in a spiritual sense (as meaning spiritually feeble, etc.), and by others in the literal sense (as referring to bodily weakness, sickness and death). The literal sense is the best exegesis, for in verse 32 the apostle says that the purpose of such chastening is "that we should not be condemned with the world", and if **spiritual** "sleep" were meant in verse 30, that would not fit in with verse 32. The passage teaches, then, that the Lord **does** sometimes remove by death those who abuse the Lord's Supper, and thus prevents their being condemned with the world. The purpose of special preparatory services before the Lord's Supper is obedience to the command of 1 Cor. 11:28, 31. Such services are to impress upon us the wickedness of our sins, our great need of God's grace, and the urgent duty of hearty repentance, so that we may not add sin to sin by partaking in an unworthy manner. While of course there is always room for improvement, and a danger of formalism, yet many can testify that such preparatory services have been a blessing to them and have been used by the Holy Spirit to bring them closer to the Lord.

**Question:**

In the familiar Christmas carol "Silent Night, Holy Night", the birth of Christ is spoken of as "the dawn of redeeming grace". Is this Scriptural? Did not "redeeming grace" exist in Old Testament times?

**Answer:**

Certainly "redeeming grace" existed in Old Testament times. It was revealed to mankind immediately after the Fall, Gen. 3:15. Redeeming grace was planned by God in eternity, before the creation of the world; was revealed to man progressively,

starting immediately after the Fall; was actually wrought out and purchased for the elect by the Mediator, Christ, during His life on earth; and is now being applied to the elect by the saving work of the Holy Spirit whom Christ has sent. Like many poetical expressions in common hymns, this phrase of "Silent Night" will perhaps not stand too close theological analysis. One good reason for singing only the Psalms of the Bible in the worship of God is that the Psalms, being inspired Scripture, are wholly free from all erroneous and misleading expressions.

**Question:**

Is it proper to speak of a minister "converting" people, or "bringing souls to Christ"?

**Answer:**

As commonly used, such speech is wrong. Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but only God can give the increase (1 Cor. 3:6). No minister or missionary can convert any one, or bring any person to Christ. A minister or missionary may be used by the Holy Spirit as a means to the conversion of some person. But we should realize that the Holy Spirit is the Agent and the minister or missionary is the instrument in this process. God uses many influences to bring a person to conviction of sin and faith in Christ, but in the end it depends upon the renewing, life-giving work of the Holy Spirit (regeneration or the new birth). A particular minister or missionary may be used by the Holy Spirit in connection with the salvation of a person, but the decisive factor, without which salvation does not exist, is the direct work of the Holy Spirit in the person's soul. We should always be careful to give all the honor and glory of anyone's salvation to God alone, and never to claim any of it for ourselves or for any other human being. Such Scriptures as Dan. 12:3 and James 5:20 are to be understood in the light of the truth set forth in I Cor. 3:6, 7, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase". That is, ministers and missionaries can "convert" or "save" people only in the sense that they are instruments used by God to that end.

(Note: Because of the large number of questions received, it is regretted that the answers to some must be postponed until the next issue of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". Ed.)

## From the Last Words of James Renwick

(Spoken on the scaffold just before his execution, February 13, 1688)

"Spectators, or (if there be any of you) auditors, I must tell you that I am come here this day to lay down my life for adhering to the truths of Christ, for which I am neither afraid nor ashamed to suffer; nay, I bless the Lord that ever He counted me worthy, or enabled me to suffer anything for Him; and I desire to praise His grace that He hath not only kept me free from the gross pollutions of the time, but also from many ordinary pollutions of children; and such as I have been stained with, He hath washen me from them in His own blood . . .

"I must tell you that I die a Presbyterian Protestant. I own the Word of God as the rule of faith and manners; I own the Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, Sum of Saving Knowledge, Directory for Worship, etc.; Covenants, National and Solemn League; Acts of General Assemblies, and all the faithful contendings that have been for the work of reformation.

"I leave my testimony approving the preaching of the Gospel in the fields, and defending the same by arms. I adjoin my testimony to all that hath been sealed by blood, shed either on scaffolds, fields, or seas, for the cause of Christ.

"I leave my testimony against Popery, Prelacy, Erastianism, etc.; against all profanities and everything contrary to sound doctrine; particularly against all usurpations made upon Christ's right, who is the PRINCE OF THE KINGS OF THE EARTH, who alone must bear the glory of ruling His own kingdom, the Church; and, in particular, against the absolute power usurped by this usurper, that belongs to no mortal, but is the incommunicable prerogative of JEHOVAH, and against this toleration flowing from that absolute power.

"Ye that are the people of God, do not weary in maintaining the testimony of the day, in your stations and places; and whatever ye do, make sure an interest in Christ, for there is a storm coming that shall try your foundation. Scotland must be rid of Scotland before the delivery come. And you that are strangers to God, break off your sins by repentance, else I will be a witness against you in the day of the Lord."

Renwick's last words were: "Lord, into Thy hands I commit my spirit, for Thou hast redeemed me, Lord God of Truth". He was the last of the Scottish Covenanter martyrs to suffer death by public execution upon the scaffold.

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**J. G. VOS, Editor and Publisher**

R. F. D. No. 1

Clay Center, Kansas



A H Stone



# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

VOLUME 3

JULY - SEPTEMBER, 1948

NUMBER 3

"IT PLEASSED GOD, IN HIS ETERNAL PURPOSE, TO CHOOSE AND ORDAIN THE LORD JESUS, HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, TO BE THE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN; THE PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING, THE HEAD AND SAVIOUR OF HIS CHURCH, THE HEIR OF ALL THINGS, AND JUDGE OF THE WORLD: UNTO WHOM HE DID FROM ALL ETERNITY GIVE A PEOPLE, TO BE HIS SEED, AND TO BE BY HIM IN TIME REDEEMED, CALLED, JUSTIFIED, SANCTIFIED, AND GLORIFIED."

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Clay Center, Kansas

# The Signing of the Covenant in the Greyfriars' Churchyard, Edinburgh, 1638

By Harriet Stuart Menteth

I'm old! I'm old. I'm very frail! my eyes are dim with age,  
Scarce can I trace the words of life upon this sacred page;  
Then out upon the unquiet heart! that yearns, and will not rest,  
To be where Scotland rallies now her truest and her best!

I heard them with the earliest dawn! I heard them gathering fast,  
A sound, as on the mighty sea, the menace of the blast;  
A mingled sound of thousand feet, and voices blent in one;  
And on the living spring-tide swept, and I was left alone!

Alone! Alone! Oh wearily the day hath lingered by!  
With now and then a far-off shout cleaving the distant sky:  
Yet have I wrestled with my God, some hours as moments past;  
But age halts soon—my son, my son! it is thy step at last!

"Father! a solemn eve hath fallen, a mighty deed is done;  
Pledged to his country and his God, receive and bless thy son!  
And pray, my father, ceaseless pray, that I may never shame  
The oath of God, to which this day I have affixed my name!

"We met within the ancient walls, where once the Greyfriars ruled,  
A concourse vast of earnest men in common danger schooled,  
Earth's titled ones, God's ministers, poor, rich, together driven,  
Christ's flock, awaiting 'neath the storm, their Shepherd's sign from heaven!

"And solemnly, oh solemnly! went up the breath of prayer,  
The silence, as a shadow, brooding o'er the thousands there;  
Only the pulse of each strong heart amid the stillness heard,  
Through which the voice of Henderson a nation's suit preferred!

"Ay, father! there was One, amid our convocation then,  
Whose eyes are as a flame of fire, to search the souls of men;  
Whose Spirit, moving wondrously, from heart to heart, can bring  
A willing people to the feet of their Almighty King!

"And when the noble Loudon spake of Scotland's gospel prime,  
Her covenants of other days, her glad espousal time;  
How fearless, through the wilderness, her God she followed still,  
And found a very present help in every time of ill—

"Till one by one her mighty men were gathered to their graves,  
And sons, degenerate from their sires, made Christ's own freemen slaves,  
Discrowning His anointed head to gem an earthly brow,  
Making our Father's holy house the ruin it is now!

"Oh, then there was such weeping through that bowed and silent throng,  
Such self-accusing bitterness for guilt contracted long,  
Such binding of the broken vows upon the soul once more—  
That very moment made us free, as we were free of yore!

"And now, with tone distinct and clear, as one whose word is power,  
Johnston of Warriston stood forth (God's gift in danger's hour),  
A mighty parchment in his hand, from which he read, the while  
A sudden sun-burst filled the place with heaven's approving smile!

(Continued on inside back cover)

# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

VOLUME 3

JULY - SEPTEMBER, 1948

NUMBER 3

## Sketches From Our History

### Contending for the Faith Through the Ages

#### CHAPTER III

##### DEFENDING THE TRUTH ABOUT MAN'S SIN AND GOD'S GRACE

In the Church's pursuit of a clear, accurate understanding of the revealed truth of God, it was necessary that the truth about God and Christ be clarified and vindicated over against error first of all. The early controversies dealt mainly with the doctrines of the Trinity and the Person and natures of the Redeemer. Not until the opening years of the fifth century did there arise a serious controversy about the doctrines of sin and salvation. Man's freedom and responsibility, his sinfulness and his need of God's grace for salvation—all of these truths were confessed and preached by the Church, but with varying emphases and without a clearly thought-out understanding of the relation of these various truths to each other. Some sections of the Church emphasized especially man's freedom and moral responsibility, while other sections stressed man's sinfulness and need of divine grace for salvation. Before these various truths could come to an adequate systematic expression in their mutual relations, the most serious kind of error would have to be faced and refuted.

Serious heresy concerning man, sin and salvation reared its head in the Church when a British monk named Morgan (or Pelagius, as he was commonly called from the Greek form of his name) began to carry on a propaganda for certain special views and opinions which proved to be very definitely contrary to the Scriptural teaching on these subjects.

Pelagius was born about the year 360 and died about 420. Practically nothing about his early life is known except that he came from British or possibly Ireland. He was never ordained as a minister or priest, but remained a layman all his life, though he habitually followed a strict monastic discipline.

Pelagius appeared at Rome about the year 400. He found the prevailing state of morality

among the people disappointingly low, and accordingly began to proclaim the duty of living an upright moral life. As this demand for right living was often met with a plea of human weakness and inability to live the good life, Pelagius soon came to the conclusion that the doctrines of original sin, total depravity and total inability were responsible for the apparent moral paralysis of the people. He felt that these doctrines cut the nerve of all human effort to attain righteousness, and made God responsible for man's being and remaining sinful. Accordingly Pelagius began to teach the contrary doctrines, especially the **plenary (complete, ability of man to live a perfectly righteous life if only he chooses to do so.** His watchword became: "If I ought, I can". When people sought to excuse their sins and shortcomings by saying "We are only human; we are not able to live as we ought", Pelagius became indignant, and retorted: "Oh, blind madness! we accuse God of a twofold ignorance; that He does not seem to know what He has made, nor what He has commanded; as if forgetting the human weakness of which He is Himself the Author, He has imposed laws on man which he cannot endure."

Pelagius was no longer a young man when he came to Rome, and he seems to have already attained something of a reputation for sanctity—that is, for sanctity of a certain obvious and external type. Like many men who have done incalculable harm in the world, Pelagius lived what appeared to be a model personal life. As far as the eyes of men could see his manner of life was blameless and he was an example of scrupulous performance of moral and religious duties. Yet Pelagius, who outwardly seemed to have such a smoothly righteous and religious life, was essentially a Pharisee rather than a Christian. If the Church had permanently tolerated his teachings it would have meant the end of all really saving gospel truth.

Like many another heretic who had troubled the Church and sabotaged the truth of God, Pelagius had an aversion to controversy and was a great lover of ecclesiastical and theological peace. He was also quite tactful and diplomatic, and took great care to avoid arousing open opposition to his teachings. During his early years at Rome he carried on a kind of private propaganda for his doctrines, avoiding public discussion of them. About this time he published a book entitled "Commentary on the Epistles of Saint Paul", in which he very subtly and cleverly introduced his unsound opinions in such a way that he could not be held responsible for them. He would set forth his opinions without claiming them to be true, but only suggesting them as points in need of further study and investigation. In this way the seeds of heresy were planted in the minds of the readers, without any actual denial of the truth or advocacy of unsound doctrine.

Pelagius began to make real progress in the propagation of his ideas when he succeeded in converting a young lawyer named Coelestius to his views. At this time (A. D. 411) the barbarian Goths were campaigning through Italy under their chieftain Alaric. Pelagius and Coelestius fled from Rome and took refuge in Northern Africa. Soon afterwards Pelagius journeyed to Palestine, leaving the younger Coelestius in Africa.

Coelestius was not only much younger than Pelagius, but also much more energetic and controversial. Soon Coelestius applied for ordination as a presbyter (minister) at the city of Carthage. This step on the part of Coelestius brought the doctrines of Pelagianism before the public in open controversy for the first time. Coelestius would very likely have been ordained, except for the fact that a deacon named Paulinus, who had travelled to Carthage from Italy, objected and brought charges of heresy against him. Thereupon a synod over which the bishop, Aurelius, presided, was summoned to determine the matter.

Paulinus accused Coelestius of maintaining seven false doctrines as follows: (1) That Adam was created mortal and would have died no matter whether he sinned or not; (2) that Adam's sin

did not have any effect on human race, but only on Adam himself; (3) that infants are born in the state of innocency the same as Adam was when he was created; (4) that Adam's sin did not bring death upon the whole human race, nor is Christ's resurrection the cause of all mankind rising from the dead; (5) that infants have eternal life even without being baptised; (6) that not only the gospel, but also the law, brings men to the kingdom of heaven; (7) that even before the time of Jesus Christ, some men had lived without sin.

Of these seven doctrines charged against Coelestius by Paulinus, all except one are unquestionably false and contrary to the Word of God. The one exception is No. 5, that infants have eternal life even without being baptised. In charging this against Coelestius as a false doctrine, Paulinus was controlled by the mistaken view of baptism which was quite generally held in the Church in his day, commonly called "baptismal regeneration", which regards baptism as the means of regeneration and as necessary for salvation. The truth is, of course, that while baptism is very important as an appointed sacrament of the New Testament, nevertheless salvation is not dependent upon it, and baptism must not be confounded with regeneration; baptism is the sign and seal, not the means, of regeneration or the new birth. Apart from this one item of his charges, Paulinus had a solidly Scriptural case against Coelestius.

Only fragmentary records of the synod have been preserved to the present day. Coelestius proved to be very persistent in maintaining his doctrines; the only one he was willing to retract was the fifth, that infants have eternal life even without being baptised. As for the other six teachings charged against him, he clung to them tenaciously. The synod really had no choice; it took the only justifiable action under the circumstances. Coelestius' doctrinal views were pronounced heretical, and he himself was excommunicated from the fellowship of the Church. Having failed to obtain the desired ordination at Carthage, Coelestius departed to Ephesus in Asia Minor, where he found the theological climate more favorable to him and where he was ordained as a presbyter of the Church.

(To Be Continued)

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## THE SCOTTISH COVENANTERS

### THEIR ORIGINS, HISTORY AND DISTINCTIVE DOCTRINES

(Selections from the book with the above title by J. G. Vos, published by the author in 1940)

#### PART II

#### THE HISTORY OF THE COVENANTERS

##### CHAPTER I

##### THE PERIOD OF PERSECUTION, 1660-1688

(Continued from last issue)

#### 4. The Indulgences and the Covenanters' Attitude Toward Them.

During the period of persecution between the Restoration and the Revolution, King Charles II issued three and King James VII four "Indulgences". These were royal offers to permit some of the ejected ministers to resume their ministry under certain regulations.

The first Indulgence of Charles II was proclaimed in 1669. On July 15th of that year, a letter from the King to the Privy Council directed the Council to "appoint so many of the ejected

ministers as had lived peaceably and orderly", to return to their original parishes, or to others if those were no longer vacant. Those accepting the Indulgence had, in order to claim the stipend of the parish, to obtain presentation from the patron and collation from the bishop of the diocese. If unwilling to submit to these requirements, they could exercise their ministry and have the use of the manse and glebe. Other conditions attached to this Indulgence were that those who accepted it must attend the prelati diocesan synods, must not permit people from other parishes to attend their preaching or receive ordinances from them, and must not publicly speak or preach against the doctrine that the king is supreme in all ecclesiastical causes.

This Indulgence was not offered to all the ejected ministers, but only to a favored few, most of whom were Resolutioners. It was first offered to ten ministers and later to a larger number. In the end about forty accepted it, and all of them made some kind of a qualifying statement concerning their understanding of the King's supremacy over the Church. Some of them stated, "We having received our ministry from Jesus Christ with prescriptions from Him regulating us therein, must, in the discharge thereof, be accountable to Him". Although forty or more ministers accepted the first Indulgence, few of them sought presentation by patrons or collation by bishops. This fact shows that their conduct, while it must be regarded as a sacrifice of principle, proceeded from unselfish motives; they were willing to give up their stipends if only they could exercise the functions of the ministry in peace. Even so, however, they compromised with prelacy.

The effect of the first and all following Indulgences was to weaken the Covenanters' cause by driving a wedge of division into their ranks. From 1669 on the ministers of Scotland were divided into the Indulged and the Non-indulged. Concerning the propriety of accepting the Indulgence, a great deal has been written. Hetherington says that "the whole discussion may be resolved into the question, which of three things ought to have been chosen by the Church; whether unanimously to accept the Indulgence, in which case she would at once have become prelati; or unanimously to reject it, in which case it would fall harmlessly to the ground; or some to receive and some to reject, in which case the Church would be divided, weakened, and trampled in the dust. The first could not be chosen without perjury; the second would have been the choice of high principles and sound prudence; the third was the course followed, recommended by the usual weak and short-sighted arguments of expediency, and proved to be the course of ruin". It will be noted that the terms on which part of the ejected ministers were offered back their pulpits were practically the same as the terms on which they might have retained them in 1662. The Indulgence, then,

instead of being a concession of anything by the King, was simply one more chance for Presbyterian ministers to keep their pulpits and their livings by becoming Episcopalians. If it is right for a covenanted Presbyterian to become an Episcopalian in order to keep the door open for preaching, then it was right to accept the first Indulgence. On the other hand if becoming Episcopalians involved a sacrifice of principle and a compromise with an unscriptural form of Church government, then it was wrong to accept the first Indulgence, and no reasons of expediency can justify the acceptance of it. But even outweighing the fact that acceptance of the Indulgence meant conforming to Episcopacy, was the fact that it meant conforming to Erastianism in its most extreme form. The Indulgence proceeded from the King's alleged supremacy over the Church; to accept the Indulgence meant to accept that Erastian supremacy, and this acceptance was not merely implied in accepting the Indulgence, but it was actually one of the stated conditions attached to the offer, for the Indulged ministers were warned against preaching or speaking against the King's supremacy in causes ecclesiastical.

In 1670 an attempt was made by the government to bring about an agreement between Presbyterians and Episcopalians in Scotland. Robert Leighton, one of the Scottish bishops appointed by Charles II, with the approval of the government, selected six of the Episcopal ministers, and accompanied by these travelled over the western counties of Scotland, attempting to win the people over to conformity to Episcopacy. Leighton was a good man and one who was grieved by the worldliness and abuses which existed among the prelati clergy. Gilbert Burnet, then professor of theology in Glasgow University, was one of the ministers who accompanied Leighton, and he has left us an interesting account of the people's reaction to the attempt to win them over. "The people of the country", he writes, "came generally to hear us, though not in great crowds. We were indeed amazed to see a poor commonalty so capable to argue upon points of government, and on the bounds to be set to the power of princes in matters of religion upon all these topics they had texts of Scripture at hand, and were ready with their answers to anything that was said to them. This measure of knowledge was spread even among the meanest of them, their cottagers and their servants. . . . The ministers had brought the people to such a degree of knowledge that cottagers and servants would have prayed extempore. I have often heard them at it; and, though there was a large mixture of odd stuff, yet I have been astonished to hear how copious and ready they were in it." This attempt to win the people over to Episcopacy was called the "Accommodation". Conferences were held in various places, but the whole attempt failed. The strict Covenanters knew their Bibles and their Church polity too well, and saw altogether too clearly the principles at stake, to yield to any such attempt.

The second Indulgence of Charles II was announced on September 3rd, 1672. It was offered to some eighty previously non-indulged ministers, many of whom rejected the offer. By the terms of this Indulgence, those who accepted it were placed two by two as joint pastors with each other or with previously indulged ministers. The object of this arrangement was apparently to confine the hitherto nonconforming ministers in the smallest possible bounds and thus limit their influence. They were forbidden to preach except in their own parishes, and were hemmed in by the some Erastian regulations as those who had accepted the first Indulgence. Although many rejected the second Indulgence, some accepted it, driving the wedge of division deeper into the ranks of the Covenanters. When the offer was proposed to a Mr. Blair, minister of Galston, he received the paper from the official who offered it, saying, "My Lord Chancellor, I cannot be so uncivil as to refuse a paper offered to me by your Lordship". He then let the paper fall to the floor, and added, "but I can receive no instructions from you for regulating the exercise of my ministry; for if I should receive instructions from you, I should be your ambassador, not Christ's". This action caused great excitement; many ministers condemned Blair, while others defended his action. Blair himself was imprisoned for his words, and died soon after.

Patrick Walker's comment on those who accepted the first and second Indulgences of Charles II is straight-forward and to the point: "Headlong they went to the unfathomable depth of defection, in their embracing of the Christ-dethroning, church-ruining, remnant-renting, zeal-queenching indulgence; where they lay in that puddle, with foul hands and garments, the first of them for 18 years, and the second for 11 years, juggling and dissembling . . .". Patrick Walker was not a man to smooth over an ugly matter with sweet and pleasant words; he believed in calling things by their right names.

The third Indulgence of Charles II was proclaimed on June 29th, 1679, a few days after the battle of Bothwell Bridge, in the form of "A proclamation suspending laws against conventicles". Like the former Indulgences, this one assumed the supremacy of the King in causes ecclesiastical. It suspended the execution of the laws against house conventicles, under certain regulations and restrictions, and specifically excepted a zone of two miles around Edinburgh and one mile around certain other places, the King "being fully resolved, not to suffer the seat of our government nor our universities to be pestered with any irregularities whatsoever". The Indulgence did not permit open air or field meetings, and it also specifically excepted those who had been involved in the "late rebellion" (Bothwell). As in the case of the former Indulgences, some ac-

cepted the third Indulgence and some rejected it. Under its terms, some ministers were released from prison. Altogether some fifteen ministers resumed preaching on account of the third Indulgence. But the toleration granted was of short duration; in a short time Erastian suppression and persecution were resumed.

In 1685 Charles II died and James VII (II of England) became King. James, formerly the Duke of York, was a Roman Catholic, and during his brief reign persecution of the strict Covenanters who kept field meetings reached its bitterest extreme, so that the years from 1685 to 1688 have been known as "the killing time". King James VII issued four Indulgences, the first of which, intended for the benefit of Roman Catholics, was proclaimed on February 12th, 1687 in a letter from the King to the Privy Council, in which the King "by his sovereign authority, prerogative royal, and absolute power, which all his subjects are to obey without reserve" granted his "royal toleration to the several professors of Christian religion". The proclamation continues: "In the first place, we allow and tolerate the moderate Presbyterians to meet in their private houses, and there to hear all such ministers as either have, or are willing to accept of our Indulgence, and none other". The laws against field conventicles were to remain in full force. The main purpose of the proclamation is then stated: the King by the royal prerogative and absolute power annulled all laws against Roman Catholics, gave them freedom of worship, made them eligible for public office, and abolished the Test, providing instead a new form of oath of allegiance owning the absolute power of the King. Like the Indulgences of Charles II, this one was thoroughly Erastian in nature and proceeded from the alleged supremacy of the King in causes ecclesiastical. It satisfied none but the Roman Catholics. The strict Covenanters continued their field conventicles and ignored the King's proposal. Patrick Walker says of the first Indulgence of King James VII, "The very design of that Popish toleration 1687, was, to lull all asleep, that they might get their bloody designs effectuate in a massacre; which were all stopt and crushed of their desires and designs, by the very remarkable steps of the Lord's providence". There seems to be general agreement, at any rate, that this Indulgence was intended to help the Catholics, and that the Presbyterians were included for the sake of appearances rather than from any real intention to help them.

The second Indulgence of King James VII followed soon after the first, on March 31st, 1687. This proclamation authorized the Privy Council to omit the oath and allow Presbyterian ministers to conduct services in private houses. Some ministers preached in houses, but not because of the Indulgence, and this was reported to the King by the Privy Council as the submission of all the ministers. The third Indulgence of James VII was

proclaimed at Edinburgh on the 5th of July, 1687. In this the King "by his sovereign authority, prerogative royal, and absolute power" suspended all laws against non-conformity in religion, and permitted Presbyterians "to meet and serve God after their own way and manner, be it in private houses, chapels, or places purposely hired or built for that use, so that they take care that nothing be preached or taught among them which may any ways tend to alienate the hearts of our people from us or our government". The laws against field conventicles were left "in full force and vigour", as the King held that, after this Indulgence, there could be no excuse for field meetings. This Indulgence was accepted by nearly all Presbyterian ministers in Scotland, except the strict Covenanters, who had just published their "Informatory Vindication", a statement and defence of their principles. They consistently rejected not only all of the Indulgences, but the very idea that an inalienable human right, the right to worship God according to his revealed will, can be either tolerated or restricted by any earthly ruler. An earthly king might recognize the right of his subjects to worship God according to the Scriptural pattern, but he could not lawfully tolerate such a right, for the very idea of toleration implies that the thing in question is not a right but a privilege that may be granted or withheld at pleasure. What the strict Covenanters saw clearly was, that the whole series of Indulgences was in essence not a recognition of man's right to worship God according to Scripture, but a mere concession or granting of privilege, which proceeded wholly from the utterly vicious doctrine of the supremacy of the King in causes ecclesiastical. The Covenanters saw that the Indulgences were Erastian to the core and utterly opposed to divine law and human freedom, and they held aloof from the whole system as from an unclean thing. To the bitter end they rejected every offer of Erastian toleration, maintained their high principle of the sole headship of Christ over the Church, and continued their field meetings.

From the time of the first Indulgence of Charles II, 1669, many Covenanting ministers preached against the Indulgence, but their preaching of separation from the indulged did not begin

until much later; Patrick Walker says that it began in 1677. Wodrow states that Richard Cameron was the first minister to preach separation from the indulged ministers, but Patrick Walker states that this is contrary to fact, because John Welwood, John Kid and others did the same before Cameron, whose preaching was during 1680. Walker quotes the following from a sermon by Kid, preached before Cameron preached separation from the indulged: "There is not a clean pulpit in all Scotland this day, curate nor indulged; wherefore come out among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not these unclean things, and I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty".

On May 15th, 1688, King James VII issued a fourth and final Indulgence. This Indulgence reaffirms the former ones, and like them speaks of the King's "sovereign authority, prerogative royal, and absolute power" which it states were "so plainly acknowledged by several acts of parliament". The Indulgence abolishes all oaths and religious tests for public office, and proclaims freedom of religion to all subjects. While this Indulgence was in some ways an improvement over the former ones, still it was vitiated by the fact that it proceeded from the absolute power of the monarch. The strict Covenanters, who had held themselves aloof from all the Indulgences, were on principle opposed to this one as to the former ones, not only because it proceeded from the King's "absolute power" but because the King was a Roman Catholic and therefore in their judgment had no right to the throne of Scotland, and because the fourth Indulgence tolerated not merely Presbyterianism but Roman Catholicism as well. Still the fourth Indulgence of James VII was the beginning of the end of persecution of the Covenanters. James Renwick had been hanged in February, 1688; the last Covenanter martyr, George Wood, a boy of sixteen years, was shot on sight during July (?) 1688. The persecuted Covenanters, followers of Cameron, Cargill and Renwick, had scorned seven Erastian Indulgences and had maintained pure Presbyterian worship in spite of all the opposition of the civil and military power of the land, for nearly thirty years.

(To Be Continued)

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## The Twenty-Seventh Psalm

THE BELIEVER; HIS FRIEND, AND HIS ENEMIES

By the Rev. Frank D. Frazer

(Note: This article is the second of a series of studies in the Psalms by the Rev. Frank D. Frazer. The series will be continued in future issues of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". Ed.)

A common but ill-informed criticism of the

Psalms is that they are unfit for Christians because so many of them—**more than half of them in fact**—have to do with "enemies", "haters", "deceivers", "adversaries", "oppressors", and other kind of foes, while there is so little in them

about "friends". David, it is said, lived in pre-Christian times of war and hate; of course he had many enemies. Christians, however, should cherish only the ideals of love, friendship and peace, shunning every thought of strife. But, there is such a thing as saying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace".

It is true that David had a notable enemy in king Saul, and many more among Saul's followers. It is true that he was "the warrior-king who conquered the enemies of Israel". By conquest he extended his kingdom to the Euphrates and included parts of Syria and Edom. But his political and foreign enemies will not account for the "enemies" spoken of in the Psalms.

Great honor is due David for his courage, strength, and nobility of character; his leadership, enhanced by sharp insight and foresight; his resourcefulness, his fidelity, his exceptional love for Jehovah, his God, and for not a few of his fellow men. Yet, while this is given generously, his history testifies that he did not always discern his worst enemies before they attacked and overcame him (e.g., see 1 Chron. 21:1; 2 Sam. 11:2). When "God had given him rest from all his enemies round about", he yielded to the pride of absolute power and to the allurements of oriental luxury, involving himself in the struggles of jealousy and ambition and the quarrels of a polygamous household. But neither his family troubles, the intrigues of his court, nor the perfidy of his people will account for the "enemies" he wrote about in the Psalms. Indeed, **the Psalms are not history; they are prophecy.** They are true to history, but they transcend it.

"David, being a prophet, spake . . ." (Acts 2:29-31); and, in common with all the prophets, "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow" (1 Pet. 1:11). The "enemies" spoken of in the Psalms are **the enemies of Christ, who caused His sufferings;** the enemies, therefore, of His body, the Church; the enemies of every member of His body in whom His Spirit dwells. So David, writing in the Spirit of Christ, calls them "my enemies; set **against me**". And these things were written for our admonition. Accordingly, when we use the Psalms, we are to "consider Him who endured, from sinners, such hostility against Himself" (Heb. 12:3), and that He did this for us, "lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

Then the Psalms will help us to be more keenly aware of the presence of enemies round about us; to realize how multitudinous, how malicious, how subtle they are. It is said, The Psalms are true to human experience, and that is the fact; but unless we enter seriously, resolutely, without counting the cost, into the struggles with tempters and temptations to evil which involve every Christian believer, there is a great deal of ex-

perience sketched in the Psalms we shall not be able to understand. We may even be persuaded that it does not concern us, but belongs to another age.

But, if we are alerted to our own immediate danger, the Psalms will further lead us into Christ's defence and security. For, "He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin". And, "in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to rescue them that are tempted."

## I. THE BELIEVER'S SECURITY (Verses 1-6)

### A. In the Midst of Enemies He is Not Afraid (vs. 1-3).

1. Jehovah is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

Jehovah is the strong shield of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

With **light** to see his enemies, exactly what they are and where they are; with **salvation** at hand when "wounded" or "bruised" or even "put to death"; with ample **protection** in the event of any attack, what more could he need? He is not afraid. But this is not because he thinks he is strong and skillful and well armed; not because he is in command of armies. His confidence is not in himself, but in Jehovah. Jehovah commands the armies he may need (Matt. 26:53). And he is not deluding himself; he already knows by experience. For,

2. When evil-doers came upon me to eat my flesh—mime enemies and my foes to do me harm—they themselves stumbled and fell.

They came as a pack of wolves. Read John 18:3-6. They had flaming lanterns and torches, but no light. They had all their weapons in the dark, but no strength. So "they themselves stumbled and fell", and he has reason to say,

3. Though an host encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Though battle rage against me, in this (extremity), as for myself, I am trusting.

**"Am always trusting"**. The Hebrew participle expresses constant, habitual action. So above the participle translated "**evil doers**" indicates the habitual, persistent doing of evil. This name, initially describing the "enemies", reveals their character and explains their enmity. They are sinners, wicked men, unbelievers. And they are multitudes as over against one who keeps on believing God, in spite of every threat, in spite of every attack. Such constancy David did not have. But there is ONE who has it; the ONE who told His disciples, "The world hates me because I testify of it that **its deeds are evil!**" (John 7:7).



No small part of that testimony is given in the Psalms. In the third chapter of Romans proof of the universal wickedness of mankind is established by seven quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures; six of these are from the Psalms; one is from Isaiah. And, on looking through the Book of Psalms, we are amazed at the many additional proof texts to the same fact that could be gathered there.

The Psalms being thus the testimony of the Righteous Man, who "knew what is in man", to the effect that "all have sinned"; that "there is none righteous, no, not one", is it strange that He has little to say about "friends"? For, even His friends turned away from Him, if they did not turn against Him. "My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my plague; and the kinsmen stand afar off" (Psalm 38:11). "I am become a reproach, yea, unto my neighbors exceedingly, and a fear to mine acquaintances" (Psalm 31:11). "I am become a stranger to my brethren" (Psalm 69:3). One of them said, "I know not this man". Then there was the "friend" that betrayed Him (Psalm 55:12-14). But, there is ONE FRIEND about whom He has a great deal to say, THE FRIEND who is His light, His salvation, and His protection. "And there is none upon earth that I desire beside THEE"; "As for me, it is good for me to be near unto God" (Psalm 73:25,28). Therefore,

#### B. He Seeks Refuge in the House of His Friend (vss. 4,5).

4. One thing I asked of Jehovah;—that I am seeking for;—to have my home in the House of Jehovah all the days of my life. To see the graciousness of Jehovah, and to inquire in His Temple. 5. For He will shelter me in His Booth in the evil day; He will hide me in the hiding-place of His Tent; on a Rock He will lift me up.

The terms "House of Jehovah", "His Temple", "His Booth", "His Tent", describe the place where Jehovah is to be found; they describe the defences which Jehovah has provided. Hence, of course, they include the Church, but they are not ecclesiastical terms and cannot be so limited. His House is the place of intimate companionship, where one may see for himself and receive the bounties of His marvellous grace. His Temple is His official presence-chamber, with its courts, where one may learn the truth, and receive guidance and strength for the dangers of the way. His Booth is the shelter provided in the field where "thy servant" is working. It is for the day, "the evil day"; a shelter from hot winds, (hot words, "the strife of tongues"; compare Psalm 31:20): a shelter from a scorching sun, dispensing judgment. His Tent is set up anywhere by the

side of the road. It affords shelter for a night, from wild beasts, or a passing storm. Inside there is a secret hiding-place, so that even should the "enemies" break in, they will not find "thy servant". But, should they, pressing in on every side, succeed in finding him, there is still the Rock which is the foundation of strength for every defence. Lifted up on that "Rock of Habitation", he is in a position inaccessible to "enemies". It is a Rock of Refuge sufficiently high and sufficiently strong to guarantee security in any possible emergency.

#### C. His Triumph and Joy Within That Refuge (vs. 6).

6. And so shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me; and I will sacrifice in His Tent sacrifices of great joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing Psalms to Jehovah.

The word here translated "enemies" is the most general Hebrew term. Being a participle, it expresses determined, unceasing hostility. "Round about me" marks the central figure against whom the hostility is directed from every angle. But now his head is "lifted up" in triumph above the angry, raging sea of adversaries. The victory is decisive. He holds a position that no enemy can reach, for Jehovah has given it to him. And, "He is set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high", that is, in the seat of universal authority. Here, "He must rule—continue to rule uninterruptibly—until God hath put all His enemies under His feet" (1 Cor. 15:20-28).

Now the word "sacrifice", in Scripture, means only one thing. It means a slaughtered substitute for sinners offered to God according to His own will and appointment. The word translated "great joy" is in some places rendered "loud noise" or "shouting". It is a joy that makes itself heard afar off. "Sacrifices of great joy" are the fullest possible expressions of the joy of salvation offered to God through the sacrifice, in the assurance that they will be heard and accepted by Him. It must have been "great joy" indeed for the Man Christ Jesus, "who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and hath sat down on the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2). That joy still re-echoes through the halls of heaven, "over one sinner that repenteth"; and, on the earth, wherever the pure, unleavened gospel is proclaimed and believed; wherever the Psalms are sung with heart and understanding. For, in Christ, every believer shares His triumph and His joy, being "made to sit with Him in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:20; 2:6).

(To Be Continued)

# Our Church Covenant and Modern Life

(Note: This is the fourth of a series of sermons on the obligations involved in the Church Covenant sworn and subscribed by the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, May 21, 1871. The other sermons of the series will be published in future issues of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". The editor desires to

acknowledge his great indebtedness to the Rev. Frank D. Frazer, whose booklet entitled "Outline Studies in the Covenant" was very helpful in the preparation of this series of sermons. Every Covenanter should read and study Mr. Frazer's excellent booklet, which clearly and convincingly displays the Scriptural character of the obligations set forth in the Covenant of 1871.—Ed.)

## IV. WHAT ACCEPTANCE OF THE TRUTH INVOLVES

Scripture Reading: 1 Timothy 6.

The Covenant of 1871, besides a preliminary confession of sins, consists of an introductory paragraph and six sections. This Covenant was adopted in 1871 after long and earnest preparation, and it is recognized by the "Terms of Communion" as binding on the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America today. In order that we may have a bird's-eye view of the Covenant as a whole, I shall present the subjects of the various sections as given in Mr. Frazer's "Outline Studies in the Covenant". These are as follows:

1. We hereby covenant to do our duty to God.
2. We hereby covenant to do our duty to the truth of God.
3. We hereby covenant to do our duty to the nation.
4. We hereby covenant to do our duty to the Church-at-large.
5. We hereby covenant to do our duty to the world.
6. We hereby covenant to perform these, our duties, faithfully.

The first paragraph of Section 2 of our Church Covenant reads as follows:

"That after careful examination, having embraced the system of faith, order and worship revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and summarized, as to doctrine, in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, and Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, and, as to order and worship, justly set forth in substance and outline in the Westminster Form of Church Government and Directory for Worship, we do publicly profess and own this as the true Christian faith and religion, and the system of order and worship appointed by Christ for His own house, and, by the grace of God, we

will sincerely and constantly endeavor to understand it more fully, to hold and observe it in its integrity, and to transmit the knowledge of the same to posterity. We solemnly reject whatever is known by us to be contrary to the Word of God, our recognized and approved manuals of faith and order, and the great principles of the Protestant Reformation. Particularly, we abjure and condemn Infidelity, under all its various aspects; Atheism, or the denial of the divine existence; Pantheism, with its denial of the divine personality; Naturalism, with its denial of the divine Providential Government; Spiritualism, with its denial of the Bible redemption; Indifferentism, with its denial of man's responsibility; Formalism, with its denial of the power of godliness. We abjure and condemn Popery, with its arrogant assumption of supremacy and infallibility; its corrupt and heretical teachings; its dogma of the Immaculate Conception; its hostility to civil and religious liberty, to the progress of society in civilization and intelligence, and especially its denial, in common with Infidelity, or the right and duty of the State to educate in morality and religion by the use of the Bible in schools enjoying its patronage and support."

In discussing the first sentence of the above-quoted paragraph of Section 2 of our Covenant, in the previous sermon of this series, we saw that our Church Covenant requires an **intelligent attachment to the truth**. This involves both a **knowledge** of the truth and a **love** for the truth. Continuing this discussion in the present sermon, we shall see that our Covenant requires:

- I. A Public Recognition of the Truth.
- II. An Earnest Effort to Understand the Truth.
- III. A Sincere Resolve to Preserve the Truth.
- IV. An Active Endeavor to Propagate the Truth.
- V. A Rejection of Errors Contrary to the Truth.

## I. A Public Recognition of the Truth

Christ our Lord has commanded us to confess Him before men. Someone might ask, What has confessing Christ before men to do with acknowledging the system of truth set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, etc.? If we will think it through we will see that it has a great deal to do with it. We cannot really confess Christ before men unless we confess **the truth about Christ** before men. The truth about Christ is set forth in the Bible; we cannot spin it out of our own consciousness; we must get it from the Bible. As a matter of fact the whole Bible is the truth about Christ. Apart from the Bible as a whole, Christ would be meaningless. It is **in the Bible system of truth** that Christ has meaning.

Everyone that professes to be a Christian is an adherent of some system of doctrine, consciously or unconsciously. It is not a question of **whether** we will have a system of doctrine, but of **what** system of doctrine we are to have. Really and adequately to confess Christ before men, not just as a mere word or name, but in reality we must confess the system of truth in which Christ is revealed to us.

Go to the primitive tribes of the upper Amazon valley and find Indians who never saw a white man. Show them a spark plug. Tell them, "This is a spark plug". Will it mean anything to them? No, for it will not be related in their minds to the system of which it forms a part. But show them an automobile. Teach them the principles on which it is operated. Show them the function of the spark plug in the system of the automobile, or the gasoline engine. Then the spark plug will have meaning to them.

Nothing is more foolish and absurd than the modern notion that we can believe in Christ without doctrine, and confess Christ without adhering to the Scriptural system of truth.

Now in our Covenant we profess and own the system of truth summarized in our Church Standards **as the true Christian faith and religion, and the system of order and worship appointed by Christ for His own house.**

Many other denominations hold this system of truth **in part**. Some even hold a **very large part** of it. But they are partly inconsistent. They hold it, we humbly believe, in a less complete and consistent form than that set forth in our Church Standards, the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, the Form of Church Government and Directory for Worship.

Is this spiritual pride on our part? Are we setting ourselves up as better and holier than other denominations? Not at all. Others are responsible to God for their own faith and life; we

are responsible to God for **our faith and life**. We are simply exercising our God-given responsibility of professing the Christian religion in what we sincerely believe to be its most complete and consistent form. Every Christian and every Church should do the same. If a Church believes its creed is true to the Scriptures, it should stand up for it; if it believes it is not true to the Scriptures, it should amend its creed or change it for a creed that is true to God's Word.

There are two words in this sentence of the Covenant that we should especially note. They are **profess** and **own**. We publicly **profess** and we publicly **own** this system as the true Christian faith and religion. To profess means to give our adherence to it publicly before the world. It means not to be ashamed of it, in any company whatever. To own means to take it as our own personal faith and religion. It means not merely to be a member of a Church that has adopted this creed, but to take it as our own personal creed, publicly, before the world.

It is not popular to be a Covenanter today. Perhaps we could not find a more unpopular denomination of Christians. But in spite of unpopularity, we publicly profess and own this system **as the real truth of God**. We are counting on it that at the Judgment Day the Great Judge will say we were right—"Well done, good and faithful servant".

What do we think of a person who is ashamed of being an American citizen? Perhaps you think that nobody is ever ashamed of being an American citizen. Just now, and here in our own country, it is highly respectable to be a loyal American citizen. But there are some places in the world where this is not the case. There are places where being an American citizen, instead of being considered an honor, is regarded as a matter of reproach. There were some Americans in enemy countries during the last war who were ashamed of being American citizens. They were approached with requests to engage in propaganda work for the enemies of our country. When the temptation came, they yielded to it. They preferred the totalitarian systems to the American system. We call them traitors, and their offence we call treason—disloyalty to their country.

We should never be ashamed of being citizens of the United States of America, even though we may recognize that our country is not perfect, that it has some serious faults. Nor should we be ashamed of being Covenanters and standing up before the world for the unpopular truths. The question—the real question—is not popularity, but **truth**. In the end we have to choose where our public profession and witness shall be—which system, which truths and doctrines, shall have our support.

## II. An Earnest Effort to Understand the Truth

"We will sincerely and constantly endeavor to understand it more fully. . .". This pledge of our Covenant implies a **continued effort at progress in knowledge of the truth revealed in the Bible**. Every Christian should continually grow in knowledge of Christian truth. Every Christian has some knowledge of Christian truth; some have more, some less, but all have some. And every Christian should have the ideal of more knowledge as his constant aim. Complete knowledge will never be attained in this life; "we know in part".

Increase in knowledge must be a more or less gradual process. Therefore to grow in knowledge requires effort, persistence and patience. This is a life-long assignment. Until we depart this life and enter the state of glory, we must seek to increase in our knowledge of the Word of God.

It is a fine thing to have a great or inclusive knowledge. But the most important thing is that we have a **growing** knowledge and understanding of God's truth. The important thing is that we shall not be static Christians, standing still, satisfied with what we have already attained. We must be eager to grow in knowledge.

This ideal of a constantly growing knowledge of the truth of God is greatly interfered with by the modern opposition to and depreciation of doctrine. The modern idea that Christianity is not a matter of doctrine but only a kind of life, results in Christians who are static, who do not grow in knowledge of the truth. If Christian doc-

trine does not matter, why should we take the trouble to learn more of it? Consequently there are multitudes of Church members in America who have no greater knowledge of the Bible today than they had ten or twenty-five years ago. Their little stock in trade is always the same—just the bare minimum of a few "essential truths", nothing more.

Modern preaching is largely responsible for this standstill. Preaching that only aims at stirring people up to support this or that practical program or activity, does not build people up in knowledge. There are Churches today, large and popular Churches, which a person could attend faithfully for a period of years, and yet gain practically no new knowledge of the meaning of the Bible. The preaching in such Churches is not really **instructive**; it is just a series of exhortations, urging people to do this, to do that, to do something else. Such preachers do not even aim at teaching a definite system of truth to the people.

We hold that Christianity is first of all a body of truth, and therefore we hold the ideal of a constantly increasing knowledge of that body of truth. We will seek, by personal Bible study, by family worship, by faithful attendance at Church services and meetings, to understand the truth of God more and more fully. We will not be satisfied with past attainments. We will not be discouraged by small progress, provided we really make some progress. We will never be satisfied to stand still. We will strive to go forward.

## III. A Sincere Resolve to Preserve the Truth

"We will sincerely and constantly endeavor . . . to hold and observe it in its integrity".

This system of truth revealed in God's Word is constantly being challenged. It is constantly under attack by Satan and Satan's helpers. There is a constant danger of disloyalty, compromise, and betrayal of the truth. The constant opposition to the system of truth held by our Church is perhaps one form of evidence that it really is the truth of God.

This opposition to the truth, and danger of the truth being tampered with, adulterated or destroyed, is not limited to the world. It is not only worldly people outside the membership of the Visible Church that oppose the truth. Sad to say, opposition to the truth arises even within the Church. And this internal opposition to the truth is the most subtle and dangerous form of opposition to the truth, and the hardest to deal with and counteract.

The Bible itself predicts that opposition to the truth will arise within the Visible Church. Paul told the elders of the Church at Ephesus: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the peace of three years, I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:29-31).

Peter wrote in his second Epistle: "But there were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (2 Peter 2:1,2).

Clearly, then, the Bible teaches us that the integrity of the truth is threatened not only by

forces existing outside the Church, but inside the Church as well. There will be those who claim to be friends of the truth, and who seem to be friends of the truth, who will betray and destroy the truth.

In the face of this threat to the truth, we pledge ourselves in our Covenant to do what we can to **hold and observe the system of truth in its integrity**, that is, to defend the truth and protect it from attacks that are made upon it.

How, then, are we to defend the truth?

First of all, we must realize that the truth will **need** to be defended. Some people say we need not defend the Bible, or the Christian religion; that it will defend itself. But it has not been so in the past. In past times God has always used the **efforts and testimony of Christian people** as the means of defending and preserving His truth. He has used the testimony of people who were willing to stand up for the truth. We should realize, then, that the **truth will need to be defended**. We will be alert. We will not be asleep on duty. We will be on our guard.

Then, we will not be afraid of criticism or unpopularity. Nobody enjoys being harshly criticized; nobody likes to be unpopular. But defence of the truth of God is so important a matter that our own feelings and our own interests simply do not count in comparison with it. Just as loyalty to our country is more important than our own comfort, so loyalty to the truth of God is vastly more important than our own feelings and personal interests. When God's cause is at stake, our personal feelings and desires just do not count.

Also we will be willing to defend the truth **without respect of persons**. That is, we will oppose any person who is attacking or undermining

the truth, regardless of who that person may be, what position he may occupy, what honors he may have, or what his reputation and attainments may be. Treason is treason, no matter who commits it. We will defend the truth without respect of persons.

This pledge of our Covenant also implies that we will give our encouragement and support to those ministers and other leaders who are standing publicly for the defence of the truth, and we will discountenance those who may at any time be doing the opposite. We will see that our influence, whether it be great or small, is exerted on the side of the system of truth that we believe the Bible teaches.

Ever since the days of Ahab and Elijah, those who publicly stand up for the truth of God, and defend the truth of God in dead earnest, **have been called trouble-makers**. A person who makes an attack on the truth is never accused of controversy; he may question the truth, oppose the truth, deny the truth, misrepresent the truth, compromise the truth—and he will never be called “controversial” for doing it. But let someone rise to challenge this attack on the truth, let someone stand up and say “No!” to this attack on the truth, and he will immediately be called a “trouble-maker”; he will immediately be accused of disturbing the peace of the Church by causing “controversy”. It is a strange thing. The Ahabs always make the trouble, and the Elijahs always get blamed for being trouble-makers. The person who is **on the defensive** is accused of starting the war! The person who stands up for what the Church officially holds and has always held, is the one who is blamed for controversy.

If we are really dead in earnest, we will be ready to support and defend the system of truth **even in spite of being called trouble-makers**.

#### IV. An Active Endeavor to Propagate the Truth

“We will sincerely and constanly endeavor to transmit the knowledge of the same to posterity.”

Herein we pledge ourselves to an **active endeavor to propagate the truth**. This body of truth is not just for Covenanters; it is for the world. It is not just for our own day; it is for the future; it is for all time.

This body of truth which we hold has a long history back of it. It has been known and believed and loved and lived by, long before our time. We did not work this all out at first-hand by our own original Bible study. Other men labored, and we have entered into their labors. Our spiritual forefathers have blazed the trail for

us. We have received the knowledge of the truth from our forefathers. It goes back, generation by generation, to the days of Christ and the Apostles.

Now as we have received the truth from the generation before us, we have an obligation to hand it down to the generation after us. That is God's appointed way of preserving and propagating His truth in this world. The Church is the guardian of the truth, to transmit it to the generations of the future.

How can we best accomplish this aim? Well, first of all, we will seek that the younger generation of our own families shall know and love the

truth. Family worship will help to accomplish this. But other religious instruction is needed too.

Then, we will see that home and foreign missions are amply supported. They not only lead men to Christ; they underwrite the transmission of the truth to the next generation, at home and abroad.

Needless to say, we will support the ordinances of God in our own local congregation, for our own congregation and others like it transmit the truth to the next generation. Individuals pass away from this earthly scene, but a congregation lives on and bears a witness to the next generation. Here at Hebron we recently celebrated our 75th anniversary of existence as an organized congregation. 75 years is a long time.

#### V. A Rejection of Errors Contrary to the Truth

"We solemnly reject whatever is known by us to be contrary to the Word of God, our recognized and approved manuals of faith and order, and the great principles of the Protestant Reformation. Particularly we abjure and condemn Infidelity", etc.

There is no such thing as accepting the truth without at the same time rejecting errors which are contrary to the truth. That popular song of two or three years ago, "Accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative", is untrue to life. We cannot accentuate the positive without accentuating the negative too.

You cannot be a loyal American without rejecting Nazism, Shintoism, Fascism and Communism. To reject these "isms" is negative, but a person must do it. The same is true in religion. A person cannot really accept the truth, and be loyal to the truth, unless he is willing to reject the errors which are contrary to the truth.

You cannot be a real Protestant without rejecting Romanism. You cannot be a real Calvinist without rejecting Arminianism. The person who tries to avoid taking sides, who says he will "walk the fence", does not really stand for much of anything. So in addition to our positive adherence

Here is our Church today, bearing witness to the same body of truth, bringing the same message to the people of 1948 as the Hebron congregation brought to the people of this community when it was first organized in 1871.

It is true that local congregations sometimes die out. It is also true that congregations and sometimes even whole denominations may prove unfaithful to the truth, and betray the cause of the truth. That is a tragedy. It need not happen. When it does happen, it is because of the sinful disloyalty of the members. May God grant that our congregation may neither die out nor turn against the truth, but remain a faithful and effective witness to the truth of God's Word for all time to come! If we really want this to be true, we will do our part to make it come true.

to the truth, we plainly declare that we reject the various systems of falsehood that are contrary to the truth.

Our Covenant mentions a number of these systems of falsehood by name. It deals with three classes of errors—errors in doctrine, errors in Church government, and errors in worship. Some of the particular sects and cults mentioned by our Covenant were prominent when the Covenant was adopted, back in 1871. Some of the names may look a little strange to us today. We should realize, however, that nearly all the latest cults and "isms" are included under one or another of these false systems rejected by our Church Covenant. For instance, the theory of human evolution, that man is descended from the lower animals, comes under the teaching of "Naturalism".

I shall not take time to speak of all these false systems in detail. But we should realize that accepting the truth means rejecting error. This is contrary to the great American idea of "tolerance", which claims that one religion is as good as another if only a person is sincere. We reject all such false "tolerance", all such easy-going evasion of the duty of discriminating between truth and error. Rejection of error, no less than profession of truth, is our testimony to Christ as our Saviour, our confession of Him before men.

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## Some Noteworthy Quotations

"There are few names in which more crimes against the Church of Christ have been committed, and are being still committed in our day—not least on mission ground—than the name of 'unity'. A show of organized strength in the face of the world is everywhere being made to

take the place of the only real strength, which comes out of loyalty to Christ and His Word. Everywhere men are busy building a big house over a divided family and reek nothing of that divided heart which can prosper in nothing."

B. B. Warfield

"Since we see that the whole of our salvation, and all of the branches of it, are comprehended in Christ, we must be cautious not to alienate from Him the least possible portion of it. If we seek salvation, we are taught by the name of JESUS, that it is in Him; if we seek any other gifts of the Spirit, they will be found in His unction; strength, in His dominion; purity, in His conception; indulgence discovers itself in His nativity, by which He was made to resemble us in all things, that He might learn to condole with us; if we seek redemption, it will be found in His passion; absolution, in His condemnation; remission of all curses, in His cross; satisfaction, in His sacrifice; purification, in His blood; reconciliation, in His descent into hell; mortification of the flesh, in His sepulchre; newness of life and immortality, in His resurrection; the inheritance of the celestial kingdom, in His entrance into heaven; protection, security, abundance, and enjoyment of all blessings, in His kingdom; a fearless expectation of the judgment, in the judicial authority committed to Him. Finally blessings of every kind are deposited in Him; let us draw

from His treasury, and from no other source, till our desires are satisfied."

John Calvin

"I am poor and needy; yet best, while in hidden groanings I displease myself, and seek Thy mercy, until what is lacking in my defective state be renewed and perfected, on to the peace which the eye of the proud knoweth not of."

Augustine of Hippo

"One prayer is worth ten thousand resolutions."

Charles H. Spurgeon

"It is our duty, as far as lies in our power, immediately to organize human society and all its institutions and organs upon a distinctively Christian basis."

A. A. Hodge

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## Religious Terms Defined

A few definitions of important religious terms will be given in this department in each issue of "Blue Banner Faith and Life." The aim will be conciseness without the sacrifice of accuracy. Where possible the Westminster Shorter Catechism will be quoted.

**MEANS OF GRACE.** "The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption, are his ordinances, especially the word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation." (S.C. 88).

**THE WORD.** The Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments, which as the special revelation of God makes known to sinners the only way of salvation.

**SACRAMENTS.** "A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ; wherein, by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers." (S.C.92).

**NEW TESTAMENT SACRAMENTS.** "The sacraments of the New Testament are, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper." (S.C. 93).

**BAPTISM.** "Baptism is a sacrament, wherein the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's." (S.C. 94).

**THE LORD'S SUPPER.** "The Lord's Supper is a sacrament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, his death is showed forth; and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace." (S.C. 96).

**PRAYER.** "Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies." (S.C. 98).

**ELEMENTS OF PRAYER.** The various kinds of addresses to God which together make up Christian prayer.

**ADORATION.** That element of prayer which ascribes honor to God for His perfections and attributes.

**THANKSGIVING.** That element of prayer which expresses gratitude to God for His love and mercies.

**CONFESSION.** That element of prayer which expresses our unworthiness and ill-desert because of our sins, and our sincere sorrow for them.

**PETITION.** That element of prayer in which we make request of God for any blessings which are agreeable to His will.

**INTERCESSION.** The special form of petition in which we request God for blessings to be bestowed upon others, or upon His Church.

**PREACHING.** The proclamation of the Word of God, with exposition of its meaning, and application to the circumstances of the hearers; if in a congregation of Christ's Church, by a min-

ister of the Gospel or other properly authorized person.

**EVANGELISM.** Proclamation of the Gospel of Christ with the specific aim of the conversion of sinners, by a minister of the Gospel or a private Christian, publicly or privately, formally or informally.

**MISSIONS.** The work of evangelism and Church establishment carried on by the visible Church beyond its existing boundaries.

**MISSIONARY.** Any person appointed by the Church to engage in any part of the work of missions as a vocation.

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## Studies in the Larger Catechism of The Westminster Assembly

### LESSON 131—FOR WEEK BEGINNING JULY 4, 1948

**Q. 145 (Continued).** What are the sins forbidden in the ninth commandment?

**A.** The sins forbidden in the ninth commandment are . . . evil suspicion; envying or grieving at the deserved credit of any, endeavoring or desiring to impair it, rejoicing in their disgrace and infamy; scornful contempt, fond admiration; breach of lawful promises; neglecting such things as are of good report, and practicing or not avoiding ourselves, or not hindering what we can in others, such things as procure an ill name.

#### Scripture References:

1 Cor. 13:5. 1 Tim. 6:4. The sin of harboring evil suspicions concerning others.

Num. 11:29. Matt. 21:15. The sin of envying at the deserved credit of others.

Ezra 4:12, 13. Seeking to damage the good reputation of others.

Jer. 48:27. 1 Cor. 13:6. The sin of being glad of the sins or disgrace of others.

Psalms 35:15, 16, 21. Matt. 27:28, 29. The sin of scornful contempt.

Jude 16. Acts 12:22. The sins of fond admiration and flattery.

Rom. 1:31. 2 Tim. 3:3. The sin of breaking lawful promises or vows.

1 Sam. 2:24. 2 Sam. 13:12, 13. Prov. 5:8,9; 6:33. The sins of neglecting such things as are of good report, and involvement in such things as procure a bad reputation.

#### Questions:

1. What is meant by "evil suspicion"?

This expression does not mean a legitimate suspicion, which is supported by reasonable evidence, but rather an improper suspicion, which is not based on evidence but arises from "wishful thinking", or our too-great readiness to believe something bad about others. Because of our sinful hearts we are too ready to put the worst interpretation on other people's conduct, when perhaps the actual facts of the matter could be explained in a more charitable way.

2. What is meant by "envying or grieving at the deserved credit of any", and why is this wrong?

Envying means being highly displeased when someone else receives some honor, praise or recognition that we would like to have ourselves, but which has not been given to us. Such envy results in nursing a secret grudge or dislike against the person whose success is envied. It is sinful because it is a proud and selfish dissatisfaction with the providence of God.



3. Why is it wrong to wish or attempt to injure the honor or good reputation of others?

This common practice is wrong (a) because it is contrary to truth, and therefore displeasing to God, whose nature is truth; (b) because it is contrary to love to our neighbor, whose true honor and welfare should be an occasion of rejoicing to us, as if it were our own honor and welfare.

4. How do Christian people commit the sin of rejoicing in iniquity?

Many Christian people who would no doubt be ashamed openly to rejoice in iniquity practiced by others, yet commit this sin in other ways. Some gossip about sins committed by others, claiming to be highly scandalized by the wrong that has been done, yet obviously taking a great satisfaction in telling about it. Others who are ashamed to do this openly will take a secret satisfaction in their hearts, rejoicing in the sins and shame of others.

5. What is "scornful contempt"?

This means treating or regarding others, in word, thought or deed, in a way which ignores their natural human dignity as people created in the image of God. When such contempt is directed against those who are our Christian brethren and fellow-members of the household of God, it is a greatly aggravated sin. Our Saviour was treated with scornful contempt when he was mocked and derided by the Roman soldiers and the scribes and Pharisees and priests at the cross.

6. What is "fond admiration"?

This expression means a blind, foolish devotion to some person, so that we praise and honor that person extravagantly, beyond what he really deserves, and regardless of the real facts of that person's life. Fond admiration is an attitude of the mind, which leads to the sin of flattery, or expressing of foolish and extravagant praise of some person.

7. Why is it wrong to break our lawful vows and promises?

We are morally responsible to God for our actions, and God requires of us that lawful vows and promises be sacredly kept. The godly man is described in the Bible as the man who swears to his own hurt, and changes not; that is, the man who stands by his word even when he finds that it will cause him some financial or other loss to do so. His contracts are fulfilled even when he suffers a loss by doing so.

8. What is our duty with respect to the good name, or good reputation, of ourselves and others?

(a) We are to attend to and practice such things as result in a good reputation; (b) we are to avoid whatever results in a bad reputation. Thus we have a duty, both for ourselves and for others, to seek to have a good name, and to seek to avoid its opposite. "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches".

### LESSON 132—FOR WEEK BEGINNING JULY 11, 1948

Q. 146. Which is the tenth commandment?

A. The tenth commandment is, Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's.

Q. 147. What are the duties required in the tenth commandment?

A. The duties required in the tenth commandment are, such a full contentment with our own condition, and such a charitable frame of the whole soul toward our neighbor, as that all our inward motions and affections touching him, tend unto, and further all that good which is his.

#### Scripture References:

Ex. 20:17. The tenth commandment.

Phil. 4:11. Heb. 13:5. 1 Tim. 6:8. The Christian duty of contentment.

Job 31:29. Rom. 12:15. Psalm 122:7-9. 1 Tim. 1:5. Esther 10:3. 1 Cor. 13:4-7. The duty of a right attitude toward our neighbor and all this is his.

#### Questions:

1. What is meant by contentment?

Contentment, as the word is used in the Catechism, means willingness to accept that condition in which God's providence has placed us, without murmuring or complaining, or being envious at the blessings or prosperity of others.

2. Why are communists particularly opposed to the tenth commandment?

Communism opposes the tenth commandment with the slogan "Religion is the opium of the people"; that is, communism holds that Christ-

ianity, by this commandment and similar statements of God's Word, teaches people that it is their duty to be patient and contented with their situation in life, whereas communism would have the people improve their condition by violent revolution, the poor taking possession of the wealth of the rich, etc. According to Christianity, contentment is a virtue; according to communist doctrine, it is a vice.

3. Does the Christian duty of contentment imply that it is wrong to try to improve our condition in life?

No. It is our duty to be contented with our condition in life, as long as by God's providence it remains our condition. This does not imply that it is wrong to try to change or improve our condition, so long as we use right and lawful means and methods for doing so. The duty of contentment must not be made an excuse for laziness, lack of ambition, or neglect of industrious work. We may seek to improve our condition and increase our worldly wealth by all right and lawful means, but while we are doing this we must always maintain a Christian spirit of contentment with what we have at the moment. That is to say, we may never make the increase of wealth our main concern in life, nor regard it as the real object of our hopes. Even while we are working to improve our condition, we must always regard God and God's kingdom as our true riches.

4. Is it true that "Religion is the opium of the people"?

No doubt there have been some very corrupt and degenerate forms of Christianity that have tended to destroy people's ambition and make them satisfied to live in misery and wretched poverty without trying to do anything to change such conditions. But this change is not true of real Christianity, and especially not of Protestant Christianity in its most consistent form (Calvinism, or the Reformed Faith). Everywhere that the Calvinistic system of doctrine has been accepted and taken seriously, it has stirred people up to vigorous activity in all spheres of life, and has tended to increase the material prosperity of the people in general. There have been three striking examples of this in three regions of the world which naturally are far from rich in wealth or material resources. The first is the little country of Holland, which is so situated that constant effort is required to hold the land against the encroachments of the ocean. The second is Scotland, largely a country of rocky hills, very poorly suited to agriculture, and apparently unable to support a large population. The third example is New England, a region of stony hillsides and very cold winters. In all three of these regions the Calvinistic form of Christianity was generally accepted and became the prevailing religion; and all three, in spite of

their natural handicaps, became world-famous for their advancement and prosperity. In each case, Christianity led to honest government, initiative, hard work and thrift, which greatly improved the condition of the people.

5. What attitude toward our neighbor is required by the tenth commandment?

The tenth commandment requires "a charitable frame of the whole soul toward our neighbor", which means that we are to love our neighbor in such a way that we will be glad and thankful for his true welfare and prosperity, as if it were our own.

6. Is it easy to have such an attitude of love toward our neighbor?

No. Our natural sinful hearts are extremely selfish, and they tend toward envy and covetousness at the welfare and prosperity of others. Only by the grace of God in our hearts, by the power of the Holy Spirit, can we really even begin to love our neighbor as ourself.

7. What is meant by "our inward motions and affections" with regard to our neighbor?

By "our inward motions and affections" the Catechism means the thoughts, desires and motives of our hearts, which spring from our character, and which determine our outward life and conduct. Thus the tenth commandment requires that we shall have right thoughts, desires and motives concerning our neighbor, and all this is his.

8. Why must our lives "tend unto, and further" the welfare of our neighbor?

Because God has placed us in human society as members of it; it is His plan and purpose that human beings shall be dependent on one another for their welfare. There is a true sense in which we are our brother's keeper, and therefore our lives must be so directed that they will tend toward the prosperity and welfare of others as well as toward our own.

9. What is the relation of the tenth commandment to the right of owning private property?

Clearly the tenth commandment, in speaking of our neighbor's possessions, sanctions the right of private ownership of property. In thorough communism there would be no private property; everything would be owned by the State, or by the people in general, collectively, and people would only borrow and use what belonged to the public. Of course such extreme communism has never actually been practiced, for human nature demands the private ownership of at least some few possessions. Communism however denies the principle of the right of private owner-

ship, and allows people to have a few possessions merely as a matter of privilege or concession, not as an inherent human right. Under a truly consistent communist system it would be impossible to speak of coveting "any thing that is thy neighbor's", for all property would be collectively

owned. The tenth commandment in forbidding coveting "any thing that is thy neighbor's" implies the truth that private ownership of property is a divinely sanctioned human right. This is implied, also, in the truth that man was created in the image of God.

### LESSON 133—FOR WEEK BEGINNING JULY 18, 1948

**Q. 148.** What are the sins forbidden in the tenth commandment?

**A.** The sins forbidden in the tenth commandment are, discontentment with our own estate, envying, and grieving at the good of our neighbor, together with all inordinate motions and affections to any thing that is his.

#### Scripture References:

1 Kings 21:4. Esther 5:13. 1 Cor. 10:10. The sin of discontentment with our own estate.

Gal. 5:26. James 3:14-16. The sin of envy.

Psalms 112:9, 10. Neh. 2:10. It is wrong to grieve at the good of others.

Rom. 7:7, 8; 13:9. Col. 3:5. Deut. 5:21. The sin of having a wrong attitude toward anything that is our neighbor's.

#### Questions:

1. Why it is sinful to be discontented?

A spirit of discontent is sinful because it involves dissatisfaction with God's providence. The discontented person really feels that God is not treating him right. Thus discontent amounts to finding fault with God. Therefore discontent is really a form of irreverence, and unbelief in the goodness and love of God.

2. What is envying, and why is it wrong?

Envying means selfish and unfriendly grudging in view of what another possesses or enjoys. It means that if we do not have the same blessings as our neighbor, we are not willing for him to have them either; if our neighbor has blessings

that God has not given to us, we sinfully wish that our neighbor did not have these good things either. Envy is wrong because it proceeds from sinful selfishness. The person who is really unselfish cannot be envious at the same time.

3. What causes people to grieve at the good of their neighbors?

It is people's sinful hearts that cause them to grieve at the good of others. We should rejoice in all blessings, whether material or spiritual, enjoyed by others; but because of our sinful hearts, we sometimes take more satisfaction in the knowledge that our neighbor has committed some sin, or suffered some loss, than in thinking of the blessings that God has bestowed on him.

4. How do wrong attitudes of the mind violate the tenth commandment?

The tenth commandment is violated by "all inordinate motions and affections" to anything that is our neighbor's. That is, not only wrong actions, but wrong attitudes of the mind are sinful and contrary to this commandment. It is wrong to desire that which is the property of others. This commandment especially emphasizes the truth that it is not only outward actions that are sinful, but also even thoughts, desires, motives and mental attitudes.

5. What Bible characters violated this commandment in a specially wicked manner?

(a) Ahab, who coveted Naboth's vineyard.  
(b) Haman, who coveted worldly honor and therefore was grieved as Mordecai. Note that in each case the sin of coveting led on to other forms of sin.

### LESSON 134—FOR WEEK BEGINNING JULY 25, 1948

**Q. 149.** Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God?

**A.** No man is able either of himself, or by any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them in thought, word and deed.

#### Scripture References:

James 3:12. John 15:5. Rom. 7:3. No human being has power of himself perfectly to keep the commandments of God.

Eccles. 7:20. 1 John 1:8, 10. Gal. 5:17. Rom.

7:18, 19. No human being can keep the commandments of God perfectly, even by the grace of God and help of the Holy Spirit, during this present life.

Gen. 6:5; 8:21. Rom. 3:9-19. James 3:2-13. Every person in the world breaks God's commandments daily in thought, word and deed.

#### Questions:

1. Why is it true that no human being has power of himself perfectly to keep the commandments of God?

This statement is true because all human beings are born with a sinful "heart" or nature, which results in their committing all kinds of sins constantly. Every person comes into this world with a nature depraved and corrupted with original sin. This original sin inevitably determines the moral quality of a person's life and actions. Even in the person who is born again of the Holy Spirit, this corruption of original sin is in this life not eradicated, but only subdued.

2. Is this truth of "original sin" generally accepted at the present day?

No. While the doctrines of original sin and total depravity are taught in God's Word with unmistakable clearness, these truths are extremely unpopular at the present day. Many people become angry and indignant when these truths are taught and preached. The popular idea today is that there is much good in every person—enough good to overcome the evil. This optimistic view of human nature is not derived from the Bible but from the philosophy of evolution which is prevalent today, with its belief in boundless progress and betterment by human development and achievement. Modern thought is rather optimistic about human nature; the Bible on the contrary is distinctly pessimistic about the natural moral condition of the human heart.

### LESSON 135—FOR WEEK BEGINNING AUGUST 1, 1948

**Q. 150.** Are all transgressions of the law of God equally heinous in themselves, and in the sight of God?

**A.** All transgressions of the law of God are not equally heinous; but some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.

#### Scripture References:

John 19:11. Ezek. 8:6, 13, 15. There are de-

3. What do we call the belief of those who say that by the grace of God, or the power of the Holy Spirit, it is possible in this life perfectly to keep the commandments of God?

This mistaken belief is called perfectionism, or "sinless perfection". It arises from a failure to grasp the real nature and scope of God's requirements. The person who really understands the spiritual nature and comprehensive character of the moral law of God cannot be a perfectionist. Only the person who has a very partial and inadequate idea of what God's law requires of human beings can imagine that it is possible, even by God's grace, in this life perfectly to keep all the commandments of God. God requires of us, not merely that we shall "be good", but that we shall be morally perfect. What God requires of us is not mere sincerity, earnestness, or relative "goodness", but absolute moral perfection. The requirement of God's moral law has never been changed. It cannot be changed because the moral law is an expression of the character of God Himself, and God of course is unchangeable. Mankind was created in the image of God, and God requires absolute moral perfection of those created in His image. Any deviation from absolute perfection is sin.

4. Did any person in the Bible claim to have attained absolute moral perfection in the present life?

No. The best and holiest of God's saints all confessed that they still committed sin. For example, many of David's Psalms contain confessions of sin. The apostle Paul, long after his conversion, experienced a constant conflict with sin. Peter, long after he was filled with the Holy Spirit, had to be publicly rebuked for his unchristian and inconsistent conduct (Gal. 2:11-14). We search the pages of Scripture in vain for a perfect human being in this present life, with only a single exception, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lived a life of absolute moral perfection in this world.

grees of sinfulness in various actions which are contrary to God's law.

1 John 5:16. Sin "not unto death" and sin "unto death".

Psalm 78:17, 32, 56. Sin rendered more heinous in God's sight by reason of various aggravating factors.

#### Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the word "heinous"?

This word mean "extremely wicked" or "atrocious".

2. Are all sins heinous, or extremely wicked, in God's sight?

Yes. There is no such thing as a sin that does not matter. Even the smallest sin is a sin against the infinite and holy God, and therefore even the smallest sin is infinitely evil. It has been stated that it is a great sin to love a little sin. This true statement brings out the inherent sinfulness of sin. There is no such thing as a sin that does not count against a person, or a sin that can be disregarded.

3. Are all sins equally wicked in God's sight?

No. Although even the least sin is an offence against the holy God, and therefore absolutely evil, still, as the Catechism teaches, some sins are in themselves more wicked than others, and some sins by reason of aggravating factors are more wicked in God's sight than others.

4. What is meant by the statement that some sins in themselves are more heinous in the sight of God than others?

This statement means that apart from any special circumstances, some sins are more heinous than others. Thus, for example, the sin of murder is more heinous than the sin of theft; the sin of theft is more heinous than the sin of idleness or laziness.

5. How does the Roman Catholic Church misuse the Bible teaching that some sins are more heinous than others?

The Roman Catholic Church teaches a false distinction between "mortal sin" and "venial sin". According to the Roman Catholic doctrine, "mortal sin" is "a grievous offence against the law of God" which "brings everlasting death and damnation on the soul", whereas "venial sin" is "a slight offence against the law of God", which only lessens the love of God in our heart, makes us less worthy of God's help, and weakens our power to resist "mortal sin".

6. Why is this Roman Catholic doctrine false?

This doctrine is false because the Bible teaches that every sin, even the least, deserves God's everlasting punishment. According to the Bible, the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23), a general statement which includes every kind of sin. The

Catholic Church is wrong in teaching that some sins are only "a slight offence against the law of God". And since no sinner is worthy of God's help at all, it is wrong to speak of venial sins as making us "less worthy of God's help".

7. What common popular error gives a wrong idea of the seriousness of sin?

The common popular idea is that many of what are called "little sins" are only of trifling importance and that God is too generous and kind-hearted to hold them against a person. People tend to think that those sins that are commonly committed in "polite society" or among respectable people, are unimportant and need not be repented of. Such sins as conventional untruthfulness, or telling "white lies", a mild or occasional use of profanity, occasionally losing one's temper, slight dishonesty or injustice in business transactions, forgetting to express thanks to God before eating our meals, are frequently regarded as mere trifles and of no real importance. Many people think they are not really sinners because they are not guilty of gross open sins such as literal murder or theft; some consider themselves "good Christians" just because they are not guilty of specially wicked sins beyond the average of their neighbors. There are those who claim that they have no real sins, though they admit that they have a few "faults" and "shortcomings". We should realize that the world's standard of sin and righteousness, and God's standard, are very different.

8. What is the meaning of the "sin unto death" and the "sin not unto death" in 1 John 5:16?

The "sin unto death" is commonly understood to mean a form of sin which inevitably results in eternal death because it cuts off the possibility of repentance; that is, a deliberate, definite and long-continued rejection of the Gospel of Christ, which finally results in the Holy Spirit ceasing to plead with the person, and abandoning him to his own sinful hardness of heart. For such a person, we are not commanded even to pray. This "sin unto death" cannot be committed by a true, born-again Christian, but it may be committed by nominal Christians who have never really been born again. The "sin not unto death" is understood to mean any sin short of deliberate and permanent rejection of Christ; that is, any sin that a true Christian can commit. We are commanded to pray for those who "sin a sin which is not unto death"—that is, for our Christian brethren—and we are promised that God will answer our prayers for such persons by giving life, that is, by bringing the persons back to a spiritual state.

## LESSON 136—FOR WEEK BEGINNING AUGUST 8, 1948

**Q. 151.** What are those aggravations that make some sins more heinous than others?

**A.** Sins receive their aggravations, 1. From the persons offending: if they be of riper age, greater experience of grace, eminent for profession, gifts, place, office, guides to others, and whose example is likely to be followed by others.

**Scripture References:**

Jer. 2:8. Sin is aggravated when committed by those who have a special responsibility for exemplary and godly living.

Job. 32:7, 9. Eccles. 4:13. Persons of riper age have a greater responsibility, hence when they commit sin it is more serious than the same sin committed by younger persons.

1 Kings 11:4, 9. Sin is aggravated when committed by persons who have had greater experience, and more blessings of God's grace than others.

2 Sam. 12:14. 1 Cor. 5:1. When those who make a public profession of the Christian faith commit sin, it is more serious than the same sin when committed by persons who make no such profession.

James 4:17. Luke 12:47, 48. Greater privileges involve greater responsibility, hence aggravate the sins committed by such persons.

Jer. 5:4,5. Persons who occupy places of prominence in society are under an added obligation to do right, and when they commit sin their prominence constitutes an aggravation.

2 Sam. 12:7-9. Ezek. 8:11, 12. Persons who hold office in Church or State have an added responsibility for Godly living, and when they are involved in wrongdoing their official position aggravates their sin.

Rom. 2:17-24. Those who are, or claim to be, guides to others are under an added obligation to live righteously themselves, and when they sin it is an aggravated sin.

Gal. 2:11-14. Those whose example is likely to be followed by others, when they are involved in wrongdoing, are guilty of aggravated sin.

**Questions:**

1. What is the meaning of the word "aggravations" in this question of the Catechism?

In this question, the word "aggravations"

means any thing that makes a matter heavier or more serious. An aggravation of a sin is any factor or circumstance that makes that sin more serious or wicked.

2. What general truth is taught by the first part of the answer to Q. 151?

The first part of the answer to Q. 151 teaches the general truth that the same sin committed by different persons involves different degrees of guilt according to the special responsibilities of the persons concerned. Sin always involves guilt, but various factors and circumstances may increase the guilt in the case of particular persons.

3. Why are sins aggravated when committed by persons of riper age?

Persons of more mature years have had a longer opportunity to learn the will of God and to experience His grace and salvation and learn to overcome temptation. It is natural to expect that aged persons will have greater wisdom and experience and better judgment than young people can be expected to have. Accordingly when people of advanced age fall into sin, it is an aggravated transgression.

4. Why does a greater measure of experience or grace increase the guilt of a person's sin?

Because the person with greater experience or grace is sinning against light and conscience more than other people. The greater our experience of the grace of God, the less excuse we have for falling into sin. Experience of grace means progress in holiness: when a person who has made great progress in holiness falls into sin, he falls from a height previously attained, and this increases the guilt of his fall.

5. Why are persons who are "eminent for profession" especially guilty when they commit sin?

Because the person who is eminent for profession, if he commits sin, is guilty not only of breaking God's commandments, but also of inconsistency; that is, his conduct is at variance, not only with God's law, but even with his own claims. Of course sin is sin, no matter who commits it; but when people who are publicly known as Christians and Church members are involved in sin and scandal, their very profession of faith increases their guilt before God.

6. What is meant by "gifts" and "place" aggravating a person's sins?

By "gifts" the Catechism means such bless-

ings of God as knowledge of the Bible, the law of God and the Gospel of Christ, opportunities for learning the Word of God, etc. It was a sin for the Egyptians and Babylonians to worship idols, but it was a much greater sin for the people of Israel to worship idols, because they had been favored with much greater gifts of light and knowledge by God.

By "place" the Catechism means one's standing or position in human society. The more prominent a person is, the greater his responsibility, and the more aggravated his transgressions. This is because all persons who are prominent in society inevitably have a greater influence on others than those who are obscure or practically unknown. When a person who is prominent before the public obtains an unscriptural divorce, the news of this is spread from coast to coast, whereas a similar action on the part of an obscure person would attract very little attention.

7. How does official position in Church or State affect a person's responsibility for doing right?

Those in official positions, whether in Church or State, are looked up to by ordinary citizens or Church members and are expected to set a good example of righteous conduct. When they fail to do so, their guilt is aggravated by their official position. Years ago an ex-President of the United States visited Europe, and shocked and scandalized the Christian people of Holland by travelling

on trains on the Sabbath day. Many American tourists in Holland had committed the same sin, but when a former President of the United States did it, it was particularly offensive, and of course involved aggravated guilt. Similarly, when a minister, elder or deacon in the Church is involved in wrongdoing, this is more serious than the same sin committed by an ordinary Church member would be.

8. How does responsibility for the moral welfare of others affect the seriousness of a person's sins?

As members of human society, and especially as Christians, we have a responsibility for the moral welfare of our neighbor. Our responsibility for our sins is measured not only by the actual sins themselves, but also by their influence on other people. Therefore those who are in positions of leadership, who are guides to others, and whose example is likely to be followed by others, have an added responsibility, and when they commit sin it is aggravated transgression. Thus, for example, a school teacher's example is likely to be followed by the pupils; older children's actions are likely to be imitated by younger children; what Church members see their Church officers doing they naturally tend to think will be all right for them to copy themselves, etc. Persons whose sinful conduct leads others into sin clearly have a double sin to account for—their own sin, and the sin of their neighbor whom they have led astray.

#### LESSON 137—FOR WEEK BEGINNING AUGUST 15, 1948

Q. 151 (Continued). What are those aggravations that make some sins more heinous than others?

A. Sins receive their aggravations, 2. From the parties offended; if immediately against God, his attributes, and worship; against Christ, and his grace; the Holy Spirit, his witness, and workings, against superiors, men of eminency, and such as we stand especially related and engaged unto; against any of the saints, particularly weak brethren, the souls of them, or any other, and the common good of all or many.

#### Scripture References:

Matt. 21:38, 39. An example of the wickedness of a sin increased by reason of the position of the person injured by the sin.

1 Sam. 2:25. Acts 5:4. Psalm 51:4. Rom. 2:4. Mal. 1:8, 14. The guilt of a sin is increased when it is committed directly against God, His attributes and worship.

Heb. 2:2,3; 12:25. Those who sin against the Lord Jesus Christ and His grace are guilty of aggravated transgression.

Heb. 10:29; 6:4-6. Matt. 12:31, 32. Eph. 4:30. Those who sin against the Holy Spirit, His witness and workings, are guilty of sin of aggravated seriousness.

Jude 8. Num. 12:8, 9. Isa. 3:5. It is especially offensive to God when offences are committed against persons who should be specially honored and respected for any reason.

Prov. 30:17. 2 Cor. 12:15. Psalm 55:12-15. To sin against those to whom we are closely related, or specially obligated, is to be guilty of aggravated sin.

Zeph. 2:8-11. Matt. 18:6. 1 Cor. 6:8. Rev. 17:6. Any offence against Christian people is an aggravated offence in God's sight.

1 Cor. 8:11, 12. Rom. 14:13, 15, 21. It is our duty to be especially considerate concerning weak

brethren, and therefore any offence which injures them is an aggravated sin against God.

Ezek. 13:19. 1 Cor. 8:12. Rev. 18:12, 13. Matt. 23:15. Any offence which imperils the souls of others, or works against their salvation, is especially heinous in God's sight.

1 Thess. 2:15, 16. Josh. 22:20. A sin which involves others, or which interferes with the true welfare of all or many, is an aggravated transgression.

#### Questions:

1. Can we sin against men, or only against God?

Strictly speaking, we can sin only against God, our Creator and Judge, to whom we are morally responsible. We injure our fellow men, but in doing so we sin against God. Therefore David, who had grievously injured Uriah and Bathsheba, nevertheless said in his prayer to God, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned". Strictly speaking, we cannot injure God, and we cannot sin against men. But in our common speech we often say that we have sinned against men, and the Bible itself uses such language sometimes. This is of course perfectly proper, provided we understand that in the strict sense of the words we sin only against God, and injure only our fellow men. Our moral responsibility is solely to God.

2. What part of the Ten Commandments deal with sins committed directly against God?

The first "table" of the law, or the first four commandments.

3. Why are sins committed directly against God especially heinous?

Because of the infinite majesty and holiness of God, against whom such sins offend, and because our highest obligation is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. This the person who sins directly against God disregards and violates his highest obligation.

4. In what ways do men sin directly against God?

Men sin directly against God by violating the commandments of the first table of the law. Particularly flagrant are such sins as atheism, idolatry, taking God's name in vain, and Sabbath breaking. All those, in their many forms, are sins directly against God; some are sins directly against God Himself as a Person; others are sins directly against God as revealed in His worship, ordinances, etc.

5. Why are sins against Christ, and His grace, especially heinous in God's sight?

(a) Because Christ is Himself truly God, just as the Father is, and therefore to sin against Christ is the same as to sin against God. (b) Because Christ's grace is the gift of God's love to lost and guilty sinners, and the person who sins against Christ's grace is sinning against the love and mercy of God, which should lead him to repentance.

6. Give a Bible instance of someone who sinned against the Holy Spirit.

Ananias. Acts 5:3 ("to lie to the Holy Ghost") and verse 4 ("Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God").

7. Why is sinning against the witness and workings of the Holy Spirit especially heinous in God's sight?

Because the Holy Spirit is given by God's love and grace to dwell and work in the hearts of His people. Those who sin against the inward witness and workings of the Holy Spirit are treating this gracious gift of God with contempt. Not every sin against the inward work of the Holy Spirit is the "unpardonable" sin mentioned in the Bible. But every person who resists or despises the inward work of the Holy Spirit is guilty of aggravated sin.

8. Why are offences against "superiors" and "men of eminency" especially serious?

We are under special obligations to treat some persons with honor and respect. For example, children are commanded to honor their parents, and it is the duty of citizens to honor those in positions of authority in the State. Similarly, in God's Word it is commanded that aged people be treated with honor and respect. Where there is a special obligation to honor and respect, any offence that is committed must be regarded as an aggravated offence. Thus, while it is wrong to slander any person, it is an aggravated offence to slander the President of our Country, or any other public official.

9. Why is it a heinous sin to injure "such as we stand especially related and engaged unto"?

The closer the relationship to any person, the greater our obligation to treat that person with justice and love. This is true regardless of whether the relationship is a blood relationship, or a social connection of some other kind. It is our duty to treat all our fellow-men with justice and love, but especially those who, in God's providence, are closely connected with us in some way or other. This truth is often forgotten and disregarded. People often treat outsiders better than



they treat their own family. But it ought not to be so. One's own family, one's own relations, one's own employer, employees, etc., have a special claim on one's consideration. An injury done to such is an aggravated offence in God's sight.

10. What should we think of offences committed against our fellow Christians?

Offences committed against our fellow Christians are especially grievous in God's sight. This does not mean merely members of our own Church, but "any of the saints", as the Catechism rightly affirms. This is, all Christian people are our brethren in Christ and have a special claim on our consideration; an offence against any of them involves one member of the body of Christ injuring another member of the body of Christ. One of Satan's most effective ways of hindering God's cause in the world is by stirring up quarrels and trouble between Christian people. In the Bible this is called "discord among brethren", and we are told that sowing discord among brethren is one of the things that God hates (Prov. 6:19).

11. What is meant by "weak brethren"?

Romans chapter 14 gives the key to the meaning of this expression. Briefly, a "weak brother" is a true Christian whose knowledge is defective, and whose faith, though real, is yet weak and wavering. He may have scruples of conscience about matters which are not really wrong at all, and he may be easily scandalized and discouraged by seeing other Christians doing things which he considers wrong. The "weak brother" has a really hard time to keep on going forward in the Christian life. Such people should have special con-

sideration on the part of other Christians, but this does not mean that the scruples of the weak brother are to be imposed on other Christians as necessary rules of conduct, nor that the weak brother may be allowed to dominate the Church and dictate to its officers and members. The weak brother's scruples constitute an infirmity to be tolerated, not a platform to be propagated by the Church as a whole. But we should be careful to avoid offending against weak brethren, that is, shocking and scandalizing them needlessly by conduct which they consider wrong, even though it may not really be wrong in itself. Such disregard of the problems and difficulties of weak brethren is a heinous sin against Christ (1 Cor. 8:12).

12. Why is it an aggravated sin to offend against "the common good of all or many"?

We are all members of human society, and as Christians we are all members of the body of Christ, the Church. If each individual person could live out his life alone on an isolated island as Robinson Crusoe did for several years, he would have only God and himself to think of in connection with his moral life. But we cannot live like Robinson Crusoe. We are members of society and as such we are mutually dependent. Therefore we must realize that any sin we commit may involve three parties—God, ourself and our neighbor (or society in general). Obviously, the more people affected or injured by our conduct, the greater will be our guilt before God. Thus a person whose criminal negligence results in a train being wrecked, a hotel destroyed by fire, or a great forest fire started, is much more guilty than one whose carelessness has endangered only his own life or his own property.

#### LESSON 138—FOR WEEK BEGINNING AUGUST, 22, 1948

**Q. 151** (Continued). What are those aggravations that make some sins more heinous than others?

**A.** Sins receive their aggravations, 3. From the nature and quality of the offence: if it be against the express letter of the law, break many commandments, contain in it many sins; if not only conceived in the heart, but breaks forth in words and actions, scandalize others, and admit of no reparation; . . .

#### Scripture References:

Prov. 6:30-33. The seriousness of a sin depends, in part, on the nature and quality of the offence committed.

Ezra 9:10-12. 1 Kings 11:9, 10. Offences

against the express letter of God's law are especially heinous, since they violate a direct command of God.

Col 3:5. 1 Tim. 6:10. Prov. 5:8-12. Josh. 7:21. An offence which involves breaking several of the commandments, or committing many sins, is especially displeasing to God.

James 1:14, 15. Matt. 5:22. Micah 2:1. When sin is not only conceived in the heart, but breaks forth into words and actions, it is of aggravated seriousness.

Matt. 18:7. Rom. 2:23, 24. A sin which scandalizes others is an aggravated offence in God's sight.

2 Sam. 12:7-10. A sin which admits of no reparation is especially heinous in God's sight.

**Questions:**

1. What is meant by "the nature and quality of the offence"?

This expression means the inherent character of an offence, considered apart from all questions of persons and circumstances. Thus murder is a more heinous sin than theft, entirely regardless of who the murderer or thief may be, who may be the victims of the crimes, the time, place, etc. No matter who does it, or when or where or why, murder is in itself more wicked than theft.

2. What is meant by "the express letter of the law"?

This means the actual words of the law of God as given in the Scripture. Thus to steal is against the express letter of the law, for God's law commands, in so many words, "Thou shalt not steal". But to participate in a raffle or a lottery, although sinful, is not against the express letter of the law. It requires a process of logical reasoning based on the law of God in the Bible to prove that raffles and lotteries are sinful.

3. Give some examples of offences which involve breaking many commandment, or committing many sins.

(a) The Bible teaches that covetousness is idolatry. Thus the person who covets also commits idolatry, by setting his heart on worldly possessions. (b) Sabbath breaking also involves the sins of theft, irreverence and taking God's name in vain. The person who breaks the Sabbath in doing so violates the second, third, fourth and eighth commandments.

4. Where do all sins originate?

In the "heart" or innermost character of a person. (Read Mark 7:21-23). Sin proceeds from the heart, and finally finds expression in the outward conduct (words and deeds) of the person.

5. Which is more wicked, to harbor sin in the heart, or to express it in actual conduct?

To express the sin in actual conduct is much more wicked, though we should not forget that even to conceive a sin in the heart is sinful in God's sight. But the sin which is expressed in actual conduct is even more wicked, because it is a fuller development of rebellion against God. Read James 1:14, 15, and note how these verses teach this very truth.

6. Why is a sin which has the effect of scandalizing others especially grievous in God's sight?

Because such a sin concerns not merely two, but three, parties, namely oneself, one's neighbor, and God. A sin which does not affect other persons, or a secret sin known only to the sinner and God, is sinful and offensive to God; much more offensive is the sin which scandalizes others, or tempts others to sin too. Thus Eve's sin of eating the forbidden fruit had the effect of leading Adam to commit sin too; this multiplied its seriousness in God's sight.

7. What is meant by an offence which admits of no reparation?

So far as our relation to God is concerned, no sin that a person commits admits of any reparation. We are all guilty before God, and only the shed blood of Jesus Christ can take away the guilt of our sin. But in our relation to our fellow-men some sins admit of reparation, and other do not. For example, the sin of theft admits of reparation; a person who has stolen a sum of money from his neighbor can pay the money back. But the sins of murder and adultery do not admit of reparation; when once the wrong is done to our neighbor, there is no way by which it can be undone. The sin of bearing false witness against our neighbor may or may not admit of reparation. Thus, for example, if a person were to bear false witness in court, and then during the same session of the court confess this sin and retract the false statement, the harm done would be largely undone. But if the retraction were made years later, it would be too late to undo the wrong done.

### LESSON 139—FOR WEEK BEGINNING AUGUST 29, 1948

**Q. 151 (Continued).** What are those aggravations that make some sins more heinous than others?

**A.** Sins receive their aggravations, 3. From the nature and quality of the offence: . . . if against means, mercies, judgments, light of nature, conviction of conscience, public or private admonition, censures of the church, civil punish-

ments; and our prayers, purposes, promises, vows, covenants, and engagements to God or men: . . .

#### Scripture References:

Matt. 11:21-24. John 15:22. Sins are aggravated when committed in spite of means used by God which should restrain sin.

Isa. 1:3. Deut. 32:6. Sins committed in spite of God's special mercies are aggravated transgressions.

Amos 4:8-11. Jer. 5:3. To sin against God's judgments is to commit aggravated sin.

Rom. 1:26, 27. 1 Cor. 11:14, 15. It is especially sinful to do what nature, even apart from Scripture, shows to be wrong.

Rom. 1:32. Dan. 5:22. Titus 3:10, 11. Those who sin in spite of the conviction of their own conscience commit aggravated transgression.

Prov. 29:1. Sin is aggravated by being committed in spite of warning or reproof.

Titus 3:10. Matt. 18:17. Sin is aggravated by being committed in spite of the censures of Church discipline.

Prov. 27:22; 23:35. Those who disregard civil penalties become guilty of aggravated transgression.

Psalm 78:34-37. Jer. 2:20; 42:5,6,20,21. Eccles. 5: 4-6. Prov. 2:17; 20:25. Lev. 26:25. Ezek. 17:18, 19. Sins committed in spite of our own promises, vows, covenants, etc., are aggravated transgressions.

### Questions:

1. What is meant by sins committed against means?

As used in the Catechism, this expression means sins committed in spite of special acts of God which should have the effect of restraining people's sinning. In Bible times such special acts of God often took the form of miracles; in our own day they may take the form of special and remarkable workings of God's providence, which should have the effect of making us stop and abstain from sin.

2. How do people sin against God's mercies?

All human beings sin against God's mercies continually, inasmuch as the very continuance of our existence depends on the free mercy of God. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness" (Lam. 3:22,23). Christian people especially sin against God's mercies, since Christian people have received the special mercy of God in His salvation. There are also cases where people sin against particular special mercies and blessings which they have received from God; for example, where a person is by God's mercy delivered from danger

of death, or from serious illness, and then instead of turning to God in repentance and faith, simply forgets God and lives a selfish, worldly life. Clearly all sinning against God's mercies amounts to aggravated transgression.

3. What is meant by sinning against God's judgments?

In the case of those who are not God's children, God's judgments are sent both to punish them for their sins and to warn them against continuing in sin. In the case of God's own children, His judgments are for the purpose of chastening, that is, to bring about their sanctification and prevent their being condemned with the world (1 Cor. 11:32). In either case, God's judgments should have the effect of leading a person to repentance and submission and obedience to God. In the Book of Revelation we read symbolic descriptions of many terrible judgments of God upon an unbelieving and Christ-rejecting world, several times with the added statement that these judgments did not bring about repentance (Rev. 9:20, 21; 16:9, 11). Such continued sinning in spite of divine judgments greatly increases people's guilt before God.

4. What is meant by the "light of nature", and how do people sin against it?

By the expression "light of nature" the Catechism means that elementary knowledge of God and of moral obligation which men have from the general revelation of God in the world of nature and the human heart and conscience, apart from God's special revelation in Scripture. The light of nature is insufficient for salvation, but it is sufficient to teach men that there is a God, that it is their duty to worship and honor Him, and that certain things are wrong. Thus the light of nature leaves men without excuse (Rom. 1:20). The light of nature, apart from Scripture, is in no sense adequate as a rule of conduct for sinners, but it does teach men that certain sins, such as murder, atheism and dishonesty, are wrong. When people commit sins which not only the Bible, but even the light of nature shows to be sinful, they are guilty of aggravated transgression. The person who sins against the light of nature sins against the law of God written in the constitution of his own being (Rom. 2:14-16), and thus violates not only God's revelation but his own psychical make-up.

5. How do people sin against "conviction of conscience"?

Conscience is that moral thermometer within our soul that registers disapproval when we act contrary to what we believe to be right, and approval when our action is in harmony with that we believe to be right. Conscience cannot tell us what is right and what is wrong; it can only tell

us whether we are acting according to what we believe to be right or wrong in any case. A person's conscience needs to be enlightened by the moral law revealed in Scripture. But it is always wrong to act against conscience; that is, it is always a sin to drive past the red light of conscience and do something which we believe to be wrong. There is a general operation of conscience, caused by the general operation of the Holy Spirit, in all human beings except those who have committed the "unpardonable" sin and have been abandoned by God to the most extreme moral and spiritual hardening. Apart from such exceptional cases, every person has some conviction of conscience, or sense of right and wrong. To disregard this is to commit aggravated sin. The Christian, by the special grace and operation of the Holy Spirit (through the new birth and sanctification) has a quickened or highly sensitized conscience, which functions far more quickly and accurately than the conscience of the non-Christian person. Yet even Christian people, because of their indwelling sinful nature, often act against conviction of conscience. In the case of the Christian, acting against conscience is even more heinous than in the case of the non-Christian person.

6. Why does sinning against "public or private admonition, censures of the church, civil punishments" involved increased guilt before God?

Because all these admonitions, censures and punishments are ways by which God shows His displeasure against sin and warns men to turn from it and practice righteousness. The Church and the State are both divine institutions, and as God's servants, each in its own sphere and manner, are to warn against wrongdoing and to encourage men in well-doing. The person who goes on in a course of sinful conduct in spite of one or more of these forms of warning and reproof is hardening himself in sin and rebellion against God. The more warnings he disregards, the greater his guilt.

7. Why does acting contrary to our own prayers, purposes, promises, vows, etc., involve aggravated sin before God?

Our own prayers, purposes, promises, vows, etc., are an abomination to God unless they are sincere; that is, unless we really mean them from the bottom of our heart and intend, by God's help, to live according to them for all time to come. If our prayers, etc., are not sincere, then they are hypocritical and God will not accept them (Psalm 66:18). If they are sincere, but at a later time we act contrary to them, this indicates backsliding or falling from a spiritual to a more or less carnal state. To allow ourselves to slip or retreat from high ground already attained in our Christian life must always be very displeasing to God and an offence against His holiness, and involves increased guilt which can only be cleansed away by the blood of Jesus Christ.

#### LESSON 14—FOR WEEK BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 5, 1948

**Q. 151 (Continued).** What are those aggravations that make some sins more heinous than others?

**A.** Sins receive their aggravations, 3. From the nature and quality of the offence: . . . if done deliberately, wilfully, presumptuously, impudently, boastingly, maliciously, frequently, obstinately, with delight, continuance, or relapsing after repentance.

#### Scripture References:

Psalm 36:4. Jer. 6:16. Num. 15:30. Ex. 21:14. Deliberate, wilful and presumptuous sinning.

Jer. 3:3. Prov. 7:13. Impudent sinning.

Psalm 52:1. Boastful sinning.

3 John 10. Malicious sinning.

Num. 14:22. Zech. 7:11,12. Prov. 2:14. Isa. 57:17. The wickedness of a person's sin is increased by stubbornness, persistence, delight and various other characteristics.

#### Questions:

1. What is meant by sinning "deliberately, wilfully, presumptuously"?

These three adverbs are closely related in their meaning in connection with sin. To sin deliberately is to sin after some consideration of the matter in one's mind. To sin wilfully is to sin with the attitude of being bent on having one's own way, no matter whether it is right or wrong. To sin presumptuously is to sin intentionally, counting on God's grace to bestow forgiveness for our sin afterwards. Deliberate, wilful and presumptuous sinning is to be contrasted with unintentional sinning, sinning resulting from weakness or sudden temptation rather than from a set purpose to sin, and sin resulting from ignorance or a faulty understanding of the requirements of God's law. Clearly all deliberate, presumptuous and wilful sinning is heinous and highly offensive to God.

2. What special form of wilful sinning is common at the present day?

Unwillingness to submit our judgments, opinions and practices to the authority of the Holy Scripture which is the special revelation of God's truth and will. There are those who frankly admit that the Bible requires the singing of the inspired Psalms exclusively, and without instrumental music, in the worship of God, who yet say, "I like hymns and instrumental music and I intend to have them". Some who would not say this in words say it by their actions, even contradicting their own voluntary profession by their inconsistent practices. Similarly there are persons who are violently opposed to the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination or election, who yet do not venture to deny that it is taught in the Scriptures. It is one thing to fail to grasp or understand the teaching of the Scriptures about some matter; it is quite a different thing to refuse to submit ourselves to a doctrine or principle which we admit to be Scriptural. Wilful rejection of a teaching of God's Word, understood and admitted to be such, is one of the most awful sins that a person can commit.

3. Give some Bible examples of godly people who sinned deliberately, wilfully or presumptuously.

(a) David's sin in numbering the people of Israel, even after Joab had tried to dissuade him from it (2 Sam. 24:1-14). (b) Peter's sin of dissimulation, for which Paul rebuked him to his face (Gal. 2:11-14).

4. What is meant by sinning "impudently, boastingly, maliciously"?

To sin impudently is to sin boldly, without any feeling of shame because of our sin. The person who sins impudently makes no attempt to conceal his sin; he does not care who knows about it. The person who sins boastingly goes one step even beyond this; he is even proud of his sinning, and brags about it to others; his glory is in his shame (Phil. 3:19). When Claverhouse shot the Covenanter martyr John Brown and then on being asked "How will you answer for this morning's work?" replied, "To man I can be answerable, and as for God I will take him into my own hands!", he sinned impudently and boastingly.

#### LESSON 141—FOR WEEK BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 12, 1948

**Q. 151 (Continued).** What are those aggravations that make some sins more heinous than others?

**A.** Sins receive their aggravations, 4. From circumstances of time and place: if on the Lord's day, or other times of divine worship; or immediately before or after these, or other helps to pre-

To sin maliciously is to sin with spite or enmity against God or God's people. When officials of the Roman Empire were not satisfied with taking the lives of Christian people, but must do it in the most cruel and inhuman ways that could be invented, by lingering excruciating tortures, they were guilty of sinning maliciously against God.

5. What makes people sin "frequently, obstinately, with delight, continuance"?

It is the perverse, wicked stubbornness and hardness of the human heart that brings about such inveterate sinning. It can only be explained by the Bible doctrines of original sin and total depravity. According to God's Word, sin is not a superficial defect in human nature, but a deep-rooted, all-pervasive moral corruption. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Thus there are people who actually sin not with regret or remorse, but with pleasure and delight (Rom. 1:32). Indeed it is really true of all unconverted people that they love sin (2 Tim. 3:4), and only the common grace of God restrains this natural love of sin from finding its fullest expression in outward deeds of iniquity and abomination.

6. Why does relapsing after repentance aggravate the seriousness of a person's sin?

Relapsing after repentance is particularly offensive to God because it involves a fall from a degree of separation from sin previously attained. This is peculiarly a sin of Christian people, for the person who is not a Christian never really repents in the true sense of the word. The non-Christian may experience a kind of natural regret for sin and resolution to "turn over a new leaf", but as he has not been born again this "repentance" is not real "repentance unto life". Christian people experience true repentance unto life, and yet often fall back into various sins of which they had once truly repented before God. In their case this lapse will be only temporary and will be followed ultimately by new repentance and restoration to a spiritual state. But even a temporary lapse into our old sins grieves the Holy Spirit and displeases God. The only way of preventing it is by constant self-distrust, spiritual watchfulness and prayer.

vent or remedy such miscarriages; if in public, or in the presence of others, who are thereby likely to be provoked or defiled.

#### Scripture References:

2 Kings 5:26. Jer. 7:10. Isa. 26:10. Sins aggravated by circumstances of time and place.

Ezek. 23: 37-39. Isa. 58:3-5. Num 25:6, 7. Sins aggravated by being committed on the Lord's day, or other times of divine worship.

1 Cor. 11:20, 21. Jer. 7:8-10. Prov. 7:14, 15. John 13:27, 30. The guilt of sins increased by their being committed immediately before or after divine worship.

Ezra. 9:13, 14. Sin aggravated by commission directly after experiencing God's chastisements.

2 Sam. 16:22. 1 Sam. 2:22-24. Sin rendered more heinous by reason of it being committed publicly, or in such a manner as to scandalize others.

#### Questions:

1. Why may circumstances of time and place increase the guilt of people's sins?

There are certain circumstances of time and place which are calculated to impress upon our minds the seriousness of our duty to God and the requirements of His moral law. When these circumstances of time and place are disregarded, and sin committed in spite of them, the sin is flagrant and the guilt aggravated. For Judas to betray Christ would have been wrong at any time, but when it was done so soon after the observance of the Passover and the institution of the Lord's Supper, Judas' guilt was greatly increased.

2. Why does a sin committed on the Lord's day, or other appointed time of divine worship, or immediately before or after such occasions, involve aggravated guilt?

Because such a sin involves not only the guilt of the sin in itself, but the added guilt of profanation of the Lord's day or other ordinances of divine worship. In Matthew 12:9-14 we read that

the Pharisees held a meeting on the Sabbath, the purpose of which was to devise a plan for killing Jesus. A meeting the purpose of which is a conspiracy to commit murder is unlawful regardless of time or place; but when it was held on the Sabbath day, the Pharisees' guilt was greatly increased.

3. How is guilt increased by disregard of recently experienced special providences of God?

The special providences of God which enter our lives are intended to make us "stand in awe, and sin not" (Psalm 4:4), that is, they should lead us to stop and think about our moral condition and our relation to God. When we disregard such special providences, we inevitably harden our own hearts and increase the guilt of our sin. To deny Christ is a great sin at any time; when Peter committed it three times in succession, all within a few hours after he had been specially warned by the Lord concerning that very matter, was an even more serious sin.

4. Why are sins committed publicly, or in such a way as to have a bad influence on others, specially wicked in God's sight?

There is a true sense in which each of us is his brother's keeper. We have a moral responsibility for our neighbor as well as for ourselves. A sin committed privately, or known only to a few persons, is wrong and offensive to God; one committed publicly must inevitably have a bad effect on many persons, and so involves added guilt before God. For a person to use the golden and silver vessels of God's holy Temple for drinking wine would be sinful even if done with the utmost privacy; when king Belshazzar did it publicly, in the presence of a thousand of his lords, accompanied by his princes, wives and concubines, the guilt was necessarily aggravated (Dan. 5:1-4, 23). It would be easy to think of many forms of sin whose guilt is aggravated by commission in a public manner.

### LESSON 142—FOR WEEK BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 19, 1948

Q. 152. What doth every sin deserve at the hands of God?

A. Every sin, even the least, being against the sovereignty, goodness, and holiness of God, and against his righteous law, deserveth his wrath and curse, both in this life, and that which is to come; and cannot be expiated but by the blood of Christ.

#### Scripture References:

James 2:10, 11. Ex. 20:1, 2. Hab. 1:13. Lev. 10:3; 11:44, 45. Every sin is committed against

the sovereignty, goodness and holiness of God.

1 John 3:4. Rom. 7:12. Every sin is a violation of God's righteous law.

Eph. 5:6. Gal. 3:10. Every sin deserves God's wrath and curse.

Lam. 3:39. Deut. 28:15-19. Matt. 25:41. All sin deserves not only temporal but eternal punishment.

Heb. 9:22. 1 Pet. 1:18, 19. No sin can be canceled except by the blood of Christ.

**Questions:**

## 1. How evil is sin?

The Catechism asserts, and the Scripture references prove, that sin is absolutely evil; that is, that sin possesses an absolute character, and even the least sin shares in that absolute character as a repudiation of the authority of God. Some sins are more heinous than others, but even the least sin is a total rejection of God's authority over us. This principle is well illustrated by the first sin committed by any human being, the sin of Adam and Eve is eating the forbidden fruit. In itself a slight and apparently unimportant action, the eating of the fruit nevertheless involved a total rejection of God's authority over the human race. It involved believing Satan's lie in preference to God's truth, and trusting human reason rather than God's revelation. The same is true, essentially, of every sin; every sin involves believing a lie rather than the truth, and following our own reason or desires rather than the revealed will of God. Thus every sin is absolutely evil, and deserves God's wrath and curse both here and hereafter.

## 2. How can a finite being, such as man, commit a sin which is absolutely or infinitely evil?

Sin is infinitely evil because it is committed against God, who is infinitely perfect. We must always guard against the modern humanistic way of thinking about sin, which tends to regard sin primarily in relation to its effects on human beings. The primary fact about sin is that it is an offence against God. Since God is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His sovereignty, goodness and holiness, every sin, even though committed by a finite creature such as man, is infinitely evil.

## 3. What does the character of God's law show about the wages of sin?

God's law is a perfect law and it demands perfect righteousness of human beings. The moral law of God does not require of us mere "goodness", but absolute moral perfection. Any deviation, even the slightest, from absolute moral perfection, is sin. Since this is true, even the slightest deviation from absolute moral perfection deserves the penalty of the broken law; that is, the penalty of death in its widest sense, physical, spiritual and eternal.

## 4. What is meant by the "wrath and curse" of God?

God's wrath is His righteous indignation and displeasure against sin and sinners; it is the opposite of love and grace, and means that God cannot regard sinners with favor or complacency (except on the basis of an atonement provided to take away their sin). God's curse is the expression of His wrath in the form of a penalty. God's wrath is an attitude toward sinners; God's curse is the attitude carried into action against them. Thus every sin deserves God's indignation and punishment in this life and the life to come. Read Rom. 1:18; Eph. 2:3.

## 5. Why does every sin deserve the wrath and curse of God eternally?

Because every sin is a sin against the eternal God. Many people have stumbled over this truth, objecting that it cannot be just for God to punish temporal sin with eternal penalties. But whether men like this doctrine or not, the Bible definitely teaches it. Even though sin is committed in time, it is committed against the God who is above and beyond time, and thus incurs His wrath and curse beyond the limits of time, that is, beyond the present earthly life. Moreover it is the nature of sin, once started, to go on without ceasing (unless the person is redeemed by Christ). The person who is guilty of sin not only cannot remove the guilt of that sin, but goes on and on in rebellion against God, always becoming more and more guilty and more and more evil. Thus in the nature of the case sin deserves eternal punishment.

## 6. How alone can sin be expiated or canceled?

Sin can be expiated or canceled in no other way than by the blood of Christ who suffered and died as the divinely-provided Substitute for guilty sinners. Every human being deserves God's eternal wrath and curse; that all do not actually suffer His wrath and curse to all eternity, is due only to the free grace and mercy of God in giving His Son to bear the penalty of the broken law as a Substitute. This implies, of course, that all attempted human ways of dealing with sin are wrong and useless. The person who tries to take away his own sin by moral reform, good resolutions, "turning over a new leaf", performing good works, acts of charity, religious observances, forms and ceremonies, Church membership, prayer, ascetic practices, or any other way whatever, is a miserable, self-deceived sinner on the road to eternal frustration in hell. Only the precious blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, can take away the guilt of human sin. There is no other way.

**LESSON 143—FOR WEEK BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 26, 1948**

**Q. 153.** What doth God require of us, that we may escape his wrath and curse due to us by reason of the transgression of the law?

**A.** That we may escape the wrath and curse of God due to us by reason of the transgression of the law, he requireth of us repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and the diligent use of the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of his meditation.

**Scripture References:**

Acts 20:21. Matt. 3:7, 8. Luke 13:3, 5. Acts 16:30, 31. John 3:16, 18. That we may escape God's wrath and curse, He requires of us true repentance accompanied by faith in Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

Prov. 2:1-5; 8:33-36. Besides the spiritual attitudes of repentance and faith, God requires us to use diligently the outward means by which the benefits of Christ's saving work are communicated to us.

**Questions:**

1. Why did God provide a way by which human beings could escape His wrath and curse for their sin?

Because of God's great love, which led Him, even in eternity before the creation of the world, to decree a plan of salvation by means of which His elect would in due time be redeemed and saved from their sin.

2. When was the way of escape from God's wrath and curse first revealed to the human race?

Immediately after the Fall, when God promised that at some future day the seed of the woman (Jesus Christ) would crush the head of the serpent (Satan and Satan's kingdom) (Gen. 3:15).

3. How are we to take advantage of the way of escape from His wrath and curse which God has provided?

We are to take advantage of this way of escape by complying with God's revealed requirements concerning it, which are outlined in the

Catechism as including (a) repentance toward God; (b) faith in Jesus Christ; (c) diligent use of appointed outward means.

4. Why is repentance necessary for escape from God's wrath and curse?

To escape from God's wrath and curse means to be saved from sin. We cannot be saved from sin without recognizing the awful evil of our sin, hating it with our whole soul, and earnestly desiring to be delivered not only from its guilt but also from its power. That is to say, we cannot be saved from sin while we still desire and intend to continue in sin. If we are to escape God's wrath and curse, we must turn from our sins to God.

5. What is meant by "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ", and why is it necessary for salvation from God's wrath and curse?

By "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ", the Catechism means true, saving faith in Christ; that is, (a) Jesus Christ being regarded as the object, and not merely the example, of our faith; we are to have faith IN Christ. (b) Our faith is to be faith in the real Christ, as He is revealed to us in the Scriptures; that is, we are to have faith in Him as our Redeemer, prophet, priest and king, the one and only Mediator between God and ourselves, and only way of salvation. (c) We are to put our trust and confidence for salvation and eternal life wholly and only in Christ, not at all in ourselves or anything we can do.

6. Why is diligent use of the outward means of grace necessary if we are to escape God's wrath and curse for our sin?

God has chosen to appoint these outward means of grace (the Word, the sacraments and prayer) as instruments by which the benefits of Christ's saving work are communicated to us. These means of themselves cannot save us; it is only Christ that can save us; but He makes use of these appointed means. Therefore if we would have Christ and make sure of an interest in Him, we must be diligent in our use of the appointed means. The false tendency called "mysticism" despises and neglects the use of these outward means of grace, and is therefore contrary to the Scriptures and spiritually dangerous. Of course God could have made a plan to save sinners without the use of outward means of grace; but He has not chosen to do so, and so we must avail ourselves of the means which God has provided.



## BLUE BANNER QUESTION BOX

Readers are invited to submit doctrinal, Biblical and practical questions for answer in this department. Names will not be published with questions.

### Question:

In Isaiah 60:12, "For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted", to whom, or to what, does the pronoun "thee" refer? What is the import of the statement or warning?

### Answer:

In the original Hebrew, this pronoun "thee" is a feminine singular. Also the second personal pronouns throughout this chapter, which constitutes a single address, are feminine singulars. The speaker is Jehovah. He calls to and addresses one having the outlines of a city. It has "walls" and "gates", "the House of my glory", "my sanctuary", "mine altar". It enshrines "the Name of Jehovah thy (covenant) God", and is called "City of Jehovah". The Hebrew word for "city" is feminine.

But Jehovah Himself, in righteous wrath for her sins, has "smitten" her. She is prostrate, "afflicted", "despised", "forsaken and hated". Together with the whole world, this city is shrouded in the darkness of wickedness, deceit and despair. But the time of Jehovah's favor has come. He will have mercy upon her, and not on her only, but on all nations and kingdoms of the earth. He will make Himself known as "thy Saviour and thy Redeemer". "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen over thee". As a sunrise, this light brings promise of a new day. "Jehovah shall be for thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory; . . . and the days of thy mourning shall be ended". The words of Jehovah are words of encouragement and hope, revealing His far-reaching purpose of grace for mankind—the purpose which Paul calls "the purpose of the ages" (Eph. 3:11)—namely, to gather from all nations into one city of God; to build one Church in Christ Jesus.

Accordingly, in this city, there is room for a great concourse of the peoples; for great caravans unloading all kinds of treasure and materials; for flocks of sheep and rams for the sacrifice. It is built on Zion hill; hence is itself called "Zion", a common prophetic name for the Church. In Hebrew, the word "Zion" is also feminine. Moreover, throughout Scripture, the Church is represented as a woman, daughter, bride, wife—always feminine—thus distinguishing her from Christ. For, while Christ and His Church are in closest union, they are never confused in Scripture. If the Church is the body, Christ is the

Head; if the Church is the bride, Christ is the bridegroom; if the Church is the city, Christ is the King. He is the Light, the Glory and the Name which attracts the peoples and for which they come. Hence, it is evident that the pronoun "thee" here refers to the Church, as distinguished from Christ.

The verb translated "serve" is the one commonly used for all kinds of work and service. Without further specification, therefore, it indicates here whatever kind of service the prosperity of the city may require. One thing, however, is clearly indicated, and that is that the people themselves come to worship Jehovah, the one living and true God, through the SACRIFICE.

Prophecy was written in terms of the commonplaces of contemporary human life, so that all then living could understand the promises and purposes of God so far as intended for them. But the outward forms of the past are not reproduced in the present, or the future. Hence, we have no ground for expecting the fulfilment to come in ancient forms, or to be confined to former geographic locations. For example, THE SACRIFICE was not offered on the Jerusalem altar, but by another method, on another hill, outside the stone walls of the earthly Jerusalem, close to a highway that was open to all peoples of the earth.

Hence this verse, which is a parenthesis aside from the main course of the passage, but an obvious deduction therefrom, must be understood, in terms of present conditions, in line with the "Purpose of the Ages"—that purpose according to which all events of history are controlled and directed to one goal. "All other purposes, all other enterprises, all secular happenings are made subservient to this one supreme purpose, which is the formation of ONE CHURCH IN CHRIST JESUS. In the interest of this pre-eminent purpose the whole world is governed." And Jesus Christ, by virtue of His position as King in Zion, the center and goal of the divine purpose, holds all authority and all judgment over all the nations and kingdoms of the earth. He will see to it that the purpose is fulfilled. He "will hasten it in its time".

The import, therefore, of this verse is that the continued existence and well-being of every nation and government is conditioned by its attitude to the Church of Christ; by its response to the

gospel of the grace of God. If any nation or government fails to take account of this all-important fact of revelation; makes no concrete and practical acknowledgment of it; gives not of its people and resources to the service of the Church of Christ, it becomes a useless thing. If it imagines that the false and apostate religions of the world are as good as that of the true Church; that the darkness of the world is as salutary as the light of Christ, it will be left in its own darkness to its own futility. It will become "utterly wasted", "dried up" (the root meaning of the word in Hebrew), deserted. For, as in the parallel passage, Zech. 14: 16-19, it will receive "no rain". If it contributes nothing toward the fulfilment of God's plan and purpose, it will receive nothing more from God, and so will soon have nothing to give. Apart from the grace of God in Christ, it must surely perish. F. D. F.

**Question:**

In doing personal evangelistic work, is it proper to tell the person we are seeking to win, "Jesus died for you"?

**Answer:**

An adequate and thoroughly Scriptural answer to the doctrinal question raised by this query will be found in the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, Chapter XI ("Of the Gospel Offer"). The chapter should be carefully read, and its Scripture proofs noted. The Testimony expressly rejects as an error the teaching "That the Gospel offer consists in declaring to sinners, that Christ has redeemed each of them in particular".

The Arminian system of theology teaches the universal or general atonement, that Christ died for all men in general, the intended purpose of His death not being infallibly to guarantee and bring about the salvation of any particular person or persons, but to provide all men an opportunity for salvation on a "take it or leave it" basis. That is, according to Arminianism, Christ died for everybody, and those who by their own free will decide to accept the Gospel offer get the benefit of Christ's universal atonement.

Opposed to Arminianism is the Calvinistic doctrine that Christ's atonement is particular, that is, that Christ died, not for all men in general, but for God's elect in particular, the intended purpose of His atonement being infallibly to guarantee and bring about the salvation of the elect of God.

Arminianism broadens the atonement to make it include every person in the world, but reduces its efficacy so that it actually saves nobody; it merely makes salvation available, to be accepted by men's free will. Calvinism, on the other hand, follows the Scriptures in teaching that God's intention in the atonement was to bring about the salvation of the elect, and that that intended purpose will be realized without fail. Thus Calvinism, while regarding the atonement as limited in its intention to the elect, at the same time teaches that its efficacy is so great that it brings to the elect all that is needed to bring about their salvation, including the new birth, the divine gifts of repentance, faith in Christ, and perseverance to the end.

Our Church has always, since the days of the Reformation, held the Calvinistic doctrine of the limited or particular atonement. A discussion of this, with Scripture proofs, will be found in "Blue Banner Faith and Life", Vol. 1, No. 8, October-December, 1946, pages 168-9 (Lesson 47) and page 178. It should be borne in mind that the question at issue is not that of the value or sufficiency of the atonement for all human beings, but that of whether, in the divine mind and plan, it was intended for the salvation of all human beings. Arminianism answers this latter question in the affirmative, Calvinism in the negative.

Since only God knows who the elect are, and He has not revealed this knowledge to men, it is impossible for the Christian worker to know whether or not a particular person is one of God's elect. Therefore there is no way of knowing whether or not the salvation of that particular person was included in God's intention in making His Son an offering for sin. Therefore we have no warrant for saying positively to any non-Christian, "Christ died for you". And only a person who has attained full assurance of his own salvation has a right to say positively, "Christ died for me".

We should tell unsaved people: (a) that Christ died to save sinners; (b) that He is offered as a Saviour, in good faith, to all men; (c) that all who truly accept the offer will receive eternal life. Such a presentation of the Gospel is sanctioned by our Church Standards, and is eminently Scriptural. But there is no instance anywhere in the Bible of a servant of Christ telling an unsaved person "Christ died for you". This popular saying is founded on the Arminian misinterpretation of the Bible.

Nor should we tell the unsaved that the intention or purpose of the atonement was to save all human beings if they repent and accept Christ. The objection to this type of statement is that it represents the divine intention in the atonement as hypothetical, conditional or contingent upon the future decisions of the free-will of human beings. It is quite true that Christ died for the salvation of all who will ever accept Him. But the reason they will accept Him is because Christ died for them; not vice versa. God did not make His Son an offering for sin in a conditional manner, or with a conditional intention. This doctrine (called "Hypothetical Universalism") is an attempt to bridge the gap between Calvinism and Arminianism, but it is not successful. Christ died either for all men alike (Arminianism) or only for some (Calvinism); the Bible says nothing anywhere of a conditionally intended atonement; on the contrary it represents the atonement as being for Christ's sheep (John 10:15), and the same discourse of our Lord expressly states that "the sheep" are those given to Him by His Father (verse 29; compare John 17:6). Note also the statement of the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, X.3, "Christ did not IN ANY SENSE suffer for the sins of all mankind, nor did he lay down his life to make an atonement for an indefinite number of sinners. . . . in the purpose of God, and in the undertaking of Christ, it was not contemplated that he should make atonement for any except those who were elected in him to everlasting life; these only he represented, and these only shall be saved through his redemption."

**Question:**

Is it legitimate for a Christian to be a member of a consumers' co-operative association? Or should Christians remain separate from such organizations on the ground that part of the members are unbelievers?

**Answer:**

There would seem to be no valid reason, in general, why Christians should not be members of such associations. There might perhaps be special reasons in certain particular cases. The fact that such co-operative associations include non-Christians or unbelievers in their membership does not constitute any reason why Christians should not belong to them. For these are not specifically religious organizations, but exist in the civil sphere. The Scripture commands against being unequally yoked with unbelievers, to be separate, etc., (for example 2 Cor. 6:14-18) are rightly interpreted as prohibiting religious association with non-Christians. Note that this passage speaks of the im-

possibility of agreement between the temple of God and idols, that is, between the Christian and the non-Christian in religious matters. Christian and unbeliever may not join together in any kind of religious fellowship or co-operative religious enterprise, but they may join together in any type of organization in the civil sphere which is in itself of a lawful nature—for example, a poultry breeders' association, a parent-teacher association, a co-operative grocery store. Paul's statements in 1 Cor. 5:9-12 are of the same import, and teach that co-operation in civil or business matters is not prohibited.

**Question:**

What is the duty of a Covenanter Church Session in case it receives a letter from a minister of another denomination requesting that membership transfer certificates of members of the Covenanter Church be forwarded to him?

**Answer:**

The Session should write the minister in question a polite letter stating that such certificates are issued to members only on their own personal request, and therefore they cannot be sent when the request comes through a third party. This is the only way to guard against non-resident members being persuaded by high-pressure salesmanship to leave our Church and join another denomination. If the member himself requests his own certificate, the Session should make an effort to persuade him to remain a member of the Covenanter Church. If this effort fails, the member should be provided with, not a "transfer certificate", but a "letter of standing", and this should be sent to him personally, not to the minister of the Church he intends to join.

**Question:**

What is your opinion of the enclosed advertisement entitled "The Bible is a Catholic Book", published by the Religious Information Bureau of the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus?

**Answer:**

This advertisement is typical of Roman Catholic propaganda where the Church of Rome is encountering stiff competition from evangelical

Protestantism. Roman Catholic publicity in countries where Romanism is dominant or has a virtual religious monopoly would take quite a different "line". Some of the statements of the advertisement are true enough. Others are Roman Catholic errors; for example the Bible is stated to consist of 73 inspired books (thus including the Apocrypha) and it is said that the Catholic Church gave the list of these 73 books to the world almost 300 years after the crucifixion of Christ. This gives the impression that the authority of the Bible is dependent on the Church. The truth is that the Bible possesses authority just because it is God's inspired Word, not because it has been agreed upon by the Church. The principal error of this advertisement is its naive equating of the terms "Catholic Church" and "Roman Catholic Church". Of course the Bible is a "Catholic" book; who ever thought of denying it? It belongs to the whole Church of God on earth; but that is very different from claiming that the Bible is a ROMAN Catholic book. Again, the advertisement states that the writers of the various Bible books were members of the Catholic Church. So they were; who ever dreamed of questioning it? But they were certainly not members of the ROMAN Catholic Church, which as a matter of historical fact did not exist in their time. The remedy for this kind of propaganda is an accurate knowledge, not only of our own faith, but of the history and dogmas of the Church of Rome. The reader is referred to "Being Protestant" by the Rev. Walter McCarroll, D.D., for more information on this subject.

**Question:**

Why are not people converted by the thousands today as at the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41)?

**Answer:**

What happened on the day of Pentecost is often misunderstood. The occasion was unique in the history of God's kingdom. Since all the persons involved were Jews, and it took place at the transfer point from the old dispensation to the new dispensation of the Covenant of Grace, it is not parallel to any situation that can exist anywhere at the present day. The economy of the Covenant of Grace could pass from its preparatory dispensation to its universal dispensation only once in history, therefore it was a unique event. We are told that these Jews were "devout men" (Acts

2:5); not that they merely claimed to be devout men, but that they actually were devout men. Some were Jews by birth, others were proselytes to the Jewish religion. Since the Bible teaches that salvation was essentially the same in the Old Testament dispensation as it is in the New Testament dispensation, truly devout men under the Old Testament were children of God, born again, justified, adopted and sanctified as truly as Christians are today (though not necessarily with the same consciousness of these blessings in their own minds). In other words, it is quite unwarranted to hold that at Pentecost three thousand souls were translated from Satan's kingdom to the kingdom of God, or converted from being dead in trespasses and sins to being recipients of God's grace. We should rather hold that their conversion (in many cases at least) was from the Old Testament form of the true religion to the New Testament form of the true religion—from faith in a promised but future Messiah to faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah who had already come. We see a hint of the same thing in Acts 6:7, "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" It was a unique turning point in the history of the covenant people of God on earth. After this turning point had passed, we read of no more mass conversions of Jews to Christianity. On the contrary, the Jews became bitterly opposed to Christianity and fought it as hard as they could. Paul was as great an evangelist as Peter, but he never got 3,000 converts at a time; he got his the hard way, by twos and threes (Acts 17:34). It seems correct to say that at Pentecost and for a short season thereafter the transfer of dispensations was in process, and during that period the great mass of the elect among the Jews and Jewish proselytes embraced Christianity, with the result that all that remained, with some exceptions such as Saul of Tarsus and other Jews who later believed, were non-elect persons, who accordingly became "hardened", had "a veil on their hearts" when the Old Testament Scriptures were read, and Paul could say of them that "wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thess. 2:16). As to why people are not converted by the thousands today as at Pentecost, it is sufficient to answer that even in Bible times people were not converted by thousands except on this one occasion. Our duty is to preach Christ faithfully; the number to be converted at any time is a matter reserved to the sovereignty and secret counsel of God. Moreover it is vain and mistaken to talk about repeating Pentecost. Pentecost cannot be repeated any more than God's calling of Abraham, or the dedication of Solomon's Temple, or the ascension of Christ can be repeated. The history of redemption does not repeat itself that way; it runs through from beginning to end, and its great epoch-making events are unique.

## The Signing of the Covenant in the Greyfriars' Churchyard, Edinburgh, 1638

(Continued from inside front cover)

"He ended, and there was a pause, a pause of holy fear;  
Who, to attest the oath of God shall first adventure near?  
It was not doubt, but solemn awe and self-distrusting shame,  
And that each deemed his brother bore a less unworthy name!

"Till the good Earl of Sutherland, the brave old Earl and true,  
One moment bowed his reverent head, then toward the table drew:  
'So deal my God with me and mine, till latest ages be,  
As we prove stedfast in this bond I bind on them and me!'

"Then followed Rothes quickly on, Cassilis, and Hay, and Home;  
Montrose, as if almost he grudged to lose the foremost room;  
Loudon, his country's beacon-light amid her murkiest hour,  
With many a noble name beside—a kingdom's hope and flower!

"Now Henderson, the called of God; Dickson, the owned of heaven,  
(Surely a blessing waits the land to which such guides are given!)  
Guthrie, as though upon the cast his life he longed to stake,  
And Rutherford, with look inspired, as if his Master spake!

"Bless God, my father, who hath lent the land we love so well,  
Sons valiant for the truth on earth, more than my tongue can tell;  
To name but those already proved by many a searching test,  
Would wile us from the hour of prayer, and steal thy midnight rest!

"Yet must thou hear, when all had signed within the house of God,  
How still a multitude without, each on the other trod;  
Pressing with fervent footsteps on, and many an earnest prayer,  
That they in Scotland's Covenant might register their share!

"Oh! Arthur's Seat gave back the shout of that assembled crowd,  
As one bare forth the mighty bond, and many wept aloud;  
They spread it on a tombstone-head (a martyr slept beneath),  
And some subscribed it with their blood, and added 'Until death!'

"Ay! young and old were moved alike, with prayers, and groans, and tears;  
Surely the fruit of such a day is yet for many years!  
And, owned in heaven, the strong appeal of each uplifted hand,  
As evening's sun went down upon the covenanted land!"

That old man rose up in his place, he bared his locks of gray:  
"Lord, let thy servant now depart, for I have seen this day;  
Upon my head in early youth John Knox's hand hath lain,  
And I have seen his buried work unsepulchred again!

"Speed on, thou covenanted cause! God's blessing upon thee!  
Baptized in Scotland's dearest blood, albeit thou needs must be;  
Christ came not to send peace on earth; only may that red rain  
Still fructify thy living seed till He return again!

"My country! oh my country! yea, for thee the light is sown,  
Only be steadfast in thy trust, let no man take thy crown!  
Thine be the standard-bearer's place! the post of suffering high—  
God's blessing on the Covenant—I'll sign it ere I die!"

## GEMS FROM THOMAS MANTON

Sin is always driving away and casting out; it drove the angels out of heaven, Adam out of paradise, and Cain out of the church.

The Scriptures do not direct us to the shrines of saints, but to the throne of grace. You need not use the saints' intercession; Christ hath opened a way for you into the presence of the Father.

God's hand is open, but our hearts are not open. The divine grace, like the olive-trees in Zechariah, is always dropping; but we want a vessel.

Carnal confidence is rooted in some vain principle and thought; so men think God is not just, hell is not so hot, the devil is not so black, nor the Scriptures so strict.

Many please themselves because they suffer afflictions in this world; and therefore think they should be free in the world to come, as many ungodly poor men think death will make an end of their troubles, as if they could not have two hells.

A Christian's life is full of mysteries; poor, and yet rich; base, and yet exalted; shut out of the world, and yet admitted into the company of saints and angels; slighted, yet dear to God; the world's dirt, and God's jewels.

Men would fain spare the pains of prayer, study, and discourse; they are loath to "cry for knowledge, to dig for it as for silver," Prov. 2:4; they love an easy, short way to truth, and therefore run away with those mistakes which come next to hand, vainly imagining that God doth not require belief to such things as are difficult and hard to be understood; they do not look to what is sound and solid, but what is plausible, and at first blush reconcilable with their thoughts and apprehensions.

Chrysostom observeth, that the saints do not pray, Lord, make a plainer law, but Lord, open my eyes, that I may see the wonders of thy law; as David doth. It were an unjust demand for blind men, or they that willingly shut their eyes, to desire God to make such a sun that they might see; it is better to desire gifts of the Spirit for the minister, that the Scriptures might be opened; and the grace of the Spirit for ourselves, that our understanding might be opened, that so we may come to discern the mind of God.

The glory of a religion lieth in three things—the excellency of rewards, the purity of precepts, and the sureness of principles of trust. Now examine the gospel by these things, and see if it can be matched elsewhere.

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## J. G. VOS, EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

R. F. D. No. 1

Clay Center, Kansas



# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

VOLUME 3

OCTOBER-DECEMBER, 1948

NUMBER 4

"WE PROFESS AND DECLARE, BEFORE GOD AND THE WORLD, OUR UNFEIGNED DESIRE TO BE HUMBLLED FOR OUR OWN SINS, AND FOR THE SINS OF THESE KINGDOMS: ESPECIALLY, THAT WE HAVE NOT AS WE OUGHT VALUED THE INESTIMABLE BENEFIT OF THE GOSPEL; THAT WE HAVE NOT LABORED FOR THE PURITY AND POWER THEREOF; AND THAT WE HAVE NOT ENDEAVORED TO RECEIVE CHRIST IN OUR HEARTS, NOR TO WALK WORTHY OF HIM IN OUR LIVES; WHICH ARE THE CAUSES OF OTHER SINS AND TRANSGRESSIONS SO MUCH ABOUNDING AMONGST US. . ."

THE SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT, 1643

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J. G. VOS, Editor and Publisher

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Clay Center, Kansas

# THE CAMERONIAN'S DREAM

By James Hyslop

In a dream of the night I was wafted away  
To the moorland of mist where the martyrs lay;  
Where Cameron's sword and his Bible are seen,  
Engraved on the stone where the heather grows green.

'Twas a dream of those ages of darkness and blood,  
When the minister's home was the mountain and wood;  
When in Wellwood's dark moorlands the standard of Zion,  
All bloody and torn, 'mong the heather was lying.

It was morning; and summer's young sun, from the east,  
Lay in loving repose on the green mountain's breast.  
On Wardlaw and Cairn-Table the clear shining dew  
Glistened sheen 'mong the heath-bells and mountain flowers blue.

And far up in heaven in the white sunny cloud,  
The song of the lark was melodious and loud;  
And in Glenmuir's wild solitudes, lengthened and deep,  
Was the whistling of plovers and the bleating of sheep.

And Wellwood's sweet valley breathed music and gladness;  
The fresh meadow blooms hung in beauty and redness;  
Its daughters were happy to hail the returning,  
And drink the delights of green July's bright morning.

But ah! there were hearts cherished far other feelings,  
Illumed by the light of prophetic revealings,  
Who drank from this scenery of beauty but sorrow,  
For they knew that their blood would bedew it to-morrow.

'Twas the few faithful ones who, with Cameron, were lying  
Concealed 'mong the mist, where the heath-fowl was crying;  
For the horsemen of Earlshall around them were hovering,  
And their bridle-reins rang through the thin misty covering

Their faces grew pale, and their swords were unsheathed,  
But the vengeance that darkened their brows was unbreathed;  
With eyes raised to Heaven, in meek resignation,  
They sang their last song to the God of Salvation.

The hills with the deep mournful music were ringing;  
The curlew and plover in concert were singing;  
But the melody died 'midst derision and laughter,  
As the hosts of ungodly rushed on to the slaughter.

Though in mist and in darkness and fire they were shrouded,  
Yet the souls of the righteous stood calm and unclouded;  
Their dark eyes flashed lightning, as, proud and unbending,  
They stood like the rock which the thunder is rending.

The muskets were flashing; the blue swords were gleaming;  
The helmets were cleft, and the red blood was streaming;  
The heavens grew dark, and the thunder was rolling,  
When in Wellwood's dark moorlands the mighty were falling.

(Continued on back cover)



# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

VOLUME 3

OCTOBER-DECEMBER, 1948

NUMBER 4

## Sketches From Our History Contending for the Faith Through the Ages

### CHAPTER III

#### DEFENDING THE TRUTH ABOUT MAN'S SIN AND GOD'S GRACE

(Continued from last issue)

We have traced the origin of the false system of doctrine called Pelagianism, and have seen how the young lawyer Coelestius became a zealous propagandist for this false system, applied for ordination at Carthage in North Africa, was charged with maintaining seven false doctrines, tried and excommunicated. This condemnation of Coelestius, however, proved to be only a temporary victory for the truth about man's sin and God's grace. It was to require many years of constant controversy and earnest effort before the Church as a whole could be brought to see the seriousness of the Pelagian heresy and to reject it whole-heartedly.

Pelagianism was essentially a Pharisaic system of self-righteousness which nullified the Scriptural truths of original sin, total depravity, total inability, and salvation by the grace of God through the atonement of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. According to Pelagianism, men are not born sinners; they never become completely sinful; they can always save themselves from sin and return to God by using their own free will; and the supernatural power of God the Holy Spirit is not needed for living a life pleasing to God. According to Pelagianism, the Gospel is not really good news, but only good advice. It is true that the Pelagian teachers, when sufficiently pressed, admitted that men need the help of God to do good and live aright. But by "the help of God" they meant, not the almighty power of the Holy Spirit in a person's heart, but merely that "help" which God gives to men by creating them, endowing them with free will, giving them a conscience, and revealing His law to them so that they may know His will. They indeed acknowledged that Jesus Christ was given by God as a gift of grace, but they regarded Christ as primarily an example or pattern of good conduct rather than a Saviour. While they spoke about the grace of God, through Christ, bringing people the forgiveness of their

past sins, they held at the same time that it is possible even apart from Christ to live a sinless life.

In brief, Pelagianism minimized human sinfulness, and consequently also minimized the grace of God in the salvation of men. If we are not sinners, then we do not need a Saviour at all; if we are not very sinful, then we do not need a Saviour very much; if men can live a perfect life without Christ, then Christ's redemption is a convenience rather than a necessity. It comes down to this: do men climb to the kingdom of heaven by their own efforts, or are they lifted there by the grace of God? Do men save themselves (with or without some help from God), or does the Lord God save them by His almighty power? Pelagianism takes one side of these alternatives; orthodox Christianity, following the clear teaching of the Scriptures, takes the other side. It is obvious that this was no battle about words, or controversy over theological trifles. What was really at stake was nothing less than the very existence of the Gospel of Christ as the power of God unto salvation. A permanent Pelagian victory would have meant the end of Christianity as GOOD NEWS OF FREE SALVATION FOR GUILTY, HELPLESS SINNERS.

The next stage of the Pelagian controversy took place in Palestine, where Pelagius had been living for three or four years. A young Spanish minister named Paul Orosius, who had recently arrived in Palestine from North Africa, appeared at a synod which had been called by John, bishop of Jerusalem, in June of the year 415. Orosius reported the action of the synod at Carthage in condemning Coelestius, and stated that Augustine, bishop of Hippo near Carthage, had written against the errors of the Pelagians. Pelagius was summoned to appear before the synod, and an attempt was made to investigate his teachings. The synod was handicapped by the fact that Orosius spoke only Latin, while most of the members

of the synod spoke only Greek, and the interpreter proved to be rather incompetent. Pelagius himself was quite at home in both languages, which gave him a decided advantage. He made a vague admission that the help of God is needed for man to live a good life, and after discussion it was decided to refer the whole matter to Innocent, bishop of Rome, since both Pelagius and his accuser, Orosius, were members of the Western Church. The synod further decreed that in the meantime both sides should refrain from attacking each other. Thus practically nothing was accomplished, and the errors of Pelagius were, for the time being, regarded as harmless, if not actually orthodox.

Six months later two bishops from Gaul (France) appeared in Palestine and filed formal charges of heresy against Pelagius with the bishop Eulogius of Caesarea, who summoned a synod of fourteen bishops at Lydda, December 415, to try the case. This "trial" turned out to be a complete farce, a mere travesty of truth and justice. If ever a real heretic was "whitewashed" by a Church court, this was the time. The charges against Pelagius had not been very expertly prepared, and moreover they were written in Latin, which was a foreign language to the members of the synod which was to try the case. Pelagius with his thorough knowledge of both Latin and Greek, and his slippery maneuvering and tricky, equivocal manner of speaking, was able to make the synod believe that he was perfectly orthodox and had been unfairly accused by his opponents. Apparently the members of the synod did not really understand the questions at issue, and Pelagius did not hesitate to take advantage of their theological innocence and immaturity. The synod never got below the surface of the questions at stake. The great orthodox scholar Jerome later referred to this synod as "a miserable synod". Even so, however, Pelagius escaped condemnation only by his dissimulation and his dishonest, equivocal use of language. If he had spoken the plain truth about his own beliefs, and called things by their right names, he would in all probability have been condemned. As it was, the synod was quite taken in by his subtle double talk.

As a matter of fact, Pelagius was the real source of the teachings of Coelestius, which had been condemned by the synod of Carthage. But at the synod of Lydda, Pelagius double-crossed Coelestius and disowned the latter's doctrines, and thus led the synod to believe that he was opposed to the very doctrines which he himself was accused of maintaining. As a result, Pelagius was acquitted of all heresy, and declared to be of orthodox faith. Augustine later commented on this synod by saying: "It was not heresy, that was there acquitted, but the man who denied the heresy". A court of the Church of Jesus Christ had been tricked into giving one of the most notorious heretics of all Christian history a clean bill of health.

The vindication of the truth would have to come later.

Pelagius and his supporters immediately took full advantage of his acquittal by the synod of Lydda. Reports of the synod were sent to the West; Pelagius published a book entitled "In Defence of Free Will" in which he boldly proclaimed his opinions. Soon two synods in North Africa formally expressed their condemnation of Pelagius and Coelestius and their teachings. Thus two regions of the Church—Palestine and North Africa—stood in mutual opposition, and each side hoped to obtain the support of the bishop of Rome, Innocent I. On January 27, 417, Innocent endorsed the decisions of the North African synods, and rejected the teachings of the Pelagians as unsound. Innocent further declared that both Pelagius and Coelestius must be regarded as excommunicated persons until they should repent and accept the truth.

A few weeks after this, however, Innocent died, and his successor as bishop of Rome, Zosimus, was favorable to the Pelagians. He soon proclaimed both Coelestius and Pelagius orthodox, and rebuked the African Churches for being opposed to these men. After this (417 or 418) a synod was held at Carthage, North Africa, attended by more than 200 bishops, in which the former sentence against Coelestius and Pelagius was reaffirmed. The synod declared that these men must remain under the ban of excommunication until they should affirm in plain and unequivocal language that the grace of God through Christ is absolutely necessary for human beings either to know or to do anything that is pleasing to God. Thus the African bishops, in their defence of the truth, did not hesitate to contradict the decision of the bishop of Rome.

Next someone persuaded the Roman government to intervene in the controversy, and on April 30, 418, an imperial decree was issued requiring Pelagius and Coelestius, with all who shared their beliefs, to be banished from Rome. The appeal to the civil government to intervene in a religious controversy of course cannot be justified. However it was quite in accord with the generally accepted belief of that day about the relation between Church and State. The great Augustine himself approved of it heartily.

The intervention of the civil government wrought havoc with the cause of Pelagianism, for it put Zosimus, the bishop of Rome, in a most embarrassing position. He would either have to go into banishment along with the rest of the Pelagians, or else he would have to reverse his former decision and admit having made a terrible mistake. He chose the latter course, and only six months after he had formally pronounced Pelagius and Coelestius orthodox, he turned clear around and excommunicated them.

About the same time as the imperial decree against the Pelagians, a council of 200 bishops met at Carthage, in North Africa, and adopted nine doctrinal statements condemning Pelagianism. The first two statements were as follows:

"1. Whosoever says, that Adam was created mortal, and would, even without sin, have died by natural necessity, let him be anathema.

"2. Whosoever rejects infant baptism, or denies original sin in children, so that the baptismal formula, 'for the remission of sins', would not have to be taken in a strict, but in a loose sense, let him be anathema." (Quoted in Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, III. 799).

The other seven statements dealt with other teachings of the Pelagians. The whole Pelagian system, with its false and superficial views of human sinfulness, of the grace of God and of the way of salvation, was taken up item by item and condemned as contrary to the Christian faith.

Zosimus in 418 sent a letter to all bishops, both in the East and in the West, announcing the excommunication of Pelagius and Coelestius, and affirming his own agreement with the decisions of the synod of Carthage concerning original sin, baptism and the necessity of divine grace. Anyone refusing to subscribe this letter was to be deposed from Church office, deprived of his property, and banished from his Church. Eighteen Italian bishops refused to sign, and were deposed from office, although some of them later changed their minds and were restored.

One of these eighteen bishops, however, Julian of Eclanum, continued a convinced Pelagian to his death. Julian was by far the ablest and most learned of the Pelagian party, and he became the outstanding advocate of the Pelagian doctrines. Even in his place of banishment he continued to write in defence of Pelagianism. The champion of the orthodox faith was Augustine

of Hippo, who preached and wrote untiringly in the defence of the truth, and whose writings were extremely influential in turning the tide against the Pelagian errors.

Finally Pelagianism was condemned by the whole Church. At the third ecumenical (world-wide) council, held at Ephesus, A. D. 431, one year after the death of Augustine, Pelagianism was formally condemned as a heresy, along with Nestorianism. For the time being, the truth was victorious. Later Pelagianism was able to stage a temporary come-back in a modified form known as Semi-Pelagianism. After further controversy this also was rejected by the Church at the Synod of Orange, A. D. 529. This synod adopted twenty-five canons against Semi-Pelagianism. The synod declared, among other things, that Adam's sin brought sin and death on all mankind; that grace is given not merely when we pray for it, but in order that we may pray for it; that even the disposition to believe is the result of the grace of God; that all good thoughts and works are God's gift; and that the grace of God is undeserved. Thus the Church adhered to the truth of God's Word concerning man's sin and God's grace, and Satan's scheme to supplant the Gospel by a system of human self-salvation failed.

Although officially condemned by the Church, Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism continued to have some influence in the Church, and in every age there have been those who have adhered to Pelagian teachings. This is especially true of the present day, for contemporary Modernism has much in common with ancient Pelagianism. In its optimistic view of human nature, its denial of original sin and total depravity, and its belief in the power of man to be good and do good, Modernism is essentially Pelagianism. Indeed, it may truly be affirmed that many Modernists out-Pelagianize Pelagius, for they go even beyond the ancient heretic in denying or minimizing the guilt of sin and in explaining away the truth of the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ for sinners.

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## THE SCOTTISH COVENANTERS

### THEIR ORIGINS, HISTORY AND DISTINCTIVE DOCTRINES

(Selections from the book with the above title, by J. G. Vos, published by the author in 1940)

#### PART II

#### THE HISTORY OF THE COVENANTERS

#### CHAPTER I

#### THE PERIOD OF PERSECUTION, 1660-1688

(Continued from last issue)

#### 5. The Covenanters' Attempts at Armed Resistance.

Early in 1666 Sir James Turner was sent with a body of troops to police the south and west of Scotland and keep the "Whigs", as the Covenant-

ers were called, under control. Turner and his men enforced the law against conventicles, and exacted unreasonable and oppressive fines from the people. In November of that year, some of Turner's men arrested an old farmer named Grier, for failure to pay the fine for absence from the parish Church. The soldiers bound Grier hand and foot, and threatened to strip him naked and roast him on a hot gridiron because of the

unpaid fine. Four Covenanters heard of this, and went and rescued Grier, disarming his captors. Realizing, apparently, that if apprehended they would be held guilty of rebellion, they determined to make a stand in defence of their rights and liberties, and the next morning attacked and overcame a party of about a dozen soldiers, one of whom was killed in the fight, and the rest taken prisoners. After this a number of the local gentry joined the little band of Covenanters, and together they marched to the town of Dumfries and captured their persecutor, Sir James Turner. Their idea apparently was that with Turner in their hands they could be sure of a hearing from the government. After capturing Turner, they went to the market place of Dumfries, where they publicly proclaimed their object to be simply self-defence. After this they drank the King's health, and pledged their loyalty to the government of Charles II. Turner was treated kindly, although he had been a great persecutor of the Covenanters. When it was proposed to shoot him, one of the Covenanters, named Neilson, whose property had been much damaged by Turner's soldiers, opposed this so firmly that the idea was dropped. From Dumfries they marched, seven hundred strong, to Lanark, where they formally renewed the Solemn League and Covenant, and also issued a declaration stating their reasons for appearing in arms, which were self-defence, maintenance of the Covenant, and protest against the apostasy and cruelties of the times.

The insurgent Covenanters, now numbering over a thousand men, marched towards Edinburgh, led by Colonel James Wallace. At Rullion Green in the Pentland hills they were opposed by the King's troops and the battle was drawn. The Covenanters at this time had nine hundred men, and the King's forces under Dalziel between two and three thousand soldiers. It was a hard fight, but the Covenanters were hopelessly outnumbered, and suffered complete defeat. Of their nine hundred men, forty or fifty were killed in the battle, and seventy or eighty captured, and the remaining seven or eight hundred took advantage of the semi-darkness of the evening, and escaped to the hills.

Of those captured at Rullion Green, some twenty were found guilty of rebellion and executed by hanging. The authorities believed that the Pentland rising must have been the result of a well developed plot, and in order to obtain evidence of this, put some of the captives to the torture of the "boot", by which the bones of the leg were mashed to pulp. But even when tortured the captured Covenanters did not reveal any plot against the government, and the verdict of history is that no such plot existed. The Pentland rising was a desperate, but entirely spontaneous and unpremeditated, attempt at self-defence on the part of people who had been vexed beyond the breaking point by their oppressors.

Nearly thirteen years passed before another armed conflict took place between the Covenanters and the King's forces. On May 3rd, 1679, Archbishop Sharp, one of the chief persecutors, was overtaken in his carriage on Magus Moor, near St. Andrews, by a group of Covenanters and immediately assassinated. Although extenuating circumstances existed, it is impossible to justify this deed of blood, and as a matter of fact very few covenanters justified it at the time or afterwards. Many who had nothing to do with the assassination of the Archbishop were later interrogated by the authorities, and when asked whether the killing of the Archbishop was murder refused to commit themselves, not because they wished to justify the deed, but because they did not believe it their duty to pass judgment on a matter with which they had no connection and concerning which they were not in possession of all the facts. Later in May, 1679, a proclamation against field conventicles was issued, in which they were called "rendezvous of rebellion", and all who went to armed conventicles were declared to be guilty of treason. On May 29th a party of Covenanters published the Rutherglen declaration, a statement of their principles and a condemnation of the defections of the land. The Rutherglen declaration was declared to be rebellion and the government set about apprehending those responsible for it. The Covenanters resolved to defend themselves if possible. A body of somewhat less than two hundred of them prepared to fight at a swampy place called Drumclog. Claverhouse, in command of the King's troops, approached them, but suffered defeat at the hands of the Covenanters. Five of the King's soldiers were captured, and over thirty killed.

The Covenanters who fought at Drumclog resolved to remain together for mutual self-defence. Soon large numbers of like-minded persons joined them, and it was thought proper to publish a statement of their reasons for being in arms. When they began to discuss the proposed statement, dissensions broke out among them. Part of them wished to include a pledge of loyalty to Charles II, and part opposed this because of the King's violation of the Covenants. Part wished to put the whole body on record as being opposed to the Indulgence, and part opposed this because unwilling to go to the length of complete separation from the indulged ministers. Before their dissensions were settled, they were attacked on the Sabbath morning, June 22nd, 1679, by the King's forces at Bothwell, where the Covenanters were in possession of the bridge. They defended the bridge as long as their ammunition lasted, and then gave way. They suffered a disastrous rout; in addition to those killed in the battle, some four hundred were killed while attempting to escape, and twelve hundred in one body surrendered to the royal troops.

The prisoners taken after the battle at Bothwell were removed to Edinburgh and confined for

five months in the Greyfriars' churchyard in a miserable condition. The uprising was officially declared to have been rebellion, and those involved in it to be traitors. The prisoners were given an opportunity to regain their freedom by signing a bond in which they called the uprising "rebellion" and promised not to take up arms against the King's forces. Some signed this bond but others would not call the insurrection rebellion nor promise not to take up arms in self-defence. Two hundred and fifty of the latter were ordered transported to Barbadoes to be sold as slaves, but the ship was wrecked and all were drowned except about fifty who escaped alive.

The publication of the Sanquhar Declaration by the strict Covenanters, under the leadership of Richard Cameron, on June 22nd, 1680, brought great wrath upon the desperate men who had thus deliberately published their principles to the world. Just a month after the posting of the Sanquhar Declaration, on July 22nd, a party of sixty-three Covenanters, including Cameron, was attacked by the King's forces. They determined to do what they could do to defend themselves, and although but poorly armed, prepared to resist the attack. Cameron offered prayer, committing the matter to God, and using the expression, "Lord, spare the green, and take the ripe". The Covenanters fought bravely, and killed twenty-eight of the King's soldiers; nine Covenanters, including Cameron, were killed in the skirmish, and the rest taken prisoners, of whom

several died of wounds within the next few days. The soldiers cut off Cameron's head and hands, to send them to Edinburgh, one of them saying "These are the head and hands of a man who lived preaching and praying, and died fighting and praying". This conflict took place at a place called Ayrsmoss, and was the last armed conflict between an organized body of Covenanters and the King's forces.

Covenanters in later times have always regarded these attempts at armed resistance as legitimate and righteous self-defence. The Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland speaks thus of them: "The appearance in arms at Pentland, Drumclog, Bothwell-Bridge, and Ayrsmoss in unpremeditated attempts at necessary, though desperate self-defence, and in vindication of the outraged liberties of the church and nation, we regard as justifiable on the admitted principles of national law, from the examples of God's saints recorded in history, and the noble struggles of such nations as have achieved constitutional freedom. To some, indeed, they may appear to have been rash and inexpedient, inasmuch as they led to increased sufferings and oppression. They served, nevertheless, as a just though unsuccessful protest against the reckless conduct of infatuated rulers, and as an impressive testimony in behalf of principles which the British nation endorsed in the ultimate rejection of the house of Stuart".

(To Be Continued)

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## The Twenty-Seventh Psalm

### THE BELIEVER; HIS FRIEND, AND HIS ENEMIES

By the Rev. Frank D. Frazer

(Continued from last issue)

#### II. HOW THE BELIEVER'S SECURITY IS MAINTAINED (Verses 7-14)

7. Hear, O Jehovah, my voice—I am calling—  
Have mercy upon me, and answer me.

8. To thee said my heart (answering thy voice, "Seek ye my face"), Thy face, O Jehovah, I am seeking.

9. Hide not thy face from me; Do not put off thy servant in anger: Thou hast been my help; Reject me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

10. When my father and my mother forsook me, Jehovah took me in.

11. Teach me thy way, O Jehovah; And lead me in a straight path, Because of them who (with evil intent) are watching me.

12. Give me not over to the desire of mine enemies, When false witnesses are risen against me, And such as breathe out cruelty.

13. — Oh, What if I had not believed that I would see The goodness of Jehovah in the land of the living! —

14. Wait thou for Jehovah! Be strong, and let thy heart take courage! Wait thou for Jehovah!

In the former part of this Psalm Christ has revealed the security a man may have in God. He has given the expression of calm, unshaken confidence in Jehovah which we should learn to make our own. For security becomes ours by faith. He now shows how that security is maintained in the midst of enemies.

The believer's security is in Jehovah Himself; in Him alone. It is guaranteed by Jehovah, by His mercy, faithfulness and power. Having set

his heart on the "one thing" needful, the believer has sought and found; he has knocked and it has been opened to him. Now it is for him to ask and it shall be given. For God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Hence, on the believer's part, his security is maintained by the faith that keeps on praying.

**A. By the faith that seeks to know and to do the will of God (vss. 7-10).**

And the will of God is revealed by **WHAT GOD HAS SAID**. "Seek ye my face" is His command. It is addressed to all, and the response of every individual should be, "Thy face, Jehovah, I am seeking".

For, it is the face, with its entire expression, and changes of expression, that reveals the person, his character, thought, purpose, will. God is a person. Men were made in the image of God, and, as one man can understand another, with the highest degree of certainty, only by seeing his face, so one can understand God only by seeing His face; by hearing the words of His mouth; seeing the light of His eyes; feeling the breath of His nostrils. But, God is Spirit, and while these and similar terms are applied to God in His own Word, we must not take them in any materialistic way, but in whatever way God may choose to make Himself and His will known to us.

It is for us to **SEEK** His face, that is, to seek to know Him as He is, and His will as He reveals it. For, Verily, he is God that hideth himself. He hides Himself within dimensions that are beyond our comprehension, yet, He is not far from every one of us. His presence is always here. He can be found; for, verily, He is a God that revealeth Himself. "Jehovah is with you while you are with him; and if you seek him, he will be found of you; but if you forsake him, he will forsake you". We must not forget, however, that God is infinite; we finite. God is holy; we unclean. We are not to ask for more than we are able to bear, or more than we need for the present duty. Remember God's corrective word to Moses: "Thou canst not see my face; for no man shall see me and live . . . my face shall not be seen". Yet, God did speak to Moses "face to face as a man speaketh to his friend".

If we would find the face of God, our faces must be toward His. "Face to face" implies mutual self-disclosure; on our part, confidence and sincerity. It involves the putting aside of our own will. "Not my will but thine be done" is the essence of all true prayer. For every sinner, it involves humble confession of sin. For the greatest obstacle to our finding God is within ourselves. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear". It

is he who confesseth and forsaketh his sins that shall have mercy.

Now, in this Psalm, there is prayer for mercy, but **NO CONFESSION OF PERSONAL SIN!** Certainly, for David, or any other sinner, to be seeking the face of God without confession of sin would be a hypocrite's presumption. But no hypocrite prays for mercy. The speaker here is not a hypocrite. He has no personal sin to confess. Yet, he is a man, for he speaks of his "mother". Addressing God, he calls himself "thy servant", a name which, wherever it elsewhere occurs in the Psalms, designates Christ, primarily, then such as are united in Christ by the regeneration of His Spirit and faith. The prayer of this Psalm is the prayer of Christ.

But, why should Christ, holy, separate from sinners, pray for mercy? Why should the beloved Son of God pray that God will not hide His face, nor put off His servant in anger, nor reject nor forsake him when persecuted or forsaken by men? There is only one answer: Christ, as Son of Man, has taken the sinner's place. "He was numbered with the transgressors, and bare the sin of many". Being "in the likeness of sinful flesh", and knowing that we could never find God unless our sins were taken away, He sought and found the way of salvation for us. He made intercession for the transgressors on the ground of His sacrifice, "slain from the foundation of the world". So, "once at the end of the ages Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself". "Christ suffered for our sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God". That gracious purpose, "to bring us to God", is manifest in all the Psalms; is manifest here in the unmistakable yearnings of His holy, yet sin-bearing humanity, that we might have the benefit of His words and work. The prayer of this Psalm is the prayer of Christ "for us men and for our salvation". And we may, without presumption, use His words of prayer and praise to God if we are in Him by faith. For then we may pray, "O Jehovah, God of Hosts, hear . . . and look upon the face of thy Christ" (Ps. 84:8,9).

The will of God is also revealed by **WHAT GOD HAS DONE**. This Servant has perfect confidence that whatever happens, His God will not change. What God has been, He is now. What God has done, He will do, on occasion. "Thou hast been my help". Thou art the "God of my salvation". "When my father and my mother forsook me, Jehovah took me in". When the first, last and surest claim on human help has failed; when a man's foes are they of his own household, He is sure that God will be His saviour still. "For neither did his brethren believe on him". "They all forsook him and fled". Even Mary, His mother, and Peter, His disciple, unintentionally, no doubt, but by their lack of faith, became

at times His enemies (John 2:3,4. Matt. 16:23). "Yea, mothers may forget". There was but one Friend He could trust. He will keep "near unto God". His security is maintained

**B. By the faith that asks to know and to be led in God's way (vss. 11-13).**

"Teach me thy way, and lead me by a straight path" (or, "on a level road"), that there be no stumbling, nor going astray, "Because of them that are watching me" ("with evil intent" is implied); hanging around, trying to catch something He may say or do that they may accuse Him, and put Him to death.

In all these petitions Christ prayed as a man, teaching us to pray. God heard, had mercy, and answered; God taught Him His way, and led Him on a straight and level path. He never deviated a hair's breadth from the path of duty. "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do". He challenged His enemies, "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" They could find nothing of fact whereby they might accuse Him. No two false witnesses could agree. His Roman judge said, "I find in him no fault at all".

Prayer is one of God's appointed means of grace whereby HE COMMUNICATETH TO US; whereby a believer RECEIVES fuller understanding and appreciation of the perfect will of God, with glad submission to that will. The what, the how, and the when belong to God, not to us. God's way is not our way, nor His thoughts our thoughts. God hid His face; rejected His servant in anger; when all others had forsaken him, God forsook him, leaving him in unbearable anguish and utter loneliness. When false witnesses rose against him, and such as breathe out cruelty, it seemed as if God had given him over to the desire of his enemies. They thought they were having their own way. But, God did NOT give him over to their desire. With all their temptations and provocations they did NOT succeed in drawing him into their net, or causing him to fall. They crucified him. Yet, in that shameful death he was glorified. They desired to degrade him

to the lowest depths beneath them. God raised him to the highest place above them. They buried him. God raised him from the dead and set him at His own right hand.

And it would seem that, in view of His sore travail and its transcendent outcome, Christ added FOR US, who are so weak, impatient, and unbelieving, the detached words of verse 13, "—Oh, What if I had not believed that I would see the goodness of Jehovah in the land of the living!" What if I had become weary with the difficulties of the way, discouraged at the delay and apparent heedlessness of God, and had let doubt weaken my confidence! What if I had abandoned the security my God provided, and had been overcome by enemies! What if I had missed the glory and joy of His faithfulness. But the crown is given only when the end of the way is reached. Therefore, the believer's security is maintained

**C. By the faith that waits God's time (vs. 14).**

So today, let every one say to his own soul, "Wait thou for Jehovah! Be strong, and let thy heart take courage! Wait thou for Jehovah!"

It is easy to talk about waiting, but one must determinedly and constantly enforce it upon himself, with the help of God, through many temptations, remembering that Christ Himself is still WAITING. It is true that "we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor", but "we see not yet all things put under him". For, "He, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; henceforward WAITING till his enemies be made the footstool of his feet". And "we are made partakers of Christ if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end". Until then let us teach and admonish one another with the word of Christ, giving praises to God. For the marvel of the Psalms is not only that they are "the word of Christ", but that they are the word of Christ for sinners to use — for sinners, that is, who have come to believe what He said and rest upon what He did FOR THEM.

(Note: Mr. Frazer's studies in the Psalms will be continued in future issues of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". Ed.)

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"Oh, if ye got but a view of the saints on Mount Zion, clothed with righteousness, even that of Christ, and a sight of the terror of God, ye would know that it is a bitter thing to depart from the living God; ye would abhor nothing like sin! Where there is so little hatred of sin it is an evidence that ye will not come to Him who is the propitiation for sin; even Him who came to be a propitiation for those that are sick and diseased with sin."

Richard Cameron

"The more I study the Scriptures, the example of Christ, and of the apostles, and the history of my own heart, the more I am convinced, that a testimony of God, placed without us and above us, exempt from all intermixture of sin and error: which belong to a fallen race, and received with submission on the sole authority of God, is the true basis of faith."

Adolphe Monod

# Our Church Covenant and Modern Life

(Note: This is the fifth of a series of sermons on the obligations involved in the Church Covenant sworn and subscribed by the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, May 21, 1871. The other sermons of the series will be published in future issues of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". The editor desires to acknow-

ledge his great indebtedness to the Rev. Frank D. Frazer, whose booklet entitled "Outline Studies in the Covenant" was very helpful in the preparation of this series of sermons. Every Covenanter should read and study Mr. Frazer's excellent booklet, which clearly and convincingly displays the Scriptural character of the obligations set forth in the Covenant of 1871. — Ed.)

## V. OUR CONCERN THAT OUR CHURCH SHALL MAINTAIN A CONSISTENT WITNESS FOR THE TRUTH

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 4.

"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth"—1 Tim. 3:15.

The Covenant of 1871, besides a preliminary confession of sins, consists of an introductory paragraph and six sections. This Covenant was adopted in 1871 after long and earnest preparation, and it is recognized by the "Terms of Communion" as binding upon the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America today. In order that we may have a bird's-eye view of the Covenant as a whole, I shall present the subjects of the various sections as given in Mr. Frazer's "Outline Studies in the Covenant". These are as follows:

1. We hereby covenant to do our duty to God.
2. We hereby covenant to do our duty to the truth of God.
3. We hereby covenant to do our duty to the nation.
4. We hereby covenant to do our duty to the Church-at-large.
5. We hereby covenant to do our duty to the world.
6. We hereby covenant to perform these, our duties, faithfully.

Paragraphs 2 and 3 of Section 2 of our Church Covenant read as follows:

"Believing Presbyterianism to be the only divinely instituted form of government in the Christian Church, we disown and reject all other forms of ecclesiastical polity, as without authority of Scripture, and damaging to purity, peace and unity in the household of faith.

"We reject all systems of false religion and will-worship, and with these all forms of secret oath-bound societies and orders, as ensnaring in their nature, pernicious in their tendency, and perilous to the liberties of both Church and State; and pledge ourselves to pray and labor according to our power, that whatever is contrary to godliness may be removed, and the Church beautified with universal conformity to the law and will of her divine Head and Lord."

The general theme of Section 2 of our Church Covenant is: We Covenant to do our duty to the Truth of God. In our previous studies of Section 2 of the Covenant we have already considered the following obligations:

1. Our Covenant involves an intelligent attachment to the truth.
2. Our Covenant requires a public recognition of the truth.
3. Our Covenant pledges us to an earnest effort to understand the truth.
4. Our Covenant pledges us to a sincere resolve to preserve the truth.
5. Our Covenant pledges us to an active endeavor to propagate the truth.
6. Our Covenant requires a rejection of errors contrary to the truth.

Continuing this study, we shall now consider the following concluding subject of Section 2 of the Covenant:

**Our Covenant Pledges us to a Serious Concern that our Church Shall Maintain a Consistent Witness for the Truth.**

Witnessing for the truth of God is not mere-



ly an individual matter. It is also, and pre-eminently, a matter for the Church as a body. We are to be concerned not merely that each one of us as an individual shall be a faithful witness for divine truth, but that our Church as a body shall be a faithful, consistent and effective witness for the truth of God.

All truly Christian Churches are witnessing bodies, bearing witness more or less effectively, with a greater or less degree of consistency, to the truth of God revealed in the Bible. Obviously the ideal must be that the Church witness for the truth of God as effectively as possible, and with the highest possible degree of consistency.

For the Church to be an effective and consistent witnessing body, it must be closely patterned after the model presented in the Scriptures.

### I. We Promise to Maintain a Scriptural Church Organization

"Believing Presbyterianism to be the only divinely instituted form of government in the Christian Church. . .".

"Presbyterianism" was originally not the name of a denomination, but the name of a certain form of organization or government in the Church. Even though it is a six-syllable word, we should not be afraid of it. The meaning is really quite simple. The Greek word "Presbyter" means "elder". Originally this meant simply a man of advanced years; later it was used as the name of a church officer among the Jews; and still later it came to be used as the title of a certain class of officers in the Christian Church.

"Presbyter" means "elder", and Presbyterianism means government of the Church by elders. The Presbyterian form of Church government is that form in which the Church is governed by elders elected by the people but receiving their authority from Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. Now we may take a few minutes to note the elements of the Presbyterian form of Church government as they appear in the New Testament. Besides such extraordinary and temporary officers as apostles and prophets, the New Testament speaks of deacons, elders, bishops, evangelists, pastors and teachers. The deacons, according to the New Testament, are a class of officers ordained to take care of what we may call the business and financial side of the Church's work. They are to take charge of the collections, keep the accounts, disburse the funds, attend to poor and needy Christians, and so forth. The work of the deacons is not concerned with the government of the Church, but with the administration of the business and financial aspects of

The more faithfully it adheres to the Scripture pattern, and the more concern the members have that their Church follow the Scripture pattern, the more effective and consistent will the Church be in witnessing to the truth of God. Accordingly, in the portion of the Covenant that is before us in this sermon, in which our Covenant pledges us to a serious concern that our Church be a consistent witness to the truth, we find three specific promises set forth. These are:

1. We promise to maintain a Scriptural Church organization.

2. We promise to keep clear of all false worship.

3. We promise to strive toward the ideal Church.

the Church's work, including also the care of all Church property and relief of cases of need among the members. It is a very important task, but essentially different from the work assigned to the elders

The New Testament speaks of two kinds of elders: 1 Tim. 5:17, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine." Here two kinds of elders are mentioned, namely (1) those who rule, or govern the Church; (2) those who in addition to ruling, also labor in the word and doctrine; that is, those who not only have a voice in governing the Church, but also preach the Word of God publicly. The first class of elders, those who only rule, are what we call "elders" in our Churches today. The second class of elders, those who not only rule but also preach, are what we call "ministers" today. We might say that every minister is an elder, but not every elder is a minister. Elders who preach, or labor in the word and doctrine, are also referred to as "bishops", "evangelists", "pastors", and "teachers", in the New Testament epistles.

\* Now we find in the New Testament that as the apostles, who were Christ's appointed representatives, organized local Churches, every local Church, or congregation, had elders chosen from among the members of that Church. This is brought out in Acts 14:23, where we read of Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey: "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." Similarly, Paul in writing to Titus said: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou

shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee" (Titus 1:5). Many other references show that every local Church had its board of elders who were entrusted with the government of that Church. This is the basic principle of Presbyterian Church government.

Two other principles of Presbyterian government may be briefly referred to. In the Presbyterian system of Church government, as we find it in the New Testament, all Church power is always in the hands of more than one person. There is no such thing in the New Testament as a Church with only one elder. Always there is a group of elders, who act jointly. Following this pattern, the Presbyterian form of Church government requires that ruling power in the Church always be exercised by more than one person, acting jointly. We adhere to this feature primarily because it is the Scripture pattern. But apart from that reason, common sense tells us that it is a very wise safeguard against arbitrary or dictatorial action in the Church. The rights and liberties of the Church members, and the faithfulness of the Church in the service of God, are best safeguarded when power is in the hands, not of any one individual person, but of a group. "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Prov. 11:14).

Another principle of Presbyterian government is that the Church is to be governed by a series of graded or pyramided courts, from the session of a local congregation, to the synod or general assembly which has jurisdiction over a whole denomination. Thus no local congregation can disregard the work, welfare and witness of other congregations; all are parts of a larger whole. This Scriptural principle guards against all false isolationism and individualism, and expresses the truth of the unity of the Church as the body of Christ.

This system of Church government, which we call Presbyterianism, we hold because we believe it was appointed by Christ, the Head of the Church, through His apostles, to whom He committed the arranging of the organization and Worship of the Church. Therefore we also reject all other forms of Church government. What are these other forms? There are three main forms, of which there exist many variations and combinations. These are: (1) the Episcopal or Prelatic form of government, in which a single bishop has jurisdiction over a number of Churches; (2) the Papal or Roman Catholic form of government, in which the Pope of Rome is regarded as the special representative of Christ on earth, and claims exclusive jurisdiction over the entire Church as a crowned and ruling monarch; (3) the Congregational or Independent form of government, in

which each local congregation is independent of all others, as a separate unit directly under Christ, with no authoritative Church government over more than a single congregation. We reject these forms of Church government, in all their various manifestations, on two specific grounds: first, because they are without warrant in the Bible; and in the second place, because we believe them to be harmful in their effects.

We should realize that in our day and age very few Christian people have any clear and settled conviction that any particular form of Church government is appointed in the Scriptures. Roman Catholics, of course, base their belief in the Papal form of government on a misunderstanding of the Bible, as well as upon Church tradition apart from the Bible. But among present-day Protestants, the common idea is that the form of Church government is a matter of expediency, to be arranged according to human wisdom, preference or common sense. Many deny that the Bible sets forth any system of Church government as a model to be adhered to. Others say that the Bible presents elements of various conflicting forms of Church government, from which we are free to choose as we deem best. Accordingly, they say that Presbyterianism is a Scriptural form of Church government, but they are not willing to say that it is THE Scriptural form of Church government. In the larger Presbyterian denominations, both in this country and abroad, comparatively few ministers and members today believe that Presbyterianism is THE ONE AND ONLY DIVINELY SANCTIONED FORM OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT. The majority may believe that it is a good form of Church government, or even that it is the wisest and best of all forms of Church government, but still they do not believe that Presbyterianism alone is appointed by God, nor that all other forms of Church government are wrong and sinful deviations from the Scriptural pattern.

Over against this prevalent loose idea concerning the government of the Church, our Covenant pledges us to maintain the Presbyterian form as the only form appointed and sanctioned by God. We reject the Episcopal, Papal and Congregational systems, in their various forms and combinations, as contrary to God's appointment and harmful to the Church. Even though some of these rival forms of Church government can claim to be very ancient, with many centuries of history and tradition to give them prestige, still we reject them because they lack the kind of authority which alone can give them a real claim on our conscience, namely, a clear warrant of the written Word of God. We are convinced that Presbyterianism has that clear warrant of the Scripture, and that all the rival systems lack it.

## II. We Promise to Keep Clear of all False Worship

"We reject all systems of false religion and will-worship, and with these all forms of secret oath-bound societies and orders, as ensnaring in their nature, pernicious in their tendency, and perilous to the liberties of both Church and State; . . ."

In this sentence of the Covenant we reject, first of all, "all systems of false religion". This is a very broad statement. It includes, of course, all of the non-Christian religions of the pagan world, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Shintoism, etc. It includes also Mohammedanism, a system which is false because it claims access to God and eternal life directly, apart from the Mediator Jesus Christ and His redemption. It includes also such modern man-centered systems as Nazism, Fascism and Communism, which claim religious devotion of their adherents and which really amount to worship of the State. Also included are the many false religious cults such as Mormonism, Christian Science, Theosophy, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventism, Spiritism, Unity, and others of the same type. All of these are essentially false systems of religion; they differ from orthodox, historic Christianity, not in minor details, but in the basic principles of religion. They are therefore not to be regarded as branches of the Christian faith, but as rival religions. Last but by no means least, this sentence of our Covenant involves a rejection of Modernism, that contemporary travesty of Christianity which destroys Churches by "boring from within", and under cover of Christian terminology and forms of worship, actually nullifies every distinctive doctrine of the Christian faith. All these various systems agree in one thing; they agree in their opposition to real Bible Christianity. We reject them as false.

Next we reject all systems of "will-worship". This term, which is taken from Col. 2:23, signifies a wrong manner of worshipping even the true God. It means worship which is not appointed by God in His Word, but has been invented by human beings according to their own preference or desire, to suit their own ideas of what is fitting and proper, or beautiful or appealing in worshipping God. It means changes introduced in the worship of God because people wanted them, regardless of whether or not they could claim a "THUS SAITH THE LORD" for what they were doing. Such will-worship is extremely common at the present day. From time to time extreme manifestations of it come to light. A fashionable New York Church is reported to have at one time included rhythmic interpretive dancing in its so-called "worship service". But we need not think of such extreme cases to find instances of will-

worship. Any form or manner of worship not appointed by God in His Word constitutes will-worship. A very common form is the singing of hymns of human composition in the worship of God, in place of the inspired Psalms which He has appointed in Scripture. Another is the use of instrumental music in divine worship, whether as accompaniment for singing or by itself apart from singing. As explained in the Shorter Catechism (Q. 51), "The second commandment forbiddeth the worshiping of God by images, or ANY OTHER WAY NOT APPOINTED IN HIS WORD". "Any other way not appointed in His Word" is will-worship, and our Covenant pledges us to its rejection.

We also reject "all forms of secret oath-bound societies and orders". There are a number of good reasons why a Christian should not belong to such secret oath-bound associations. Their very secrecy casts suspicion on the propriety of their activities; ordinarily secrecy implies something that cannot stand the light of publicity, although of course this is not always the case. More serious is the oath-bound character of such "lodges" or "fraternal" orders. The candidate for membership must swear to keep the secrets and obey the rules of the order before he knows what they are. No Christian has any right to trifle with his conscience in such a way as that. We may not swear to do anything until we know what it is, and are sure it is something that we can approve of, because it is in harmony with God's law. Most serious of all is the fact that the popular secret orders involve a false system of religious belief and worship. They seek to approach God directly, without faith in Christ as Mediator; their prayers almost invariably omit the name of Jesus Christ. They teach that those who are faithful members of the lodge will go to heaven when they die. This is contrary to the Bible which teaches that only by personal faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour can sinners be saved and go to heaven. We realize, of course, that large numbers of professing Christians, including not only Church members but many prominent ministers, are members of oath-bound secret societies. This is a deplorable situation. Of course the fact that Church members and ministers do something does not make it right. We believe that professing Christians who hold membership in oath-bound secret orders are inconsistent. They may be quite sincere and may not realize at all that they are doing wrong. Still we believe they are inconsistent, and we reject the entire system of oath-bound secrecy as ensnaring in nature, pernicious in tendency, and perilous to the liberties of both Church and State.

### III. We Promise to Strive Toward the Ideal Church

"We . . . pledge ourselves to pray and labor according to our power, that whatever is contrary to godliness may be removed, and the Church beautified with universal conformity to the law and will of her Divine Head and Lord".

In doctrine, in worship, in Church organization, in Church discipline and in Christian service, we pledge ourselves to strive for universal conformity with the will of Christ. This is an unrealized ideal. It will never be perfectly realized this side of the state of glory. But we will do what we can in striving toward its realization. Perfection cannot be attained in this world, but progress toward perfection, by the grace of God, can be obtained, and we promise to try to obtain it. Just as every individual Christian must strive to grow in grace and increase in holiness day by day until he departs to be with the Lord, so the Church as a body must strive continuously for an ever increasing conformity to Christ's will.

We should recognize this ideal of progressive reformation of the Church as a valid ideal. The reformation of the Church is not something that took place back in the sixteenth century and was finished at that time. It is a continuous process and must continue until the end of the world. No Church can be static. Change is always taking place; if it is not reformation, it will be degeneration. Some Church members are unwilling to accept the ideal of progressive reformation. They are always thinking and talking of "the good old days". No doubt we do well to remember the history of our Church and the days of her purity and power in the seventeenth century in Scotland. No doubt the spiritual condition of the Church was in some respects better then than now, and the practice of the Church and its members in some ways more faithful and consistent in those days than today. But we are to look forward as well as backward. The Church cannot stand still; it must move forward. We must see that it moves in the

right direction, not on some by-path of human error or opinion, but on the King's highway revealed in the Word. That is, we must see to it that whatever changes occur in the Church are for the better, not for the worse; that they are true progress along Scriptural lines, and not retrogression or defection from Scriptural positions. We must bring every new thing, every proposal, every teaching, every activity, to the test of "what saith the Scripture", and must be willing fearlessly and without prejudice to follow the outcome of that test. When there is an issue between popularity and loyalty to Scripture, we must choose loyalty to Scripture. When there is an issue between tradition and loyalty to Scripture, we must choose loyalty to Scripture. Our watchword must be "Prove all things: hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21).

We also pledge ourselves to pray and labor for the attainment of this ideal. It is not merely an ideal; it is a project, an assignment, an undertaking. Note that the Covenant speaks of PRAYER first, and then of LABOR. Both, of course, are necessary; but prayer is primary.

The progressive reformation of the Church is a practical matter, and it begins at home, in our own Church, our own family, our own personal life, our own heart—not in a committee of Synod, but in our own heart. It must begin in the heart if it is to be real and lasting. Let us each one, by God's grace, dedicate ourselves anew to this great task of striving toward the ideal Church, realizing that the reformation of the Church must take place in our own hearts or it will not be real. Each of us should strive that our own life may be beautified with universal conformity to Christ's law and will, and then we should strive that our Church should progressively be brought closer and closer to His law and will as it is revealed in His Word, the Holy Bible.

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## Some Noteworthy Quotations

"It is a harder thing to be a holy person than to be a martyr. It is more easy to withstand an enemy than a temptation. When we conflict with an enemy, we do but conflict with an arm of flesh and blood; but with inward conflict we fight 'with principalities and powers'".

Thomas Manton

"Works are not the condition of justification, yet they are the evidence of it. By the righteousness of faith we are acquitted from sin, and by the righteousness of works we are acquitted from guile and hypocrisy. Though works have nothing to do in the court of heaven in matter of justifica-

tion, yet they have a voice and testimony in the court of conscience."

Thomas Manton

"Man hates evil, because it is against his interest; but God hates evil, because it is against His nature."

Thomas Manton

"No child of God can ever grow strong in grace with mere exhortation, if it be not associated with good old-fashioned doctrine. I should like to hear all our pulpits sounding with the

good old-fashioned doctrine of John Owen, and of such men as Bunyan, and Charnock, and Goodwin, and those men of olden time who knew the truth and dared to preach it fully. There were giants in those days. . . Now where find we such? We labor and we strive, we dig, we toil, we seek to be something, and we end in being nothing. And so it must be as long as hands are weak and knees are feeble; and so also must this be as long as good doctrine is denied us, and truth is kept back in the ministry. Feed God's children well; give them comfort; give them much to feed upon of the sweet things of the kingdom of God; and then they will grow strong, then they will begin to work."

Charles H. Spurgeon

"Christ's soldiers always win their battles on their knees. On their feet they may be conquered, but on their knees they are invincible."

Charles H. Spurgeon

"In the Psalms, we look into the heart of all the saints, and, we seem to gaze into fair pleasure-gardens; into heaven itself, indeed; where bloom the sweet, refreshing, gladdening flowers of holy and happy thoughts about God and all His benefits. On the other hand, where will you find deeper, sadder, more piteous words of mourning than in the Psalms? In these again, we look into the hearts of the saints, and we seem to be looking into death, yea, into hell itself. How gloomy, how dark it is there, because of the many sad visions of the wrath of God!"

Martin Luther

(From the Preface to Calvin's "Commentary on the Psalms of David"): "What various and resplendent riches are contained in this treasury, it were difficult to find words to describe. . . I am in the habit of calling this book, not inappropriately, 'The Anatomy of all Parts of the Soul', for not an affection will any one find in himself, an image of which is not reflected in this mirror. Nay, all the griefs, sorrows, fears, misgivings, hopes, cares, anxieties; in short, all the disquieting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated, the Holy Spirit hath here pictured to the life."

John Calvin

"In heaven alone is the attainment of our highest good. God is the highest good of the reasonable creature. The enjoyment of Him is our proper happiness; and is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. To go to heaven, fully to enjoy God, is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here . . . These are but drops, but God is the ocean."

Jonathan Edwards

"The days were in this land when men had much zeal for Christ. They thought themselves

happy to be zealous for God's name; and now we have that same opportunity that our fathers had, who put all in hazard for the doctrine, worship, discipline, and form of government of the house of God. They put themselves into the state of the quarrel to get the Gospel in its purity transmitted to posterity in succeeding generations. But oh, how few men now will quit anything for Christ! Will ye not do as much as quit these things? I tell you that ere long you and these things shall be for ever parted asunder."

Richard Cameron

"There is not a more miserable deceived soul in the world than that soul among you who, like Herod, hears the preached Gospel gladly, and yet, like Herod, lives in sin. You love the Sabbath day, you love the house of God, you love to hear Christ preached in all His freeness and in all His fulness; yes, you think you could listen for ever if only Christ be the theme; you love to sit down at sacraments, and to commemorate the death of your Lord. And is this all—is this all your holiness? Does your religion end here? Is this all that believing in Jesus has done for you? Remember, I beseech you, that the ordinances of Christ are not means of enjoyment, but means of grace; . . . Awake, then, my friends, and let it no more be said of us, that our religion is confined to the house of God and to the Sabbath day."

Robert Murray McCheyne

"Narrow is the mansion of my soul; enlarge Thou it, that Thou mayest enter in. It is ruinous; repair Thou it. It has that within which must offend Thine eyes; I confess and know it. But who shall cleanse it? Or to whom should I cry, save Thee?"

Augustine of Hippo

"The great burden of all true conviction is not chiefly the sins committed, but the sinful deadness of heart and aversion to divine things which is the root of actual transgression, and which remains immovable in spite of all we do."

A. A. Hodge

"Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt."

Augustine of Hippo

"I read, and kindled; nor found I what to do to those deaf and dead, of whom myself had been, a pestilent person, a bitter and a blind brawler against those writings, which are honied with the honey of heaven, and lightsome with Thine own light: and I was consumed with zeal at the enemies of this Scripture."

Augustine of Hippo

"The grace of God does not find men fit for salvation, but makes them so."

Augustine of Hippo

# Religious Terms Defined

A few definitions of important religious terms will be given in this department in each issue of "Blue Banner Faith and Life." The aim will be conciseness without the sacrifice of accuracy. Where possible the Westminster Shorter Catechism will be quoted.

**THE CHURCH.** The body of people who are distinguished from the rest of mankind by either a vital or an external participation in the dispensation of the Covenant of Grace.

**HEAD OF THE CHURCH.** The Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the appointment of God the Father, has been made the head of the body, the Church.

**THE INVISIBLE CHURCH.** "The invisible church is the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ the head" (Larger Catechism, 64).

**THE CHURCH MILITANT.** That portion of the invisible Church which at a given time is present on earth, and consequently engaged in conflict with evil.

**THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT.** That portion of the invisible Church which has already entered the state of glory, and consequently is enjoying victory over evil with Christ.

**THE VISIBLE CHURCH.** "The visible church is a society made up of all such as in all ages and places of the world do profess the true religion, and of their children" (Larger Catechism, 62).

**ATTRIBUTES OF THE CHURCH.** Those qualities which the Church possesses as the body of Christ, namely, unity, holiness and catholicity.

**UNITY OF THE CHURCH.** The character of the invisible Church as one single body of which Christ is the head, and the oneness which the visible Church ought to possess throughout the world.

**HOLINESS OF THE CHURCH.** The character of the Church as a body separated from sin and the world, and devoted to God.

**CATHOLICITY OF THE CHURCH.** The universal character of the Church, as a body not limited to any particular times, places or denominations, but including all who profess the true religion, and their children.

**MARKS OF THE CHURCH.** The special signs by which the purity of a particular branch of the visible Church may be judged, namely (1) the

faithful preaching of God's Word; (2) the proper administration of the sacraments; (3) the proper exercise of Church discipline.

**OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH.** Those who, having been chosen by the members and given authority by Christ, have been set apart for the work of governing the Church and administering its affairs, namely, ministers of the Gospel, ruling elders, and deacons.

**MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL.** Those officers of the Church who have been set apart for the work of preaching the Word of God, administering the sacraments and governing the Church.

**RULING ELDERS.** Those officers of the Church who have been set apart for the work of governing the Church, but not for preaching the Word of God nor for administering the sacraments.

**DEACONS.** Those officers of the Church who have been set apart for the administration of the business, financial and property interests of the Church, and for the care and relief of needy Christians.

**CHURCH GOVERNMENT.** The system of organization which Christ has appointed in the Scripture for the visible Church.

**CHURCH JUDICATORIES.** The series of graded courts composed of ministers and ruling elders by which the government of the Church is carried on, namely Session (Consistory), Presbytery (Classis), Synod, General Assembly.

**CHURCH DISCIPLINE.** The exercise of the authority which Christ has committed to His Church for reclaiming members who fall into scandalous sin, and for guarding the purity of the Church by excluding those who cannot be brought to repentance.

**CHURCH CENSURES.** The progressive steps by which Church Discipline is exercised, namely, Admonition, Rebuke, Suspension, Deposition and Excommunication.

# Studies in the Larger Catechism of The Westminster Assembly

## LESSON 144—FOR WEEK BEGINNING OCTOBER 3, 1948

**Q. 154.** What are the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of his mediation?

**A.** The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to his church the benefits of his mediation, are all his ordinances, especially the word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for their salvation.

### Scripture References:

Matt. 28:19,20. The preaching of the Gospel, and the sacrament of baptism, appointed by Christ as means of salvation.

Acts 2:42,46,47. The word and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper are means of grace, used by God for the salvation of His elect.

Eph. 6:17,18. The word of God and prayer are appointed means of grace.

### Questions:

1. Why does the Catechism speak of "outward and ordinary means" used by Christ for the salvation of His people?

These means—the word, sacraments and prayer—are called "outward" to distinguish them from the inward work of the Holy Spirit by which we are born again, sanctified, etc. These means are called "ordinary" because in ordinary cases the Holy Spirit makes use of them to bring about a person's salvation, although in special cases (infants dying in infancy; persons mentally incapable of using means) the Holy Spirit may bring about a person's salvation entirely by His inward work, apart from any use of outward means.

2. Are means of grace, such as the word, sacraments and prayer, necessary for salvation?

As explained in the previous question, these means of grace are necessary in ordinary cases. They are the appointed way by which the Holy Spirit does His work. Therefore these appointed means of grace ought to be used with earnestness and in faith, if we would make sure of our salvation. However the saving grace of God is not absolutely tied to these outward means, as if the

Holy Spirit could not work without them. We should avoid the error of Romanism, on the one hand, which regards salvation as absolutely dependent on sacraments, and the error of Mysticism, on the other hand, which regards the sacraments and other outward means as unnecessary and without value. Our Catechism sets forth the exact truth as presented in the Bible, namely that the word, sacraments and prayer are "the outward and ordinary means" by which God's elect are brought to salvation.

3. What benefits come to us by the use of the word, sacraments and prayer?

The benefits of Christ's mediation; that is, all the benefits and blessings which Christ purchased for His people through His perfect life and His sufferings and death on the cross. These benefits include the sum total of all that is good and valuable, for all eternity. We are made "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:16, 17).

4. What does the Catechism mean by "the word"?

By "the word" the Catechism means the Holy Bible, the written Word of God, and the message of truth about God, man and salvation which the Bible presents. Of course a person can be saved without having actually read the Bible itself, provided certain truths of the Bible have become known to him. But it would hardly be possible to overrate the importance of the Bible itself as a book. All real knowledge of the way of salvation can be traced back to the written Word of God.

5. What does the Catechism mean by "the sacraments"?

By "the sacraments" the Catechism means Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These only were appointed by Christ, and therefore these are the only true sacraments. Those added by the Church of Rome are not sacraments. Part of them (such as marriage and ordination) are divine ordinances; part of them (such as penance and extreme unction) are human inventions or corruptions of the worship of God. But only Baptism and the Lord's Supper are sacraments.

6. What does the Catechism mean by "prayer"?

By "prayer" the Catechism means CHRISTIAN PRAYER. There are two things necessary to make a prayer a Christian prayer: (1) It must be a prayer addressed to the true God, the God revealed in the Bible; (2) It must be a prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, who is the only real way of approach to the throne of God. Thus prayers to the gods of the heathen religions, and prayers to the Virgin Mary, the saints and angels, etc., are both useless and wrong; and any prayer which attempts to reach God's presence directly without faith in Christ as Mediator, is not a Christian prayer.

7. To whom are the means of grace made effectual for salvation?

To the elect of God. Acts 2:47. Those whom God has foreordained to eternal life, He will, sooner or later, bring out of their sin into a state of salvation. In ordinary cases, this is accom-

plished by means of the word, sacraments and prayer. The fact that a person is really in earnest about using these means of grace is a sign that the Holy Spirit is working in that person toward bringing about his salvation.

8. Since the Holy Spirit makes these means of grace effectual for the salvation of the elect, is it necessary for us to make any effort ourselves to use the means of grace?

Yes. The Bible commands us to use the means of grace diligently. We are not to wait for some special impulse, but to avail ourselves of the appointed means of grace immediately, without delay, and continuously. It is true that a harvest of grain depends on rain and sunlight, which only God can provide; but that is no excuse for neglecting to plant the seed, which God expects men to do. Faith in the Holy Spirit and His work is no excuse for spiritual laziness, or neglect of the use of appointed means.

#### LESSON 145—FOR WEEK BEGINNING OCTOBER 10, 1948

**Q. 155.** How is the word made effectual to salvation?

**A.** The Spirit of God maketh the reading but especially the preaching of the word an effectual means of enlightening, convincing and humbling sinners; of driving them out of themselves, and drawing them unto Christ; of conforming them to his image, and subduing them to his will; of strengthening them against temptations and corruptions; of building them up in grace, and establishing their hearts in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.

#### Scripture References:

Neh. 8:8. Acts 26:18. Psalm 19:8. The Word of God is used by the Holy Spirit for enlightening sinners, that is, imparting to them a knowledge of the truth.

1 Cor. 14:24, 25. 2 Chron. 34:18, 19, 26-28. The Spirit uses the Word for convincing and humbling sinners.

Acts 2:37, 41; 8:27-39. The Word is used by the Spirit to drive sinners out of themselves, and draw them to Christ.

2 Cor. 3:18. The Spirit uses the Word as a means for conforming God's children to the image of Christ.

2 Cor. 10:4-6. Rom. 6:17. Believers are to be subdued to Christ's will by the power of the Spirit, who works through the Word.

Matt. 4:4,7,10. Eph. 6:16,17. Psalm 19:11.

1 Cor. 10:11. By means of the Word of God, the Holy Spirit strengthens God's people against temptations and corruptions.

Acts 20:32. 2 Tim. 3:15-17. 1 Thess. 2:2,10,11, 13. Rom 1:16; 10:13-17; 15:4; 16:25. Through the whole course of the believer's life, until he finally enters the state of glory, the Holy Spirit uses the Word as a means for his spiritual development and progress.

#### Questions:

1. What do the first five words of the answer to Q. 155 teach us?

The first five words are: "The Spirit of God maketh . . .". These words teach us that the Bible or the Word of God does not have any INHERENT power of its own, apart from the inward work of the Holy Spirit in a person's heart, to accomplish anything toward a person's salvation. It is of course not impossible for the Spirit, in special cases, to work apart from the Word (see the Confession of Faith, Chap. X, Section 3). But the Word by itself alone, without the inward, saving work of the Holy Spirit, can NEVER bring about any step in the salvation of a person. The Spirit is not helpless without the Word, but the Word is useless for salvation without the Spirit.

2. Can the Bible not accomplish any good apart from the special work of the Holy Spirit?

Yes. Apart from the saving work of the Holy Spirit, the Bible may, by God's common grace (His grace which is not limited to the elect, but is given to the elect and the reprobate in common), have



the effect of restraining sin, stirring up people's consciences to a certain extent, and promoting what is called "civic righteousness", that is, ordinary virtues in the sphere of human society. For example, a man might read the Ten Commandments, and as a result decide not to commit a murder or theft that he had been planning. This would not contribute anything to his salvation, but it would make the world a more tolerable place to live in.

3. If the Word of God by itself alone cannot accomplish anything toward the salvation of human beings, is there any use in publishing and circulating the Scriptures far and wide as is done by the American Bible Society and similar organizations?

Yes. Circulating the Scriptures is scattering the seed. It is true that apart from the saving work of the Holy Spirit the seed can never spring to life and lead to salvation, but we can never know when and where the Holy Spirit will use Scripture portions that have been circulated to bring about the salvation of souls. Men have been converted to Christ by reading Bibles placed in hotel rooms by the Gideons, and by reading small portions of the Bible printed on thin, cheap paper and circulated on foreign mission fields.

4. What two methods of using the Word of God does the Holy Spirit make use of to bring about the salvation of sinners?

(a) The reading of the Word. (b) The preaching of the Word.

5. Which of these two methods is especially used by the Spirit?

The preaching of the Word is the method especially used by the Spirit, though of course the Spirit uses both methods, sometimes in combination and sometimes separately. We see this illustrated in the account of Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:27-39). The Ethiopian had been reading the Scripture, and had no doubt gotten some light from it, but he was still in a confused state of mind, as his question addressed to Philip revealed. When Philip sat down in the chariot with him and "preached unto him Jesus", his confusion was cleared away, and the Holy Spirit used the Word for his salvation.

6. Why is the special work of the Holy Spirit absolutely necessary if the Word of God is to lead to a person's salvation?

Because by nature we are alienated from God

and dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). Because of our natural corruption and total spiritual deadness or helplessness, the life-giving and life-sustaining work of the Holy Spirit must accompany the Word if salvation is to result.

7. In what experiences of the Christian life does the Holy Spirit make use of the Word to bring about a person's salvation?

The Spirit uses the Word as a means of grace in every stage and phase of the process of salvation, from the new birth to the believer's entrance upon the state of glory at death. The believer's soul being at death "made perfect in holiness" is of course accomplished solely by the almighty power of the Holy Spirit, apart from the Word. So also the final stage of salvation, the resurrection of the body at the Last Day, will be accomplished directly by the Holy Spirit apart from the use of the Word as a means (Rom. 8:11). It is true that we read, "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout . . . and the dead in Christ shall rise first . . ." (1 Thess. 4:16), but this "shout" is not the use of the Word (Scripture) as a means, but a NEW word of Jesus Christ at His second coming, at which the dead shall rise. Therefore those final stages of the process of salvation which take place after death are accomplished apart from the use of Scripture as a means. But for every part of the saving process in this life, from beginning to end, the Spirit's ordinary way of working is by the use of the Word as a means of grace. (Regeneration, or the New Birth, is a supernatural act of the Holy Spirit wrought directly in the human soul, not by the use of means but by the direct, creative power of God. In this experience the human soul is as passive as it was in its own creation. However Regeneration is always accompanied by the Holy Spirit's use of the Word as a means of grace, by which the person is convicted of his sins, given an understanding of the way of salvation, etc. There are two exceptions to this use of the Word by the Holy Spirit to accompany the act of regeneration, namely (1) infants, who because of their immaturity are incapable of knowledge of the truth; and (2) the insane and mentally deficient, who by reason of their mental abnormality are incapable of knowledge of the truth. See the Confession of Faith, Chap. X, Section 3. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit even before he was born (Luke 1:15); in such a case Regeneration clearly must have taken place without being accompanied by the use of the Word by the Holy Spirit).

#### LESSON 146—FOR WEEK BEGINNING OCTOBER 17, 1948

Q. 156. Is the word of God to be read by all?

A. Although all are not to be permitted to read the word publicly to the congregation, yet all sorts of people are bound to read it apart by themselves, and with their families; to which

end the holy scriptures are to be translated out of the original into vulgar languages.

#### Scripture References:

Deut. 31:9-13. Neh. 8:2, 3;9:3-5. Reading the Word of God publicly to the congregation is a

duty of those especially called as ministers of the Word.

Deut. 17:19. Rev. 1:3. John 5:39. Isa. 34:16. All classes of people are bound to read the Word of God privately.

Deut. 6:6-9. Gen. 18:17,19. Psalm 78:5-7. The duty of reading the Word of God in the family.

1 Cor. 14:6, 9-12,15,16,24,27,28. As the Scripture would be useless in an unknown language, we infer that it is to be translated into the various languages in common use by the people of the world.

#### Questions:

1. Why are not all Christian people "to be permitted to read the word publicly to the congregation"?

Reading the Scripture "publicly to the congregation" is a part of conducting the public worship of God and therefore it is to be done only by those who have been properly called to that office in the Church. Of course in the absence of an ordained minister or licentiate, the elders of the Church may properly appoint some person to read the Scripture and conduct a prayer meeting or "fellowship meeting". What the Catechism denies is that any private Christian may lawfully take it upon himself to conduct public worship, without being appointed to do so by those whose office it is to rule the house of God.

2. What classes of people are under obligation to read the Scriptures privately?

All classes of people, everywhere in the world where the Scriptures have been circulated. To read the Bible is not only a duty of Christians or Church members, but of all people whatever who are old enough to be able to read.

3. If a person has never learned to read, is it his duty to read the Bible?

Yes. A person who has never learned to read should realize that it is his Christian duty to learn to read, so that he may read and study the Word of God. The fact that God has given us His Word in written form implies that it is the duty of all people to learn to read, that they may read the Scripture. Modern experience on many foreign mission fields proves that there are practically no people who cannot learn to read. It is worthy of note, too, that the spread of the Gospel in mission lands is accompanied and followed by a remarkable increase of literacy, or the ability to read and write. Even many persons past middle age have learned to read a script as difficult as that of China, that they might read the Bible for themselves. On many mission fields it is considered a shame for a Church member to be unable to read.

4. Why do we believe that the Word of God is to be read in the family circle?

As the family is the basic unit of human society, so too the family is the basic unit in God's Covenant of Grace. It is through the Christian family that the body of God's covenant people is perpetuated from generation to generation. Parents together with their children are participants in this Covenant of Grace. Therefore the Christian family is a covenant institution, and has covenant obligations as well as covenant promises and covenant blessings. Among these obligations is the obligation to maintain family worship. Of course family worship could be carried on without the actual reading of the written Bible, as was no doubt often necessary before the invention of the art of printing. But since in the providence of God the Word is available to all in printed form, it is obvious that family worship is greatly facilitated, and also rendered more effective, by the reading of the printed Bible. (See also "Blue Banner Faith and Life", Vol. 1, No. 7, July-September, 1946, pages 138-139, "Is the practice of family worship commanded in the Bible, and if so, where?")

5. What is the meaning of the expression "vulgar languages"?

This expression, which might easily be misunderstood, means simply the ordinary living languages in common use by the peoples of the world. The word "vulgar" has come to have the meaning of "lacking in refinement or good taste", but in the Catechism it simply means "ordinary" or "common". English, French, German, Chinese, etc., are "vulgar languages" in the sense intended by the Catechism.

6. Why must the Bible be translated into modern languages?

The Old Testament was written in the Hebrew language, which at the time of the writing was the common language of the covenant people of God; and the New Testament was written in Greek, which at the time of writing was the language most widely known in the Roman world. Today these languages are known only to the comparatively few who have made a special effort to learn them. The Bible is a message for all mankind, and the Gospel which it contains is to be proclaimed to all nations. The Great Commission cannot be carried out adequately without translating the Bible into the various languages of the world. This work of Scripture translation has been going on since very early times, but by far the greatest progress has been made during the past 100 years. Today the Word of God, in whole or in part, speaks to men in more than one thousand languages and dialects. This great achievement has been accomplished by the toil of multitudes of missionaries working in cooperation with the great Bible societies of the world. Today the Bible is diffused through the world as never before.

## LESSON 147—FOR WEEK BEGINNING OCTOBER 24, 1948

Q. 157. How is the word of God to be read?

A. The holy scriptures are to be read with a high and reverent esteem of them; with a firm persuasion that they are the very word of God, and that he only can enable us to understand them; with desire to know, believe, and obey the will of God revealed in them; with diligence, and attention to the matter and scope of them; with meditation, application, self-denial, and prayer.

### Scripture References:

Psalm 19:10. Neh. 8:3-10. Ex. 24:7. 2 Chron. 34:27. Isa. 66:2. We are to read the Scriptures with a high and reverent esteem of them.

2 Pet. 1:19-21. We are to read the Scriptures with a firm faith that they really are the Word of God.

Luke 24:45. 2 Cor. 3:13-16. In reading the Bible, we are to realize that only God can enable us really to understand it.

Deut. 17:19,20. We are to read the Bible with a real desire to know and obey the will of God revealed in it.

Acts 17:11. The Word of God is to be read with diligence.

Acts 8:30,34. Luke 10:26-28. We are to pay attention to "the matter and scope" of the Scriptures, that we may grasp their true meaning.

Psalm 1:2; 119:97. The Word of God is to be read with meditation.

2 Chron. 34:21. In reading the Word of God, we are to apply it to our own selves, that is, to seek to discern its bearing on our own lives and needs.

Prov. 3:5. Deut. 33:3. We are to read the Word of God with self-denial; that is, we are to be willing to give up our own opinions, preferences and prejudices, and to accept and obey the will of God instead of our own ideas.

Prov. 2:1-6. Psalm 119:18. Neh. 8:6,8. The reading of the Word of God is to be accompanied with prayer.

### Questions:

1. What is meant by reading the Scriptures "with a high and reverent esteem of them"?

This means that in reading the Bible we should do so with an attitude different from that which we would have toward any other book. The Bible is the only source of saving truth; all other religious books, in so far as they present the truth, are based on the Bible. The Bible is the standard by which all other books are to be judged;

in reading them, we are always to do so with an attitude of reserve and caution, accepting their statements only in so far as we find them to be in accordance with the teachings of the Bible. We may never commit ourselves implicitly, or without reservation, to any book but the Bible. In reading the Bible, on the other hand, we are to commit ourselves to it implicitly, without any reservation whatsoever. Many people who have the outward appearance of reverence and piety in their handling of the Bible are in point of fact extremely irreverent in their attitude toward it. A minister once said, "We must not accept all the teachings of Jesus, but only those of His teachings which we find to be true". Such an attitude toward the Bible is blasphemously irreverent; it amounts to placing our own human reason above the Word of God, and accepting only those teachings of God's Word which agree with our own reason. We may never regard the Bible as a mixture of truth and error; we may never try to decide what teachings of the Bible are true. We are to accept all the teachings of the Bible as true, and to judge and measure the teachings of all other books, and the opinions and judgments of human reason, by the Scriptures. We may of course have doubts or difficulties in ascertaining what is the true meaning of a text or portion of Scripture; but we must always commit ourselves without reserve to the true meaning, whatever it may be. That is to say, our attitude toward the Bible must always be a wholly RECEPTIVE attitude, never a hesitant or CRITICAL attitude.

2. Are we to regard the Scriptures as the word of men, or the Word of God?

We are to realize, of course, that every word in the Scriptures was written by men. At the same time we are to understand that the real Author of the Bible is God the Holy Spirit. Consequently we are to read the Bible with a firm conviction that it is "the very Word of God". The fact that a particular portion of the Bible was penned by Moses, Isaiah or Paul is a minor, secondary consideration; the important thing is that God is the real Author of it and that it is really the Word of God.

3. How does modern religious "liberalism" undermine people's faith that the Scriptures are the very Word of God?

Modern religious "liberalism" does not believe that the Bible as a whole, in the entirety of its content and teachings, is the Word of God. It holds that the Bible is a human book which, however, "contains" the Word of God; that is, the Bible is partly the Word of God and partly the word of man. Since the human mind must decide which statements of the Bible are the Word of God and which are only the word of man, this viewpoint really amounts to enthroning the hu-

man faculty of reason as the real authority for faith and life. If we must pick and choose among the contents of the Bible, accepting one statement and rejecting another, then obviously the Bible is no longer our real standard. Only when we accept all that the Bible teaches, without question, as the Word of God, do we really regard the Bible as our standard.

4. What currently popular religious viewpoint subtly destroys the authority of the Bible as the Word of God?

The comparatively new brand of theology called "Barthianism", which has been developed by the Swiss theologians Karl Barth and Emil Brunner and their many disciples. This new theology is also called "the theology of crisis", "neo-orthodoxy" and "the dialectical theology". It denies that the Bible, as a written book, is really the Word of God. At the same time the Barthian theology teaches that any statement of the Bible may BECOME the Word of God to a person when it grips that person's conscience or comes home to that person as a revelation of God's will. This makes the authority of the Bible depend, not on the fact that the Bible itself, as a book, is the inspired Word of God, but on human experience in connection with the Bible. Barthianism adheres to the "higher critical" theories about the Bible; it holds that many statements of the Bible are not true in their common, plain meaning; and yet it tries to hold on to the Bible as an instrument by means of which the Word of God takes hold of people. In spite of its current popularity, "neo-orthodoxy" must be adjudged to be extremely dangerous and unsound.

5. Why is it true that only God can enable us to understand the Scriptures aright?

Because the human mind is darkened and clouded by sin, so that it is not a reliable judge of truth and error. The fall of the human race into sin resulted not only in a perversion of the moral sense, so that men love sin rather than righteousness, but also in a darkening of the mind or intellect, so that men love falsehood rather than truth. The human race is deeply prejudiced against the truth of God and in favor of sinful error. "Their foolish heart was darkened" (Rom. 1:21); "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge" (Rom. 1:28). Only by the regenerating and illuminating work of the Holy Spirit can this natural sinful darkness of the human mind be taken away, so that a person becomes spiritually discerning and receptive of the truth. While regeneration is an act which is complete in an instant of time, the Spirit's work of illuminating the minds of God's people is a gradual process which must continue through our whole earthly life. We must always seek the illumination of the Holy Spirit to understand the Scriptures.

6. What should be our motive in reading and studying the Bible?

In reading and studying the Bible we should have a practical motive, namely, a desire "to know, believe, and obey the will of God" which the Bible makes known to us. Many people study the Bible with wrong or inadequate motives. Some study the Bible merely as literature; others merely as history. There have even been those who studied the Bible in order to contradict its teachings and argue against the Christian religion. Still others have studied the Bible with a kind of idle curiosity, or with some fanatical idea or fad; for example, there have been those who have studied the Bible merely to tabulate its teachings about baptism, or about hell, or about the powers of magistrates; such people have a kind of "collector's interest" in some one line or element of the Bible's teaching, but they have no intention whatever of applying the teachings of the Bible to their own personal condition as lost sinners in need of salvation. They collect items from the Bible as a person might collect antique furniture or porcelain ware. All such study of the Bible is inadequate and wrong. No person studies the Bible aright unless he has studied it first of all as a message from God concerning the salvation of his own soul. We may properly study the Bible as literature, as history, etc., but only after we have paid heed to the Bible as God's Word revealing the way of salvation to lost and guilty sinners. For those who reject or neglect the great message of the Bible, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to play with the Bible as literature, etc., must be an abomination in the sight of God. What would we think of a guilty, convicted criminal who, when offered a free pardon, would pay no attention to this offer, but merely write an essay on the literary form and style of the message by which the offer was conveyed?

7. Why must we read and study the Bible "with diligence"?

The Bible is a big book and contains many things that are hard to understand. It contains not only milk for babes but strong meat for mature Christians. We will never gain an adequate understanding of the Bible by reading it for five minutes a day. No one would expect to gain a grasp of chemistry or mathematics by occasional slight exposure, without any conscious effort, to these sciences; why should anyone expect to understand the Bible without any effort or hard work? It is a tragedy that many professing Christians and Church members are so spiritually and intellectually lazy that they remain spiritually "babes" all their life and have to be fed with carefully prepared "milk"; anything like the "strong meat" of which the Bible speaks (Heb. 5:11-14) they immediately protest against as "too deep". Instead of regarding the Bible as "too deep", or wishing that God had given us a shallower Bible, we should pray with the Psalmist, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Psalm 119:18). And we cannot pray that prayer sincerely if we are too lazy or in-

different to study the Bible seriously. God will not open our eyes to behold wonderful things in His Word if we are neglectful or indifferent in reading His Word.

8. Why must we pay attention to the "matter and scope" of the Scriptures?

In studying the Bible, we must make use of all the intelligence that God has given us. Piety is not contrary to a right use of the faculty of reason. In studying any text or portion of the Bible, we should always note not only what is said, but who the speaker is, what the occasion and circumstances, and the relation of the statement to other statements before or after it, and to the chapter and book as a whole. In the Bible we read these words: "There is no God." We cannot grasp the true import of this statement unless we note the fact that it is reported as a sentiment of "the fool": "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 53:1), and that in the remainder of the verse people who cherish such sentiments are declared to be "corrupt" and to "have done abominable iniquity". Similarly we read: "Skin for skin; yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life" (Job 2:4). Quoted by itself, out of its context, this verse would be very misleading; it is only when we note that Satan, the father of lies, is reported as having made this statement that we can discern its true import.

9. What is meant by "meditation", and why is it necessary in connection with reading the Bible?

Meditation means thinking carefully and seriously, for a greater or less length of time, about the meaning of something. Meditation does not mean, as many people wrongly suppose, a mere idle wandering of the thoughts or vague day-dreaming. It is definite; it calls for effort. Meditation is necessary in connection with Bible reading because we cannot expect to gain the real riches of its truth by a hasty skimming of its surface. It is true in Bible study as in all other fields that serious thinking requires time. The Bible is not a modern super-market with its wares all packaged and arranged on shelves ready to be checked out with the least possible effort; the Bible is a gold mine that has to be methodically and patiently worked if we are to gain possession of its treasures. We have more and better helps for Bible study today than ever before, but the haste and complexity of modern life, with its many activities which make demands on people's time, have resulted in many Christians who have only an elementary and superficial knowledge of the Bible, and who live from one year to the next with virtually no real increase in their understanding of Bible truth. There is no shortcut to success in Bible study; meditation is needed, and that takes time.

10. Why must we study the Bible with "application"?

The Bible is not a merely theoretical or abstract message, but a personal message suited to the needs of those who read it. A person might study geometry or astronomy out of sheer intellectual interest and curiosity, without any intention to make any practical application of these sciences to his own life. But to study the Bible in such a way as that would be to miss the real meaning and importance of the Bible. Unless we apply its teachings to ourselves personally, our Bible study will not only do us no good, but will actually add to our guilt at the Judgment Day.

11. Why does the Catechism speak of "self-denial" in connection with Bible study?

Presumably the Catechism does not here refer to that self-denial which a person must practice in order to have sufficient free time for adequate Bible study. The Scripture references which are cited indicate that the meaning is that we must deny ourselves by giving up our own prejudices, preferences and special ideas, and accepting the teachings of the Word of God as our standard for faith and life. We are to accept ALL the teachings of the Bible, not merely those which commend themselves to us as reasonable, desirable or helpful. We are to deny ourselves by surrendering our own reason as our supreme standard of truth, and becoming as little children, accepting God's Word on God's authority.

12. What is the place of prayer in relation to Bible study?

Clearly prayer has an important place in connection with Bible study. If a real understanding of the Bible is dependent on the inward illumination of the Holy Spirit, it follows that we must pray for the continuance and increase of this illuminating work in our hearts and minds. But the place of prayer in connection with Bible study has sometimes been sadly misunderstood. A person will say, "I know that such-and-such is the true interpretation of this text, because I got it in answer to prayer." We have no warrant for expecting the Holy Spirit to reveal the true interpretation of any text of Scripture to us miraculously, without study on our part, in answer to prayer. Prayer is not a substitute for dictionaries and commentaries and other reference books. We are rather to pray that in our diligent use of the best available helps, the Holy Spirit will bless and guide us into the real truth. To claim that an interpretation is true because a person "got it in answer to prayer" is foolishness. If it is really true we will be able to set forth substantial reasons why it is true, and why other interpretations are false. Obviously the fact that Mr. A. "got it in answer to prayer" will not carry any weight with Mr. B. When prayer becomes a substitute for thinking and study, it is not the kind of prayer that is pleasing to God.

**LESSON 148—FOR WEEK BEGINNING OCTOBER 31, 1948**

**Q. 158.** By whom is the word of God to be preached?

**A.** The word of God is to be preached only by such as are sufficiently gifted, and also duly approved and called to that office.

**Scripture References:**

1 Tim. 3:2,6. Eph. 4:8-11. Hos. 4:6. Mal. 2:7. 2 Cor. 3:6. Those who preach the Word of God publicly must be possessed of certain qualifications, which are set forth in the Bible.

Jer. 14:15. Rom. 10:15. Heb. 5:4. 1 Cor. 12:28,29. 1 Tim. 3:10; 4:14; 5:22. The Word of God is to be preached publicly only by those who have been lawfully called to the office of the ministry of the Word.

**Questions:**

1. With what kind of preaching of the Word does this question of the Catechism especially deal?

With public preaching of the Word in a congregation of Christ's Church. This may be inferred from the words "publicly to the congregation" in the answer to Q. 156. A person who is not an ordained minister or licentiate may witness for Christ privately or publicly as opportunity is afforded, but the official public preaching of the Word in the Church is to be done only by those duly set apart for that work.

2. Why is the official preaching of the Word to be done only by "such as are sufficiently gifted"?

It is clear that the preaching of the Word is a work of very great importance. For it to be done adequately, proper qualifications are necessary. There are spiritual qualifications, intellectual qualifications and educational qualifications which must be insisted upon if the Church is to have an adequate ministry. A man who is not a born-again and consistent Christian clearly is not fit to preach the Word of God to others; he would only be a blind leader of the blind. A man who cannot think straight, who is unable to detect a fallacy in an unsound argument, will be likely to be led astray by false teachings himself, and to lead others astray in turn. A man who lacks adequate general and theological education will ordinarily not be able to do justice to the great work of preaching the Word of God, and will be in danger of preaching an unbalanced or one-sided message. When God calls a man to the work of the ministry he also equips him with the necessary abilities and qualifications that he may execute the work adequately.

3. Why does our Church, along with most Protestant Churches, require a full college and seminary education for the office of the ministry?

The more important a work is, the more im-

portant it is that those who must do that work have adequate training. There have always been those who have thought that it is more or less a waste of time to spend seven years in college and seminary in preparation for the work of the ministry. In many denominations today there is a constant pressure to relax such requirements and admit men to the ministry who have had less than a full college and seminary course. Some consider college subjects such as philosophy, European history and literature as useless for the ministry, and as a waste of time which could be spent on "winning souls". Similarly there are those who think that a short course on "the English Bible" together with such practical subjects as public speaking and pastoral work should be sufficient, and that extended study of Hebrew, Greek, Church history and systematic theology is a waste of time.

No person who needed to have an operation performed would willingly go to a surgeon who had obtained his training by a shortcut. The State rightly insists that those whose decisions and actions involve the life and death of their fellow men be thoroughly trained for their work. How much more important it is that ministers of the Gospel, whose work may affect the eternal destiny of human beings, be thoroughly educated for their appointed task. Considering the length of time required for training for the medical and other learned professions, four years of college and three years of seminary work are not too much for ministerial training.

The minister who lacks college training will hardly be able to understand the modern world in which he must deliver his message. The study of philosophy, history and other academic subjects is far from a waste of time; such study gives the background of modern thought and enables the minister to proclaim the whole counsel of God in a way that will really come to grips with the present-day situation. Similarly the study of Greek, Hebrew, systematic theology, Church history, etc., is anything but a waste of time; such study enables the minister to have a thorough first-hand knowledge of the Bible and its teachings, and to preach a Scriptural, consistent and integrated message.

The modern trend toward cutting down on "theoretical" studies in preparation for the ministry, and increasing "practical" studies, is deplorable and should be resisted. There are in America two kinds of theological seminaries and Bible institutes. In one kind, the aim is to equip the student with a certain amount of prepared material, which he can go out and preach. In the other kind, the aim is to place the tools of Bible study and theological research in the student's hands, and to train him in their proper use. He can then go out and preach, and will never run out of material to the end of his life. We believe the latter is the proper and only adequate type of training for the work of the ministry.

The foregoing must not be taken to mean that there are never to be any exceptions to such rules. Clearly some of our Lord's disciples had but little formal education, yet they became effective ministers of the Word. They however had the priceless advantage of three years of association with Jesus and personal instruction from Him. God sometimes calls to the office of the ministry a man who has had but little formal education, and in such exceptional cases, where the divine call is evident, the Church should not hesitate to ordain the candidate to the ministry. Such cases will however be quite rare, especially in times when there are normal opportunities for gaining an education. The exception should not be allowed to become the rule.

4. What is meant by being "duly approved and called" to the work of the ministry?

There is a divine call to the work of the ministry, and there is a call of the Church. We should always remember that the ministry is not a profession, but an office. A person may not simply decide to become a minister, as he would decide to become a lawyer or to go into some line of business. He must have some reason to believe that he is called by God to the ministry. This does not mean a special revelation from heaven, such as a dream or vision, but a consciousness that one possesses some measure of the requisite qualifications, together with an earnest desire to preach the Gospel, a willingness to make sacrifices for the cause of Christ and a readiness to endeavor to gain the necessary preparation. Those whom God calls to the ministry, He will lead into it in His own way.

The call of the Church consists, first, in authenticating the call of God by "duly approving" of the candidate, his religious convictions, his general ability, and his academic and theological preparation. This "approving" is ordinarily divided into various stages; first, the candidate is re-

ceived under the care of a presbytery as a student for the ministry; then, after partial preparation he is licensed to preach; finally, after full preparation and a call from a congregation or mission board, he is ordained to the office of the ministry.

The formal call of the Church consists of a call by a congregation upon the candidate to become their pastor, or the call of a mission board or other agency of the visible Church to engage in home or foreign missionary work or some other phase of the work of the ministry. In every case there ought to be a definite call, either to the pastorate of a congregation, or to some other specific field of work, before a man is ordained to the office of the ministry.

5. Why must a man be duly called by God and the Church before entering upon the office of the ministry?

Even the Lord Jesus Christ did not make himself a high priest, but was called of God to that office, as Aaron had been (Hebrews 5:4,5). While there are today many "free-lance" and independent preachers and missionaries, this is a wrong tendency and ought to be discountenanced. Many of these independent preachers and missionaries may indeed have been called of God, and may be doing a good work in preaching Christ and Him crucified; but there is a certain contempt and neglect of the visible Church as a divine institution involved in their attitude, which cannot be endorsed. The call of God and the call of the Church are not contrary to each other; every true Church is an instrument of God in training and ordaining men to the office of the ministry. Some who claim a superior kind of piety hold that the call of God is sufficient, and that they do not need the call and ordination of the Church. Such disregard of the visible Church is not Scriptural and should be discountenanced.

#### LESSON 149—FOR WEEK BEGINNING NOVEMBER 7, 1948

Q. 159. How is the word of God to be preached by those that are called thereunto?

A. They that are called to labor in the ministry of the word, are to preach sound doctrine, diligently, in season and out of season; plainly, not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power; . . .

#### Scripture References:

Titus 2:1,8. The duty of preaching sound doctrine.

Acts 18:25. 2 Tim. 4:2. The duty of preaching the Word diligently and persistently.

1 Cor. 14:19; 2:4. The Word of God to be preached plainly, with dependence not on human cleverness, but on the power of the Holy Spirit.

#### Questions:

1. What is meant by "sound doctrine"?

The expression "sound doctrine" means TRUE doctrine, or doctrine that is in accordance with the truth revealed in the Bible.

2. Why is the preaching of sound doctrine important?

The preaching of sound doctrine is important because it is only through knowledge of the truth revealed in the Bible that we can come into real contact with Christ and experience salvation through Him. If pure food and medicine are necessary for our bodily health, how much more important is pure spiritual food for the life and nourishment and healing of our souls!

3. How can ministers make sure of preaching sound doctrine?

The only way to make sure of preaching sound doctrine is by a steadfast loyalty to the written Word of God, the Holy Bible, and an unceasing effort to grasp its real meaning. Only by continuous and careful Bible study can sound, true doctrine be maintained.

4. Why is it necessary that the Word of God be preached diligently?

What God commands, is to be done diligently. The preaching of the Word is commanded by God, as an appointed means of the salvation of souls and extension of His kingdom. This work, being of such great importance, should of course be carried on with diligence and continuous earnest effort.

5. What is meant by preaching the Word "in season and out of season"?

This expression means that preaching the Word is not to be limited to formal occasions such as the regular services of the Church, but is also to be done informally, whenever opportunity offers and occasion demands. The minister is to be a witness for the truth at all times, not only in the regular Church services.

*June 4-53*

### LESSON 150—FOR WEEK BEGINNING NOVEMBER 14, 1948

**Q. 159 (Continued).** How is the word of God to be preached by those that are called thereunto?

**A.** They that are called to labor in the ministry of the word, are to preach . . . faithfully, making known the whole counsel of God; wisely, applying themselves to the necessities and capacities of the hearers; zealously, with fervent love to God and the souls of his people; sincerely, aiming at his glory, and their conversion, edification, and salvation.

#### Scripture References:

Jer. 23:28. 1 Cor. 4:1,2. Acts 20:27. The Word of God to be preached faithfully, honestly and fully.

Col. 1:28. 2 Tim. 2:15. 1 Cor. 3:2. Heb. 5:12-14. Luke 12:42. The Word to be preached in a wise manner, taking account of the capacities and spiritual state of the hearers.

Acts 18:25. 2 Cor. 12:15; 5:13,14. Phil. 1:15-17. Col. 4:12. The duty of preaching the Word of God zealously, with fervent love to God and the souls of His people.

2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2; 12:19. 1 Thess. 2:4-6. John 7:18. 1 Cor. 9:19-22. Eph. 4:12. 1 Tim. 4:16. Acts 26:16-18. The duty of preaching the Word

6. What is meant by preaching the Word of God "plainly"?

This means making the meaning plain and clear to those who hear. The preacher should not aim at being regarded as "deep", but at being understood by his hearers. It is wrong to smooth over unpleasant truths or duties for fear of offending the hearers. The minister of Christ must make the truth clear and plain, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. His aim must not be to please his hearers, but to please God.

7. On what should ministers rely for the effectiveness of their messages?

They should rely, not on "enticing words of man's wisdom", but on the "demonstration of the Spirit, and of power". That is, the minister is not to place his trust in his own ability as an orator or public speaker, nor to depend on the psychological influence of his own manner of presenting the message, but to depend on the Holy Spirit blessing the message and applying it to the hearts of the hearers. The minister's reliance is to be placed, not in psychology or "salesmanship", but in the work of the Holy Spirit that accompanies and follows his preaching. This does not mean that the message should not be presented in an interesting and attractive way, but that dependence must not be placed on the human factor, but on the divine.

of God sincerely, with right motives, namely, God's glory and the true spiritual welfare of His people.

#### Questions:

1. Why must ministers preach the Word of God faithfully, honestly and fully?

Because it is not their own message, but God's message, that they are handling. A minister is an ambassador; therefore he has no right to tamper with the message entrusted to him. It must be delivered accurately and in full.

2. What is meant by the expression "the whole counsel of God"?

This expression, which is taken from the apostle Paul's words in Acts 20:27, means the entire revealed truth and will of God. Ministers are to preach the whole truth of the Bible. They have no right to preach a limited, deformed or partial message.

3. How are ministers to preach "the whole counsel of God"?

It is of course impossible to preach the whole counsel of God all at one time. Ministers can proclaim only a small part of the counsel of God



in any one sermon or address. To attempt too much at one time would only result in confusion and spiritual indigestion on the part of the hearers. But ministers must make it their aim to preach, in due time, all that God has revealed in His Word, omitting nothing of the system of divinely revealed truth.

4. Are all truths of the Bible equally important?

No. All are equally true, but all are not equally important. The most important ones are the ones which receive the most emphasis in the Bible itself. While aiming at proclaiming the whole counsel of God, a minister must take care to place the chief emphasis on the most important truths or doctrines, which are given the most prominence in the Bible itself, or which are most in need of emphasis because most neglected or denied at the present day. No minister should indulge in fads or hobbies, specializing on certain truths to the neglect of all others.

5. What temptation to deviate from preaching the whole counsel of God must be faced and resisted by ministers?

The temptation to say little about, or remain silent about, those truths of the Bible which are commonly regarded as "unpopular", while emphasizing and saying much about those truths which are commonly called "popular". Thus a minister may face the temptation to say little or nothing about sin, death and eternal punishment, while preaching much on the love of God, the teachings of Jesus about love to our neighbor, and the like. Ministers have no right to "soft pedal" part of God's message because it may be distasteful to their hearers. As servants of God they must preach the whole truth without "trimming" it to suit human prejudices.

6. Why must ministers take "the necessities and capacities of the hearers" into consideration in their preaching?

#### LESSON 151—FOR WEEK BEGINNING NOVEMBER 21, 1948

**Q. 160.** What is required of those that hear the word preached?

**A.** It is required of those that hear the word preached, that they attend upon it with diligence, preparation, and prayer; examine what they hear by the scriptures; receive the truth with faith, love, meekness, and readiness of mind, as the word of God; meditate, and confer of it; hide it in their hearts, and bring forth the fruit of it in their lives.

#### Scripture References:

Prov. 8:34. 1 Pet. 2:1,2. Luke 8:18. Psalm

Because if they fail to do this, their preaching will be largely ineffective and useless. The truth of God is always the same, but it must be preached in a somewhat different manner to different groups of people. The manner or method of preaching that would be suited to an audience of non-Christians on a foreign mission field would be different from that suited to a congregation of Christian believers in the same country, and the latter again would be somewhat different from that suited to a congregation of Christian believers in America. The minister may not deviate from the truth of God, but he must try to present the truth of God in such a way that his hearers, whoever they may be, will really "get the point."

7. What is meant by preaching the Word of God "zealously"?

This does not necessarily mean an emotional pitch of excitement, but rather a deep spiritual attitude, which the Catechism describes as "with fervent love to God and the souls of his people". That is, a minister of Christ is to preach the Gospel earnestly, regarding it as an extremely important matter, not something trifling or indifferent. The minister's motive should not be popularity or applause, but devotion to God and desire for the spiritual welfare of His people.

8. What is meant by preaching the Word of God "sincerely"?

This word means without pretence or hypocrisy; that is, really and honestly meaning what one says.

9. What is to be the chief aim in preaching the Word of God?

The chief aim is to be the glory of God.

10. What is to be the subordinate aim in preaching the Word of God?

The subordinate aim in preaching the Word of God is to be the accomplishment of God's purpose in the conversion, edification and final salvation of His people.

119:18. Eph. 6:18,19. We are to attend upon the preached Gospel with diligence, preparation and prayer.

Acts 17:11. The preached message to be testified by the Scriptures.

Heb. 4:2, 2 Thess. 2:10. James 1:21. Acts 17:11. Hearers of the preached Word are to receive the truth with faith, love, meekness and readiness of mind.

1 Thess. 2:13. The truth is to be received, not as mere matter of human opinion, but as the Word of God, having divine authority.

Luke 9:44. Heb. 2:1. Luke 24:14. Deut. 6:6,7. Mal. 3:16. Hearers of the preached Word are to meditate and confer concerning it.

Prov. 2:1. Psalm 119:11. The Word to be hid in the heart.

Luke 8:15. James 1:25. The Word to be fruitful in the life.

#### Questions:

1. What is our first duty in connection with the preached Gospel?

Our first duty in connection with the preached Gospel is to hear it. This implies regular attendance upon the ordinances of divine worship. In an age when iniquity abounds, and the love of many has waxed cold, there are many Church members who attend the services of their Church only occasionally. Some think that if they attend half of the regular services of their own Church they have done very well. We should conscientiously attend ALL the regular public preaching services of our own Church unless prevented by circumstances beyond our control. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is" (Heb. 10:25).

2. Does regular Church attendance fulfil our duty in connection with the preached Gospel?

Certainly not. Regular Church attendance is only the first step. The Catechism not only affirms that we must "attend upon" the preached Word, but goes on to state HOW we must attend upon it. This answer of the Catechism sets forth a very high ideal for Christian people's response to the preached Word, but it is an eminently Scriptural ideal. We should certainly avoid the mistaken idea that occupying a seat in the house of worship on the Sabbath day fulfils our duty or even confers a favor on God. It is possible to attend Church services regularly and yet get no benefits whatever, because we do not pay attention to the service nor take the message seriously.

3. What are some of the practices that we should avoid during Church services?

We should avoid coming late, sleeping, talking or whispering unnecessarily, reading books or papers that have nothing to do with the service, thinking over our worldly affairs and planning our business for the following week, and all other conduct which will distract ourselves or others from paying reverent attention to the service.

4. What is the remedy for habitual sleeping during Church services?

Sleeping during Church services is sometimes blamed on the preacher, but where one or two members fall asleep and all the rest have no difficulty in staying awake it is probably not the preacher's fault. Sleepiness during Church services may be caused by poor ventilation of the

building. Janitors often fail to realize this; it should be tactfully explained to them that fresh air is necessary for mental alertness, and a building which has been closed for several days needs to be thoroughly aired out before the service begins. In other cases sleeping in Church may be caused by keeping late hours on Saturday evening—something which every conscientious Christian will try to avoid. In some cases it may really be the minister's fault; he should try to make his sermons interesting and to deliver them in an effective manner so as to hold the congregation's attention.

5. What kind of preparation should we make to hear the Word preached?

We should take care of our ordinary business, except for real works of necessity, on Saturday, so that our minds will be free to think about God and His Word on the Sabbath day. We should endeavor to dismiss all worldly business and pleasures from our thoughts so that we will be receptive to God's Word. We should conscientiously avoid reading "Sunday" newspapers and listening to secular radio broadcasts on the Lord's day. No minister can preach effectively if the people come to Church with their minds full of thoughts about movies, radio, baseball, politics, business and other worldly affairs. Nor can the people pay attention to the preaching of the Word if their minds are occupied with picnics, auto trips or other recreations planned for the Sabbath afternoon or evening. The Lord's day should be entirely consecrated to the service of God, if we are really to honor God and get blessing from His Word.

6. What should we pray for in connection with the preaching of the Word?

We should pray that the Holy Spirit will bestow spiritual gifts upon the minister, so that he may expound the Scriptures truly and effectively. We should also pray that ourselves and others may be given the grace of the Spirit to receive the Word, that the Holy Spirit will accompany and follow the preaching with His gracious working, so that sinners will be converted to Christ and the saints built up in their Christian faith and experience.

7. Is it the duty of Christian people to believe and accept whatever their minister preaches?

Certainly not. They are to "examine what they hear by the Scriptures"; that is, they are to test and judge the content of the message by the Word of God which is the infallible rule of faith and life. No real minister of Christ will want his hearers to accept anything just because he says it is true; he will want them to accept the truth because God says it is true, and because they find that it is taught in God's Word. The minister is not only to preach the truths of God's Word, but to show the people where and how God's Word teaches those truths. The people are to be-

lieve the truth, not on their minister's authority, but on the authority of God speaking in His Word.

8. What attitude should we have to the truth of God as it is preached to us?

We should "receive the truth with faith, love, meekness, and readiness of mind, as the word of God". That is, we should have a **RECEPTIVE** attitude toward the truth, not an attitude of stubborn resistance to it. Such a receptive attitude can exist only by the special work of the Holy Spirit in a person's heart and mind. By nature we all have a stubborn, perverse prejudice against the truth and a tendency to resist and argue against the truth. Many can testify that when they were really converted to Christ, their opposition to the truth of God ceased, and they became meek and receptive in their attitude. Sometimes professing Christians manifest a spirit of violent rebellion against such doctrines as original sin, total depravity and inability, predestination and eternal punishment. The fact that these doctrines are taught very plainly in the Bible, which they usually do not attempt to deny, seems to carry no weight with such objectors, but rather to increase their opposition. With respect to the doctrines mentioned above, and all other doctrines, the only question that really matters is **ARE THESE DOCTRINES SCRIPTURAL?** If they are taught in God's Word, that should settle the matter for every Christian believer. Whether we like these doctrines or not is irrelevant. We are to receive the truths of God's Word with "readiness of mind", on God's authority, whether we like them or not.

9. Why should we meditate and confer concerning the preached Word?

We should meditate on it because only by spending time in serious thinking can we really grasp the truth in its relation to our own lives and problems. We should confer concerning it with our fellow Christians because this will tend greatly to increase the effectiveness of the message. Conversation on divine truth among Christian people is greatly neglected at the present

day. We are so busy with a multitude of interests and activities that we seem to have little opportunity for fellowship and conference with other Christians. A person who likes to talk about religion today is likely to be regarded as something of a "crank" or fanatic. Of course those who feel they must always be talking about religion and nothing else will come to be regarded as a nuisance and will bring reproach on the Church. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Eccles. 3:1). To confer concerning divine truth seasonably and profitably is an art that should be cultivated by the Lord's children.

10. Why must we hide the Word of God in our hearts?

To hide the Word in our hearts means more than merely memorizing portions of Scripture, though that is a very profitable pursuit. It means to retain the truth in our mind and keep on thinking it over and reflecting on its relation to every sphere of our life. This is the opposite of the "in one ear and out the other" manner of receiving the truth of God. If we really believe and receive the truth, it will remain in our hearts and we will reap benefits at future times as well as right away.

11. Why must we bring forth the fruit of the Word of God in our lives?

Because the Word of God is an intensely practical message. We should beware of being like the character named "Talkative" in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, who had the Bible and Christian doctrine at the tip of his tongue and could speak fluently on all religious subjects, but was a complete stranger to the power of godliness in his own personal and family life. "By their fruits ye shall know them". The Word of God is a message of salvation, godly living and Christian self-denial or being crucified with Christ. If a person is a stranger to these experiences he is not bringing forth the fruit of the Word of God in his life, and his habitual hearing of the preached Gospel will only add to his condemnation at the Judgment Day.

#### LESSON 152—FOR WEEK BEGINNING NOVEMBER 28, 1948

**Q. 161.** How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation?

**A.** The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not by any power in themselves, or any virtue derived from the piety or intention of him by whom they are administered, but only by the working of the Holy Ghost, and the blessing of Christ, by whom they are instituted.

#### Scripture References:

1 Pet. 3:21. Acts 8:13 compared with Acts 8:23. 1 Cor. 3:6,7; 12:13. The efficacy of the sacraments depends entirely on the working of the

Holy Spirit and the blessing of Christ, not on any inherent power nor on any power derived from the minister who administers them.

#### Questions:

1. What does the Roman Catholic Church teach concerning the efficacy of the sacraments?

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that grace is contained in the sacraments themselves, and that this grace is conferred on every recipient of the sacraments who does not positively resist it. This grace is said to be bestowed as an "opus operatum" (that is, as "a work wrought" or "an

operation performed") upon every recipient who does not positively resist. A person may be ignorant of the truth about God and the way of salvation; he may even be unconscious because of sickness or accident; even so, it is held, Baptism will of itself confer on him the grace of regeneration. According to this teaching, faith is not necessary; the sacrament works of itself, just as a red-hot piece of iron will burn a person, whether he believes it will or not (Council of Trent, Session VII, Canons 6 and 8).

The Roman Catholic Church also holds that the efficacy of the sacraments depends on the secret intention of the administrator at the moment of administering the sacrament. The priest must, at the moment of performing the actions and pronouncing the words, have in his mind the intention of doing what the Church intends to do in that sacrament. Thus the priest might say all the prescribed words and perform all the required actions, yet if he does not have in his heart and mind the secret intention of conveying grace through that sacrament, the recipient does not really receive any grace at all, and the sacrament is null and void. (Council of Trent, Session VII, Canon 11). If the administering priest has the right intention, the sacrament conveys grace to the recipient automatically unless the recipient positively resists it.

2. Do the sacraments have any power in themselves?

No. Our Catechism rightly rejects the Roman Catholic view of the efficacy of the sacraments, by saying that the sacraments do not become effectual means of salvation by any power in themselves. The Roman Catholic view is untrue and without support in the Bible. Note Acts 8:13,23, where it is stated that Simon the Sorcerer "was baptized" and then soon afterwards the apostle Peter said to him "thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity". If baptism of itself confers regeneration, as an "opus operatum", Simon would have been regenerated by his baptism; he would have been a new creature in Christ Jesus; but as a matter of fact he was still in the bond of iniquity. Clearly baptism did not convey any grace to Simon the Sorcerer. The whole idea that the sacraments of themselves confer grace is contrary to the Bible's emphasis on faith as necessary for salvation.

3. Is this false view of the sacraments limited to Roman Catholics?

No. There are many Protestants who have a mistaken and unscriptural view of the efficacy of the sacraments. Many who have never really repented of their sins and who have no clear faith in Jesus Christ as their Saviour, cherish the idea that to be baptized, or to "take communion", will of itself confer some spiritual benefit on them. Some go so far as to suppose that participation in the sacraments will get an ungodly person into heaven when he dies. Others think that "taking

communion" will somehow make up for their sins and give them standing with God. The notion that baptism of itself removes a person's sins is quite common among uninstructed Protestants. Sometimes parents who make no Christian profession and are not living as Christians will ask a minister to baptize their children, and will be offended when he declines to do so. We should always remember that the sacraments do not work of themselves, and are without value apart from faith in Jesus Christ.

4. Does the efficacy of the sacraments depend on the piety or moral character of the minister?

No. On this point the Church of Rome is in agreement with orthodox Protestantism. The validity and efficacy of the sacraments are not dependent on the piety, spiritual life or moral character of the person who administers them. Of course every minister should be a truly pious man and of moral character beyond reproach. But the spiritual state of the minister does not alter the efficacy of the sacraments. If a minister is proved to be an ungodly and wicked man, this does not mean that the people he has baptized were not really baptized, nor that those who sat at the communion table under his ministry did not really partake of the Lord's Supper. It is a terrible thing for a minister to be an unconverted person, but it does not limit the efficacy of the sacraments administered by him.

5. Does the intention of the minister determine the efficacy of the sacraments?

No. So long as the sacraments are administered substantially in accordance with Christ's institution, the personal intentions of the minister have no effect upon their efficacy. Suppose an unconverted man were to go into the ministry with wrong motives, regarding the ministry simply as an occupation or means of livelihood, and administering the Lord's Supper not because of real faith in Christ and obedience to Him but merely because the rules of the Church require it. Such a minister would be a hireling, not a true servant of Christ, and his intention would be merely to comply with the formal requirements of his occupation. Though such a minister would be unworthy and his motives wrong, still his wrong intentions, and lack of the right intention, would not affect the validity or efficacy of the sacrament. Those communicants who partake of the sacrament with true repentance and faith in Christ would receive the real benefit and blessing of the Lord's Supper, in spite of the minister's wrong intentions or motives.

6. On what does the efficacy of the sacraments really depend?

The efficacy of the sacraments really depends entirely upon the working of the Holy Spirit, and the blessing of Christ who instituted the sacraments. As the sacraments were not invented by

man, but instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ as means of grace, we can be sure that God will accompany them with the gracious working of the Holy Spirit in the case of every person who partakes of them with a true faith, according to Christ's appointment. The Holy Spirit, whom Christ has sent, takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto His people. It is His purpose to work through and with the sacraments. Thus the sacraments which have no inherent power are yet, by the Holy Spirit's working, real means of grace to God's children.

7. Is it possible to underrate the importance of the sacraments?

Yes, and many do so. While avoiding the

error of the Church of Rome, which teaches that the sacraments have an inherent power, we must avoid going to the opposite extreme and holding that the sacraments are not real means of grace. There have been many, and are many today, who look upon baptism as simply a rite or ceremony of dedication of a child or adult person to God, and on the Lord's Supper as merely a memorial service to symbolize the truths of redemption and to remember Christ. Such a view of the sacraments is not in harmony with the orthodox Calvinism or Reformed Faith set forth in our Church standards. Baptism is more than a rite of dedication; the Lord's Supper is more than a symbolic portrayal and memorial service. Both sacraments are real means of grace, though they have no inherent power.

#### LESSON 153—FOR WEEK BEGINNING DECEMBER 5, 1948

**Q. 162.** What is a sacrament?

**A.** A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ in his Church, to signify, seal, and exhibit unto those that are within the covenant of grace, the benefits of his mediation; to strengthen and increase their faith, and all other graces; to oblige them to obedience; to testify and cherish their love and communion one with another; and to distinguish them from these that are without.

#### Scripture References:

Gen. 17:7,10. Ex. 12. Matt.28:19; 26:26-28. The sacraments are holy ordinances instituted by Christ in His Church, that is, in and for the visible body of the covenant people of God.

Rom. 4:11. 1 Cor. 11:24,25. The sacraments are intended to signify, seal and exhibit the benefits of Christ's work of redemption.

Rom. 15:3. Ex. 12:48. The sacraments are not intended for the world but for those within the sphere of the Covenant of Grace.

Acts 2:38. 1 Cor. 10:16. The benefits of Christ's mediation constitute the meaning of the sacraments.

Rom. 4:11. Gal 3:27. The sacraments are intended to increase believers' faith, and all other graces.

Rom. 6:3,4. 1 Cor. 10:21. Participation in the sacraments involves a pledge or covenant of obedience to Christ.

Eph. 4:2-5. 1 Cor. 12:13. The sacraments are a bond of unity among Christian people.

Eph. 2:11,12. Gen. 34:14. Participation in the sacraments is a badge of separation from the world, on the part of Christian people.

#### Questions:

1. How does the Shorter Catechism define a sacrament?

"A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein, by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented sealed, and applied to believers" (S.C. 92). This is somewhat briefer than the Larger Catechism's definition, and it gives only what is essential to a correct definition of a sacrament. The Larger Catechism's answer is more detailed, and describes the nature and purpose of the sacraments more fully. We may analyze the Shorter Catechism's statement as follows: (a) a sacrament is a holy ordinance; it belongs to the classification of things called "holy ordinances"; some holy ordinances are sacraments; others are not; but every sacrament is a holy ordinance. (b) A sacrament is something instituted by Christ; that is, of course, by Christ during His life on earth. Thus marriage, while a holy ordinance, is not a sacrament, for it was not instituted by Christ during His earthly life; but baptism and the Lord's Supper were so instituted, therefore they are sacraments. (c) A sacrament involves the use of "sensible signs", that is, material elements such as water, bread, wine, and certain actions by which these elements are used. (d) A sacrament, with its "sensible signs", is for the purpose of portraying, sealing and applying Christ and His redemption. (e) A sacrament is for believers (not for the world).

2. What is the original meaning of the word "sacrament"?

The word "sacrament" does not occur in the Bible. It is derived from the Latin word "sacramentum" which meant a pledge or an oath, especially a military oath of allegiance. In the early Church the Latin "sacramentum" came into use as a translation of the Greek word "mysterion" ("mystery"). This word "mysterion" occurs 27 times in the Greek New Testament; in Jerome's Latin version, the Vulgate, 8 of these are translated by "sacramentum" (Eph. 1:9; 3:3,9; 5:32, Col. 1:27; 1 Tim. 3:16, Rev. 1:20; 17:7). The Greek word "mysterion" means something which remains unknown until it is revealed; thus it came

to be used for various Christian doctrines and ordinances, including baptism and the Lord's Supper, and so the Latin "sacramentum" came into use for the same things. Some have objected to the word "sacrament" because it does not occur in the Bible. This is foolish, for many necessary religious terms in common use are not found in the Bible; the word "Trinity" is an example; so are the words "attribute", "infallible", "supernatural", and many others. These words do not occur in the Bible, but the ideas they stand for do, and the words are necessary as handles for the ideas. We cannot find out what a sacrament is by studying the history of the word "sacrament", but we can properly use the word "sacrament" to designate a certain class of ordinances which we find in the Bible. The important thing is not that we should use only Bible words, but that the ideas we have in mind should be those intended by God in His Word.

3. For what body of people did Christ institute the sacraments?

For His Church, the body of people included in the sphere of the Covenant of Grace. Since the sacraments involve the use of external elements and actions, they have been entrusted to the visible Church, that is, the Church as a visible institution. We should always remember that baptism and the Lord's Supper are CHURCH ordinances. They are intended only for those who are members of the Church, and except in extraordinary circumstances they should never be administered except in a congregation of Christ's Church. To administer either sacrament to those outside the sphere of the Covenant of Grace is wrong. Private baptism and private communion are irregular and should be avoided. The idea that any company or association of Christian people may properly administer the Lord's Supper is also wrong. The sacraments pertain to the visible Church as an institution; they are not to be individualized by private observance, nor divested of their ecclesiastical character by administration in voluntary associations or groups of Christian people. They are for the Church only.

4. What is meant by the word "signify"?

In this connection, "signify" means to be a sign of something, that is, to portray or represent something. Thus the sacraments are to signify the benefits of Christ's mediation unto those that are within the Covenant of Grace. In the Lord's Supper the bread signifies the body of Christ and the wine signifies His blood. The Lord's Supper as a whole signifies the believer's participation in the benefits of Christ's redemption. Spiritual realities are represented by material elements and external actions.

5. What is meant by the word "seal"?

The word "seal" is here used in the sense of "to pledge", "to guarantee" or "legally to certify". The Catechism states that the sacraments were

instituted by Christ to seal the benefits of His mediation to those that are within the Covenant of Grace; that is, to guarantee, or legally to certify, these benefits to those persons. This does not mean that baptism and the Lord's Supper of themselves, as mere outward ordinances, can guarantee anything to their recipients, but it means that when the sacraments are RIGHTLY USED, WITH TRUE FAITH IN CHRIST, they function as "seals" or divinely-given certificates of the benefits of Christ's redemption. The person who, with true faith, makes a right use of the sacraments, is to regard them as seals of the Covenant of Grace—as God's guarantee of the fulfilment of all the Covenant promises.

6. What is meant by the word "exhibit"?

We would naturally suppose that the word "exhibit" here means "to show forth" or "to display", but that is not the meaning intended in the Catechism nor in the Confession of Faith. Writing of the use of the same word in the Confession of Faith (XXVII.3; XXVIII.6), Dr. A. A. Hodge says: "The old English word 'exhibit', there used, does not mean to SHOW FORTH; but in the sense of the Latin EXHIBERE, from which it is derived, TO ADMINISTER, to apply" (Commentary on the Confession of Faith, p. 451.). In support of this explanation, Dr. Hodge points out that while the Larger Catechism says "to signify, seal, and exhibit", the Shorter Catechism in the corresponding place (Q. 92) says "represented, sealed, and applied". Thus "exhibit" must be understood in the sense of "apply". Here again we must realize that, as in the case of the verb "seal", this "applying" must be understood to exist only when there is a right use of the sacraments, with true faith. Apart from real faith in Christ, the sacraments do not apply any spiritual benefits to those who receive them.

7. To whom are the sacraments intended "to signify, seal, and exhibit" Christ's benefits?

"Unto those that are within the Covenant of Grace", that is, to believers in Jesus Christ and to their children.

8. What are the benefits of Christ's mediation?

These benefits include all that Christ has done, is doing, and will do in the future for His people. They include His work as our Redeemer in His three offices of Prophet, Priest and King. In short, the entire plan of salvation is embraced within their scope, from God's decree to redeem His elect, made before the creation of the world (Eph. 1:4), to the final glorification of the elect, and their enjoyment of eternal life in the kingdom of glory (Romans 8:30). All this is included in the benefits of Christ's mediation which are signified, sealed and exhibited by the sacraments.

9. What practical purposes do the sacraments serve in the life of believers?

The sacraments serve "to strengthen and increase their faith, and all other graces", and also "to oblige them to obedience". That is, the sacraments when rightly used serve to strengthen and build up believers in all phases of their Christian life, thus making them better and more consistent Christians; and they also serve as pledges on the believer's part of obedience to the requirements of God's Covenant of Grace.

10. What function do the sacraments perform in human society as a whole?

In addition to their other uses and functions, the sacraments serve "to distinguish" the people of God "from those that are without". That is, they serve as badges or emblems or evidences of membership in the covenant people of God. They mark off those that are within the Covenant of Grace from the population of the world in general. Baptism is the mark of Church membership as such; a baptised person is rightly regarded as a member of Christ's Church unless and until he has repudiated his baptism by long-continued neglect of the means of grace or has been excommunicated because of heinous sin. This function of baptism has been greatly obscured by the abuse of the sacrament which has become terribly common in American Protestantism, by which many Churches will baptize any infants whatever, regardless of whether the parents are Church members or not, and apart from any proper understanding and acceptance of the obligations of the Covenant of Grace. In large sections of American

Protestantism baptism has come to be regarded merely as a ceremony for attaching a name to an infant and in some vague manner dedicating the infant to God. When we speak of baptism serving as a mark to distinguish the Church from the world, we mean baptism strictly as set forth in the Bible and our Church standards, not the modern American free and easy perversion of the sacrament.

While baptism is the mark of Church membership as such, the Lord's Supper is the mark of COMMUNICANT Church membership, that is, of Church membership as involving a voluntary personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Him. As in the case of baptism, the true function of the Lord's Supper has been greatly obscured by the extreme form of "open communion" which is practiced in many Churches today, by which the decision whether to partake is left entirely to the individual, and by which virtually all who may wish to come are invited, even though they may have only a vague, sentimental attachment to Jesus, and may not be members in good standing of any truly evangelical Church. This practice breaks down the distinction between the Church and the world which the Lord's Supper is intended to maintain. Of course not all Churches that practice "open communion" have this extreme form of it; some limit the invitation to members in good standing in evangelical denominations or Churches; this however is not "open communion" in the strict sense but a form of "restricted communion".

#### LESSON 154—FOR WEEK BEGINNING DECEMBER 12, 1948

**Q. 163.** What are the parts of a sacrament?

**A.** The parts of a sacrament are two: the one an outward and sensible sign, used according to Christ's own appointment; the other an inward and spiritual grace thereby signified.

**Q. 164.** How many sacraments hath Christ instituted in his church under the New Testament?

**A.** Under the New Testament Christ hath instituted in his church only two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper.

#### Scripture References:

Matt. 3:11. 1 Pet. 3:21. Rom. 2:28,29. The sacraments are not mere external signs or ceremonies, but involve also inward spiritual realities.

Matt. 28:19. 1 Cor. 11:20,23. Matt. 26:26-28. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the only appointed New Testament sacraments.

#### Questions:

1. What is meant by saying that "the parts of a sacrament are two"?

This statement means that when a sacra-

ment is rightly used, with true faith in Jesus Christ, it involves two parts, namely an outward, sensible sign, and an inward, spiritual grace. Those who use the sacraments wrongly, without true faith in Jesus Christ, do not really participate in THE SACRAMENTS; they only participate in the outward forms or ritual of the sacraments, not in the spiritual realities of the sacraments.

2. What is meant by "an outward and sensible sign"?

By an "outward" sign the Catechism means a sign that exists in the external, material world—the realm of matter, having physical and chemical properties, existing in the dimensions of time and space. The sacramental elements (water, bread, wine), and their accompanying actions, are "outward" in this sense.

By a "sensible" sign the Catechism means a sign that can be perceived by the senses, such as sight, taste, touch. The sacramental elements can be seen, touched, tasted; the sacramental actions can be perceived by the sense of sight. Thus the sacraments involve "sensible" signs.

3. In the outward part of the sacraments, what is necessary besides the actual material elements (water, bread, wine)?

Besides these actual material elements, it is necessary that they be "used according to Christ's own appointment"; that is, in the manner appointed by Christ in the Scripture, with the proper actions, and with words which are truly in harmony with the institution of Christ. Thus in the sacrament of baptism, it is necessary that water be applied to the person baptized; but this is not sufficient; it must be applied in the name of the Triune God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the Lord's Supper, it is not sufficient that bread and wine be passed to the communicants and partaken of by them; Christ's appointment must be followed in taking the elements, giving thanks for them, breaking the bread, giving the bread and wine to the communicants with the words of institution.

4. What is meant by "an inward and spiritual grace"?

In this expression, "inward" is in contrast to "outward", "spiritual" is in contrast to "sensible", and "grace" is the counterpart of "sign". The word "grace" here means a saving work of God for and in the believer, which is also a gift of God to the believer. This grace is the counterpart of the external "sign"; the grace is what the sign stands for; the grace is the real thing, the reason for which the sign exists. The external sign may be regarded as a signboard pointing to the grace. This grace is called "inward" because it does not exist in the physical or material world, but in the realm of the "heart", the spirit, the realm of personality; it exists in what we commonly call "the soul". This grace is called "spiritual" because it does not affect the bodily senses, such as sight, taste, touch or hearing, but the human spirit or soul; so far as it can be consciously perceived by the subject, it is perceived not by the senses but by the spiritual discernment (1 Cor. 2:9-16).

5. What is the connection between the "outward and sensible sign" and the "inward and spiritual grace"?

"There is in every sacrament a spiritual relation or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified; whence it comes to pass that the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other" (Confession of Faith, XXVII.2). The Roman Catholic Church teaches that in the case

of the Lord's Supper, at least, the sign is literally identical with the thing signified; the bread really is the actual body of Christ, and the wine really is the actual blood of Christ. Some Protestant Churches have a doctrine of the Lord's Supper which approaches this Roman Catholic teaching. We believe, on the other hand, that the bread and wine only represent the body and blood of Christ. The bond of connection, or sacramental union, between the "outward and sensible sign" and the "inward and spiritual grace", then, is a symbolical and therefore a representative connection; the bread and wine symbolize, and therefore represent, the body and blood of Christ. In addition to this symbolic connection, there is what may be called an instrumental connection between the sign and the grace. That is to say, by Christ's appointment, when the outward sign is rightly used, with true faith, the spiritual grace which it stands for is actually given or conveyed to the recipient. God by His Holy Spirit bestows the grace on the person who uses the outward sign aright, so in this sense we may affirm that there is an instrumental connection between the sign and the grace. The grace is conveyed not by the sacrament of itself, but by the Holy Spirit; but inasmuch as the sacrament is a divinely appointed means of grace, the Holy Spirit honors it by bestowing the grace where the sacrament is used aright.

6. How many sacraments are there under the New Testament?

Only two, namely, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These alone meet the requirements of the correct and Scriptural definition of a sacrament which is set forth in the Catechism (Q. 162). That is, these two divine ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, are clearly in a class by themselves, having certain characteristics which no other divine ordinances possess, and therefore they are set apart from the rest and the term "sacraments" is reserved to these alone. This question of the Catechism (Q. 164) is especially directed against the Roman Catholic doctrine that there are seven sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders and Matrimony). Part of these are essentially divine ordinances but not sacraments; others are not even divine ordinances, but have their roots in human tradition. Only two of this list of seven can really claim to be sacraments in the Scriptural and theologically correct sense of the term.

#### LESSON 155—FOR WEEK BEGINNING DECEMBER 19, 1948

**Q. 165.** What is baptism?

**A.** Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, wherein Christ hath ordained the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to be a sign and seal of ingrafting into himself, of remission of sins by

his blood, and regeneration by his Spirit; of adoption and resurrection unto everlasting life; and whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church, and enter into an open and professed engagement to be wholly and only the Lord's.



**Scripture References:**

Matt. 28:19. The sacrament of baptism instituted by Christ.

Gal 3:27. Baptism is a sign and seal of union with Christ.

Mark 1:4. Rev. 1:5. Baptism represents remission of sins by Christ's blood.

Tit. 3:5. Eph. 5:26. Baptism represents regeneration or the new birth.

Gal. 3:26,27. Baptism represents adoption into the family of God.

1 Cor. 15:29. Rom. 6:3-5. Baptism stands for the resurrection unto everlasting life.

1 Cor. 12:13. Baptism is the rite of formal initiation into the visible Church.

Rom. 6:4. Baptism involves "an open and professed engagement to be wholly and only the Lord's".

**Questions:**

1. What action constitutes baptism?

Baptism is constituted by a washing of the person with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, by a minister of Christ.

2. What is the proper mode of baptism?

The mode of baptism is a matter of indifference. That is, the quantity of water to be used and the manner in which it is to be applied are not matters which have been appointed in the Scripture. In the history of the Church there have been three modes of baptism, namely effusion (pouring,) sprinkling and immersion. Any one of these constitutes a valid administration of baptism. The Confession of Faith states: "Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; but baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person" (XXV-III.3). It should be noted that the Confession does not say that immersion is wrong, but only that it is not necessary; nor does it say that sprinkling is the only right mode of baptism, but only that by sprinkling or pouring baptism is "rightly administered", that is, that either of these modes, equally with immersion, constitutes a valid administration of the sacrament.

3. Is it true that the Greek word translated "baptize" in the New Testament literally means "to immerse"?

Certainly not. In its New Testament usage, the Greek verb "baptizo" literally means "to wash", as will be seen by looking up Mark 7:4 and Luke 11:38, in both of which texts this verb is used, and where the idea of "immersion" would obviously be out of place. The Greek noun "bap-

tismos" literally means "washing", as is evident from Mark 7:4,8 and Hebrews 9:10. To suppose that tables were cleansed by immersion is absurd. Yet the Greek text of Mark 7:4 speaks of the "baptism" of tables. The confident claim of Baptists that "baptizo" and "baptismos" in their New Testament usage mean "to immerse" and "immersion" will not stand the test of a careful scrutiny of the passages in the New Testament where these words occur.

4. What is the essential meaning of baptism?

Essentially baptism signifies union with Christ, and consequently it signifies, in a general way, all the benefits which Christ brings to His people. There are also certain of Christ's benefits which are represented by baptism in a more particular and direct way, especially the washing away of our sins and the new birth by the power of the Holy Spirit.

5. What is the meaning of "ingrafting into Christ"?

This phrase means being brought into vital union with Christ, so that the person is a member of the spiritual body of which Christ is the head, a branch of the true vine, a partaker of the spiritual life and power of Christ. As a twig is grafted into a tree, and thereafter exists in vital union with the tree, receiving its nourishment and strength from the tree, so the believer is grafted into Christ, and thereafter lives in union with Him, receiving his spiritual nourishment and strength from Christ.

6. What is the connection between baptism and the forgiveness of sins?

Baptism is a sign and seal to the believer of the remission of his sins by the blood of Christ. Just as in ordinary life water is used to cleanse away dirt, so in the plan of salvation the blood of Christ cleanses away the sins of His people. This is of course a figure of speech; the "blood" of Christ means His death, at which His blood was shed; when the Bible says that the blood of Christ cleanses away our sins the meaning is that God forgives our sins, and sanctifies our hearts, on the basis of Christ's atonement. These are transactions that take place in the spiritual realm; baptism is the outward sign and seal of them. There may be forgiveness of sins without baptism; there also may be (outward) baptism without the forgiveness of sins; but where baptism is rightly used it seals, and thus involves, the forgiveness of sins.

7. What is the relation between baptism and the new birth?

Roman Catholics and some Protestants hold that baptism itself confers regeneration or the new birth, so that the two are virtually identical, and whoever is baptized is also regenerated. The great majority of Protestants reject this teaching

as an error. It is a confusion of the sign with the thing signified. If baptism is a sign and seal of regeneration, then it cannot be identified with regeneration. Titus 3:5 is relevant in this connection; note that it does not speak of "the regeneration of washing", but of "the washing of regeneration", which is a very different thing. We are not regenerated by washing (baptism), but we are washed (spiritually cleansed) by regeneration (the new birth).

8. How is baptism a sign and seal of adoption into God's family?

Gal 3:26,27 provides the answer to this question. To be baptized, in the true sense and use of baptism, involves union with Christ and faith in Christ. By faith in Christ the believer is adopted into God's family. Thus baptism is a sign and seal of adoption.

9. How is baptism a sign and seal of the resurrection unto everlasting life?

The Catechism cites 1 Cor. 15:29 and Rom. 6:5 in support of this proposition. The former of these texts is a very difficult one, and apparently refers to an (unauthorized) custom in the Corinthian Church of being baptized for the dead. The text does not sanction this custom, but recognizes it as existing, and the apostle then argues that if there is no resurrection, such baptism would be meaningless. From the apostle's argument we may properly infer that the baptism of any person would be useless and meaningless if there is no resurrection of the body. Thus baptism implies "resurrection unto everlasting life". Rom. 6:3-5 specifically links the two ideas of baptism and the resurrection: the believer who is united to Christ in baptism shall also be united with Christ in His resurrection. (The Baptist view that the basic meaning of baptism is identification with Christ in His burial and resurrection and that this requires immersion as the mode of baptism, is without foundation. Rom. 6:3-5 has nothing to do with the MODE of baptism, which is not there under discussion; the subject under discussion is sanctification, not baptism; baptism is introduced into the argument to prove a point about sanctification. It is quite true, of course, that union with Christ in His death and resurrection is represented by baptism, but this is just part of what baptism represents, and it implies nothing concerning the mode of baptism; it does not imply that the act of baptism is intended directly to portray burial

and resurrection by immersion under water and rising out of it).

10. What is the connection between baptism and Church membership?

The Catechism states that by baptism "the parties are solemnly admitted into the visible Church". It is clear that baptism is a badge, sign or emblem of membership in the visible Church. A question arises, however, as to the precise function of baptism in this connection. Are people baptized because they are Church members, or are they Church members because they are baptized? Q. 165 of the Catechism, and the similar statement of the Confession of Faith (XXVIII.1) seem at first sight to imply that people are Church members because they are baptized. On the other hand, the Westminster Standards uniformly teach that the sacraments are for those who already are Church members (L.C. 162; C. of F. XXVII.1). While there has apparently always been some confusion on this point, it appears that the view that people are baptized because they are already Church members is sound, and held by the most eminent writers on Reformed theology. The key to the difficulty may be found in the word "solemnly" which is apparently used by the Catechism in the sense of "formally" or "publicly". That is, those persons who are already in God's sight members of the visible Church by reason of their covenant standing (in the case of infants) or by reason of their own profession of faith in Christ and obedience to Him (in the case of adults), are formally and publicly **RECOGNIZED AS MEMBERS**—"solemnly admitted into the visible church"—by the sacrament of baptism. We might say that by baptism the persons baptized (whether adults or infants) are publicly recognized, not only as members of the visible Church in general, but also as members of a particular branch and congregation of the visible Church.

11. What engagement or promise on the human side is involved in baptism?

"An open and professed engagement to be wholly and only the Lord's". In the case of adults being baptized, this engagement is entered into by them personally. In the case of infants, it is entered into by the parents on behalf of the children, as their proper representatives. The fact that baptism involves obligations on our part, as well as grace on God's part, is often insufficiently emphasized. We should always remember that baptism involves solemn vows on our part, as well as blessings on God's part.

#### LESSON 156—FOR WEEK BEGINNING DECEMBER 26, 1948

**Q. 166.** Unto whom is baptism to be administered?

**A.** Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, till they profess

their faith in Christ, and obedience to him, but infants descended from parents, either both or but one of them professing faith in Christ, and obedience to him, are, in that respect, within the covenant, and to be baptized.

### Scripture References:

Acts 2:38; 8:36,37. For adults to be baptized, a personal profession of faith in Christ is required.

Gen. 17:7-9 compared with Gal. 3:9,14; Col. 2:11,12; Acts 2:38,39; Rom. 4:11,12. God's covenant with Abraham includes all believers in Christ, together with their children.

1 Cor. 7:14. One Christian parent is sufficient to give children a "holy" or covenant status, even though the other parent may be an unbeliever.

Matt. 28:19. All nations to be baptized.

Luke 18:15,16. Infants brought to Jesus, with His approval, to be blessed by Him.

Rom. 11:16. The "holy" or covenant standing passes from parent to child, from "root" to "branches".

### Questions:

1. What class of persons can rightly be baptized?

Only those who are members of the visible Church can rightly receive the sacrament of baptism.

2. Into what two classes are members of the visible Church divided?

The visible Church is composed of two classes of people, namely (1) those who have made a personal profession of faith in Christ and obedience to Him; and (2) their infant children, that is, their children who have not yet made a personal profession of faith.

3. How does a person of adult age, or one who has reached the age of responsibility, become a member of the visible Church?

Persons formerly outside of the Church become members of the Church by making a public profession of faith in Christ and obedience to Him. Upon making such a profession, they are admitted to membership and are thereupon baptized, and their names added to the roll of the particular congregation in which the sacrament is administered. Their baptism is both a token of their formal admission to the membership of the Church, and a privilege which belongs to them as members.

4. How do the infants of Christian parents become members of the Church?

The infants of one or both Christian parents are born into the Church, and thus are members from birth, just as children born in the United States are American citizens from birth. The infants of Christian parents are baptized because they are members of the Church from birth. They are not made members by being baptized; on the contrary, they are baptized because they are already members from birth.

5. Why are the children of Christians parents members of the Church from birth?

They are members of the Church from birth because of God's covenant with their parents, which is a continuation of God's covenant made with Abraham, which included his children after him as well as Abraham himself. However the children of Christian parents do not have all the privileges of Church membership until they themselves make a personal profession of faith in Christ, and obedience to Him, and are thereupon admitted to the Lord's Supper.

6. Is it correct to speak of Christian young people, children of Church members, who have themselves been baptized as infants, "joining the Church" when they make a profession of faith and are admitted to the Lord's Supper?

No. A person cannot "join" anything if he is already a member of it. The children of Christian parents are ALREADY Church members from their birth, in evidence of which they are baptized. To speak of such young people "joining the Church" is wrong, for it implies that previously they were not members, and that in their case baptism was not a sign of Church membership. We do not speak of a person "joining" the United States, or becoming an American citizen, when he reaches his 21st birthday; he was an American citizen the day he was born, even though unable to express personal allegiance to his country. The common manner of speaking of Christian young people "joining the Church" is contrary to the Scriptural doctrines of the Covenant of Grace, of the Church and of Baptism. This prevalent manner of speaking betrays an individualistic, baptistic ideology which is contrary to the ideology of the Covenant of Grace which is set forth in our Church standards and which we believe to be Scriptural. In denominations where this individualistic ideology is prevalent it will probably require an entire generation—perhaps two generations—of continuous, faithful preaching and teaching of the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace, and its implications, before the people can be brought to the point where they will no longer speak of the children of Christian parents "joining the Church". Here is a real challenge for all ministers and members who take the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace seriously.

7. Do all Churches believe that the infants of Christian parents ought to be baptized?

No. The Baptists and others of similar faith teach that only those who can make a personal profession of faith are to be baptized. This belief however has never been held by more than a minority of the Christian people of the world. The vast majority of professing Christians have believed in infant baptism.

8. What objections are commonly urged against the practice of infant baptism?

It is commonly objected by Baptists and some others: (a) that there is no command in the New Testament to baptize infants; (b) that there is no example of infants being baptized; (c) that infants cannot understand the meaning of baptism, therefore it cannot benefit them; (d) that most of those baptized in infancy grow up to be ungodly, or in later life turn out to be merely nominal Christians; (e) that infant baptism is a Roman Catholic superstition.

9. How can we answer the objection that there is in the New Testament no command to baptize infants?

We reply that no command is needed. Infant baptism is based on God's covenant with Abraham. Infants received the sign of the covenant (circumcision) in Old Testament times, therefore they are to receive the sign of the same covenant also in New Testament times (baptism). We would not expect to find a definite command to baptize infants. On the contrary, we would expect that, if the Baptist position is correct, there would be a definite command NOT to baptize infants, as this would be a change from the Old Testament practice.

10. Is it true that there is in the New Testament no example of infants being baptized?

It is true that there is no positive proof that infants were baptized, or that they were not baptized, one way or the other. Similarly there is no positive proof in the New Testament that women partook of the Lord's Supper. But a number of New Testament passages are best explained on the presumption that infants were baptized. For example, the Philippian jailer "was baptized, he and all his" (Acts 16:33); Paul baptized "the household of Stephanas" (1 Cor. 1:16); Cornelius was baptized together with "his kinsmen and near friends" (Acts 10:24, 48). Can we suppose that in all these various family groups there were only adults, with no infants or young children?

11. How can we answer the objection that in-

fants cannot understand the meaning of baptism, therefore, it cannot benefit them?

Jesus took young children in his arms and blessed them, upon their parents' request. The Greek word means "babies", not children of eight or nine years old. This was not baptism, but it has something to do with the question of infant baptism. Clearly these children were too young to understand who Jesus was, or what He was doing. Yet Jesus did not hesitate to take them in His arms, and bless them. Who shall say that this was a useless act, or could not bring benefit to the children? As elsewhere in the Bible, the parents' faith was accepted on behalf of the children (compare Mark 9:24-27).

12. Is it true that most of those baptized as infants grow up to be either ungodly, or merely nominal Christians?

This has often been asserted, but never proved. There are no accurate statistics to prove any such claim. Such evidence as exists proves nothing one way or the other. Many people who are baptized in adolescence or adult life also later turn out to be either ungodly, or merely nominal Christians. It has never yet been proved that Churches which reject infant baptism are more pure than those which practice it. Nor has it ever been proved that those baptized as adults tend, as a class, to be more faithful and consistent Christians than those baptized in their infancy.

13. Is infant baptism a Roman Catholic superstition?

Of course the fact that the Roman Catholic Church practices infant baptism does not prove that infant baptism is wrong. The Roman Church also accepts the doctrine of the Trinity, the deity of Christ and many other truths of Christianity; we do not reject these because the Church of Rome teaches them. As a matter of fact the practice of infant baptism, existed, and can be proved to have existed, in the Church long before the appearance of the characteristic Romish errors and superstitions.

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## BOOK REVIEW

### Reformed Evangelism: A Manual on Principles and Methods of Evangelization

Compiled by the Grand Rapids Board of Evangelism of the Christian Reformed Churches. Published 1948 by Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S.E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 447 pages, \$2.50.

There has long been a need for a book on evangelism that would deal adequately with this important subject and at the same time be true to the Reformed or Calvinistic faith. There has been no dearth of literature on evangelism, but

most of the available material has been either superficial, or dominated by Arminianism or other unsound theological viewpoints, or at best only inconsistently Calvinistic. Consequently many people have the impression that somehow Calvinism and evangelism do not go together, and that when evangelistic work is undertaken the Calvinistic theology must be, if not abandoned, at least toned down and kept in the background. There are many who are members of Calvinistic Churches,

and who profess adherence to the Reformed Faith, who nevertheless in connection with evangelism proclaim a message and employ methods which are leavened with Pelagian, Arminian or anti-nomian errors.

The present volume is in welcome contrast to the mass of current literature on evangelism. In the first place it is thorough. Written by seventeen members of the Christian Reformed Church, it constitutes a real achievement in applying the principles of the Reformed Faith to evangelism. The reader gets the impression that the authors know whereof they write, that they are thoroughly at home in their respective fields, and that their combined efforts represent an integrated, consistent whole which is oriented to current American conditions and at the same time proceeds from a real grasp of the Reformed Faith and a consistent loyalty to that faith. In this book we find a type of evangelism which is really Calvinistic; not merely an evangelism which is to be added to Calvinism as something external, but an evangelism which is Calvinistic at heart and through and through—in its principles, in its objectives and in its methods.

The volume is divided into two parts. The first part deals with "The Theoretical Principles of Reformed Evangelism". The titles of its eight chapters are as follows: The Fundamental Principles of Reformed Evangelism; Highlights in the History of Evangelization; The Reformed Approach; Evangelization and the Church; Ecclesiastical Organization for Evangelism; Motives and Incentives for Evangelism; The Spiritual and Psychological State of the Unchurched; The Worker and His Qualifications. In some 200 pages this part of the book discusses the all-important basic principles of evangelism. The book does not fall into the error of so much literature on evangelism, of saying little about basic principles and placing the whole stress on methods and technique. The writers are convinced that principles are of the utmost importance, and that there can be no truly sound practice of evangelism unless it is based on principles that are soundly Scriptural.

The second part takes up "The Practical Execution of Reformed Evangelism", with eleven chapters entitled as follows: The Sunday School and the Gospel Service; Working with Children and Youth; Working With Adults; Personal Work and Family Calls; Open-Air Services; Tract Distribution; Approaching the Modernist; Approaching the Roman Catholic; Approaching the Jews; Approaching the Adherents of the Cults; Personal Witnessing. Following these chapters there are a bibliography and an index. Also many of the chapters have special bibliographies appended to them.

An outstanding emphasis of the book is its consistent emphasis on the Covenant of Grace. Repeatedly it is stressed that a truly Reformed evangelism must be covenantal in its character; it

must deal with sinners not merely as sinners but as covenant-breakers, for, apart from the fact that all human beings are guilty of the breach of the Covenant of Works, the great majority of Americans are covenant-breakers in an even more wicked way—they have violated the obligations of the Covenant of Grace is forsaking the Gospel of their youth, their parents or their grandparents; they are not merely sinners as the heathen in countries which have never had the light of the Gospel are sinners; most Americans, with their Christian background, are first, second or third generation violators of the obligations of the Covenant of Grace. It is not enough to deal with such people as a missionary would deal with those who come into contact with Christianity for the first time; on the contrary, they must be charged with their guilt as covenant-breakers, and the covenant claims of God must be urged upon them. They must be commanded to repent and believe, not merely for the eternal welfare of their own souls, but because THE RIGHTS OF GOD are involved.

The book also ably exposes the openly or covertly Arminian character of much American "Fundamentalist" evangelism, with its virtual denial of the sovereignty of God in the salvation of men, and its erroneous doctrine of the absolute freedom of the human will, with its stress on man's "decision" as the determining factor in his salvation and eternal destiny. The following, from the chapter on "The Reformed Approach", may be quoted as showing the book's rejection of Arminian attitudes and techniques:

**"Do not belittle God.** In your utterances never speak of God in connection with these two verbs: God "cannot" or God "needs". What business have I, poor, dependent, finite mortal to say what God cannot do or what He needs. He doesn't need me, nor my sin, nor death, nor grave. He doesn't need us as witnesses. He is pleased to use us. That is glory enough.

"In Mark 9 we read of a father pleading for his demon-possessed son and saying to Jesus, 'If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us.' Jesus at once sensed the "if" and the "canst". It was very much misplaced. He answered, 'If thou canst believe, all things are possible.' That's it—the 'if' and the 'canst' is on our side.

**"Avoid all erroneous expressions.** Do not say (what we have heard others say):

"God has done His part—now you do yours.

"If you refuse to believe, God almighty cannot save you.

"You are lost only because you reject the Christ.

"If you refuse salvation, you are beyond the reach of God.

"Jesus begs to come into your heart.

"Won't you let God?"

**"Avoid the embarrassing altar-call.** Why must the evangelist see the hands raised? What more can he teach them, when they come forward, than that which he was supposed to teach them in his message?

"Says our Synodical report: 'It stands to reason, we would much discourage the so-called altar call. It is too spectacular. And it is clearly based on the theory that man's natural will is free to accept Christ, and that almost anything that can be used successfully to make a man say, "Yes, I accept Christ", is permissible. The altar call doubtless fosters mere emotionalism and shallow externalism. The undue application of pressure, which the altar call so easily produces, is certainly far below the dignity of the sacred Gospel.'

**"Do not press for 'a decision'.** We should not imitate other groups in pressing for 'a decision'. Conversion is far more than decision. It is fundamentally a change of heart which God alone can give and does give to His people at His own time. We may urge prayerful consideration, we may warn most earnestly, and we may recommend most cordially, but we should not press for a decision" (pages 84, 85).

Another outstanding and altogether wholesome emphasis of this book is its insistence on the principle that evangelism is properly the function of the organized Church. We live in a day when there is a great deal of evangelism and missionary work being carried on by "free-lance" individuals and by non-Church voluntary associations. Neglect of evangelism and missions on the part of the Churches accounts for some of this independent type of work. Discouragement over the prevalence of modern unbelief in some of the major denominations accounts for more of it. But it can hardly all be explained by these two factors. There has also been a certain widespread disregard, and even contempt, for the functions and authority of the visible Church as an institution. This should not be. Again and again the present volume brings out the truth that the Church, not the individual or a voluntary private association, is God's appointed agency for evangelism. "Free-lance" evangelism by individuals and private associations cannot be approved except as a second-best makeshift where the Church itself neglects or refuses to carry on a sound evangelistic work. In the judgment of the reviewer, this note is much needed in contemporary American Protestantism, especially in Fundamentalist circles. Disparagement of the visible Church is not Scriptural and should always be avoided.

The volume under review contains many other most excellent features—so many that it would be out of the question to mention all of them in the space available for this review. A few characteristic emphases may be noted, however. We are to preach a God-centered Gospel (p.33). Our method is involved in our message (p. 71). Men are lost because they are sinners,

not merely because of the specific sin of rejecting Christ (p. 73). We have no Scriptural warrant for saying positively to an unsaved person, "Christ died for you" (p. 73). The glory of God is primary, man's benefit secondary (p. 76). Un denominationalism is wrong (p. 112). What constitutes the external call of the Gospel (p. 83, quoting Charles Hodge).

There are a few matters in which the reviewer found himself unable to agree with the viewpoints advocated by the various writers of the volume. On page 111 terms of communion which would exclude any truly saved Christian from membership in the visible Church are apposed as unscriptural. This the reviewer believes to be theologically unsound and incapable of valid defence, for it makes regeneration rather than a credible profession the criterion of membership in the visible Church. An excommunicated person may be a "genuine Christian", but he may at the same time be justly cast out of the fellowship of the visible Church because of heinous sin. See the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, XXII, which rejects as an error the proposition "That saintship is the criterion of church-membership, so that the visible Church may not, without guilt, receive any who is not really a saint, or exclude any who is regenerated" (Error 3). In the judgment of the reviewer, the position of our Christian Reformed brethren involves a confusion of the visible with the invisible Church. Election and regeneration constitute the criterion of membership in the invisible Church; a credible profession of faith and obedience constitutes the criterion of membership in the visible Church.

The reviewer takes issue also with some of the writers of the volume with respect to the place of singing in evangelism. Of course, as is well known, the Christian Reformed Church approves of singing hymns of human composition as well as the inspired Psalms in the worship of God; this position we cannot endorse, as we believe it is unscriptural. But apart from the question of Psalms versus hymns, the reviewer considers the place accorded to singing in connection with evangelism by this volume to be too great. It is worthy of note that in the Book of Acts, with its inspired record of the wonderful evangelistic and missionary work of the apostles Peter and Paul, not to mention others, absolutely nothing is said about singing as a method or accompaniment of evangelism. The only reference to singing is Acts 16:25 where Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises in the prison. The reviewer feels that the importance of singing in evangelism is greatly over-emphasized in many circles at the present day. In comparison with the viewpoint of some modern evangelists, however, the statements of the present volume on this subject are really moderate, and in any case they are merely incidental to the main message of the book.

It would be a pity to pick flaws in so valuable and praiseworthy a volume. The reviewer ven-

tures, however, to suggest that the so-called "Five Points of Calvinism" are somewhat wrongly handled. These are repeatedly referred to, in one instance as "The great pillar truths of Calvinism" and "the five fundamental 'points' of Calvinism" (p. 72). The five "points" referred to are, of course, Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited or Particular Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and the Perseverance of the Saints. Now these are certainly "pillar truths" and also "points" of Calvinism. But they should not be called THE pillar truths of Calvinism, nor THE FIVE points of Calvinism. These famous "five points" are after all not a condensed summary of the Calvinistic Faith. They are only five doctrines selected from the whole body of the Calvinistic Faith by the Arminian party in Holland in the 17th century as five points to be attacked. The Arminians published their five points against these five doctrines of the Calvinistic Faith. Then after long controversy the Synod of Dort (1618-19) condemned the five points of the Arminians and affirmed the orthodoxy of the five doctrines the Arminians had attacked. Therefore these "five points" are really not "the five points of Calvinism" but only those truths of Calvinism which distinguish Calvinism from Arminianism. They are true and they are important, but they are NOT a summary of Calvinism, they are not "THE" pillar truths of Calvinism. In a former day the great opponent of Calvinism was Arminianism, so these "five points" not unnaturally came to be regarded as a sort of statement-in-brief of Calvinism. But today, while Calvinism is still being opposed by Arminianism, Calvinism's great antagonist is something very much worse than Arminianism, namely modern secular humanism which rejects all external authority, makes man's happiness the end of all things, and regards reli-

gion—if it leaves any place for religion at all—as a mere side-issue or minor concern of life. A summary of the truths of Calvinism in distinction from modern secular humanism would single out other truths than those which distinguish Calvinism from Arminianism. Arminius has been put in the shade by Immanuel Kant and his successors, and only Calvinism has the artillery to do battle with real effectiveness against the modern man-centered world-view. The volume under review is by no means oblivious of this modern foe of the Christian religion, but in some places the impression is given that the "five points" are a summary of the main truths of Calvinism.

A few typographical errors, mostly unimportant, were noted in reading the book. A serious one occurs on page 95 where the word "moral" is printed as "mortal".

Every reader of "Blue Banner Faith and Life" who is concerned about the need for evangelism and for a soundly Scriptural type of evangelism, should by all means read this book. Here is a discussion of evangelism that is really different. The people who wrote it are dead in earnest about proclaiming God's message in God's way. They are also really working at it, and they are getting some results. By all means purchase the book and read it thoroughly.

(Note: Additional outstanding religious books will be reviewed in future issues of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". The reviewing of a book here is not to be understood as necessarily implying an endorsement of everything contained in it. Please purchase books through your local bookstore or direct from the publishers; do not send orders to the publisher of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". Ed.)

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## Formality Not Christianity

By Robert Murray McCheyne

**"He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."** Romans 2:28-29.

Formality is, perhaps, the most besetting sin of the human mind. It is found in every bosom and in every clime; it reigns triumphant in every natural mind; and it constantly tries to re-usurp the throne in the heart of every child of God. If we were to seek for proof that fallen man is "without understanding"—that he has altogether fallen from his primitive clearness and dignity of intelligence, that he has utterly lost the image of God, in knowledge, after which he was

created—we would point to this one strange, irrational conceit by which more than one half the world are befooled to their eternal undoing: that God may be pleased with mere bodily prostrations and services, that it is possible to worship God with the lips, when the heart is far from him. It is against this error, the besetting error of humanity, and pre-eminently the besetting error of the Jewish mind, that Paul directs the words before us; and it is very noticeable that he does not condescend to argue the matter. He speaks with all the decisiveness and with all the authority of one who was not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles, and he lays it down as a kind of first principle to which every man of ordinary intelligence, provided only he will soberly consider the matter, must yield his immediate assent,

that "he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

In the following discourse I shall show very briefly, **First**, That external observances are of no avail to justify the sinner; and, **Second**, That external observances can ever stand in the stead of sanctification to the believer.

**1. External observances are of no avail to justify the sinner.**

There are several refuges of lies to which the awakened soul will run, before he can be persuaded to betake himself to the righteousness of God; and in every one of them we see that he that compasses himself about with sparks of his own kindling receives only this of God's hand: to lie down in sorrow. First of all, the soul generally contents himself with slight views of the divine law, and says: "All these have I kept from my youth up;" then, when the spirituality of the law is revealed, he tries to escape by undermining the whole fabric of the law; when that will not do, he flies to his past virtues to balance accounts with his sins; and then, when that will not do either, he begins a work of self-reformation, in order to buy off the follies of youth by the sobrieties of age. Alas! how vain are all such contrivances, invented by a blinded heart, urged on by the malignant enemy of souls.

But there is another refuge of lies to which the awakened mind often betakes itself with avidity, to find peace from the whips of conscience and the scorpions of God's law; and that is, a form of godliness. He will become a religious man, and surely that will save him. His whole course of life is now changed. Before, it may be, he neglected the outward ordinances of religion. He used not to kneel by his bedside; he never used to gather his children and servants around him to pray, he never used to read the Word in secret, or in the family; he seldom went to the house of God in company with the multitude that kept holy day; he did not eat of that bread which, to the believer, is meat indeed, nor drink of that cup which is drink indeed.

But now his whole usages are reversed, his whole course is changed. He kneels to pray even when alone; he reads the Word with periodical regularity; he even raises an altar for morning and evening sacrifice in his family; his sobered countenance is never wanting in his wonted position in the house of prayer. He looks back now to his baptism with a soothing complacency, and sits down to eat the children's bread at the table of the Lord. His friends and neighbors all observe the change. Some make a jest of it, and some make it a subject of rejoicing; but one thing is obvious that he is an altered man; and yet it is

far from obvious that he is a new man, or a justified man. All this routine of bodily exercise, if it be entered on before the man has put on the divine righteousness, is just another way of going about to establish his own righteousness, that he may not be constrained to submit to put on the righteousness of God. Nay, so utterly perverted is the understanding of the unconverted, that many men are found to persevere in such a course of bodily worship of God, while, at the same time, they persevere as diligently in some course of open or secret iniquity. Such men seem to regard external observances not only as an atonement for sins that are past, but as a price paid to purchase a license to sin in time to come. Now Paul sweeps away this refuge of lies from every soul, in these decisive words: "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

Is there any of you whom God has awakened out of the deadly slumber of the natural mind? Has he drawn aside the curtains, and made the light of truth to fall upon your heart, revealing the true condition of your soul? Has he made you start to your feet alarmed, that you might go, and weep as you go, to seek the Lord your God? Has he made you exchange the careless smile of gaiety for the tears of anxiety, the loud laugh of folly for the cry of bitter distress about your soul? Are you asking the way to Zion with your face directed thitherward? Then take heed, I beseech you, of sitting down contented in this refuge of lies. Remember, he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; remember, no outward observances, no prayers, or church-going, or Bible-reading, can ever justify you in the sight of God.

I am quite aware that when anxiety for the soul enters in, then anxiety to attend ordinances will also enter in. Like as the stricken deer goes apart from the herd to bleed and weep alone, so the sin-stricken soul goes aside from his merry companions, to weep, and read, and pray, alone. He will desire the preached Word, and press after it more and more; but remember, he finds no peace in this change that is wrought in himself. When a man goes thirsty to the well, his thirst is not allayed merely by going there. On the contrary, it is increased every step he goes. It is by what he draws out of the well that his thirst is satisfied. And just so it is not by the mere bodily exercise of waiting on ordinances that you will ever come to peace; but by tasting Jesus in the ordinances, whose flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed.

If ever, then, you are tempted to think that you are surely safe for eternity, because you have been brought to change your treatment of the outward ordinances of religion, remember, I beseech you, the parable of the marriage feast, where many were called, many were invited to



come in, but few, few were found having on the wedding garment. Many are brought within the pale of ordinances, and read and hear, it may be, with considerable interest and anxiety about the "all things that are ready," the things of the kingdom of God; but of these many, few are persuaded to abhor their own filthy rags, and to put on the wedding garment of the Redeemer's righteousness. And these few alone shall sit still to partake of the feast, the joy of their Lord; the rest shall stand speechless, and be cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. You may read your Bible, and pray over it till you die; you, may wait on the preached Word every Sabbath-day, and sit down at every sacrament till you die; yet, if you do not find Christ in the ordinances, if he does not reveal himself to your soul in the preached Word, in the broken bread and poured-out wine, if you are not brought to cleave to him, to look to him, to believe in him, to cry out with inward adoration: "My Lord, and my God,"—"How great is his goodness! how great is his beauty!"—then the outward observance of the ordinances is all in vain to you. You have come to the well of salvation, but have gone away with the pitcher empty; and however proud and boastful you may now be of your bodily exercise, you will find in that day that it profits little, and that you will stand speechless before the King.

## **2. External observances can never stand in the stead of sanctification to the believer.**

If it be a common thing for awakened minds to seek for peace in their external observances, to make a Christ of them, and rest in them as their means of acceptance with God, it is also a common thing for those who have been brought into Christ, and enjoy the peace of believing, to place mere external observances in the stead of growth in holiness. Every believer among you knows how fain the old heart within you would substitute the hearing of sermons, and the repeating of prayers, in the place of that faith which worketh by love, and which overcometh the world. Now, the great reason why the believer is often tempted to do this, is, that he loves the ordinances. Unconverted souls seldom take delight in the ordinances of Christ. They see no beauty in Jesus, they see no form nor comeliness in him, they hide their faces from him. Why should you wonder, then, that they take no delight in praying to him continually, in praising him daily, in calling him blessed? Why should you wonder that the preaching of the cross is foolishness to them, that his tabernacles are not amiable in their eyes, that they forsake the assembling of themselves together? They never knew the Savior, they never loved him; how, then, should they love the memorials which he has left behind him?

When you are weeping by the chiselled monument of a departed friend, you do not wonder that the careless crowd passes by without a tear. They

did not know the virtues of your departed friend; they do not know the fragrance of his memory. Just so the world cares not for the house of prayer, the sprinkled water, the broken bread, the poured-out wine; for they never knew the excellency of Jesus. But with believers it is far otherwise. You have been divinely taught your need of Jesus; and therefore you delight to hear Christ preached. You have seen the beauty of Christ crucified; and therefore you love the place where he is evidently set forth. You love the very name of Jesus; it is as ointment poured forth; therefore you could join for ever in the melody of his praises. The Sabbath-day, of which you once said: "What a weariness is it!" and "When will it be over, that we may set forth corn?" is now a "delight" and "honorable", the sweetest day of all the seven. The ordinances, which were once a dull and sickening routine, are now green pastures and waters of stillness to your soul; and surely this is a blessed change. But still you are in the body; heaven is not yet gained; Satan is hovering near; and since he cannot destroy the work of God in your soul, therefore he tries all the more to spoil it. He cannot stem the current; therefore he tries to turn it aside. He cannot drive back God's arrow; therefore he tries to make it turn awry, and spend its strength in vain. When he finds that you love the ordinances, and it is in vain to tempt you to forsake them, he lets you love them; ay, he helps you to love them more and more. He becomes an angel of light, he helps in the decoration of the house of God, he throws around its services a fascinating beauty, hurries you on from one house of God to another, from prayer-meetings to sermon-hearing, from sermons to sacraments. And why does he do all this? He does all this just that he may make this the whole of your sanctification, that outward ordinances may be the all in all of your religion, that in your anxiety to preserve the shell, you may let fall the kernel.

If there be one of you, then, in whose heart God has wrought the amazing change of turning you from loathing to loving his ordinances, let me beseech you to be jealous over your heart with godly jealousy. Pause, this hour, and see if, in your haste and anxious pursuit of the ordinances, you have not left the pursuit of that holiness without which the ordinances are sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. I have a message from God unto you. It is written: "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of man, but of God." He is not a Christian which is one outwardly, neither is that baptism which is merely the outward washing of the body; but he is a Christian which is one inwardly, and true baptism is that of the heart, when the heart is washed from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Remember, I beseech you, that the ordinances are means to an end: they are stepping-stones, by which you may arrive at a landing-place. Is your soul sitting down in the ordinances, and saying, It is enough? Are you so satisfied that you can enjoy the ordinances of Christ, that you desire no higher attainments? Remember the word that is written: "This is not your rest." Would you not say he was a foolish traveler, who should take every inn he came to for his home, who should take up his settled rest, and instead of preparing himself for a hard journeying on the morrow, should begin to take the ease and enjoyment of the house as his all? Take heed that you be not this foolish traveler. The ordinances are intended by God to be but the inns and refectories where the traveler Zion-ward, weary in well-doing, and faint in faith, may betake himself to tarry for a night, that, being refreshed with bread and wine, he may, with new alacrity, press forward on his journey home as upon eagles' wings.

Take, then, this one rule of life along with you, founded on these blessed words: "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly"—that if your outward religion is helping on your inward religion, if your hearing of Christ on the Sabbath-day makes you grow more like Christ through all the week; if the words of grace and joy which you drink in at the house of God lead your heart to love more, and your hand to do more—then, and then only, are you using the ordinances of God aright.

There is not a more miserable deceived soul in the world than that soul among you who, like Herod, hears the preached Gospel gladly, and yet, like Herod, lives in sin. You love the Sabbath-day you love the house of God, you love to hear Christ preached in all his freeness and in all his fulness; yes, you think you could listen for ever if only

Christ be the theme; you love to sit down at sacraments, and to commemorate the death of your Lord. And is this all—is this all your holiness? Does your religion end here? Is this all that believing in Jesus has done for you? Remember, I beseech you, that the ordinances of Christ are not means of **enjoyment**, but means of **grace**; and though it is said that the travelers in the Valley of Baca dig up wells, which are filled with the rain from on high, yet it is also said: "They go from strength to strength." Awake, then, my friends, and let it no more be said of us, that our religion is confined to the house of God and to the Sabbath-day. Let us draw water with joy from these wells, just in order that we may travel the wilderness with joy and strength, and love and hope, blessed in ourselves, and a blessing to all about us. And if we speak thus to those of you whose religion seems to go no farther than the ordinances, what shall we say to those of you who contradict the very use and end of the ordinances in your lives? Is it possible you can delight in worldliness, and vanity, and covetousness, and pride, and luxury? Is it possible that the very lips which are so ready to sing praises, or to join in prayers, are also ready to speak the words of guile, of malice, of envy, of bitterness? Awake, we beseech you; we are not ignorant of Satan's devices. To you he has made himself an angel of light. Remember it is written: "If any among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." "For he is not Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God!"

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## BLUE BANNER QUESTION BOX

Readers are invited to submit doctrinal, Biblical and practical questions for answer in this department. Names will not be published with questions.

### Question:

Is it legitimate to hold membership in voluntary religious associations which exist for good purposes but which do not support the whole platform of truth which our Church believes to be Scriptural?

### Answer:

The reader who submitted the above query mentioned in his letter such associations as the Gideons, Christian Business Men's Groups, Ministerial Associations, Kiwanis Clubs. With reference to the last named, it should be noted that

Kiwanis does not profess to be a religious association, and therefore does not properly come within the scope of this query. For a discussion of the question of the Christian's participation in such non-religious associations (business, social, educational, professional, etc.) see "Blue Banner Faith and Life", July-September 1948, p. 129.

With respect to religious associations, it should be noted that the query does not concern Churches, but voluntary religious associations. It is not a question of what Church a person should be a member of, but of what religious organizations he may join in addition to his Church.

In general, it may safely be affirmed that a

Christian may join or co-operate with any voluntary religious association PROVIDED this does not involve doing evil that good may come; that is, provided it does not involve a compromise with error or wrong. This general proposition may be explained in detail as follows. We may join or co-operate with any voluntary religious association provided the following conditions are met: (1) The association's professed purpose must be good, that is, in harmony with the moral law of God; (2) the association must be honestly managed for the accomplishment of its professed purpose; (3) the association must be so constituted that membership does not NECESSARILY involve endorsement of, financial support of, or participation in, anything which is contrary to truth and right as revealed in the Bible. We may co-operate freely with Christians of other denominations in voluntary religious associations SO LONG AS WE ARE NOT PUT IN THE POSITION OF HAVING TO COMPROMISE WITH WHAT WE BELIEVE TO BE EVIL.

The following may help to explain the conditions outlined above, and to illustrate their application to concrete situations. (1) The association's professed purpose must be good in the sense that it is in harmony with God's moral law revealed in the Bible. The Gideons, the American Bible Society, and many other voluntary religious associations clearly have a good and lawful purpose. On the other hand, an association the professed purpose of which was to promote the principles of Mormonism, Christian Science, Unitarianism, Universalism, anti-Semitism, etc., would have a bad and (from the standpoint of God's law) unlawful purpose, and therefore a Christian should not join or co-operate with such. In some cases the purpose of an association might be partly good and partly bad; for instance, an organization might exist for the purpose of providing food, clothing and shelter for orphans (which is good) and also for the purpose of training the orphans in the teachings of a false system of religion (which is bad). In such a case a Christian could not consistently join or support such an association.

(2) The association must be honestly managed for the accomplishment of its professed purpose. That is to say, the professed purpose must not be a mere "front" or cloak beneath which activities contrary to that purpose can be carried on. With respect to the Gideons and the American Bible Society, for example, there would be no question as to their being honestly managed for the accomplishment of their professed purpose. But suppose an association was formed for the purpose of publishing and circulating sound, orthodox Christian literature, and for a period of many years did exactly that, but at a later time began to publish and circulate quantities of unsound, unorthodox, harmful literature. While professing to exist for the propagation of the truth, it is at the present time actually engaged, to a great extent, in propagating ideas which are contrary to the truth.

It rejects the writings of sound Bible scholars, but publishes and circulates the writings of the leading modernists and "higher critics" of the day. In such a case we would have to say that while on paper the association professes to have a good purpose, as a matter of actual fact it is not being honestly managed for the accomplishment of that good purpose, but on the contrary is being used for something quite different from, and incompatible with, that good purpose. Although such an association "on paper" would appear to be a bona fide religious association with a commendable purpose, the real situation would be quite different: its bad actions would speak so loud that its professed purpose could no longer be taken at face value. In all such cases Christian people should refrain from membership, co-operation or financial support.

(3) The association must be so constituted that membership does not NECESSARILY involve or imply endorsement of, financial support of, or participation in, anything which is contrary to truth and right as revealed in the Bible. If the constitution or by-laws require that all members sign a creed or statement which contains untrue elements (such as, for example, the universal Fatherhood of God, the universal brotherhood of man, "belief in our fellow men", recognition of all religions as essentially the same), a Christian should not join such an association, as it would involve an endorsement of error. If all members are required to pay dues, part of which are used to pay the expenses of an annual "Sunday" picnic, a Christian should not join the association, for he could not do so without becoming involved in the guilt of Sabbath violation. But if matters are so constituted that a member can protest and vote against the "Sunday" picnic, and can refrain from attending it and from supporting it financially or in any other way, then membership would not NECESSARILY involve the guilt of Sabbath violation. That is, the mere fact that the association or some of its members engage in practices APART FROM ITS PROFESSED PURPOSE which we believe to be wrong, does not in itself constitute a bar to membership. PROVIDED PARTICIPATION IN, APPROVAL OR SUPPORT OF SUCH ACTIVITIES IS NOT REQUIRED AS A CONDITION OF MEMBERSHIP. Membership in a voluntary association involves moral responsibility for the association's professed purpose and in addition for those activities and policies of the association which must be approved of, supported or participated in in order to maintain membership in good standing. It does not involve moral responsibility for all actions of the association, so long as the member protests against and abstains from these actions which are wrong.

The foregoing discussion has dealt with the question of the morality of membership in voluntary religious associations. In addition to the question of morality, the question of expediency must be considered. A matter may be lawful, and yet not expedient (1 Cor. 10: 23,24). That is, a

matter may not be sinful, and yet there may be good reasons for abstaining from it. There might conceivably be situations where a Christian would feel that he should abstain from membership in some voluntary association, not because it would be sinful to join, but in order to avoid offence to his weak brethren who, in their confident oversimplification of moral issues, think that membership in an association must involve a blanket endorsement of everything done by it or connected with it. There are always weak brethren who cannot see the difference between the essence of a thing and its "accidents" or incidental features. In some situations it may be better simply to refrain from membership in a particular voluntary association rather than to try to explain our conduct to weak brethren whose degree of Christian knowledge is insufficient for an understanding of the real issue. Such concessions to weak brethren can however be carried too far. We must always remember that the weak brother's weakness is an infirmity to be tolerated by the Church, not a platform to be propagated by the Church as a whole. For a further discussion of this question see "Blue Banner Faith and Life", July-September 1948, page 119 (Lesson 137, Question 11) "What is meant by 'weak brethren'?".

**Question:**

What is the meaning of the word "exegesis"? Does every person have a right to his own exegesis of a portion of Scripture?

**Answer:**

The word "exegesis" is derived from the Greek verb "exegeomai", which originally meant "to lead out, be leader, go before", and later came to be used in the sense of "to draw out in narrative" or "to unfold in teaching". Thus the exegesis of a text or portion of Scripture is an unfolding or drawing out of its meaning. Properly exegesis means drawing out or ascertaining the true meaning of a text by means of a painstaking, accurate study of the text, its context, historical circumstances, etc. The aim of all genuine exegesis is to be as faithful and accurate as possible in drawing out the real, true meaning of the text. While Biblical exegesis can never be as exact as chemical analysis, owing to the nature of the material with which it deals, still the aim must be the highest possible degree of accuracy in extracting the meaning from the text.

There is a fairly common mistaken notion that "exegesis" is equivalent to "opinion", and that several scholars, each of whom advocates a different exegesis of a certain text, may all be equally correct. According to this popular notion, exegesis is something like taste in art, music or architecture—something which is highly individual, in which a person is entitled to his own preference and need not be able to give any reasons for it. This is far from the true meaning of exe-

gesis. There can be only ONE true exegesis of any text or portion of Scripture, for there can be only ONE true meaning of any text or portion of Scripture,—the meaning intended by the Holy Spirit in that text or portion. The exegetical studies of scholars will approach that one true exegesis with varying degrees of accuracy; an exegesis of a Scripture portion may be entirely incorrect, or it may be entirely correct, or it may be somewhere between the two. Where two exegeses are mutually contradictory, it is absolutely certain that one of them is false.

No person has any right to an exegesis for which he is unable to present a substantial reason. If a person says, "This is my exegesis of this text; I have no special reason for it; but it is my exegesis and I like it", he is a very foolish person. Such a person is not even trying to "draw out" the meaning of the text; he is just reading his own opinions and prejudices into the text. Every person has a right to his own exegesis just in proportion to his own knowledge. It would be foolish for a person who had never studied Greek to undertake to decide points of Greek grammar and syntax. Such a person does indeed have a right to his own opinion about points of Greek grammar and syntax, but he must make a thorough study of the Greek language first.

The popular idea that "you can prove anything by the Bible" is based on the false notion that any exegesis of a text is as valid as any other exegesis of that text, which implies, of course, that the Bible is not the infallible, inspired Word of God and does not have a definite meaning in itself, apart from the opinions of those who study it. If the Bible is really God's Word, as we believe it is, then it is not true that "you can prove anything by the Bible". For if the Bible is God's Word, then every particular text and sentence of the Bible has a definite meaning in itself, quite apart from the subjective opinions or beliefs of those who study it. Just in proportion as men study the Bible **ARIGHT** they will arrive at a grasp of its true meaning.

**Question:**

Why do not all scholars who have the technical knowledge for thorough Bible study believe in the truth of Christianity?

**Answer:**

Every person's study of the Bible, as of all other matters, is influenced by his primary assumptions. The idea that a person can study the Bible, or anything else, with a mind completely emptied of all assumptions, so as to study "facts" without any "theories", is sheer nonsense. Inevitably we come to the Bible, as to all other matters, with a host of assumptions in our mind, consciously or unconsciously. The important thing is that our assumptions shall be those sanctioned by the Bible itself, not those derived from

our sin-clouded human reason. In studying the Bible, we inevitably either assume that the God of the Bible exists, or we assume that the God of the Bible does not exist. There is no neutral or non-committal region between these two assumptions; every person makes one or the other of them; even the agnostic who says he does not know whether the God of the Bible exists or not, really assumes that He does not exist until His existence is proved.

What a scholar does with the Bible depends, in the end, on whether he really believes in the God of the Bible. And this, in turn, depends on whether or not he has been born again (John 3: 1-3). And this, in turn, depends ultimately upon God's eternal decree of election. The scholar who takes a "negative" attitude toward the Bible and the Christian religion does so, ultimately, because his sin-darkened mind, which has never been enlightened by the renewing work of the Holy Spirit, is hopelessly, utterly prejudiced against believing in the existence of the God of the Bible, and therefore in the truth of the Christianity revealed in the Bible. On the other hand, the scholar who takes a "positive" attitude toward the Bible and the Christian religion does so, ultimately, because the natural sinful darkness of his mind, and his prejudices against God and God's truth, have been removed by the renewing work of the Holy Spirit (regeneration, or the new birth; 2 Cor. 5:17).

The scholar with a "negative" approach to the Bible will come to a chapter in Exodus, for example, with the fixed assumption that "religion" is a product of an evolutionary development of the human race, and that the Bible is a record of part of that evolutionary process. Inevitably his personal faith or belief will be determined by his assumptions. Another scholar, who has a "positive" approach to the Bible, will come to the same chapter with the assumption that the infinite, almighty God created the human race for Himself, that man fell into sin and alienated himself from God, and that the Bible is the record of God's redemption of fallen man. Inevitably this scholar's personal faith or unbelief will be determined by his assumptions. What this comes down to is that in the case of the person who has not been born again, his assumptions are derived from his own sinful heart and mind, whereas in the case of the person who has been born again, his assumptions will become those of the Bible itself; his natural prejudice against the truth will have been removed by the Holy Spirit's renewing work. Consequently when this latter scholar reads "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1), instead of saying "This is an interesting ancient Hebrew myth", he will immediately accept it as an unquestionable statement of infallible truth. In the words of the Reformer John Calvin, "they who have been inwardly taught by the Spirit feel an entire acquiescence in the Scripture".

**Question:**

What is the meaning of Jeremiah 15:19, "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth. . . ."?"

**Answer:**

Two interpretations have been offered for these words. (1) It is said that the statement refers to the people of Judah, and that the meaning is that the prophet should make a distinction between the godly portion of the people ("the precious") and the ungodly portion of them ("the vile"). (2) The other interpretation is that the reference is to Jeremiah's own heart, and the meaning is that the prophet should separate God's revelations from those ideas which originated in his own sin-corrupted heart, and then he would be qualified to be as God's mouth, that is, to be an official spokesman or prophet of God. The context indicates that the second of these two interpretations is the correct one. Note verses 17 and 18, in which Jeremiah complains of his personal sufferings for the Lord's cause, and even asks God: "wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?" Such sentiments, with their implied doubt of God's love and reliability, did not proceed from the Holy Spirit's revelation to Jeremiah, but from the sinful tendencies of his own heart. To serve God aright as a prophet he must distinguish sharply between his own personal feelings and God's Word.

**Question:**

Please explain the meaning of Hebrews 12:26,27.

**Answer:**

The verses referred to read as follows: "Whose voice then shook the earth; but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." The reference is to the cataclysmic events which will take place at the end of the age, at the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, when all that is earthly and temporary, as well as all that is sinful and imperfect, will be forever abolished, and only that "which cannot be shaken" will remain; that is, the present order of things will be forever done away, and the eternal order of things will follow.

**Question:**

What is the difference between Premillennialism and Dispensationalism?

**Answer:**

All Dispensationalists are Premillennialists, but not all Premillennialists are Dispensationalists.

lists. These two theological teachings are often confused and even identified, but in reality they are quite distinct. The common form of Dispensationalism is represented by the writings of J. N. Darby and the Scofield Reference Bible. It divides the history of the world (past and future) into seven distinct periods or dispensations, and affirms that in each dispensation God deals with the human race on the basis of some one specific principle. Such Dispensationalism draws sharp distinctions between Israel and the Church, between "the gospel of grace" and "the gospel of the kingdom", and between being under "law" and being under "grace". One feature of this system is belief in the premillennial second coming of Christ. (See "Blue Banner Faith and Life", Vol. 1, No. 6, June 1946, pp. 92,93, "What is the Sco-

field Reference Bible? Is it a reliable aid to Bible study?")

Premillennialism, on the other hand, is that view of the Last Things which affirms that the second coming of Christ will be followed by a millennium during which Christ will reign in person on earth. As explained above, not all Premillennialists are Dispensationalists. Apart from the question of Dispensationalism, Premillennialists are divided into various groups by different views of the order of events associated with the second coming of Christ. What they all have in common is the belief in an earthly millennium which will follow the second coming of Christ. For a discussion of the second coming of Christ, see "Blue Banner Faith and Life", Vol. 1, No. 8, October-December 1946, pp. 165-167 (Lesson 45); Vol. 2, No. 2, April-June 1947, pp. 75-78 (Lessons 71, 72).

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God doth not need

Either man's work or His own gifts; who best  
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best. His state  
Is kingly. Thousands at His bidding speed  
And post o'er Land and Ocean without rest:  
They also serve who only stand and wait.

John Milton

"Blessed whoso loveth Thee, and his friend in  
Thee, and his enemy for Thee. For he alone  
loses none dear to him, to whom all are dear in  
Him who cannot be lost."

Augustine of Hippo

"It is no vain and empty thing, that the excel-  
lent dignity of the authority of the Christian  
Faith hath overspread the whole world."

Augustine of Hippo

"If faith has not for its basis a testimony of  
God to which we must submit, as to an authority  
exterior to our personal judgment, and independ-  
ent of it, then faith is no faith."

Adolphe Monod

"I will take my stand, where, as a child, my par-  
ents placed me, until the clear truth be found out."

Augustine of Hippo

"To Thy grace I ascribe it, and to Thy mercy, that  
Thou hast melted away my sins as it were ice.  
To Thy grace I ascribe also whatsoever I have not  
done of evil; for what might I not have done, who  
even loved a sin for its own sake?"

Augustine of Hippo

"It may sometimes seem difficult to take our  
stand frankly by the side of Christ and his apostles.  
It will always be found safe."

B. B. Warfield

These thorns are sharp, yet I can tread on them;  
This cup is loathsome, yet He makes it sweet:  
My face is steadfast toward Jerusalem,  
My heart remembers it.

Christina G. Rossetti

For Adoration, David's Psalms  
Lift up the heart to deeds of alms;  
And he, who kneels and chants,  
Prevails his passions to control,  
Finds meat and medicine to the soul,  
Which for translation pants.

Christopher Smart

# Index of Blue Banner Faith and Life, 1946-1948

**Note:** The following index, with the exception of the contents of Vol. 3 No. 4, was compiled by Miss Rose A. Huston, whose great assistance in this matter the editor desires to acknowledge with hearty thanks. For the future, it is planned to publish an index at the close of the final issue of each year.

## Explanation of Notation:

I means Volume 1, or 1946

II means Volume 2, or 1947

III means Volume 3, or 1948

Arabic numerals following the Roman indicate page numbers. Thus "I-75-79" means Volume 1 (1946), pages 75 to 79. The symbol "ff." means "following pages".

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# THE CAMERONIAN'S DREAM

(Continued from inside front cover)

When the righteous had fallen, and the combat had ended,  
A chariot of fire through the dark cloud descended.  
The drivers were angels on horses of whiteness,  
And its burning wheels turned upon axles of brightness.

A seraph unfolded its doors bright and shining,  
All dazzling like gold of the seventh refining;  
And the souls that came forth out of great tribulation  
Have mounted the chariot and steeds of salvation.

On the arch of the rainbow the chariot is gliding;  
Through the paths of the thunder the horsemen are riding.  
Glide swiftly, bright spirits, the prize is before ye,  
A crown never fading, a kingdom of glory!

Note: The foregoing poem, written by James Hyslop in 1812, is an imaginative description of the Battle of Ayrsmoss, Scotland, which took place on July 22, 1680. The battle, in which the Covenanter leader and minister Richard Cameron was killed, is described on page 139 of this issue of "Blue Banner Faith and Life".

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Clay Center, Kansas

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~~Also Chapter~~

~~8 in Magic~~

~~in Marriage~~

Spain

but had to see  
can't find it

