

## Reformed Theology and Evangelism

Jesus commanded the people at the tomb of Lazarus, "Remove the stone." This was a command from the King. It was no less than an order from God.



If you had been at the sepulchre and heard Jesus say while He looked at you, "Remove the stone," to refuse would have been to disobey God.

Jesus gave us a command as He spoke to His disciples after the resurrection: "... as the Father has sent me, I also send you"; and "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." (John 20:21; Matthew 28:19). This is a command of God. Someone asks, "Why are you doing that?" We answer, "God told me to do this."

Many ask, "If God is sovereign and He ordains all that comes to pass why do we preach?" Paul teaches that God "works all things after the counsel of His will"; and Daniel writes that "He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth." (Ephesians 1:11; Daniel 4:35) These passages are examples of what the Bible teaches concerning God's sovereignty. The Bible does teach that God is in absolute control and our preaching would be in vain if He were not.

The same people usually ask, "Why should I pray if God controls and predestines according to His own will and counsel?" Again, this is the only foundation on which we can pray. It would be foolish to pray to a God who was not in complete control. If God is not sovereign then prophecy is not sure, the certainty of salvation becomes 'maybe salvation,' and prayers would end with "I hope you have the power to work this out." "If God has the power..." must preface every statement of evangelism if God is not sovereign. Thus, the question must be this: "How can we preach if God is not sovereign?"

Many false teachers try to teach God's sovereignty and at the same moment retain man's free will. In reality this effort is only man's sinful pride manifesting an impious irreverence before the Sovereign God. The Bible clearly teaches God's sovereignty, but it never teaches that fallen men possess a will that is free from their sinful nature. Jesus taught that no man is free. He said that everyone who

sinned was a slave to sin (John 8: 34). Man is a slave to sin and does not have the ability to choose Jesus. Thus, he also taught "no one can come unto me, unless it has been granted him by the Father." (John 6:65) We often hear, "... the one who comes to me I will certainly not cast out." Few quote the first part of that verse which states, "All that the Father gives to me shall come to me..." (John 6:37). "Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto."

(Westminster Confession of Faith, XI-3)

Does this not make man a puppet? Definitely not, for the Bible teaches that man is significant. We are significant in coming to Christ and we are significant as evangelists (Man is significant in all areas of history but we are now only concerned with these two specific areas). Jesus and the evangelists of the New Testament did not merely pray to the Father for the salvation of the lost. If man was insignificant and a puppet we would not talk to him. We would speak only to the ventriloquist and to the one who pulled the strings. But these evangelists pleaded, often tearfully, with the lost. The lost man is not regarded as being a puppet or a nonentity when he is invited to Christ.

Neither is the gospel-bearing Christian insignificant. Many, listening to the Father of lies, ask, "Why do we go out and witness if God chooses? If the salvation of the elect is sure, why do we preach?" Of course, the first answer is the one given earlier: "God said to." But there is more. The evangelist, the message-bearer, is significant. He is not an insignificant entity going through empty motions. Paul, in his last message to the elders of Ephesus, said of himself, "I am innocent of the blood of all men." (Acts 20: 26) Paul was using this phrase as an Old Testament scholar. The phrase is in Ezekiel 3: 17-19: "Son of man, I have appointed you a watchman to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, warn them from Me. When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die'; and you do not warn him or speak out to warn the wicked from his wicked way that he may live, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet if you have warned the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered yourself." Ezekiel 33:1-11 elaborates this thought. Paul is saying to these elders, "you had better teach the flock right doctrine and also be evangelists to all people or you will not be innocent of their blood." This is how significant we are as evangelists.

There are those who say, "you Calvinists have a low view of Man. You say he is totally depraved." We do teach that man is totally depraved. Man's history stands as an indestructible monument to his thorough depravity. Besides, his depravity is taught in Scripture. To tell a man that he is not depraved is sadistic. To let a man pretend to be free of cancer when he has a curable cancer would be cruel. The doctrine of total depravity is essential to Biblical evangelism.

However, it is not true that the Calvinist has a low view of man. In fact, he has a higher view of man than can be found in all philosophy. He looks at God and says, "man is made in the image of God." The Calvinist teaches, on the basis of the following passages of Scripture, that man retained the image of God through the Fall: Genesis 9:6 — "Whoever shed man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed. For in the image of God he made man." James 3: 9 — "With it (the tongue) we bless our Lord and Father; and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God." Matthew 6: 26 — "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?" Thus, we may say to the derelict on Chicago's skid row as he lies in his own vomit in the gutter, "you have been made in the image of God, depraved though you be; I came to tell you the gospel."

The 20th Century evolutionist says, "Man is an animal." The manufacturer regards man as being "so many man-hours." The great institutions and governments treat him as a number. The anthropologists think of man as being an object of study. The Reformed theologian comes to Man and says, "you are more. You are man-personal, rational, and moral. You write, you paint, you read, you love, you are not an animal. You are man in God's image, in heaven or in hell forever." If the friend dies without Christ, the friend to whom you have long witnessed, what will you do? "Weep for him! then go and find another to tell, for man is man and hell is real."

One should not leave this subject without considering two thoughts. 1) Believing in God's sovereignty and all that the doctrine implies should not inhibit our zeal. Paul had much to say about Election and Predestination but he also said he taught "publicly and from house to house . . . to Jews and Greeks . . ."; and in the same message, ". . . remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears." (Acts 20: 20, 21, 31) Calvinism should ignite the pulpit rather than freeze it. 2) Someone has said, "Evangelism without the leaven of sound doctrine leads to ignorant fanaticism." There is another verse from Acts 20 we should remember: "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God." You are not a Biblical evangelist unless you declare the whole counsel of God. Numbers, success, and methods too often determine our message and the service or witness is nothing more than ignorant fanaticism. The Sovereignty of God, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Perseverance of the Saints, Effectual Calling, Pre-

destination, Providence — These doctrines are the foundation and content of Biblical evangelism.

C. H. Spurgeon, the poetic British evangelist, wrote:

"And I have my own private opinion, that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and him crucified, unless you preach what now-a-days is called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism. Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else. I do not believe we can preach the gospel, if we do not preach justification by faith, without works; nor unless we preach the sovereignty of God in his dispensation of grace; nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah; nor, I think, can we preach the gospel, unless we base it upon the peculiar redemption which Christ made for his elect and chosen people; nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called, and suffers the children of God to be burned in the fires of damnation, after having believed. Such a gospel I abhor. The gospel of the Bible is not such a gospel as that. We preach Christ and him crucified in a different fashion, and to all gainsayers we reply, 'We have not so learned Christ.'

—The Rev. John Sartelle

## Why PCUS Evangelism Is Sterile

When the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, expect chaos. When a denomination loses its theological moorings, expect disaster in every area of its work and life . . . and especially in its evangelistic outreach. Our denomination is dying. Its rapid drift from biblical and Reformed truth has sapped the life of the Spirit of God from it. Heresy and apostasy are the twin foes which have struck the mortal blows.

Think through the following exercise. Note carefully the quotations from denominationally endorsed literature.

1. Can we know God for sure (Rom. 1:19,20; John 6:45)?

"Our words cannot adequately say who he is or how he works."

"We cannot regard any interpretations of Scripture . . . as valid for all times and places."

(The New Confession, pp. 3,15)

2. Does the fact that God is holy and just mean that He must judge sin with punishment (Nahum 1:2-3)?

"God judges by forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin."

(Geo. Hendry, *The Westminster Confession for Today*, John Knox Press, p. 48)

"Against all who oppose him, God expresses his love in wrath."

(The Confession of 1967, 9.14)

3. Did one human being, Adam, fall from fellowship with God and thus plunge the whole human race into sin (Rom. 5:19-21)?

“The human race rejected God from the start.”

(The New Confession, p. 4)

“The story of Adam is the story of man in rebellion . . .”

(CLC, *Christian Doctrine*, p. 191)

(We ask, where is Adam as an individual? Where is the garden? Where is the Fall? in the statements above?)

4. Christ's death satisfied God's justice, didn't it (Rom. 3:25-26)?

“In no passage in the New Testament where the death of Christ is represented as a sacrifice is it suggested that it produced an effect on God, either in the ‘satisfaction’ of his ‘justice,’ or in the alteration of his disposition toward men.”

(Hendry, op. cit., p. 111)

“The ‘satisfaction’ theory of the atonement . . . is unbiblical.”

(CLC, *Christian Doctrine*, p. 520)

5. It is true that in common grace, God loves all men, but does He not love only **some** men with electing, redeeming love (Acts 13:48; John 13:18; Eph. 1:11)?

“People ask how the church can best . . . make known God's saving love for all men.”

(CLC, *We Gather Together*, p. 49)

“The deepest mystery (is) . . . God's fatherhood of all mankind . . . God's love which embraces the whole family of man . . .”

(CLC, *Response*, p. 95)

6. Is it not true that only those for whom Christ died will actually be saved (John 6:64-65; 10:14-16)?

“The mission of the Church . . . issues from the one Triune God and His intention for the salvation of all men.”

(CLC, *Response*, Foreword)

7. Don't we believe that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven? Isn't it necessary to repent and to believe in Him as one's Saviour and Lord (Heb. 2:3; Matt. 10:32,33; Mark 1:15; Eph. 2:8)?

“With regard to (those) not professing the Christian religion . . . it is difficult to see why the absence of a Christian profession should be held against them.” (Henry, op. cit., p. 131)

“Our loves are reflections of the nature of God's being whether we acknowledge him or not. To love is to acknowledge him in fact.”

(Circle Bible Studies, 1970, p. 50)

“There is hope in this age and in the age to come for those who will not have been acquainted with or recognized the Son of Man

here below.” (*Layman's Bible Commentary*, on Matt. 12:31)

8. But—man **does** have a soul, doesn't he, Matt. 10:28; Gen. 2:7)?

“Now it should be obvious that the concept of the soul as the immortal, spiritual part of man's being is very much out of accord with the view of the Bible.”

(Rev. Lewis B. Hay, PCUS professor, “The Presbyterian Outlook,” Aug. 10, 1970)

“Another explanation of the image of God is to identify it with the spiritual side of man's nature, or with his soul. This view also comes from the ancient Greeks . . . It is not biblical.” (CLC, *Christian Doctrine*, p. 189)

Now, let's sum up. If we cannot know anything for sure about God . . . If God's wrath is really only His love and His justice is forgiveness . . . If the human race did not fall in Adam . . . If God loves all men with saving love . . . If Christ's death did not produce any effect on God . . . If all men will eventually be saved, anyway . . . If faith in Christ is not necessary for salvation . . . If man doesn't actually possess a soul . . . If such heresies are endorsed by the denomination . . . THEN don't we have a fair idea why evangelism in the PCUS is sterile, barren, fruitless . . . ?

(And, don't we have an indication as to why our denomination is divided?)

— Paul G. Settle

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## The Election of Grace and the Great Commission

God has instructed the church to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations . . .” (Matthew 28: 19). In another Gospel we have the same thing with the same emphasis: “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” (Luke 24: 47) The Apostle Paul, in the book of Acts emphasized the universality of God's commandment that **all men everywhere** are to repent. (Acts 17:30)

Now, how do we apply Deuteronomy 29:29 in the light of these two obvious Biblical facts? First of all, whether the doctrine of election is true or false . . . whether anyone is saved through our witnessing or not . . . has nothing whatsoever to do with my God-given duty and responsibility to preach the Gospel to every creature. Likewise, my duty to preach the Gospel to every creature does not allow me to deny the truth that there is an election of grace. The truth that God has “mercy on whom he will have mercy,” and “whom he will he hardeneth” (Romans 9: 18) is His business; and beseeching sinners to be reconciled to God (II Corinthians 5:20 is my business. The first belongs to God) and is His own secret purpose, and the second belongs to us and our children because God has “revealed” it as our duty (and joy!).

— Sword and Trowel

# STEERING COMMITTEE FOR A CONTINUING PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

*True to the Bible, the Reformed Faith and Obedient to the Great Commission*

## Already Divided

The Presbyterian Church in the United States has been divided. To deny or ignore this division is both false and foolish.

Those who are responsible for the division are those who have substituted the liberalizing systems of Neo-orthodoxy and existentialism for the biblical theology of the Westminster standards.

Both neo-orthodoxy and existentialism teach that we have no sure Word from God in human language. The neo-orthodox philosopher declares that the Word of God and the words of the Bible are not necessarily the same. For him, the Bible only "contains the Word of God, but the Bible — its words, sentences, paragraphs — is **not** the Word of God in itself. Such thinkers delight to distinguish between Christ, the "living Word," and the Bible, the **witness** to the living Word. Existentialism also denies that men have received special, propositional revelation from God. The existentialist really has no other 'word' from God than his own individual response to his 'ground of being.' If, in his awareness of his existence in a dangerous world, he takes the 'leap of faith' toward this ground of being, then he has achieved 'salvation' for that moment.

Our denomination's literature contains many examples of such false teaching. Thus, the division becomes ever wider and deeper. Both these heresies are diametrically opposed to the constitutional doctrine of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. The Westminster standards are founded upon the **absolute** truth of the sovereign God and the **objective** revelation of God given in the Holy Scriptures. This position is the one for which conservatives contend — absolute truth and objective revelation. On the other hand, the radical (liberal) follows the dim trail of relative truth and subjective revelation. Granted that there are men of sincerity on both sides, we must confess that the division is fundamental and cannot be bridged by compromise. To place adherents of the two views under the same standard would be to ask one or both to live a lie.

Those who introduced the neo-orthodox and existentialistic systems into the church are specifically and definitely responsible for the division in our denomination.

The same persons have also sought to corrupt the polity of our church under the guise of the ecumenical movements. Their efforts are aimed toward uniting organizational structures at any cost — thus the efforts to merge with the Northern church under a broad, unauthoritative Book of Confessions, and then to unite with the Church of Christ Uniting (COCU).

(Continued on page 6)

## Why Vote Now

We favor an immediate (1973) vote on a plan of church union which includes a satisfactory survival clause for those who do not elect to unite. Why do we favor such a plan now?

**First**, because this would make as amicable as possible the division that has been forced upon us by those who have brought radical changes to our church.

**Second**, because it would bring to an early conclusion the internal debate within our denomination and allow each side to move forward towards the objectives in which they respectively believe.

**Third**, because it would permit each side to move more rapidly towards ecumenical relations with groups of similar creed and ecumenical viewpoints.

**Fourth**, because the church is as ready now to face the issue as it will ever be. Church union in principle has been before the church for 20 years and the essence of the present plan has been before us for several years. He who has not read and studied by now, will probably never do so.

**Fifth**, because the time, talent and money being spent in continued debate could better be spent in doing what our Lord commanded in His Great Commission.

**Sixth**, because it would permit a church or minister to elect not to unite if it (he) did not believe in the principles of union but voted for the plan for the one sole reason of its survival clause. Many could conscientiously vote for a plan because of one feature in the plan if that vote relieved him from subjection to the other undesirable parts of the plan.

**Seventh**, because such a plan will permit the continuation of a faithful Presbyterian church by those who elect not to unite.

We reiterate that the validity of these arguments hinges upon a satisfactory survival and conscience clause and an early (1973) vote.

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## The Steering Committee and the Mission of the Church

We believe "The functions (mission) of the Church are to proclaim, to administer and to enforce the law of Christ revealed in Scripture." (Compare The Book of Church Order, I-3) — From "Faith and Order" document.

## Keeping Posted

● This issue focuses on the Gospel and evangelism. In September's "Contact" we clearly delineated our denomination's deviations from biblical Christianity into the vagaries of universalism. That heresy is closely akin to the watered-down gospel we find described in various official pronouncements, papers, and programs. One finds it difficult to escape the growing certainty that official denominational leadership is proclaiming "another gospel" which is no gospel at all (see Gal. 1:6-9).

● MUST reading for every Presbyterian is George Whitefield's masterful exposition of the doctrines of grace in a letter to John Wesley (written 232 years ago this month). The letter, entitled "Why Preach Electing Grace" is available from the PCU office at .10c per copy, in an attractive pamphlet form. Get your order in soon, for our supply is limited.

● Charles Turner and several other Chattanooga ministers have announced the opening of the Chattanooga School for Biblical Studies, an institute intended to provide in-depth study of the Bible and its teachings on the Bible-college level. Would the Lord have you begin a similar ministry?

● Joe Morecraft has "translated" John Owen into contemporary English for the masses! At least, he has begun the task, and you may order copies of Owen's "Rules of Direction for the Walking of the Saints in Fellowship According to the Order of the Gospel" from Joe, at 1616 Maryland Ave., Bristol, Tenn., 37622. (By the way, Joe's translation of the title reads, "Rules for Walking Together in Sweet Christian Fellowship.") Get it for your people!

● Beginning next month, the Lord willing, we shall feature a brief three-part series from the pen of the Rev. John Richard de Witt, on "The Distinctives of the Reformed Faith." Look for these articles, and pray that God will use them to build His Church in its most holy faith.

● By now you know that Hanover Presbytery dismissed the West End church, Hopewell, with its property. The same presbytery continues to pressure the Tabb Street Church, Petersburg, with the threat to take its property if the congregation does not return to the PCUS fold. Linwood Wilkes, minister at Tabb Street, says "They (the presbytery) are attempting to change the minds and the votes of the people. They are interfering in the internal affairs of our church . . . but . . . we are ready for whatever comes."

● The action of the Cynthiana, Ky., First church, wherein it renounced the jurisdiction of the PCUS, is being contested by Transylvania (Union) Presbytery. A judicial commission has been appointed to deal with the congregation.

● The congregation of the First church, Louisville, Ky., voted unanimously on Oct. 29, to affiliate with Vanguard Presbytery.

● Norfolk Presbytery is taking legal action against the Grace Covenant congregation of Hampton, Va., which recently withdrew from the denomination. The minister is a member of Vanguard Presbytery.

● Augusta-Macon Presbytery, on Oct. 24, refused "by an overwhelming majority (with cheers and applause) to require a minister who was being examined . . . to affirm his belief that Mary, the mother of the Lord, had not known a man sexually before the birth of the Child, Jesus." It is precisely this kind of shameful infidelity to God and His Word that has divided our denomination.

● A review of the 1972-1973 Covenant Life Curriculum materials for adults is available from the PCU office. Order now from our limited supply, for your Session, Diaconate, DCE, Christian Education Committee, etc. They're free!

● Merry Christmas! May the virgin-born Son of God, the Seed of David, fill your life with His righteousness and use you to His glory.

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## "Give Attendance to Reading"

— I Timothy 4:13

You will profit from reading the following books that deal with Evangelism:

EVANGELISM AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD, J. I. Packer

GOD-CENTERED EVANGELISM, R. B. Kuiper

EVANGELISM EXPLOSION, D. James Kennedy

THE SOUL WINNER, Charles Spurgeon

THE PLAN OF SALVATION, B. B. Warfield

TODAY'S GOSPEL: AUTHENTIC OR SYNTHETIC?, Walter J. Chantry

EVANGELISM, G. Campbell Morgan

JONATHAN EDWARDS ON EVANGELISM, Carl J. C. Wolf

BY ALL MEANS, Marvin Mardock

WHO IN THE WORLD?, Christians, Schipper, & Smedes.

## Closet Call

*"And when thou prayest, enter into thy closet . . .* — Matthew 6:6

Give thanks for the helpful meeting of the Steering Committee with the four coalition executive groups, November 3, 4.

Praise God for His moving in and through the National Presbyterian and Reformed Fellowship.

Pray for conservative leaders as they seek to bear a testimony to the grace of God in these Last Days.

Vanguard Presbytery members and leaders have requested prayer for the new church court.

Remember our Moderator, Dr. L. Nelson Bell, in his present ministry of reconciliation.

Pray that God will supply the financial needs of the coalition groups and of the Steering Committee.

Intercede for the ministers and congregations who have withdrawn from the denomination and are now threatened with court action.

*"In Thee, O Lord, do I hope; Thou wilt hear, O Lord my God."* —Psalm 38:15

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## The Christmas Gospel

Perhaps not one man out of a hundred of those who deny the virgin birth today gives any really clear evidence of possessing saving faith. A man is not saved by good works, but by faith; and saving faith is acceptance of the Jesus Christ "as He is offered to us in the gospel." Part of that gospel in which Jesus is offered to our souls is the blessed story of the miracle in the virgin's womb.

Only one Jesus is presented in the Word of God; and that Jesus did not come into the world by ordinary generation, but was conceived in the womb of the virgin by the Holy Ghost.

— J. Gresham Machen

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### STEERING COMMITTEE — (Continued from p. 4)

Conservatives deplore also the adulteration of the Gospel of Christ in favor of a socially-oriented 'evangelism' which teaches that all men will ultimately be saved.

Such devious routes as union presbyteries, gerrymandering of votes through the plan of restructuring (consider the action which forced Alabama and Mississippi into an enlarged new synod with Tennessee and Kentucky), and centralization of power in the General Executive Board have been followed toward serious division. The radical ecumenists have thus already divided the church, even if a plan of union with the UPCUSA denomination is never voted on!

The Steering Committee for a Continuing Presbyterian Church realistically acknowledges that division has already occurred and that its cause is the departure from the faith and order of historic Presbyterianism on the part of many denominational leaders.

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