

The Presbyterian Guardian

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The Voluntary Convict

What would you think of someone who voluntarily spent his life in prison in order to demonstrate his real concern for the criminals there? Crazy? And yet the Son of God stepped down from heaven in order to demonstrate his love for us criminals under sentence of death.

What concern! Talk about involvement! Christ was made in the likeness of sinful flesh (Romans 8:3). This does not mean that Christ had a sinful nature, but that he did have a truly human nature—the same nature that we have made “sinful flesh.” Christ really and literally became a man. He lovingly and willingly entered the human race and became subject to its miseries, even though he had no part in the sin that causes those miseries.

Christ Jesus came into a world of criminals, a world of rebels against the kind King of Glory, in order to demonstrate his love for them. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13).

He came, not just to show that he cared; Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (I Timothy 1:15). This innocent man did not come to us merely to talk or helplessly sympathize with us criminals, or even to show the “ultimate” in useless concern. He came to take our place on death row. Every single sinner who trusts himself to Jesus Christ is immediately set free, launched upon a never-ending

term of God's acceptance and favor toward him. Not even physical death itself can end this closest of relationships.

Only genuine Christians know that this is the real cause for the Christmas celebrations. This blind, deaf world only knows half the truth. And to know half the gospel is to know no gospel at all! They sing the carols, paint the manger scene and attend the season's pageants; but the bright truth of God's saving love in Christ escapes them. As one who blinks and turns his head from the blinding sun, this world cannot see the glory of God in the highest, the glory that shone forth long ago and still shines forth into the hearts of those who love the voluntary convict who died in their place.

“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:2, 6). Hallelujah, Emmanuel!

Adapted from a “pastor's message” by the Rev. Rollin P. Keller to the Emmanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Wilmington, Delaware.

Acts 15

and the authority of a church synod

R. LAIRD HARRIS

Dr. Harris is Dean of Faculty at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis. He writes here on a subject of crucial interest in the conversations between the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The question is, Does the church have the right to speak authoritatively on ethical matters beyond those explicit, or reasonably implicit, in Scripture?

In the church at Antioch a doctrinal question had arisen. Were the Judaizers right? Did circumcision, feasts, and fasts save the soul?

Some apparently really thought that legalistic observance of the type mentioned in the Pharisee's prayer (Luke 18:12) gained merit with God. Therefore, of course, they thought that Gentiles could not be saved. Such a view not only forbade the spread of the gospel among the Gentiles, it also perverted the very gospel message of free salvation through the sacrifice of Christ.

A presbyterian assembly

In facing a doctrinal problem like this, there were various approaches the leaders at Antioch could have taken. They could have submitted the dispute to Peter, the "Prince of the Apostles," for a decision *ex cathedra*. This would have been the later Roman Catholic approach. Or, they could have asked for a meeting of the apostolic college. This would have been the hierarchical or Episcopal approach. But then, they could have called a congregational meeting in Antioch to settle the question. This would have been the approach of independent church government.

They did none of these things. They called for a meeting of the apostles and the elders representing the churches in that area. It looks suspiciously like the meeting of a Presbytery or Synod! Note that it was made up of apostles and elders (Acts 15:2, 6, 22; 16:4). At first sight, it seems as if the conclusion was sent out in the name of the apostles and elders and other brethren (15:23); but the better Greek text here reads: "The apostles and the brethren who are elders: (NASB). Note also that the decrees were not merely advisory; they were expected to be observed (16:4). If this meeting was not really a presbytery, it would be hard to find as strong warrant elsewhere in the New Testament for presbyterian assemblies.

[Note: Dr. Harris also points out that Acts 15 is quite a basic reference in the thinking of the Westminster Assembly concerning church government. Both the Confession of Faith, Chapter XXXI, and the original "Form of Presbyterian Church-Government," rest much of their case for the Presbyterian system on Acts 15. What was done in Jerusalem and recorded in Acts 15 constitutes a major amount of the Spirit-revealed precedents to guide us in our church government today.]

The Jerusalem decree

The decree of this assembly is recorded three times; Acts 15:20; 15:29; and 21:25. Four things are forbidden, three of which are mentioned each time: fornication, things strangled, and blood. The fourth item is spoken of as the pollutions of idols in 15:20, and as "things offered to idols" (*eidōlobutōn*) in 15:29 and 21:25.

It is clear that the question of eating things offered to idols had become a matter of great controversy in the early church. The trouble was that meat offered to idols was tainted or not tainted, depending on how you looked at it. It was customary for people to butcher an animal, present it or a part of it in pagan worship, and sell the rest in a public butcher shop. Apparently such meat was not even marked. At least as meat it was no different from other meat. And yet it had been offered by the butcher to his idol. Should a Christian partake of such meat?

The decree of the council was that Christians should not use such meat. It seems, however, that the council argued that the reason was for expediency's sake. At least, this was the interpretation given by Dr. Machen in his classes, as I understood him. The council cited the fact that there were Jews in many of the cities where churches now were. These Jews would have been particularly indignant if Christians ate such meat or indulged in such extreme violations of their law as to eat strangled things, etc. In order to reach the Jews, it was expedient to adopt these principles. And the council did, therefore, proscribe these items (15:21).

Paul's "Christian liberty"

It is clear that the council did forbid the use of meat offered to idols. It is equally clear that Paul (who accepted the council's decision, Acts 16:4) claimed that eating meat offered to idols was in the area of his Christian liberty (1 Corinthians 8:1 where *eidōlobutōn* is used; cf. verse 9). It seems that the only way to harmonize these two concepts is to hold that for special reasons at particular times and places, the church has the right to legislate on things in themselves indifferent.

For eating meat offered to idols is truly indifferent. It was wrong or not depending on the viewpoint of the one who partook. If a person ate meat as part of idol worship, of course, it was sinful. But if a person ate the meat not knowing or not caring what had been done with it, there was no sin. This is surely the meaning of Romans 14:14: "Nothing is unclean of itself; but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean."

How different is the situation with heroin or LSD. These drugs harm a person irrespective of his viewpoint about them. Whether we endanger our life or that of others by

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Jesus and the Draft

JAMES C. PETTY

Jim Petty is pastor of the Church of the City, largely serving the university community in Philadelphia. The question of the Christian's attitude toward the draft should be a matter of concern for us all, especially since the U.S. Supreme Court has rejected the principle of "selective conscientious objection" — a principle that is clearly set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, XXIII, 2, under the concept of "just and necessary" war.

Recent congressional action to extend the draft means that many more brothers in Christ are going to face conscription into the U. S. armed forces. What do we say to them? What does supreme loyalty to Jesus mean when you face the draft? Are we supposed to render blind obedience to the state, and just close our eyes when we pull the trigger? Or, should we refuse to participate in any way since war involves the death of other human beings?

It is obvious that there is real insight and sensitivity in the position of many conscientious objectors. Those who object to all war on conscientious grounds have, for one thing, played an important role in humanizing our violence-prone culture. It must further be said that pacifism, in the form of passive resistance, is the right course to follow when it can produce the desired results — peace, freedom, and justice. When will we learn that it is *not always* right to defend ourselves or our country? Jesus himself taught us to turn the other cheek.

Inadequacy of pacifism

Pacifism as a general principle for all occasions is inadequate. First, it does not always work. Second, it can be cruelly counter-productive, actually producing more death and destruction than it avoids. Czechoslovakia used non-violent resistance against Russian domination; yet it simply didn't work. It was as ineffective as had been the active armed resistance of the Hungarians.

Ghandi used the technique of pacifism with skill and success against the "gentlemen" of Great Britain. Yet when East Pakistan under Sheik Mujib instituted an even more pervasive program of passive resistance, the people were butchered in a surprise attack by the armies of West Pakistan. The same principle holds true for the French, Dutch, and East European undergrounds during Nazi oppression. Resistance, active and armed, was for them the only alternative to watching their neighbors be murdered. Therefore, it cannot always be argued that one is free of guilt because he refuses to bear arms. The very refusal can cause others to die.

If we lived in a world where men were fundamentally incapable of cruel and aggressive lusts for wealth and power, then pacifism would be the rule of action. The realism of the Bible, however, recognizes that the world is not like this; it goes so far as to teach that "the heart is desperately wicked and deceitful above all things, who can comprehend it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Pacifism thus fails to take account of the fact that in a fallen world a certain limited use of force becomes both good and necessary.

Inadequacy of blind obedience

If pacifism is an inadequate position for a Christian, so is the "patriotic" alternative of blind obedience to a militaristic state. The Bible teaches neither. A true Christian cannot render blind obedience to anyone on earth. Rather, any allegiance he renders must be governed by his ultimate obedience to Jesus. The kind of obedience that Jesus requires of his people covers every area of life from art to warfare.

Does obeying Jesus ever mean obeying the government? Yes, it does. Although civil governments have no ultimate authority, God has granted authority to them for the purpose of maximizing justice, freedom and peace. And he has given them the power of the sword for that end (Romans 13). God has also commanded us to be subject to them, so long as obedience to the government does not conflict with obedience to the Lord (Acts 5:27-32). Hence, our disobedience or obedience to the state is not simply a matter of whim or arbitrary personal preferences. We must obey — except when we are commanded to do evil.

This concept directly affects our view of the draft. It means that for the Christian it is not a question of deciding between service in no war or service in any or all wars. Rather, it means that the Christian brother faced with an induction notice must judge whether that particular war is right or wrong in God's sight. If his conscience judges that a particular war is "immoral" (e.g., it breaks one of the ten commandments), then as long as he holds his loyalty to Jesus he should refuse to participate. As children of the light we cannot participate in any sinful act, even if we fill only a minor role in it.

Selective conscientious objection

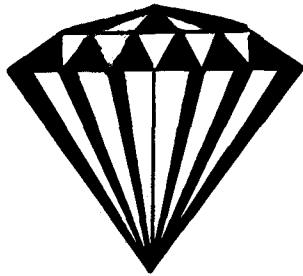
In short, the Christian must exercise *selective* conscientious objection to participation in any sinful act. That means he should refuse to follow a battlefield order to "waste" villages filled with unarmed civilians, to administer brutal beatings or commit adultery in order to obtain intelligence information. If he feels the war as a whole is unjust, then he must conscientiously object to the *entire* war and may not even serve as a supporting non-combatant. In summary, the refusal to obey the state must be practiced at the point where sin is commanded and only there.

As Jesus' people we are not committed to abstract principles, such as pacifism or blind patriotism. Rather, we are committed to the infinite and personal God of the Bible and to his righteous character as revealed in his son Jesus Christ. He is our standard for judging both the means and the end of a particular war. If a war is right, just and necessary, we must be willing to fight hard, yet with regret and compassion. If, on the other hand, a war is wrong and we know it, to participate is point-blank disobedience to God.

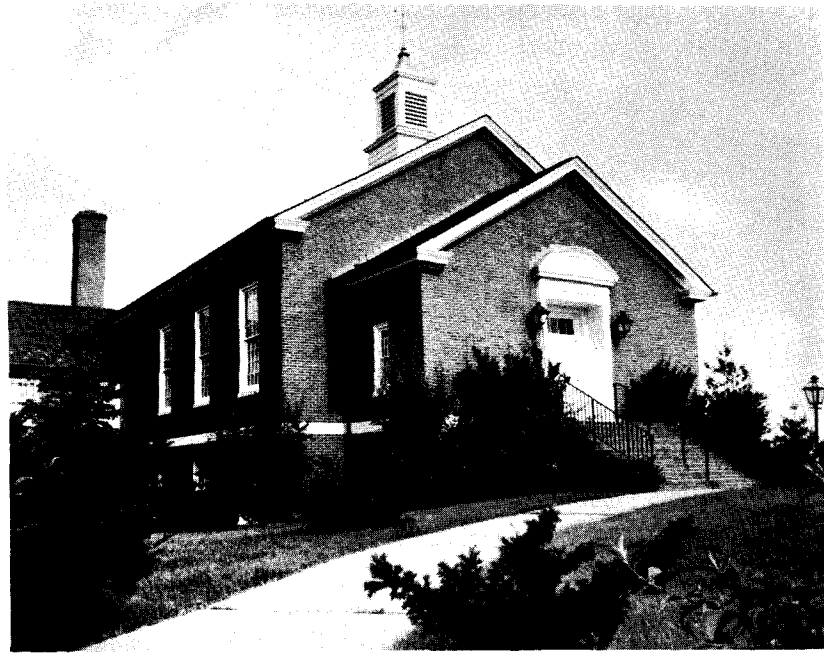
Regarding the Viet Nam war, we who are members of

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Emmanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Wilson Road, today.



75 years of Presbyterianism



The Eastlake Mission of the Central Presbyterian Church of Wilmington, Delaware, began in 1890. Eastlake then was a thinly settled suburb. But the mission developed and a frame building was constructed on the corner of 30th and Madison Streets.

In 1895, a new brick building was built at 27th and Market Streets. On May 21 of the following year, a group of forty-six people met with a committee of the Presbytery of New Castle to organize a church. Two elders were elected and then ordained, and the Eastlake Church was declared to be duly organized. Thus, in 1896, began the life of a truly Presbyterian church in Eastlake.

But how is it that an Orthodox Presbyterian Church can claim to be seventy-five years old? After all, the O. P. C. did not come into existence until 1936.

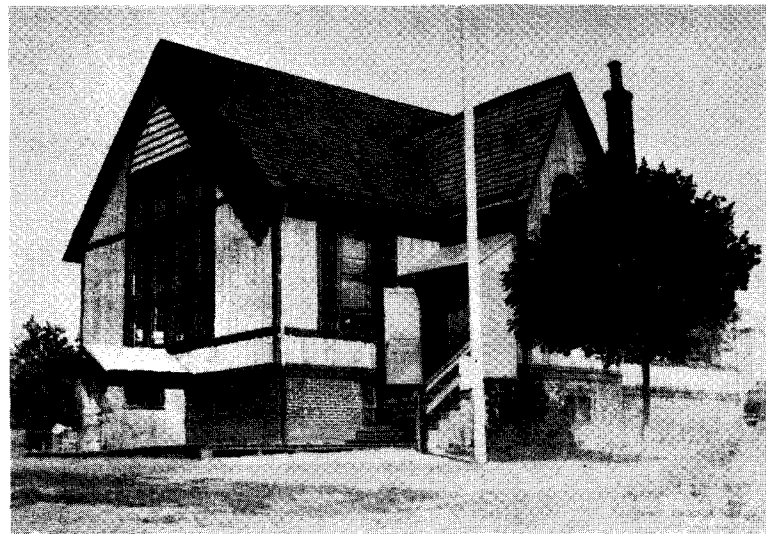
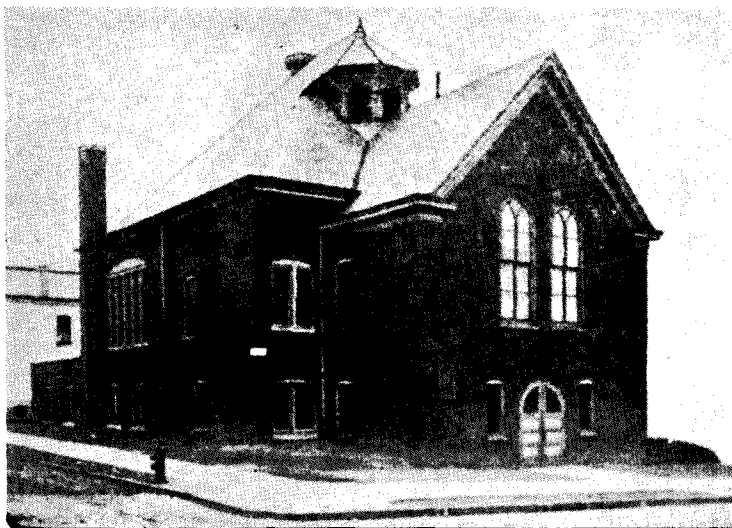
Unbroken history

The fact is that the same people were worshipping the same Savior in the same building in Eastlake in 1937 as in 1935. While the great superstructure of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. was increasingly controlled by modernists, there were many faithful members who had no intention of giving up their biblical convictions about the deity of Christ, his atoning death, or his physical

resurrection.

Finally it became imperative for such people to separate from the denomination in order to remain what they always were — Bible-believing Presbyterians. The reason for the existence of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church has been, and still is, to continue the Presbyterian heritage. This church simply wants to remain what Presbyterians always used to be.

It was that strange turn of events that led to the "defrocking" of Dr. Machen and other faithful ministers and the discipline of still other faithful members, that finally made it evident that such people were not welcome in the old Presbyterian Church. Their "crime" was to persist in supporting only those missionaries who believed the Bible to be infallible and who refused to preach or tolerate any



Eastlake Presbyterian Church, 30th and Madison Streets, 1891.

Eastlake Presbyterian Church, 27th and Market Streets, 1914.

other gospel than the one taught in Scripture. Because they were true Presbyterians, loyal to God's Word, and zealous for God's truth, they were forced to leave the old church.

Unanimous decision

In many of the congregations where this issue came to a head in the 1930s, there was a division among the people. Often the separation was clouded by bitterness and the pain of broken friendships. Very few congregations had a majority with the courage to break the old ties, give up the old buildings, and go forth in obedient faith. In many cases, only a handful of stalwarts came forth to make up the new denomination.

But in the Eastlake Church, there was not a single negative vote cast when the decision to leave was made. In a very real sense, this is still the same church that it always was. The present clerk of session still has the minute books reaching back to the constitution of the church on May 21, 1896. The old presbytery won a lawsuit to take the building (though it was bought back by the congregation), but no effort was made to take the session books. The history continued, unbroken.

It was in 1932 that John P. Clelland was ordained and installed as pastor. Under his leadership the church made its unanimous decision to withdraw from the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Under his ministry also, the Eastlake Church grew in numbers until it became necessary to seek larger quarters.

After 22 years as pastor, Mr. Clelland accepted a call to serve in Valdosta, Georgia. In that same year, the Eastlake Church determined to move out from the old area, and plans for a new building were drawn up. In 1958, the congregation dedicated its present building on Wilson Road.

New name, same church

After the move from the Eastlake area, the congregation adopted its present name: Emmanuel



John P. Clelland addressing Anniversary Banquet

Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Its pastor during these years of growth and relocation was the Rev. Robert W. Eckardt, who served from 1954 to 1966. Since 1967, the Rev. Rollin P. Keller has been pastor.

The Emmanuel Church has been a faithful part of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Its support of the Church's missionaries and other outreach activities has steadily grown. Having reached a goal of giving that allocated one-third to benevolent causes, the congregation immediately set out to increase this proportion to one-half. The Wilmington congregation also served as host to the 1971 General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the largest one yet.

The Eastlake/Emmanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church celebrates seventy-five years of continuing faithfulness to the heritage of Presbyterian faith handed down by her spiritual fathers. It is to the honor of God's grace alone that Emmanuel Church remains a church where the Bible is sincerely believed and faithfully taught.



Robert W. Eckardt speaking at Anniversary Banquet



75th Anniversary Banquet, September 25, 1971.

The Christmas Revolution

RICHARD M. LEWIS

This article, and its sequel in next month's issue, is an adaptation of a special Christmas program given in the Covenant Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Berkeley, California. The Rev. Richard M. Lewis is the pastor of that church, located on the firing line of confrontation with the radical-revolutionary leftists.

Revolutionary or reactionary?

Many movements in our own country and abroad claim to be revolutionary. From the standpoint of the Scriptures, all these movements are reactionary. The Christian faith itself is the only truly revolutionary force today.

Daniel speaks of the four great empires that were to arise one after another (Daniel 7). These were the kingdoms of Babylon, the Medo-Persians, Greece, and Rome. All were tyrannies of men that crushed the human spirit and enslaved millions. War, plunder and slavery are what we have come to expect of such worldly kingdoms. The effect of modern revolutionary movements is simply to bring men back under the same kind of tyranny. These modern movements are, therefore, reactionary not revolutionary.

But Daniel tells us that God himself would also set up a kingdom that should never end. The four kingdoms were fitly represented by beasts, illustrating their vicious and ferocious character. God's kingdom is represented by "one like unto a son of man," for this kingdom alone has truly human qualities. Because it brings such a radical change from the kingdoms of this world, the establishment of this new kingdom is truly revolutionary. It brings a complete turn-around in the affairs of men.

The Christmas Kingdom

At Christmas we celebrate the coming of God's kingdom. The angel told Mary that God would give to her Son the throne of David from which he would rule over the house of Jacob forever. Our sentimental feelings for Mary and Christmas often blind us to the fact that her song is really a revolutionary anthem: "He hath showed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away."

Scattering the proud, putting down the mighty, setting up the poor, filling the hungry, and denying the rich—this is revolutionary language! Mary is singing about a total turn-around in human affairs.

Although Christ's kingdom, in all its glory and perfection, will be here only when he comes again, yet he has already begun to reign as king. So we should expect to see the results of his reign in the affairs of men. That is the theme of "The Christmas Revolution." If we are to celebrate

Christmas for what it really is, we should be aware of some of the truly revolutionary effects that have come wherever men in faith have submitted to the Savior-King. The rest of this article is intended to show some of the remarkable ways in which Mary's song has actually been fulfilled down through the centuries.

1. The Revolution in Labor

One of the greatest social benefits brought by the Christian faith is the dignity it gave to the working man.

In the ancient world, laborers were not highly thought of. The Romans thought of toil as beneath the dignity of a citizen. The Greeks thought of work as something to be done by servants and slaves.

But the Christian faith made changes. The old pagans frequently made fun of the Christian church in the Second Century because its members were mostly working people. Christianity was at first a working-class movement. Paul reminded the Corinthians that not many mighty and not many noble had been called (1 Corinthians 1:26, 27). Among the earliest converts in New Testament times were a tanner, a seller of purple dyestuffs, a jailer, tent-makers, and simple household servants.

Among the motives for work given in the New Testament are these: the Christian is not to be a burden to others (1 Thessalonians 2:9); he is to obtain goods with which to help those in need (Ephesians 4:28); and he is to make a good impression on non-Christians and so commend the faith to all men (1 Thessalonians 4:11).

2. Christian Social Welfare

One of the biggest social problems facing our nation today is the problem of the poor. In Psalm 72 we read of the concern for the poor by the great King to come: "For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper" (verse 12). We would expect, then, to see a concern for the poor among Christ's subjects.

In Acts 4 we read that early Christians did have such a concern. While so many of the early believers were in dire need, those with property counted it not as their own, but sold it and brought the money to the apostles for distribution to the poor.

When the church became larger, that concern continued. An early Christian document, written shortly after the death of the last of the apostles, speaks of that concern: "Let everyone who 'comes in the name of the Lord' be received; but when you have tested him, you shall know him, for you shall have understanding of true and false. If he who comes is a traveller, help him as much as you can; but he shall not remain with you more than two days, or, if need be, three. And if he wishes to settle among you and has a

NPRF moves ahead

Louisville, Ky.—Some 60 ministers and elders from nine Presbyterian and Reformed denominations determined to move ahead and make the National Presbyterian and Reformed Fellowship a viable organization of fellowship and encouragement for those who "seek in our time the unity of a pure witness to the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ in the communion appointed by Christ through His apostles and prophets in the New Testament." The group voted to secure a full time executive director and to expand their activities through a series of regional rallies.

Though recognizing that a national

Presbyterian-Reformed church true to the Scriptures is still a long way off, the body reaffirmed its commitment to this ultimate objective, as stated in the purpose quoted above. The NPRF is now chartered under the state of New York, and adopted by-laws under which an eighteen-member board of directors replaces the steering committee that has functioned since the organization began.

Participants in the Louisville meeting came from the Presbyterian Church U. S., the United Presbyterian Church U. S. A., the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Associate Reformed Pres-

byterian Church, the Reformed Church in America, the Christian Reformed Church, and the Reformed Episcopal Church.

President of the NPRF is the Rev. G. Aiken Taylor (PCUS); vice-president, the Rev. Donald J. MacNair (RPES); secretary, the Rev. August J. Kling (UPUSA); treasurer, the Rev. Russell Horton (RCA). Corresponding secretary is the Rev. John H. White (RPNA), Geneva College, Beaver Falls, PA 15010. Interested ministers or elders may become members by contacting the Rev. Mr. White.

Regional rallies are planned soon in the Baltimore and Philadelphia areas. Other rallies will be scheduled after the first of the year.

craft, let him work for his bread. But if he has no craft, provide for him according to your understanding, so that no Christian shall live among you in idleness" (*Didache*, 12:1-4).

Here we see social welfare as practised among early Christians. The community first tried to find work for the brother who desired to settle among them. The craftsman was found a place for his trade, the unskilled laborer whatever was suitable.

The Christian is expected to work and to help those who had no work or could not work. In return, he could expect the Christian community to try to find work for him, or if that was impossible, to provide for him. These early Christians provided an employment service and unemployment insurance for one another.

Measures were taken to prevent imposters and lazy persons from taking advantage of this Christian charity. The community would test the visitor as to his Christian faith. Visiting Christians were not to receive support for more than three days. If they intended to stay longer they were expected to work.

How were early Christians able to provide for one another in this way? Behind it all was the rich grace of God: "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work. As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor; his righteousness remaineth forever" (2 Corinthians 9:8, 9).

3. Slavery and the Early Church

Slavery has cursed the human race for as long as fallen man has been on this earth. It was abolished in our own land scarcely a hundred years ago.

In the ancient Greek and Roman world, the majority of people were slaves. One writer of that time reports that, in the Fourth Century B. C., Greek Attica contained 400,000 slaves and only 21,000 free citizens. The historian Gibbon estimates that the Roman empire was one-half slave, some 60 million in bondage.

These slaves had no rights whatever. Some were worse off than the cattle. They could own no property, had no right to marry, could be sold, transferred or pawned like

any other piece of property. They could be punished or put to death simply at the master's whim.

Many of the early Christians were slaves, though some came from the upper classes. Without disturbing the external distinctions between classes, a true brotherhood was established through Christian love; see the little letter of Paul to Philemon.

The pagans were unable to understand this disregard for social rank. In their ignorance these pagans claimed that foul motives were behind the brotherhood of Christians. But a Christian named Minucius Felix, writing about 200 A. D., gave the true explanation. He said, Our bond consists in mutual love. We call ourselves brothers as members of the one family of God, as partners in one faith, as joint heirs in hope.

A century later, a Christian named Lactantius spoke similarly. Asked whether Christians did not recognize social distinctions, he replied: "There is none; nor is there any other cause why we mutually bestow on each other the name of brethren except that we believe ourselves to be equal. For, since we evaluate all human beings not by the body but by the spirit, although the condition of the bodies be different, yet we have no servants, but we look upon and speak of them as brothers in spirit, as fellow-servants in religion."

What a revolution we have in these words! Slaves are accepted as brothers in the Lord. To regard property as brothers was simply inconceivable to the Romans. Yet this is the transformation wrought by the simple words of Christ, "All ye are brethren" (Matthew 23:8). The Christian slave was given a new dignity, and his fellow-Christians thought of his work as the fruitful activity of a child of God.

4. Later Efforts for Slaves

Slavery persisted in the Roman Empire even after Christianity became the official religion in the Fourth Century. Immediate abolition would have meant the total rebuilding of the social order. Yet during this period constant efforts were made to better the condition of Rome's slaves.

Under Christian influence several Roman emperors passed laws for the betterment of slaves. Some of these spelled

out new conditions under which slaves were given certain rights to their freedom. No longer were they solely dependent on the master's good will, but they now had some rights to freedom from the state.

One such law decreed that any slave, Christian or non-Christian, who had been circumcised by his Jewish master was by that fact made free. The Emperor Constantius, to give Christian slaves greater protection, forbade the Jews to purchase them. Another law gave the Christian clergy the right, by force if necessary, to free any slave who had been forced into prostitution by the master.

Within the church itself we read of many instances in which Christian slave-owners set their slaves free. One wealthy Roman, receiving baptism at an Easter festival, gave all of his more than twelve hundred slaves their freedom with substantial gifts besides. Another new Christian set free some fourteen hundred slaves. Often the freeing of the slaves was a solemn act that took place in the church itself.

By the Eleventh Century slavery had almost died out in the former territories of Rome. Christianity was not the only factor leading to this decline, nor is it true that all Christians felt that owning slaves was wrong in itself. Yet without doubt we owe to Christianity the gradual extinction of slavery.

Jesus and the Draft

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God's family must do at least three things: (1) We must search the Scriptures more intensely than ever in order to overcome the sincere differences of opinion that exist among us regarding military service. (2) We must (belatedly) start doing our "homework" and begin looking at the real facts of the war; without the facts, our principles are useless. (3) We must be willing and ready to support our brothers who go to jail rather than violate their consciences, even if we disagree with their judgment. "Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin" (Romans 14:23).

We are entering a period in American history where the refusal to commit sinful acts may result in punishment. The Supreme Court has already forbidden the right of selective conscientious objection. Whether or not they know it, this is a direct violation of our freedom to test all things and hold fast that which is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Our nation is presently living on memories and is becoming defensive about its decaying morale. Increasingly it relies on sheer legal might to keep the system going. Yet penal retaliation can only suppress freedom of conscience for so long. Now is the time for all of us who own Jesus Christ as our Lord to begin practicing selective participation in the wars of our country, and to begin working for the freedom to live in obedience to Christ. We must do this because Jesus, not Caesar or Washington, D. C., is King of kings and Lord of lords.

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Acts 15

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drugs is not a matter of indifference. The Sixth Commandment is involved. But it is different with meat offered to idols. In this case (and not in general situations) "whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23).

The so-called law of love in doubtful things is clearly stated with regard to meat offered to idols in Romans 14, 1 Corinthians 8 and 10. In these things, one's attitude is the essential thing. In these things, what is perfectly all right in itself should be curtailed for the benefit of a person who might become ensnared in idolatry. And in these cases, the person who eats with a clear conscience should not be unduly criticized. It is far otherwise with a person who engages in practices which endanger his own health, wealth or purity, or that of his neighbors. The Bible nowhere calls this sort of thing a matter of indifference.

The right to restrain

Even in the truly indifferent things, the early church exercised its right to restrain the liberty of its members so that the break with idolatry would be more clear and so that the Jews would not be turned off by an unwise Christian witness.

James Bannerman, in his famous book on church government, *The Church of Christ*, agrees with this conclusion:

Take the case of the decree passed by the Council of Jerusalem, that the Gentile converts to Christianity should abstain from meats offered to idols, from things strangled, and from blood. The apostles and presbyters met in synod gave commandment, and the Holy Ghost gave commandment to this effect (Acts XV. 23, 28; XV. 4); but the command is not binding upon us now, simply because it rested on grounds peculiar to the age and country in which it was given, and our circumstances are in this respect essentially different from those of the early Church. But the general principle of which this decree was a particular and local application is still of universal obligation,—namely, that no man has a right so to use his Christian liberty as needlessly to offend the consciences of his brethren: "Let all things be done unto edification," and "Let all your things be done with charity."

The situation had a further development. This practice of eating meat offered to idols, in which Paul claimed liberty and which the council forbade, is referred to at the end of that first century as a very evil thing. Revelation 2:14, 20 calls eating meat offered to idols (the same Greek word again) the doctrine of Balaam and of Jezebel, and links it with the depths of Satan! Obviously, some things, even though in themselves truly indifferent, may be proscribed by the church.

Ed. Note: This is, we trust, the beginning of a discussion of the rights and duties of the church to speak to the practices of its members, particularly in those areas not specifically discussed in Scripture. Several questions need to be considered before reaching a final conclusion. One of the most important, perhaps, is what significance to us today is the Jerusalem council's assurance that its decree "seemed good to the Holy Ghost" (Acts 15:28). Under what conditions would a church decree of today have the right to speak that way of itself?



Special gifts for a special age

JOHN H. SKILTON

Much has been written about the special gift of speaking in tongues, so that another article on the subject may seem wearisome and superfluous. It seems difficult, if not impossible, to say anything on the subject that has not been said before. Nevertheless, it may be of use to stress an aspect of the subject that is of very great practical importance today.

The aspect, which in the writer's judgment might profitably be emphasized again, is that the gift (or gifts) of speaking in tongues was a special charismatic endowment; it was bestowed by the Holy Spirit in the apostolic age, and we have no warrant to believe it has been continued in the church.

Like the other special or extraordinary gifts of the Spirit in the apostolic age, speaking in tongues was granted for the special purposes of God for that age and has not been perpetuated in the church. Claims have of course been made since to gifts or powers that might seem to resemble these special apostolic gifts of the Spirit. But however sincere the claims, justification cannot be found for identifying these gifts with the apostolic charismata.

The special Day of Pentecost

A special gift of speaking in tongues or foreign languages was conferred on the apostles by the Holy Spirit on the unique occasion of Pentecost. The Lord after his resurrection had commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father concerning which he had spoken to them (Acts 1:4).

This promise had to do with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. "For John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence" (Acts 1:5).

On Pentecost there suddenly came a sound from heaven like that of a rushing of a mighty or violent wind. The house where they were sitting was filled with the sound. Tongues as of fire then appeared to them, dividing and resting on each of them. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues or languages as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Men of diverse national backgrounds heard them speak in their own tongues the wonderful works of God. As Peter explained, this was in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit. Jesus of Nazareth, as David had foretold, had been raised up by God. Now at the right hand of God exalted and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus poured forth what was seen and heard.

The day of Pentecost was the unique day of the promised coming of the Holy Spirit. The dramatic and spectacular gift that he bestowed in his coming was manifestly appropriate

for attesting that coming and for the beginning of the period of the universal diffusion of the gospel and the world-wide extension of the church.

It would be unwarranted to suppose that the supernatural, miraculous gift of speaking in foreign languages would continue in the church henceforth. The Holy Spirit himself would remain, but the gift which on that day broke down Babel's impediments was not promised as a perpetual gift for the church. Christians of a later day can find no grounds in what then happened for expecting to be relieved of the necessity of studying foreign languages. Missionaries cannot rightfully expect to receive a Pentecostal gift of speaking in the languages of the countries to which they would carry the gospel.

Special gifts among Gentile believers

On another unique occasion, often called the Gentile Pentecost,¹ a gift of speaking in tongues was also conferred by the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:24-48). In response to the specially disclosed will of the Spirit, Peter had gone to Caesarea and had entered into the house of the Gentile Cornelius. While Peter spoke, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word in a way that made his presence clear (Acts 10:44). "And they of the circumcision that believed were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?" (Acts 10:45-47).

Later in Jerusalem Peter reported how it had been the divine will that he should go to uncircumcised Gentiles and that the Holy Spirit had fallen on the believers in Caesarea "even as on us at the beginning" (Acts 11:15). Peter continued: "And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit. If then God gave unto them the like gift as he did also unto us, when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:16-17). We further read that "when they heard these things, they held their peace and glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18).

At Caesarea the Holy Spirit clearly indicated that Gentiles who believed were to be baptized and received into the church without being required to be circumcised and to observe other Jewish customs (Acts 15:7-11). He imparted to them on this extraordinary occasion an extraordinary gift of utterance, a gift at least similar to that which he granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost.

But we are not given any warrant to suppose that the special gift, conferred at Caesarea for a special purpose, would be conferred on all who thereafter believed the gospel, or that even in the early church such a gift was an inseparable accompaniment of Christ faith. It would indeed be precarious to maintain without express warrant that what happened on a unique occasion for a special purpose might be expected to become ordinary and normal.

Special gift specially given

We have, in fact, clear indications in the book of Acts that such a gift of speaking with tongues, the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit or charismata, were not always found when Christian faith was present. In Acts 19 we read of cer-

tain disciples who had not received the special gifts of the Holy Spirit when they believed (verse 2). They had received only John's baptism, and had not even heard of the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

Then, even when they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus, they did not at once and automatically receive the special gifts of the Spirit. It was not until Paul laid his hands on them that the Holy Spirit came upon them; then, and in a manifest and convincing way, they spoke with tongues and prophesied (verses 5, 6). The gift of utterance given them by the Holy Spirit, whatever its relationship to the gifts of tongues bestowed on Pentecost and at Caesarea, had not come at the time of their conversion, nor simply with their baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus, but in connection with the special apostolic action of the laying on of hands.

In Acts 8 we find another important passage of a similar kind. There we read of disciples in Samaria who had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus, but who had not received the special gifts of the Holy Spirit (verses 14-16). The apostles Peter and John came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. They then laid their hands on them, with the result that these disciples received the Holy Spirit (verse 17). When Simon the sorcerer saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Spirit was given, he offered money that he might be given the power that on whomsoever he would lay his hands he might receive the Holy Spirit (verses 18, 19).

Dr. Benjamin B. Warfield has outlined the significance of this passage:

This case of the Samaritans was of great importance in the primitive church, to enable men to distinguish between the gifts of grace and the gifts of power. Without it there would have been danger that only these would be accredited as Christians who possessed extraordinary gifts. It is of equal importance to us, to teach us the source of the gifts of power, in the Apostles, apart from whom they were not conferred: as also their function to authenticate the Apostles as the authoritative founders of the church. It is in accordance with this reading of the significance of this incident, that Paul, who had all the signs of an Apostle, had also the power of conferring the charismata, and that in the entire New Testament we meet with no instance of the gifts showing themselves—after the initial instances of Pentecost and Cornelius—when an Apostle had not conveyed them. Hermann Cremer is accordingly quite right when he says that "the Apostolic charismata bear the same relation to those of the ministry that the Apostolic office does to the pastoral office; the extraordinary gifts belonged to the extraordinary office and showed themselves only in connection with its activities."²

In the light of these passages in Acts 8 and 19, it is not at all surprising to find references to the possession of the gifts of the Holy Spirit by members of churches founded by an apostle. It would seem that the Galatians had received extraordinary as well as ordinary gifts of the Spirit (Galatians 3:2-5). One of the special bestowed on Christians in Corinth was that of speaking with tongues (1 Corinthians 12-14). Opinions have differed as to whether or not this gift in Corinth was a speaking in foreign languages like the gift received on the day of Pentecost. Whatever may have been its precise nature, it was, as Paul's treatment of it makes clear, a special or extraordinary gift of utterance

bestowed by the Holy Spirit. It may have seemed ecstatic, rhapsodic, ejaculatory, and unintelligible; nevertheless, it was susceptible to interpretation by those who had received a special gift of interpretation from the Holy Spirit.

The uniqueness of the apostolic ministry

The special privileges and gifts of the Spirit received by the apostles enabled them to perform the special work of authoritative witnessing and planting and governing for which Christ had appointed them.

The Lord, for example, promised the Spirit to them to teach them all things, and to bring to their remembrance all that he had said unto them (John 14:26). Jesus also told them, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come" (John 16:12-13).

Not only knowledge of the truth, but the power to proclaim it was promised. Just before his ascension, Jesus told the eleven, "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Chosen and appointed directly by Christ, taught by him, witnesses to his ministry and to his resurrection (cf. Acts 1:21-22), endued with special gifts of the Spirit, the apostles were uniquely qualified and enabled to perform the work of their unique office. No one in future ages would possess the qualifications for their office, and their office would necessarily be discontinued.

Such signs and wonders and special gifts of the Holy Spirit which accompanied the ministry of the apostles provided, by God's design, a confirmation of their testimony. Jesus of Nazareth was truly, as Peter told his hearers on the day of Pentecost, "a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know" (Acts 2:22). The signs that Jesus performed provided a divinely appointed basis and encouragement for Christian faith (John 20:30-31). It was not strange that he, as the exalted Lord continuing his work through his apostles (cf. Acts 1:1-5), supported them in their ministry by many wonders and signs (Acts 2:43).

The signs of the apostolic ministry

So it is that Paul could write to the Corinthians that "in nothing was I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I am nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, by signs and wonders and mighty works (2 Corinthians 12:11-12; cf. also commentaries by Calvin and Charles Hodge). Likewise Paul could make reference to the things that Christ wrought through him, "for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Holy Spirit: so that from Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ" (Romans 15:18-19).

The author of Hebrews puts it very clearly: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard: God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will" (Hebrews 2:3-4).

Similarly Acts tells us that when Paul and Barnabas were in Iconium they spoke boldly in the Lord, "who bare witness unto the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands" (Acts 14:3; cf. 1 Peter 1:12). The significant connection made in a number of passages in the New Testament between the witness to the word of God's grace and the signs and wonders and distribution of the Spirit, which abundantly confirmed the apostolic testimony, must not be neglected.

Warfield calls attention to an important principle, "of which the actual attachment of the charismata of the Apostolic Church to the mission of the Apostles is but an illustration. This deeper principle may be reached by us through the perception, more broadly, of the inseparable connection of miracles with revelation, as its mark and credential; or, more narrowly of the summing up of all revelation, finally, in Jesus Christ. Miracles do not appear on the page of Scripture vagrantly, here, there, and elsewhere indifferently, without assignable reason. They belong to revelation periods, and appear only when God is speaking to His people through accredited messengers, declaring His gracious purposes. Their abundant display in the Apostolic Church is the mark of the richness of the Apostolic age in revelation; and when this revelation period closed, the period of miracle-working had passed by also, as a mere matter of course."³

Warfield appropriately quotes Bavinck: "'According to the Scriptures,' Herman Bavinck explains, 'special revelation has been delivered in the form of a historical process which reaches its end-point in the person and work of Christ. When Christ had appeared and returned again to heaven, special revelation did not, indeed, come at once to an end. There was yet to follow the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, and the extraordinary working of the powers and gifts through and under the guidance of the Apostolate. The Scriptures undoubtedly reckon all this to the sphere of special revelation, and the continuance of this revelation was necessary to give abiding existence in the world to the special revelation which reached its climax in Christ—abiding existence both in the word of Scripture and in the life of the church. Truth and life, prophecy and miracle, word and deed, inspiration and regeneration go hand in hand in the completion of special revelation. But when the revelation of God in Christ had taken place, and had become in Scripture and church a constituent part of the cosmos, then another era began. As before everything was a preparation for Christ, so afterward everything is to be a consequence of Christ. Then Christ was being framed into the head of his people, now his people are being produced, now they are being applied. New constituent elements of special revelation can no longer be added; for Christ has come, his work has been done, and his word is complete.'"⁴

The way God works today

When the work of the apostles was done, and they had confirmed the salvation which the Lord began to attest in his earliest ministry, when the church had been planted, the apostolic foundation provided (Ephesians 2:20), and the New Testament had been written, there was no further need of the apostolic office and of the signs and gifts which had so notably accompanied it.

The apostles had proved "the link between the Lord himself and the Scriptures of the New Testament."⁵ With the death of the apostles and of others who in the apostolic age had received special gifts, these special gifts died out. Revela-

tion and inspiration such as had been given to the apostles or others were no longer necessary. For the new period there remained the Holy Scriptures, the canon now being complete. The God-breathed written word with its inspired message from the apostolic age was designed to be for men in later times the only infallible rule for faith and life. Its glorious perfections render any new special revelatory gifts of the Spirit unnecessary for the accomplishment of God's purposes for us.

As the Westminster Confession of Faith says, "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequences may be deduced from scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men" (I, VI).

If there should appear to be some phenomena today which in certain ways resemble the special gifts imparted by the Holy Spirit in the apostolic age, we should be warned by such considerations as we have been adducing not to identify them with those gifts.

Men recover from illnesses today in answer to prayer; but their recovery does not prove that a miracle in the New Testament sense has occurred on their behalf. God's people may in our times experience remarkable deliverances from danger; but this does not establish the fact that the directly supernatural or miraculous, rather than the natural or at the most preternatural, has been at work for them in God's providence. Men today speak in an ecstatic and unintelligible fashion; but this does not furnish proof that they are experiencing a supernatural gift of tongues such as was granted by the Holy Spirit in New Testament times.

In the case of the signs and wonders and special gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the New Testament, we have divine authority, the testimony of the inerrant word of God itself, as to their nature. But no such infallible authority can be cited to establish a supernatural character for certain present-day phenomena. Indeed, on the contrary as we have seen, the Scriptures give us no warrant to suppose that the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit would be continued beyond the apostolic period.

God gave his special gifts, his special signs, for a special age.

¹ Dr. N. B. Stonehouse in *Paul before the Areopagus* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1957), p. 77, says that "in spite of certain parallels with Pentecost, the development in Caesarea is undoubtedly viewed as somewhat subordinate to it, and as actually intimating the significance of Pentecost for the salvation of the Gentiles."

² *Miracles Yesterday and Today: True and False* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1953), p. 23. The reader is referred to the entire book.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 25f.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁵ N. B. Stonehouse, "The Authority of the New Testament," in *The Infallible Word* (Philadelphia, The Presbyterian Guardian Pub. Corp., 1946), p. 110.

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Does NOT endorse "new hermeneutic"

Your response to my letter in the October *Guardian* has moved things from bad to worse. Your diagnosis now of the real source of your difficulties with the report on "The Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority" is that the study committee (of the Christian Reformed Church) approves of "the new hermeneutic" and "the historical-critical method." However, this contention on your part, Mr. Editor, reveals an unfortunate misunderstanding of the report. The report does not approve of "the new hermeneutic" nor of "the historical-critical method" as the quotations at the end of this letter indicate.

In the section of your response entitled "The more basic concern" you draw the conclusion that since the committee makes a distinction between the historical *events* of biblical history and the literary *record or description* of these events, the committee has thereby endorsed "the new hermeneutic" and "the historical-critical method" as employed by "such neo-orthodox theologians as Ernst Fuchs and Gerhard Ebeling" and by Kuitert and others in the Netherlands. As a matter of fact the committee has asked the questions which you raise, Mr. Editor, and the committee has also warned against "the new hermeneutic" and "the historical-critical method" as employed by the men you mention!

Events and descriptions

Let me observe first of all that the distinction between an event and the record or description of an event does not necessarily involve one in "the new hermeneutic" or "the historical-critical method." Some of your statements seem to imply that you do not consider it legitimate to distinguish between an event and the description of the event. However, this distinction is so basic and so necessary, that I can hardly imagine that you could mean that. Is not the entire Bible an inspired record or description of events that happened in history from creation to Pentecost and the death of the apostles? Then the question arises as to whether the descriptions of these real events are *literal* descriptions? I recognize that the word "literal" is subject to misunderstanding. But what the committee meant by that term is what I have been taught by my

teachers at Westminster Seminary and elsewhere.

The Gospels, for example, do not present a biography of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament does not present a full, chronological history of Israel. Thus the committee states that "an affirmation of basic historicity does not necessarily commit one to the view that the narrative is a literal description of an event" (*Agenda*, p. 294/*Acts*, p. 485). Sometimes a particular event may be described quite literally; sometimes an event is described only partially so; at other times the description may not be literal.

With respect to the account of the fall, as I have indicated in my October letter, I take the serpent and the trees and the garden to have been real and historical. But even so, is the account a full, complete, literal account of that event? Elsewhere Scripture indicates that it was Satan (the devil) who tempted Adam and Eve, but he is not mentioned in the account of the fall. The reference to the "seed of the woman" and the "seed of the serpent" is somewhat different. The "seed of the woman" does not include all of Eve's physical descendants, and the "seed of the serpent" certainly refers more to the unbelieving line of men than it does to snakes and serpents.

Thus the committee was distinguishing between an event and the description of an event. The committee did use the term "method" when it spoke approvingly of the "method" of distinguishing event and description. But the term "method" in that context does not mean approval of "the historical-critical method" or "the new hermeneutic" of Ebeling, Fuchs, etc., as you imply.

Warning on "new hermeneutic"

As a matter of fact, the entire committee is agreed that the Ebeling-Fuchs use of the historical-critical method is illegitimate. One full day's meeting was devoted to an evaluation of "the historical-critical method", and this subject reappeared constantly in our discussions. The report deals primarily with less consistent uses of "the historical-critical method" on the part of men like Kuitert and Baarda and other writers of the Dutch *Cahiers* (popular religious pamphlets). And specific

statements in our report do exactly what you suggest should be done but imply has not been done. I shall simply quote a number of these statements from our report which are critical of "the new hermeneutic" and "the historical-critical method." For the sake of brevity I shall simply list these quotations and hope that you will reread the contexts in which they occur in the report (*Agenda*, pp. 287-290, 301-302/*Acts*, pp. 478-481, 492-493).

1. "The result (of following the new hermeneutic) is that in this quest the faith-perspective is neutralized and is allowed no role in reconstructing the historical picture of Jesus" (p. 287/478).
2. "If a method sets limits for what Jesus could have been, then it is evident that such a method is rooted in principles contrary to Scripture's own view of historical reality. Such a method cannot be considered legitimate" (p. 287/478).
3. "In the new hermeneutics the assertion is only that the historian via the historical method can neither affirm nor deny the resurrection as historical fact. As a Christian he believes it, but as an historian he can make no pronouncement concerning it. . . . However, the assertion that as an historian one can say nothing concerning the resurrection as an historical fact raises a fundamental question. . . . May the *Christian* as historian stand neutrally over against the resurrection as historical fact? . . . Why then should the *Christian* as historian not pronounce the resurrection to be a fact? If he does not do so because of the historical method, then it would appear that that method is based on a view of reality not in harmony with Scripture" (pp. 290f./481f.).
4. For such theologians "the reliability of the documents has already been undermined by the use of the historical method" (p. 291/482).
5. Recommendation 4, together with its context of explanation on pages 301f./492f.: "Synod warns against any use of the historical-critical method which excludes or calls into question the redemptive events of biblical history or their revelational dimension, thus compromising the full authority of Scripture as the Word of God" (p. 301/492).

[Page numbers refer, first to the *Agenda*, second to the *Acts* of the 1971 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church. The report is also available in booklet form from the Christian Reformed Publishing House, 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49508.]

In the light of the above quotations, I trust that you will understand that I must regard your charge that the committee does not warn against "the new hermeneutic" or "the historical-critical method" as a basic misunderstanding of the report. I do hope, Mr. Editor, that whatever difficulties you do have with this report may be set forth in a more adequate context of discussion.

FRED H. KLOOSTER
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Dr. Klooster plainly feels that the discussion of this report has deteriorated. He is right, and I regret it very much. The subject of the Bible's authority and its interpretation is crucial. He urges a "more adequate context of discussion"; I would urge concerned readers to secure a copy of the report from the address above, enclosing 25¢ to cover costs.

"Misunderstandings"

In his letter above, Dr. Klooster says that I have misunderstood the report, and insists that the study committee did not endorse "the new hermeneutic" or "the historical-critical method" of biblical interpretation. Actually, I did not say or imply that the committee had *endorsed* either of these *as a whole*; Dr. Klooster has misunderstood me.

What I do not understand, and what causes a large part of my "difficulties" with the report, may be clear to the reader from the quotations given by Dr. Klooster above. In the third one, the committee suggests — but does not clearly state — that the "historical-critical" method "is based on a view of reality not in harmony with Scripture." If that is so, and I would fully agree that it is, then why does the committee go no further than to warn against the "misuse" of such a method as it does in Recommendation 4 (the fifth quotation above)?

To warn against misuse of a method certainly suggests that the method is otherwise suitable within certain limits — even though it may be "based on a

view of reality not in harmony with Scripture"? The committee finds certain "principles" of the historical-critical method to be "acceptable" in spite of this questionable basis. It finds the use of this method permissible so long as it does not lead to a denial of the "basic" or "essential historicity" of such portions of Scripture as Genesis 1-11 — though the committee never explains what sort of "historicity" this really is, nor why it is acceptable to deny that the events of Genesis 1-11 are related through "literal descriptions."

Frankly, Dr. Klooster, all of this is confusing. Despite what you have said, the report itself does not warn against this method, but only warns against its misuse or abuse; my "charge" still stands. Is this method "based on a view of reality not in harmony with Scripture," or is it not? If it is, should not the committee have *rejected* it as a method of permissible biblical interpretation? That is still the question.

"Difficulties" remain

My "difficulties" with the report remain unresolved. The committee's report advocates a definition of Scripture's authority in terms of its content and purpose rather than in terms of its Author. The report, though frequently negative toward certain results of the "historical-critical" method, nevertheless allows for the use of such a method despite its origin in unbelieving presuppositions.

It is to be hoped that discussion of this report will lead to a more adequate and less confusing statement of "The Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority." (It should be noted that the Synod did not adopt this report, but called for a year's intensive study of it.)

What is needed today is a clear setting forth of those principles of biblical interpretation developed by believing scholars and drawn from the characteristics of Scripture and its Author. This method, the so-called "historical-grammatical," has surface similarities to certain techniques of "the new hermeneutic"; but the underlying principles are totally antithetical. What is also needed is a clear reaffirmation of the authority of Scripture as the authority of God himself who spoke through the mouths of his servants.

— J. J. M.



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Letters to the Editor

"Jesus People" and the church

What troubles me concerning the "Jesus Movement" (cf. September issue of the *Guardian*) is not so much that results are not being made in terms of converted souls by persons outside of biblical denominations. This would be difficult to deny, at least in what one can tell from outward confession by those persons purported to be saved. And certainly we members of the church should welcome the continued spreading of the gospel message even by those who are outside our particular group; for is not this what Christ would have done (Mark 9:38-40)?

What is disturbing me, however, is the great lack of doctrinal understanding of the purpose of the church, both physical and spiritual. It is no small thing to ignore the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:23-27), nor to reject the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12, 1 Corinthians 12:27).

Unless one falls prey to the error of dispensationalism, he will admit that God has used the particular means of both a spiritual and a physical church since the fall of Adam to bring forth and carry through the plan of salvation to the elect. It is true enough that God's Church has undergone great error at times; but this does not prove that God's methods, i.e., the church, are inefficient but that Christians have not been obedient to God's will.

What will happen to these Jesus People in five years or ten when they approach the beginnings of middle age? Where will they turn for spiritual guidance? Will they continue to work

outside the church, or will they struggle for spiritual direction within themselves? Contemporary phenomenal growth should not be worshipped as a sacred cow. If it were, then Reformed Christianity would be running a poor last behind Roman Catholicism, Pentecostalism, Buddhism, or any other religion Christian or non-Christian.

We do not know where the Spirit bloweth, but as far as I can tell the "Jesus Movement" is at best an extension of Christ's ministry to a part of society that most Christians have long neglected; at worst, it could leave scores of young Christians feeding on milk for a lifetime.

Gary B. Adams
Heidelberg, Germany

News Item on "Jesus Movement"

Evidence is building that the "Jesus Movement," particularly in the Pacific Northwest but elsewhere also, is splintering. The "drop-out" rate has been high as the young people marry, and settle down.

More serious has been the growing strength of the "Children of God," a radical, almost violently anti-institutional group. In some areas, the communes of this group have been barred to all outsiders and parents report that minor children have been hidden away in defiance of court orders. The group is also faced with an eviction lawsuit by one of its now disillusioned benefactors.

Other groups of "Jesus People" insist that they can and should work in and through organized churches.

Evolution IS nonsense

The series of articles by Dr. Davis A. Young, entitled "Whence Man?" (*The Guardian*, April, May, June-July), discussed the origin of man. This is a subject of great importance to the Christian at a time when non-Christians are insisting that we give up our views on man's origin.

Dr. Young was very clear. He showed conclusively that the Christian must accept a literal interpretation of Genesis 1, and that this means "there is no way, absolutely no way to reconcile an evolutionary view of man's origin with the biblical data." In his

second article, Dr. Young pointed out that, on any evolutionary basis including the "theistic," "sin would be nothing more than an unpleasant characteristic of human nature," for which man would not be truly responsible.

Then in the third article, Dr. Young suggests how Christians are to view science. He says that the totality of evidence will be overwhelmingly for creation, "but the difficulty is that the totality of evidence is not yet in." "For example, progressively older human fossil remains *in general* tend to bear progressively more ape-like characteristics As such it seems to be favorable to the evolutionary hypothesis." "The available evidence of these various fossil men or apes does indeed suggest an evolutionary sequence. . . . This interpretation, however, must be unsatisfactory to the Christian."

Evolution, though the Christian believes it is false and perhaps one day can prove that it is, now is scientifically acceptable, if not probable. Clearly Dr. Young is making two assertions here, one scientific and the other theological.

He is saying that the Christian must be, at best, on a defensive position with regard to the scientific evidence about man's origin. And he is suggesting that evolution, if not scientifically verifiable, is at least reasonable. These two assertions must be challenged.

In the first place, evolution is scientifically nonsense. This is not to be so in the future, but is true now. Consider, for example, the excellent works of Morris, or those of Schute (e.g., *Flaws in the Theory of Evolution* in which the claim to geological dating is made ridiculous), or the very contemporary, professional works of scientists in the *Creation Research Society Quarterly*. A recent article cited a series of measurements of the earth's magnetic field, collected for more than a hundred years, showing that the earth's magnetic field is decreasing at a predictable rate. Projected back in time, an increasing magnetic field would have shielded our planet from cosmic radiation. This leads to the interesting result that all Carbon-14 dating is telescoped down to no more than 12,500 years—which is interesting to me as a Christian facing an evolutionist who claims to have a 250,000 or 750,000 year-old Peking man.

Dr. Young asked for Christians to

enter the sciences. They have, and are sweeping the field. As far as science is concerned, the Christian does not need to fear the reasonableness of evolution, for evolution is scientifically nonsense.

In the second place, science has told us nothing the Bible has not already told us about the reasonableness of evolution. The major conflict is not on a scientific battlefield. It is the *fool* who says there is no God (Psalm 14:1). Evolution is *not reasonable*. Every single fact in the universe, including so-called evidences for evolution, declares the eternal power and Godhead of God (Romans 1:18-22). Evolution is *not reasonable*. For the Bible says it is a belief contrary to evidence. Perusal of Huxley, or of a modern evolutionist like Asimon, or a local tax-supported high school's textbooks, shows clearly that evolution is a belief that is imposed upon the facts.

With this in mind, the Christian may close with the evolutionist, for he is dealing primarily with a belief that evidence will not change.

Dr. Young is opposed to all types of evolutionary theory and is convinced of their falseness. The intent of this letter is not to suggest differently, but (1) to show the Christian that science is on his side *now*; he need not wait for a future when more facts are in, and (2) to show that the only basis for reaching one who does not believe in Christ is the basis of God's self-proclaimed existence in his Word.

Roy L. Kerns (B.S., physics)
Westminster Theological Seminary

Korean scholar lectures

On November 23, Korea's foremost Reformed scholar, Dr. Yune Sun Park Th.M., D.D., presented a lecture on "Oriental Philosophy in the Light of the Christian Bible" at Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia.

Dr. Park, now retired from his position as Professor of New Testament in the Presbyterian General Assembly Theological Seminary of Seoul, Korea, continues work on his life-time project of producing commentaries for the Korean church. He has completed a nine-volume commentary on the New Testament, and seven volumes on the Old. Currently, he is a visiting scholar at Westminster Seminary.



Orthodox Presbyterians at Covenant College

Guest convocation speaker at Covenant College this year was the Rev. Luder Whitlock, pastor of the West Hills Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Harriman, Tennessee. The services at which he spoke marked the beginning of the 17th year for the college.

Out of Covenant's record enrollment of 394, 44 are Orthodox Presbyterians. The college has two OP faculty members.

Pictured above are some of the Orthodox Presbyterian young people attending Covenant College this year. *Front row, left to right:* Phil Daane, Oostburg, Wis.; J. C. Kiester, physics professor; Luder Whitlock, convocation speaker; Robert Nuermberger, psychology professor. *Second row:* Bev Ingelse, Oostburg, Wis.;

Jane Roskamp, Cedarloo, Iowa; Susan Stampfli, Sunnyvale, Cal.; Gail Logsdon, Silver Springs, Md.; Barb Ingelse, Sandy TenHaken, Beth DeTroye and Pat Arriens, all from Oostburg, Wis. *Third row:* Janie Miller, Mary Kay Reynolds, Manhattan Beach, Cal.; Nancy Elliott, Garden Grove, Cal.; Lou deSabla, Silver Spring, Md.; Mark Wilson, Sunnyvale, Cal.; Neil Campbell, San Diego, Cal.; Nancy Evers, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.; Debbie Barres, Hialeah, Fla. *Back row:* Steve Miller, Westfield, N. J.; Mike Heft, Manhattan Beach, Cal.; Steve Fikkert, Cedar Grove, Wis.; Mark Holler, Manhattan Beach, Cal.; Don Anderson, Chester, N. J.; Beth Elliott, Garden Grove, Cal.; Pat Nyenhuis, Oostburg, Wis.

1972 G. A. in Oostburg

The stated clerk and moderator of this year's General Assembly are calling for the 1972 assembly to meet at Bethel Church, Oostburg, Wisconsin. The assembly is to convene at 8 p.m., May 15, 1972.

Westfield, N. J.—Additional enthusiasm for the Christian day school cause was engendered by the "Fair" held here on November 5, 6 by the Covenant Christian School Society. The ladies who put in long days in making various and sundry items for sale, felt

the effort had been most worthwhile. Scores of new people became acquainted with the Society's goals through literature and conversation. Those involved in the "Fair" realize the joy of purposeful service. And the Society's coffers were increased by more than \$1500. This profit will be augmented in early December when unsold articles are offered at a "Christmas Sale" in nearby Cranford. A drive to raise \$15,000 to underwrite the opening of a Christian school on the junior high level this coming September is to be inaugurated at a special dinner on December 3.

The Presbyterian Guardian

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Here and There in The Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Alliance, Ohio—God has opened the door for a fresh work of his grace in this eastern Ohio area. A small nucleus of two faithful families, the Gorises and Libengoods, together with others interested, requested the Presbytery of Ohio to undertake a home missions work in the city. At its October 18 meeting, the presbytery called David W. King as its missionary in Alliance.

During the previous winter and spring, the Rev. Calvin K. Cummings had ministered to the group through bi-weekly Bible studies. As usual, the need for this work was generated by the sad defection to liberalism by once-faithful churches. The city is nearly barren of sound gospel preaching; many Christians travel long distances to worship in the few evangelical churches, while the local Methodist college (Mount Union) promotes unbelief in its classes.

The Kings' new address: 135 S. Haines Ave., Alliance, OH 44601. Worship services for the group began in the Kings' home on October 24.

Houlton, Me.—Bethel Church is rejoicing in the recent addition of three communicant members by profession of faith and of five covenant children. The church became totally self-supporting in October; it has passed the half-way mark in repaying building loans both from the local bank and the Contingent Fund of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension.

Thanks to God is also expressed for the very satisfactory recovery of Mrs. Charles Stanton, wife of the pastor, following an operation for removal of the gall bladder.

The Lake George (Maine) Presbyterian Family Camping Association reports progress in its planned development of vacation sites. Lots are being assigned to applicants now. Others

interested may contact the Rev. Charles E. Stanton, RFD 2, Houlton, ME 04730.

Silver Spring, Md.—Continuing what is now an annual tradition, Knox Church held its Missionary Conference on November 12-14. Home Missions was featured on Friday evening with Elder Ned Gummel from Knox's own Rockville outpost, Glenn Jerrell for the Boardwalk Chapel in Wildwood, N. J., and the Rev. Messrs. Morton Whitman, James Petty and William Krispin from Williamsburg, and two areas of innercity Philadelphia. On Saturday evening, Foreign Missions received the spotlight as missionary Harvie Conn spoke. On Sunday, both Mr. Conn and the Rev. Herbert Bird continued to present the needs for gospel missions abroad.

Meanwhile, the Rockville group, meeting at the Gummel home on 1016 Neal Drive, has seen nearly thirty in attendance for Sunday evening doctrine classes (6:15 p.m.) and worship (7:15 p.m.).

Winter Conference

Lake Luzerne, N. Y.—A winter conference for high school youth is being planned by the Presbytery of New York and New England, to be held here on December 27-30. Conference speaker will be the Rev. Harvie Conn. The Rev. Wendell L. Rockey, Jr. is serving as director.

The "cool" conference meets at the Peniel Bible Conference campgrounds and a full program of winter sports is available. There are accommodations for over one hundred and the cost is \$15.00. For further information, contact the director or the registrar, the Rev. Raymond M. Meiner, 1138 Parkwood Blvd., Schenectady, N. Y. 12308.

Freeze on Missions?

The special offering for foreign missions, taken in most O. P. churches in September, fell short of last year's total. Over \$16,000 was received in 1970, but receipts this year were just under \$12,000, a decrease of 25%. What does it mean?

Total contributions by Orthodox Presbyterians to the Church's major committees are barely matching those of last year. Foreign missions, despite its disappointing offering, is slightly higher for the first ten months of this year, compared with the same period in 1970—\$131,000 as against \$126,000. But home missions is down for the same periods, \$94,000 this year compared with \$98,000 in 1970. Christian education is also down, \$57,000 against last year's \$59,000. Receipts from the Thank Offering are not yet in.

Contributions from Orthodox Presbyterians to all three committees for the ten-month period show a total of slightly more than \$282,000 in both 1970 and 1971—no change at all! But the budget for 1971 calls for an additional \$28,000. Unless there is a significant change in giving in November and December, missions outreach for the O. P. C. will suffer.

Undoubtedly, these figures reflect the general economic situation in the nation as a whole. Some O. P. congregations have been especially hard hit. What shall we do? Hold our breath and see if the President's economic policy works?

There is no "freeze" on contributions to the work of Christ's church! By the time you read this, there will be only a few days left in 1971. We may still be in a recession, "Phase II," or whatever. But has not the Lord blessed us richly? Now is the time to consider how greatly he has prospered us, and to give that his servants may continue to proclaim the gospel of God's grace.