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Editor's Notes

Leonard W. Pine, Editor

Reforming Evangelism

Hardly any other subject has fostered as much division and debate in the Christian Church as has the subject of evangelism. In conservative Reformed ranks of late, confusion has reigned as Presbyterians and others have tried to reconcile their theology with their practice (or lack thereof). Bible-believers of all denominations have reacted strongly to the liberal's social gospel, and rightly so, but their methods are often hardly better.

Recognizing this problem is one thing, doing something about it another. We have dedicated this issue to evangelism to provide you with resources to *do something!* More particularly, to do something *biblically*.

We've added a new category for this issue, one that we hope will increase the usefulness of the *Journal*. Whenever we attempt to put into practice what we believe, there are always inconsistencies due to our finite capacities to comprehend and apply. The *Practicum* section is dedicated to helping you apply your theology consistently.

Once again, we invite your feedback. Whether you have disagreements or kudos, we'd like to hear them. Letters to the Editor are always welcome, as well (see page 12). Let us know where you think we have done well, and how we can serve you better in future issues. *Good*

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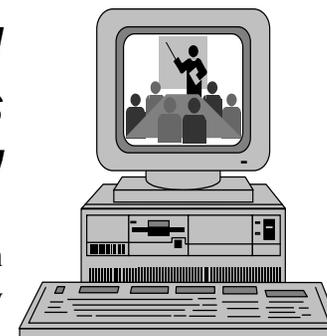
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BOOKS

Review by Dennis Leaman

John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Gospel According to Jesus*, Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1988. 237 pp.

Some years ago the Volkswagen Company advertised their van by saying "This time we finally got it right." When it comes to the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, however, there is no room for going back to the drawing board. To do so is to leave souls stranded on the freeway of life.

This is why John MacArthur's book, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, is so important today. Like Esther it has "come to the kingdom for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14). It deserves a wide reading and our riveted attention until its precepts are anchored in our souls and pounded from our pulpits. This book is not a polemic against the modernists who deny the Bible and preach a social gospel. This is an apologetic against today's evangelicals and fundamentalists who believe the Bible but preach a watered-down gospel. John MacArthur writes, "You will hear sinners entreated with words like these: 'Accept Jesus Christ as personal savior;' 'Ask Jesus into your heart;' 'Invite Christ into your life;' or 'Make a decision for Christ.' None of them is based upon biblical terminology. They are the products of a diluted gospel. It is not the gospel according to Jesus. . . . It was in every sense good news, yet it was anything but easy-believism."¹

This book is about lordship

salvation. Though the author does not particularly like that title, (it was the title given to the debate by those who hold to easy-believism), it does help define the issue. John MacArthur says, "The call to Calvary must be recognized for what it is: a call to discipleship under the lordship of Jesus Christ. To respond to that call is to become a believer. Anything less is simply unbelief."² But "less" is being preached in our churches today. Many are calling men to Christ without the proclamation of the law which the Holy Spirit can use to bring true repentance and genuine remorse for sin. Many are only asking sinners to accept Jesus as Savior but not as Lord. I heard of an evangelist that told his audience, "If you come down the aisle and accept Jesus Christ as Savior tonight, I don't care how you live your life after that!" That's the kind of diluted gospel that is being preached today, and John MacArthur thunders against it. He has been willing to disagree graciously with many in his own dispensational camp from which much of the easy-believism flows. He has taken the words of Christ as he deals with Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, and the rich young ruler, as well as Christ's teaching on the parables, to give us a fresh look at the "gospel according to Jesus." He asks us to read it like Bereans. We should! †

¹p. 21

²p. 30

KEYNOTE

REFORMED EVANGELISM: FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

by Leonard Pine

INTRODUCTION

My first day at college was a memorable one. I met one of my roommates as I was unloading and we began to talk about where we were from, what our majors were, what churches we attended, and so on. When I told him I was a Bible Presbyterian, he remarked, "Oh! So you don't believe in evangelism then." He was suffering under the common, yet mistaken, idea that Reformed theology kills evangelical zeal. Sometimes, I think Reformed people themselves are under the same delusion, not realizing that truly Reformed theology is the greatest incentive to evangelism ever!

Years later, my friend and I conducted a large youth rally in my home town of Grants Pass, Oregon. His techniques and strategy were far different from mine. His Arminian background dictated his emotional appeals to the will of man as the deciding factor in one's salvation. My appeals were for submission to a sovereign, merciful God. What are your appeals like? Do you make any appeals at all? Historically, the greatest missionaries and evangelists have been predominantly Reformed—why do we have a problem with

evangelism then? This article will examine [1] our motivation for evangelism, as well as [2] some principles that will guide us as we set out to **reform evangelism**.

DEFINITION OF EVANGELISM

A good place to start is to define what we mean by evangelism. The word has taken on a great deal of excess baggage over the years until many now equate *evangelism* with certain types of activities within the church. That is, one is evangelizing when he or she is asking people to come to church, or when he or she happens to mention God's name favorably in conversation, or if he or she participates in an evangelistically oriented meeting, to mention a few examples. However good these activities are, they are not evangelism *per se*. Our method

*What are your
appeals like?
Do you make
any appeals at all?*

must be determined by what evangelism is, rather than defining evangelism in terms of method. Just last year I filled out an application to work with a Christian organization that oversees all ministries in Remann

Hall, a juvenile detention center in Tacoma. On the application they asked me to describe how I would lead a soul to Christ, outlining verses I would use, etc. It puzzled me, because I hardly ever use the same approach twice. People's hearts offer different barriers that guard their essential sinfulness. Therefore, different "demolition tools" are needed from situation to situation. I came to realize that this organization had fallen into the same salesmanship trap that many believers and their ministers have—that is, all one has to do is use a set package of verses and appeals and God is sure to honor and bless because "we're doing evangelism!" J.I. Packer writes, "There is only one *method* of evangelism: namely, the faithful explanation and application of the gospel message."¹ I would add to this definition by referring to Proverbs 24:11, 12, which reads, "Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, 'Surely we did not know this,' does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?"² Evangelism is the *urgent, compassionate, and faithful* (obedient to command and content) explanation and application of the gospel wherever and whenever the Lord leads us to engage a soul.

MOTIVATION - Why we must evangelize

Matthew 9:37,38 reads, "The

harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers in the His harvest." Everyone recognizes that the need is great, but few believe it strongly enough to do something about it. If folks do pray as Christ instructs them, they often think only in terms of others going besides themselves. (This is what I call the "my-ministry-is-as-a-prayer-warrior" syndrome.) As Reformed people, we pride ourselves on paying attention to the full counsel of God. Very well, what do the Scriptures say about why we *all* should be telling others about the gospel?

We must evangelize to glorify God. I Corinthians 10:31 tells us that whatever we do must be for God's glory. All of us are familiar with the Shorter Catechism's first question and answer as well; glorifying and enjoying God are man's principle duties here on earth and for eternity. A person's glory is simply the manifestation of his perfections; and evangelism is an essential part of directing men to see (and bow before) God's perfections. Moreover, evangelism demonstrates God's perfections in our own lives as we carry out his work.

For one thing, our testimony reflects the light of God. Jesus states in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." From where does our light come? John 8:12 has the answer: "Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am

George has written many letters of encouragement and thanks to the group and always mentions his expectation for the next week.

Another man the group reaches is a Spanish-speaking man named Mario Leon. The group has been able to reach out to him with a few members from Miami, Florida, who are of Cuban descent. They have been able to explain the Gospel in full to this man who has been raised Catholic from birth.

On April 1, 1995, the group held a homeless tent revival. It took place in a city park in Clearwater after many struggles with the city's department heads who hardened their hearts and pushed for the cancellation of the event. Through it all the Lord prevailed. Fifty-six homeless people were in attendance at the revival. Members of the group provided preaching, singing, special music, food, and an abundance of clothing to the homeless. Faith Bible Presbyterian Church in Trenton, Michigan, and students from Clearwater Christian College sponsored the revival.

E.Y.E. Witness asks for your prayers for their outreach. They have been able to share the gospel with many and have seen the excitement of some that have

received Jesus as Lord of their life. The group is working on their own discipleship program since many homeless do not feel comfortable in churches due to their dress.

The expenses of this project are heavy. Pray for the Lord's leading about what you can do to help. ✠

Aaron Carr founded and leads E.Y.E. Witness and is a senior Bible major at Clearwater Christian College. He is a member of Faith Bible Presbyterian Church in Trenton, Michigan, pastored by Rev. John Mills. Aaron is looking forward to full-time ministry as the Lord leads. If you would like to support this project, make your checks out to "Aaron A. Carr" and mail to:

*Aaron A. Carr
Clearwater Christian College
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faith, possess salvation, and submit as the Holy Spirit uses us. We need to pray and have the prayer support of others. We seek to do a great work for God. Such work takes faithful servants in the hands of the Almighty.

k. *We need to follow up.* Whether the person we share God's Word with trusts in Christ or not, there is a great need for follow up. Provide literature about salvation for the one who may be seeking. Provide literature about spiritual growth for the new born babe in Christ. Always try to get people to read the Bible. It is the power of God unto salvation.

Summary

We must believe that God is saving souls today. It is God who regenerates the soul, gives the gift of faith, and draws the sinner to trust in Christ. It is our task to tell the Gospel to every person. God can use our efforts for His perfect purpose in bringing others into the Kingdom. Let us be faithful and give God the glory, for salvation is of the Lord! †

THE STORY OF E.Y.E. WITNESS

by Aaron Carr

A group known as E.Y.E. Witness (Exciting Youth Evangelism) from Clearwater Christian College hits the streets every week. Their focus is to spread the Word of God to all of those who don't really have a place to call home except the streets of Tampa and Clearwater. Along with spreading the Gospel the group hands out Bibles, blankets, hats, and food. The aim of the group is to help people who are so used to looking down to look up to a Heavenly Father who will forgive them of their sins and cleanse them from all unrighteousness.

Two students from Clearwater Christian College started E.Y.E. Witness in 1993, desiring to spread the Word of God to those who are less fortunate. The group has seen much growth: starting out with only two members, they now have twenty-five! They have been given countless numbers of tracts and Bibles to hand out. Every week members of the group go door-to-door in the dorms of the College collecting any change that the students would be willing to give towards helping the homeless. Members use this money to buy the blankets, hats, and food goods that are handed out.

The group has reached many. Every week they meet with a man known only as "George" to fellowship, sing praises, and pray.

the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” Our lives and our words reflect the light of Christ that is in us. When Christ reveals Himself, there is always glory, for His perfections shine forth, not ours.

That truth leads us to the second aspect of glorifying God, which is that our testimony directs praise to Him. Only God can create a new person, and the world knows it. Psalm 40:2, 3 describes God's act of re-creation and the effect it has upon men: “He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth—praise to our God; many will see and fear, and will trust in the LORD.” Do you want to glorify God? Then spend your life praising and testifying of the God who redeemed you!

We must evangelize out of obedience to God. The command and urging to evangelize is an important part of the message and ministry of Christ (for examples, the sending out of the 12 and the 70). Both Matthew 28:19,20 and Acts 1:8 strongly emphasize the commissioning by Christ of the disciples to the task. Paul follows up in II Cor. 5:18-21 with the insistence that we all fulfill our role as Christ's ambassadors, following Paul's example. Peter writes with similar thinking behind his discussion of the priesthood of all believers. Of course, the Old Testament is full of calls to declare

God's glory and dominion to all nations: a duty sorely neglected by Israel out of pride and self-service. We dare not follow their example. God gives us strong warning in Ezekiel 3:18 that as watchmen we must be faithful to proclaim what God has said to whom He has said it, for their sakes as well as ours. We *do* have an obligation to others. Paul was able to declare in Acts 20:26, "I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all." He could say this because he had testified faithfully out of obedience to God and commitment to his fellow creatures.³

We must evangelize out of compassion for others. This third motivating factor arises naturally out of the one that precedes it. We have just seen that Paul was concerned more about souls than a head count. He didn't travel throughout the Mediterranean world just so he could carve notches in his gospel gun. He was aware of God's command that we love our neighbors as ourselves. I met a Baptist preacher in Columbia, South Carolina, who had gotten a hold of just enough Reformed theology to make him dangerous. He was truly a hyper-Calvinist who went about deciding on his own initiative who were the elect and who weren't. We were talking about a rebellious student that attended the little Christian school his church operated. This preacher told me, “God doesn't love that kid and never will.” (He had decided that since *he* didn't love Johnny, God must not either.) When I objected, he jumped down

my throat: "The idea that God loves the sinner but hates his sin is a lie from hell!" Now, I understand the doctrine of reprobation, but it is not up to us to decide who is reprobated so that we can excuse ourselves from loving souls.

We need to follow Christ's example. In Luke 15:1, 2 the evangelist tells us of the complaints of the Pharisees about Christ's habit of fellowshiping with traitors (which was the prevailing view of tax collectors) and sinners. We often have the same repugnance toward the lost, forgetting that apart from God's grace we would be as they are. The lost gathered around Christ because He loved them more than himself. We are not told that Christ only

A Calvinist is one who has experienced compassion and thus should be one who is filled with compassion.

received the elect around Him. The word *received* is an interesting word. It comes from the verb προσδέχομαι and means *to welcome, take up, or receive*. Paul uses the same word elsewhere (Romans 16:2; Philippians 2:29) of welcoming someone in the Lord. Following Christ's example, we will welcome sinners rather than shun them as we seek to obediently proclaim to them the gospel of Jesus Christ.

If, however, we seek to follow

Christ's example using our own capacity to love, we will sorely fail. Christ's love must be the driving force behind our labors for souls. Paul writes in II Cor. 5:14 that "the love of Christ compels us." Paul's recognition of the condition of man was only the beginning: it had to be coupled with the love of Christ.

As we show Christ's love in our testimony to others we are also acting out Christ's mercy. Jude 21-23 expresses this thought vividly: "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garments defiled by the flesh."

Paul T. Murphy summarizes the necessity of compassion well:

After all, what is a Calvinist? A Calvinist is one who has looked into the fires of Hell and seen its terror. A Calvinist is one who knows that he is a Hell-deserving sinner. A Calvinist is one who has been drawn to the foot of the cross and seen Christ in all His glory as a Savior for sinners. A Calvinist is one who knows that Hell is where, but for the sovereign grace of God and no other reason, he belongs. A Calvinist is one who has experienced compassion and thus should be one who is filled with compassion.⁴

I hope that by now you are convinced that evangelizing is not

their life. We are not to be secret disciples, but let our light shine, and take our place in the local church.

c. *Practice your presentation.*

We need practice sessions where we can go over our presentation of the gospel in a setting as near the real evangelistic call as we can make it. This should be taken very seriously. The basic training of a soldier is no frivolous matter. In a similar way, so is the training of the evangelist.

d. *Stay focused on salvation.* It is important to stay on the subject of salvation when talking to others. It is very easy to forget the main purpose of our visit. Remember how the Samaritan woman tried to get Jesus into a religious dispute rather than talk about her personal relationship with God?

e. *There are answers to common objections.* Many are afraid they will be asked something that they do not know. It is good to go over common objections to the gospel, and give answers to them in a brief and biblical manner. You will be surprised at the confidence this can give to the person wishing to share the good news with others.

f. *Go on evangelistic visits.* There can be no substitute for face to face, actually talking to others, about a personal relationship with God. Therefore, every church's evangelistic teaching ministry must include actual visits. Go two by two, or three by three, and talk to friends, neighbors, and church visitors about God's saving work

and their relationship to Him. The experienced person does most of the evangelism work in the beginning. As the lessons continue, more and more of the work is turned over to the student.

g. *Have a definite period of training.* To help people, the training course should have a starting and stopping date. This requires a 3 or 4 month commitment. Each week will include about 2 hours of homework, an hour of class time, and an hour of visiting time. It is important to fulfill this obligation. The only way to fail is to quit.

h. *Have attractive literature.* If the material you use to present the Gospel can be put into an attractive booklet, it is very helpful. It makes it much easier to present the Gospel, stay on the topic, and be at ease. It can also be left with the unsaved for their further consideration.

i. *Trust in God.* Only God can save a soul. Therefore, the presentation of Biblical truth, prayer, and dependence upon the Holy Spirit are far more important than our method of presentation. Our Lord said this about the Christian life: "Without me, you can do nothing." This is also true of our evangelistic ministry.

j. *Expect difficulty.* This is a ministry where the work of God and the work of Satan clash. It is vital for the Christian evangelist to have on the whole armor of God. We must be righteous, know the truth, believe the Gospel, exercise

teaching gift may train the lay person with the gift of evangelism. It is all right for the student to excel and be better than the teacher in this area. This may be the way God supplies your church with the one gifted in evangelism.

Classroom Training

There does need to be classroom training. Such training should include the following:

a. *Learn a logical presentation of the gospel.* We must be convinced that we are sinners and in need of salvation. We need to hear of God's love and justice in sending His Son Jesus to perfectly fulfill the law for His people, taking upon Himself their sin and paying the penalty by His death on the cross.

b. *Invite others to confess their faith in Jesus.* We need to be encouraged to respond to this truth. Do we really believe that Jesus died for our sin, was buried and rose again from the dead according to the Scriptures? Do we love God for providing for us a Savior? Are we willing to acknowledge that Jesus is our Savior and Lord? The gospel truly received will touch our intellect, our affections, and our will. Some biblical invitations to salvation that Jesus used are:

“And behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, ‘Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ He said to him, ‘What is written in the law? How readest thou?’ And he answering said, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all they

soul, and with all they mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.’ And He said unto him, ‘Thou hast answered right: this do and thou shalt live.’” (Luke 10:25-28)

“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, ‘Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” (Matthew 4:17)

“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

Some of Paul's biblical invitations are:

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” (Romans 10:9-10)

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Romans 10:13)

“And [he] brought them out, and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ And they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.’” (Acts 16:30-31)

We do want to help people acknowledge God's saving grace in

an option, or just something that only a privileged few are supposed to do. If so, great—but now you very well may be one of the millions who say “Yes, I need to witness more” but never do because they don't know HOW. Every situation *is* different. But there are some basic principles that will help you get started down, and stay on, the right track.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES - How we should evangelize

The first principle is that *Reformed theology is not your enemy!* (or, Tulip or not Tulip?) Some Reformed people almost seem apologetic about referring to the truths of Scripture. It is a tacit admission that while these things are true, we don't want to talk about them because they will drive men away. I am glad our Savior did not take such a timid approach to His evangelism. He declared the truth, no matter how hard it was to hear, and the Holy Spirit applied the Word to whomever He willed. With that in mind, a brief look at the so-called Five Points of Calvinism is in order, since these are often the points of issue in evangelism.

1. Total Depravity

Understanding this keeps you focused on what the Bible emphasizes—God's mercy, not man's ability. Most unregenerate men want to believe that there is some corner of their hearts that is capable of reaching out to God on their own initiative. Challenge such belief with the

Scriptures. Man has to approach God on God's terms and no other. Learn what the Scriptures say about man's ability, and that knowledge will change your entire "strategy" of evangelism. You will not be content to let men blissfully plunge ahead into darkness thinking they have no need to humble themselves before God. Remember the first Beatitude? “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall see God.”

2. Unconditional Election

Understanding this keeps you from despair in hard places and actually is a great source of confidence. Because Jesus says in John 10:14, “I am the good shepherd; and I know my sheep, and am known by my own,” we can proceed confidently knowing that the work of regeneration is completely in God's hands. Christ will certainly gather in His sheep as He wills!

Furthermore, preaching about election is certainly appropriate: Jesus, after all, made it clear that that Father had given Him a particular flock. Those whom the Holy Spirit regenerates will respond to the message of God's love. Worrying about a person's response to this doctrine is inconsistent with a biblical understanding of man's depravity. If a person is not humbled before God when

confronted with the gospel, the Holy Spirit is not at work! Don't cast pearls before swine!

Again, the Bible's emphasis is on God's mercy, not man's deserving or twisted ideas of "fairness."⁵ If one's concept of depravity is wanting, his view of election will also suffer. Rather than accepting that none deserve salvation, unregenerate men think that God should make an exception in their case. Challenge such thinking from Scripture! Paul explains forcefully in Romans 9:14-24 that God's election demonstrates his glorious mercy against a backdrop of deserved reprobation. We must not apologize for the glory of our God.

3. *Limited Atonement*

Understanding this keeps you consistently Trinitarian. The operations of the Persons of the Trinity are equal in extent. See I John 5:6,8; Rom. 8:28-31; Eph. 1:3-14; and I Pet. 1:2. The Father's election, the Son's redemption, and the Spirit's sanctification are all particular. We must point men to the God of the Scriptures, not an Arminian interpretation of the Living God. There is a God of confusion, for what the Father has desired the Son only partially accomplished, and the Spirit's stirrings in men's hearts are hit-and-miss.

Regarding especially the

work of the Son, we must understand that He is not greater or lesser than the Father (does not accomplish more or less than the Father). The Son has equal honor with the Father. (John 5:23) The Son redeems only those given Him by the Father. (John 17:6,9,10) In other words, He cannot redeem more than the Father elects. The "Lamb's book of life" demonstrates that the number of the Father's elect is identical with the number that Christ redeems. Finally, Christ redeems no more than the Spirit sanctifies. (I John 5:6,7) "Christ's oblation is not of larger extent than the Spirit's operation."⁶

The Bible's emphasis is on the completeness and sufficiency of Christ's atoning work, not man's deciding vote. The universalistic, Arminian position makes a mockery of sovereign grace and manipulators out of evangelists. Preaching with understanding of God's particular atonement will overflow with joy in the God who accomplishes surely what He sets out to do!

4. *Irresistible Grace*

Understanding this helps preach a full gospel. "The Holy Spirit never fails to to bring to salvation those sinners whom He personally calls to Christ," Paul T. Murphy explains.⁷ The first implication of this statement is that faith and repentance are divine

PRACTICUM

TEACHING EVANGELISM

by Albert Cook

Every Bible-believing church is interested in evangelism. Our Lord has instructed us to go into all the world and teach the gospel to everyone. The early Church was persecuted, and as they fled for their safety they shared the way of salvation every place they traveled. The great first century export from Jerusalem was the gospel.

It has taken generations, but there is a sense in which our own salvation is part of this continuing ministry. For most of us, someone told us the way to be saved and invited us to trust in Christ. The Holy Spirit blessed these words to a heart made receptive, and we passed from darkness to light, from death to life. Thanks be to God for the glory of His grace.

We, also, would like to be used of God to help others be saved. Our soul is willing. God has blessed us so much. Often we witness with zeal and matter-of-fact bluntness. God uses us to some degree, and we are pleased. It is not unusual for Christians engaged in evangelism to say, "I wish I knew how to present my message better." Turning to the Church, they say, "Teach us."

This is an awesome responsibility, but there can be no denying it: evangelism is one of the important ministries of the Church. God has given the Church leaders

for the equipping of the saints for ministry. We are to go into our community as Christians, to tell all that Jesus saves.

There are many ways of teaching evangelism in the Church. I have used Evangelism Explosion, the Four Spiritual Laws, the Romans Road, and just reading a passage like John 3. I know that these methods can be effectively used to teach evangelism, and with a little creativity, they can be modified to meet your theological position.

Here, then, are some practical points to consider in your church's

It is not unusual for Christians engaged in evangelism to say, "I wish I knew how to present my message better." Turning to the Church, they say, "Teach us."

evangelism teaching efforts.

Use the Gift of Evangelism

If at all possible, have the leader be one who has the gift of evangelism. He or she will love it, and inspire others by passion and example. If we lack such a gifted person, we must use the best we have out of a matter of obedience. Who knows, the Pastor with a

all men and adequate for the salvation of all, is freely offered to the acceptance of all, although in the secret purpose of God He intended that it should have precisely the effect which in experience it is found to have. He deigned in its adoption to save His own people, but consistently offers its benefits to all who are willing to receive them. More than this no anti-Calvinist can demand.¹⁰

Conclusion

Sinners do not come to Christ because they are convinced of their divine election. They come because they have sensed their own need and found the solution in Christ. They trust Him because of "the all-sufficiency and suitability of the Savior and the Savior's own word in the free overture of his grace."¹¹

By the same token, the witnessing Christian need not ascertain God's secret counsel of who may be the elect. Though some may scoff at the heavenly message, he remembers the word of God through the missionary Paul, "But thanks be to God, who . . . through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing; . . . in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God."¹² †

¹Only the Good Shepherd's sheep know and follow His voice; also see John 6:63-66.

²Cited from *Charles Spurgeon: The Early Years, 1834-1859*, p. 72.

³Matthew 22:14

⁴*The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, p. 286.

⁵Ezekiel 3:4-11

⁶Isaiah 1:16-18; 6:9, 10

⁷Exodus 3:18, 19

⁸Matthew 23:37

⁹Ezekiel 18:23

¹⁰Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II, p. 644.

¹¹John Murray, "The Atonement and the Free Offer of the Gospel," in *The Collected Writings of John Murray*, Vol. I, p. 84.

¹²II Corinthians 2:14-17

Book Questions?

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the WRS Journal.

gifts. Secondly it implies that the Gospel is not an option but a command. (Acts 17:30) Once again, the biblical emphasis is upon the work of the Spirit, not the work of man's will. "It is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13) The calling of the Spirit is not plaintive and timid but bold and confident. When He regenerates, man's will is truly free to return to his God! Far from violating the will, God's irresistible grace restores it to genuine ability, led by the Spirit to gain the narrow way. Never hesitate to preach God's grace—there is no salvation without it.

5. *Perseverance of the Saints*

Understanding this avoids "easy-believism." There is no distinction between being saved and being a disciple in the Scriptures. That is, there is no salvation without submission. Titus 3:7 says that "being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Such hope implies the necessity of preaching repentance. Perseverance does not mean that once saved, a person can then live unto himself and yet claim the blood and name of Christ with the full expectation of being eagerly received by the Savior in glory. To such persons, Christ has other words to say, "Depart from

Me, I never knew you." Our witness will be one that seeks to turn men to righteousness from evil. We will not water down the gospel so that it is easier for the wicked to swallow.

Further, understanding and properly employing the doctrine of perseverance will keep us from decisional evangelism. We know if people are of God by their actions, not their decisions. ("By their fruits you shall know them...")

To summarize our first principle then, I assert that without Reformed theology, evangelism is DE-formed! Do not fear to take up the standard and hold your ground. All too many believers approach evangelism letting what the world wants to hear call the shots. As a result, many who claim the name of Christ are no disciples at all. They are like the seed which fell on stony or thorny ground: they spring up quickly with only shallow roots, only to wither away into nothing when the Adversary comes.

We can cover our remaining principles in fairly short order. The second principle is to *be flexible!* Paul declared that he was "all things to all men" in his efforts to win others to Christ. (I Cor. 9:19-22) His discussion with the Athenians in Acts 17 on Mars Hill demonstrates forcefully that Paul was a master persuader. First, you have to know who your audience is, and Paul had them pegged

perfectly as intellectuals, philosophers, and people of position in Athens. He addressed them respectfully, and approached them on their own terms. If you only think of the gospel in terms that are natural to you, you will never be able to be flexible when faced with an audience outside of your experience.

Second, you have to be familiar with what your audience *knows*. Paul established common ground by speaking of the gods he saw on the way into the city, and by quoting their own poets to confirm his point in their minds. It was not the only proof he offered for his thesis, but it was effective to demonstrate that even their own thinkers instinctively understood that what he was saying was true. Don't be afraid to pull in current events, insights from pagans (pearls in sow's snouts!), and other appeals to a person's culture to demonstrate that what God has said is true and relevant to their hearts and lives.

Third, you have to be able to adjust to different people's needs. Don't operate from a script. If you only know one way to present the gospel, you're in trouble, because hardly anyone ever lets you just waltz them through your presentation without questions, objections, or comments that can throw you off-track. Operate rather from ideas that are firmly planted in your heart. If you are a genuine believer, you know what God can do in a person's life. Talk about Christ from your heart, not a list, and when objections come you will respond from the truths within you. The knowledge in your head will follow.

(These statements *do* imply that you are truly regenerated and that you have studied your Bible enough to have some knowledge.) If you think about it, you communicate this way every day. The way you explain an event you've experienced will vary from listener to listener, but the essentials are there and you don't panic that you might not get it right. It's the same in testifying of the good news of Jesus Christ.

The third principle is to *remember Who you represent!* Imaging God is not just a quality of the believer, but an action. (Jer. 6:27; Acts 22:15; I Peter 2:9, 10) As His representative, your mouth must be filled with His message. It is God's Word that saves, not yours. (I Tim.4:6, 7; Rom.1:16,17) We have authority because of Who God is, and only to the extent that we remain true to His Word. This principle acts as a check to going overboard on flexibility, a common problem among pragmatic religion. Being culturally relevant is useless if we lose sight of the good news!

The fourth principle is that *the gospel must consume you!* Aristotle wrote that there were three primary proofs for any given argument: *logos*, or factual information; *pathos*, or emotional appeals; and *ethos*, a person's character. He insisted that *ethos* was the strongest of all appeals, because what a person says is less important than who

A ship is in danger of sinking offshore. A man brings a rescue ship to take his family off their doomed craft. He invites the rest of the passengers to safety because his own ship is large enough for all. Still, many passengers refuse

*Inability does not
negate
responsibility.*

*Insufficiency does not
make the offer
[of the gospel]
any less sincere.*

safe passage because of their failure to appreciate their danger, or else because of personal enmity to the man. Their insufficient reasons do not make the offer any less sincere.

Biblical Examples

There are many biblical examples that show that God's warnings and pleadings are sincere. The real problem lies in the willful inability of sinners to respond.

God sent Ezekiel to rebellious Israel to plead the covenant, even though God tells him beforehand that they will not turn.⁵ Isaiah beseeches sinners in God's name, yet this very pleading only hardens their hearts.⁶ God tells Moses to go through normal channels of communication with Pharaoh despite the word from God that Pharaoh will not give heed.⁷

One of the clearest examples that shows God's sincere call to the wicked is Jesus' final appeal to Jerusalem.⁸ He plainly declares His desire to gather them to Himself as a hen does her chicks, yet they "would" not. Key to understanding this passage is the English word, "would." In Greek it is the word "desire." This verse uses the word twice in juxtaposition between its two subjects. In line with His invitation to "all ye that labor and are heavy burdened," Jesus desired them to come. However, they did not desire to come.

The true Calvinist admits that limited atonement does not erect a fence around proclamation of the gospel. God freely offers the gospel to all, but all do not come. The problem lies with the hearers, not with the offer.

The Gospel Is Freely Offered to All

While the universal offer of the gospel is God's means of gathering the elect, it still is freely offered to all mankind. God makes the gospel proclamation a genuine offer to all because 1) God takes no delight in the death of the wicked, but that they should turn and be healed,⁹ and 2) it addresses the universal need of sinners. The non-elect does not reject Christ under duress, but of his own will.

"According to the Calvinistic scheme the non-elect have all the advantages and opportunities of securing their salvation, that, according to any other scheme, are granted to mankind indiscriminately. Calvinism teaches that a plan of salvation adapted to

proffered only to the elect.

On the other hand, the Arminian, who has difficulty with the biblical doctrine of predestination, believes that God would not be fair or sincere to broadcast a gospel only for the elect's sake. Just the same, the Bible talks about the elect. Therefore the Arminian supposes that God does not ground election on His own initiative, but rather in man's choosing God. In his scheme election is not an eternal decree but is incidental to a sinner's conversion.

The popular Arminian view of election is that God chooses those whom He foresees will choose Him. This is a misunderstanding of the biblical doctrine of God's foreknowledge.

Even in the Arminian's misconception of foreknowledge there is no escaping what appears to be an insincere offer of the gospel. Why should God design a universal gospel appeal when He knows beforehand that certain souls will reject the good news? This belief in God's foresight does not keep the Arminian from sincerely offering the gospel to all.

We Cannot Indict the Universal Gospel

The gospel is designed for every soul in every condition. It is God's primary means of applying an atonement sufficient for all yet efficient only for the elect.

God is not unjust when He commands all to repent, although some will not and cannot turn to Him. Despite his total inability, the non-elect soul is still subject to the

laws of his Maker.

Should God give up the claims of His law upon the reprobate because sinners choose to live apart from Him? No, they are still responsible to obey His revealed will. As Lorraine Boettner explains, "If inability canceled obligation, then Satan with his inherent depravity would be under no obligation to do right, and his fiendish enmity toward God and men would be no sin. Sinners in general would then be lifted above the moral law."⁴

A soul's inability to respond to the gospel is a "self-acquired inability" resulting from the fall of mankind. Inability does not negate responsibility.

Analogies of the Free Offer

Boettner marshals several analogies to illustrate God's claims on the non-elect. Consider the following.

A draft dodger may shoot himself in the foot to escape military service, but he is still responsible to his government. He suffers twice. He must live with the miseries of his own rash judgment for this self-imposed disqualification, and he also must pay the penalty of the law.

After an attempted coup, a leader may offer general amnesty to his foes. The only condition is that they lay down their arms and live peaceably. Is God insincere in His offer of peace when sinners insist on continuing the battle? God offers favorable terms in good faith, yet He does not constrain all resistors.

he is perceived to be. (Which is why politicians can lie and get away with it.) What kind of person are you? I Corinthians 4:20 reads, "The kingdom of God is not in word by in power." Do you talk a good line, but fail to back it up with depth of character? Are you an imitation, or a real Christian? People can spot a fake quickly. As soon as such a person is under pressure the veneer wears thin, and the real person shines through. Very simply, if you don't really believe what you're saying, neither will anyone else.

Also, what do you know? Another way of asking this question is, how much do you study? Just as a salt-water well can't produce fresh water, neither can a dry well produce any water at all. Spurgeon used to speak of a water seller that he observed outside his hotel while on a preaching tour. On a daily basis the man took bucket after bucket of water from the town well to fill his water wagon. The man would then leave, only to return a short while later to repeat the process. Others would come to fill a bucket or two for their own use, but this man came again and again as he emptied his wagon. It dawned on Spurgeon that, in principle, the evangelist must take the same course as that of the water seller. Not only must you fill up with the living water for your own use from day to day, but you must also fill up enough to distribute to others. That means coming to the well of life frequently. Do you care enough to do so?

Speaking of caring, what is your desire? Jonah was only interested in what served himself best. He wanted

the wicked to get their just deserts, with no possibility of parole. Paul, on the other hand, held his own life in low esteem if he might be used of God to bring men to the Savior. Which example do you fit under?

Finally, who or what are you depending on? Do you pray? How? And how much? Does concern for the souls of others

If you don't really believe what you're saying, neither will anyone else.

burn within you to the point that you pour out your heart before God for them? Augustine's famous statement from a funeral sermon is appropriate here: "We weep for the body from which the soul has departed. How much more should we weep for the soul from whom God has departed?" You cannot do the work alone, nor can you depend upon men's techniques or efforts to accomplish God's task. Plead with Him, commune with Him, before you ever say a word about the gospel to others. Since we are to be ready to give an answer at any time of the hope that lies within us, that means "pray without ceasing!" Read again Paul Murphy's view of the Calvinist's compassion (above, p. 6) as an excellent summary of this fourth principle.

CONCLUSION

So what's stopping you? Far from granting you an excuse not to evangelize, our theology provides the greatest of motivating forces and the most powerful of messages. By God's grace, in His power, and with His Word, *let's get busy.* †

¹*Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, Downers Grove, IL:InterVarsity Press, 1961, p. 86.

²All Scripture quotations taken from the New King James Version of the Bible.

³For Paul's feelings about the souls of men, a brief look at Romans 1 and 9:1-3 makes it clear that Paul was driven by more than just fear of reprisal from God. He keenly felt an obligation to others. See also II Corinthians 5:10 and 11.

⁴"Reformed Evangelism: A Challenge to Faithfulness," *The Counsel of Chalcedon*, 11/91, p.18. I am indebted to Murphy's article as the framework for my own further development of the theme of Reformed evangelism.

⁵Ezekiel 18:19-29 is an excellent discussion of the Lord's justice as opposed to man's ideas of fairness. God's answer to Israel's whining was that every man would answer for his own conduct before God: "The soul that sins shall die." (vs. 4, 20)

⁶Christopher Ness, *Antidote Against Arminianism*, reprint ed., (Edmonton, AB, CAN:Still Waters Revival Books, 1988, p. 64).

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Letters to the Editor

**Questions?
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We want to hear from you! We intend *the WRS Journal* to be a forum for the development of opinion and interpretation among members of the Bible Presbyterian Church and our friends. If we're the only ones talking, however, our readers miss out on the broader base of knowledge available in our churches. So, *write* to us!

Our criteria for publishing a letter to the Editor are simple:

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Second, while you are welcome to disagree with our contributors, your letters should reflect Christian charity at all times as you express your opinions.

That's it! Please understand that we may have to edit your letter somewhat to conform to our space requirements. All letters received become the property of *the WRS Journal*.

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**THE FREE OFFER OF THE
GOSPEL IN THE LIGHT OF
DIVINE ELECTION**

by Christopher K. Lensch

Introduction

The Bible is clear—the salvation of God comes with no strings attached. The elect are saved by God's free gift of life in Christ. This is the Reformation doctrine of "salvation by grace alone."

As early as St. Augustine's battle with the heretic Pelagius, a debate has simmered in church history over whether God's gift of salvation is given to every soul or just to an elect group of God's choosing. In more recent times the Calvinist-Arminian debate has framed the debate in terms of "unconditional election" and "limited atonement."

The Problem

Occasionally there is confusion whether God's free salvation for some (the elect) is freely offered to all. The outward call of the gospel falls upon the ears of both elect and non-elect, but the non-elect spurn the good news. Only the elect ultimately respond because, in their case, the inward call of God's Spirit attends the audible proclamation.¹

Charles Spurgeon illustrated the revelation of the gospel this way. "The general call of the gospel is like the sheet lightning we sometimes see on a summer's evening—beautiful, grand—but whoever heard of anything struck by it? But the special call is the forked flash from heaven; it strikes

somewhere. It is the arrow shot in between the joints of the harness."²

God has ordained the preaching of the gospel to every creature as the means of calling His elect. But what of the many who are called but not chosen?³ Is it hypocritical for God and His messengers to give the gospel to the non-elect who will not come to Christ?

**Misunderstandings of
the Free Offer**

Two aberrant views misunderstand the free offer of the gospel. Hyper-Calvinism recognizes God's sovereign grace in salvation, but it is unbalanced. Focusing particularly on the elect, hyper-Calvinism diminishes God's compassion for all of mankind. It emphasizes the beginning and end of election so much that it neglects God's ordained means in the middle: the Great Commission. The hyper-Calvinist view cuts the nerve of evangelism.

A hyper-Calvinist believes that the gospel is meant only for the elect and is not legitimately offered

*Is it hypocritical for
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not come to Christ?*

to the non-elect. When Jesus bade His audience, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden....," a hyper-Calvinist maintains that this invitation is

Issues

The following questions seem likely to reappear:

(1) If an office, what are its qualifications? If these cannot be adduced from the NT, how could the church recognize and set apart men who by their gifts and aspirations were inclined thereunto.

(2) If an office, was it temporary? Many think so. For example, Lloyd-Jones reckoned "the evangelist was a man whose office was temporary, and as the churches were established and became more settled, this office likewise disappeared." (*Christian Unity*: 192) "I call this office 'extraordinary', because in duly constituted churches it has no place," Calvin wrote in the *Institutes* IV.3.4.

(3) If an office, to what extent has the church suffered by being delinquent to recognize it as such?

The church at Philippi contained "bishops and deacons" (1:1). Was it deprived of a full complement of officers?

(4) If a gift, is it sequestered to those regular officers within the church? (i.e. deacon, or more regularly, elder) Would it belong (in some degree) to all office-bearers or only to some especially endowed thereunto? And, if a special endowment, How are those so gifted within the regular offices to be formally recognized, there being no NT criteria?

If these questions cannot be answered by listening to the NT, listening to the "talkifications" of human deliberation is ill-advised, and Murray was right in his

resignation that "here is a moot question". Perhaps the problem lies not in the answer, but in the question. The query which limits the alternatives to that of office or gift is to blame. It would appear from its three instances in the NT, that *evangelist* was neither an office to be entered, nor an gift to be exercised, but a work to be performed. A work clearly contained within, but not limited to, the regular offices in the church.

Men differ in gifts, and only a relative few hold office, but every Christian may be called upon to "do the work of an evangelist."

The Man therefore looking upon Evangelist very carefully, said, Whither must I fly? Then said Evangelist, pointing with his finger over a very wide field, Do you see yonder Wicket Gate? ...go directly thereto, so shalt thou see the Gate; at which, when thou knockest, it shall be told thee what thou shalt do. So I saw in my dream that the Man began to run. . .crying, 'Life! Life! Eternal Life!' †

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PERSPECTIVES

WHY EVANGELIZE ROMAN CATHOLICS?

by John Battle

Today there is considerable confusion regarding our relationship to Roman Catholics. Are they truly believers? Is it possible for a Roman Catholic priest to be a true Christian? Can we have spiritual fellowship with the local Catholic church, even as we work toward the same moral goals in our community and society at large? Has the Roman Catholic Church changed from the old days, so that it now accepts the Bible as the only word of God, and salvation by grace through faith? Is it merely another Christian denomination, which we therefore should recognize?

Traditionally, Protestant Christians have considered the Roman Catholic Church to be apostate from the true biblical faith. Protestants have assumed that Catholics needed to be saved by faith in Christ alone, and then to separate from the Roman church and join a Bible-believing Protestant church. Many of our most active members are indeed former Roman Catholics, and they often have a great zeal to convert other Catholics. Is this attitude wrong? Today, influenced by the toleration found in the new evangelical movement, many Protestants and Catholics feel that such an attitude is misguided and unloving. This is a burning issue

which demands careful thought and study.

Believers in the Roman Church

First, it is possible for true Christians to be members of the Roman Catholic Church. This was true certainly in the time before the Reformation, and even during Reformation times. For example, both Luther and Calvin found Christ as their Savior while they were still Roman Catholics. Luther's "father in the faith," Johann Staupitz, was his superior in the Augustinian order, and remained a Catholic until his death. Since the Reformation, of course, there is the option for many Catholics to join Protestant churches. But even now, it is entirely possible for one to come to Christ through the study of Scripture or through someone's personal witness or other such means, regardless of the church to which he belongs. And it is possible for that person to remain in that church, even if it is the Roman Catholic Church, some apostate Protestant church, or even a cultic group. The person's level of understanding, strength of conviction, and surrounding circumstances all come into play. In the same way, it is possible for an unbeliever to be a member of an evangelical Protestant church. Many people are in churches to which they do not naturally belong. However, a true Christian should be growing in faith and

understanding; such natural growth normally will lead that person to obedience to God's word and the fellowship of a biblical church.

Non-Believers in the Roman Church

Second, while it is possible for a Roman Catholic to be a true believer, that is not the assumption we should make. We need to be guided by what the church officially teaches, not by the exceptions. We are not able to judge individual souls; God alone knows who is saved. But we can and must judge doctrine and practice. It is our duty to identify orthodox beliefs and heresies, and to form and maintain churches that are orthodox. True churches of Christ are identified by their submission to the word of God, their faithful preaching of biblical truth, their administration of the sacraments, and their exercise of church discipline. Churches which fail in these areas should be identified and avoided by Christian people. Members of churches which preach a false gospel should not be assumed to be Christians; rather, we should generally assume that people share the beliefs of their church.

Dealing with Catholics, one will find two major groups which indeed do need to receive the gospel of salvation. The first group is the vast number of "nominal Catholics." The Catholic church exercises great latitude in its membership. There are a few external requirements to belong to the Roman church; and many

people meet that minimum, are in good standing, and yet have very little spiritual interest at all. They feel that, as long as they passively submit to the church, they will be "taken care of." Of course, this faith is misplaced. The second group is those people who seek to follow and practice their church's teaching, and thus attain salvation. It is this second group about which we hear the most controversy. In order to know where they stand, we must examine their church's teaching regarding salvation.

Roman Catholic Doctrine of Justification

With the initial success of the Protestant Reformation, the Roman church responded in the sixteenth century with the Council of Trent, in which they solidified and codified their doctrines of salvation, especially contrasting them with those of Luther and the other reformers. This Council produced lengthy and detailed statements about the Catholic doctrine of salvation. In its Sixth Session it emphasized the relation of justification to faith. For them, justification was not an act of God's declaring the sinner righteous in his sight, but a process of making him righteous; therefore, they said, works along with faith are required for justification:

If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification, and that it is not in any way necessary that he

missionary is not a NT word.

The notion that *evangelist* is an itinerant "revivalist" hired to supplement a church's evangelistic emphasis, is adventuresome and without NT warrant.

Synthesis

The unresolved (perhaps unresolvable) question appears to hinge upon whether 'evangelist' is an office or a gift. That is, is it to be viewed as a recognized office or a recognizable gift. A third alternative would be that it is neither. Consider: (1) The multiplication of offices which have no footsteps in the New Testament has endangered both the church and those within it.

Warning against the historical accretion of ecclesiastical "offices" by Rome, John Owen cautioned;

Four things are required unto the constitution of an office:— 1. An especial trust; 2. An especial mission or commission; 3. An especial name; 4. An especial work. All these are required unto an office properly so called and constituted. . . .

If there be any office, let it be under never so glorious or so specious a title, if Christ hath not appointed that office by virtue of gospel ordinance and institution, there is a nullity in it,—it is no gift of Christ. . . . All the outward order and solemnity in the world, and all the holiness of persons, when engaging in such an office, cannot give it a right and title; because it wants the law of Christ for its foundation." (*Works*, Vol. IV:355, 436)

(2) Both normal and continuing NT offices (viz. deacon and elder)

are supplied with specific information, ie., qualification and recognition; evangelist is not. (See 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and 8-11.) Note: The two NT individuals stated to have functioned as evangelists, were, in fact, already holders of office (Philip, a deacon; and Timothy, presumably an elder).

(3) The Ephesian passage (4:8-12): [a] mentions gifts, but not offices ("he gave gifts," v. 8; "he gave some...." v.11). It is granted, however, that the gift may be the office. [b] Verse twelve directly respects not the conversion of sinners, but "the perfection of saints," which would obviate the specific thought of "missionary" labor. [c] "Prophets" cannot be identified in terms of NT office; and deacon, a regular office, is not mentioned. Even if this were a list of offices, it is not complete.

(4) Timothy is not told to enter the office of evangelist, but to do the work of evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5). "The ministry is described in verbs, not nouns: *Tend, feed*, not *be a pastor, hold the office of pastor*". (C.K. Barrett, *Essays* : 165-166)

(5) Where Paul alludes to a 'division of labor' within the office of elder, he mentions only teaching and ruling, not evangelizing. (1 Timothy 5:17). Lawrence Eyres, in his excellent work *The Elders of the Church*, e n u m e r a t e s several "areas of specialization" beyond the essential duties of teaching, praying, and ruling. Although the list is thorough and suggestive, a specialist in the area of evangelism is not mentioned.

EXEGESIS

THE OFFICE OF THE EVANGELIST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

by Tom Lyon

I looked, and saw a Man named Evangelist... he gave him a Parchment Roll, and there was written within, 'Fly from the Wrath to come.' (Pilgrim's Progress)

Evangelist: Office, Gift, Or...?

The term *Evangelist* has circulated in the Church's vocabulary for nearly 2000 years. That acquaintance, as is often the case, has made the word popular but left it technically undefined. When the archives of historical systematics and comment are searched, treatment of the term is occasional, seldom critical, and brief (if at all).

For example, John Murray, in a nine page article entitled "Offices in the Church," allows only one paragraph to the question, and concludes: "It would appear, therefore, that here is a moot question on which we are compelled to be indecisive." (*Collected Writings*, Vol. IV p.365)

Analysis

The data which can be brought to the question is this: First, *evangelist* (εὐαγγελιστής) is found but three times in the NT.

(1) Acts 21:8 — where Philip is surnamed "the evangelist";

pointing to his exploits recorded in Acts 8:5-13; 26-40. (His activities in the interim are not known.) (2) Ephesians 4:11—where evangelist is listed with other 'gifts' (viz. apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers) given by Christ to the Church. (3) 2 Timothy 4:5 — where Timothy is called upon to "do the work of an evangelist".

Second, historically, *evangelist* was employed reflexively to denote one who preached the gospel (εὐαγγελιστήν), and came to be understood as those who were the apostles' lieutenants (e.g. Timothy), carrying on their work after them. Not until the second century was the term applied to those who had written a "Gospel."

The notion that an evangelist is an itinerant "revivalist" hired to supplement a church's evangelistic emphasis is adventuresome and without NT warrant.

Notice that neither of those specifically related to the term in the NT (Philip or Timothy) authored Gospels.

Third, contemporary usage has tended to identify *evangelist* with *missionary* (i.e. one who carries the gospel beyond the borders of its previous acquaintance). It should be noted, however, that

be prepared and disposed by the action of his own will, let him be anathema. (Canon 9)

If anyone says that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and remains in them, or also that the grace by which we are justified is only the good will of God, let him be anathema. (Canon 11)

In these anathemas the Council of Trent mixed the true Protestant doctrines with some heretical ones opposed by the Reformers as well. But in any case, they made it clear that the biblical doctrine of justification through faith alone in Jesus Christ, apart from works, which follow justification, would not be permitted in the Catholic church. They therefore would exclude the faith of Paul, who said to Peter,

We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified. (Galatians 2:15-16 NIV)

Many Protestants have written since the Reformation, defending the vital biblical teachings of salvation by grace through faith alone, along with other Protestant doctrines; a fairly modern example in our own country is Lorraine

Boettner's *Roman Catholicism*. An excellent recent treatment and defense of the Protestant doctrine of justification is a collection of essays edited by Don Kistler, *Justification by Faith Alone* (Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1995; essays by John MacArthur, R. C. Sproul, Joel Beeke, John Gerstner, and John Armstrong).

How Has the Church Changed?

However, Roman Catholics today claim that the church has changed much since Reformation times, and that the traditional criticisms against it no longer apply. European Catholic theologian Hans Küng, on the eve of the Second Vatican Council, strongly presented this case in his book *The Council, Reform and Reunion* (1961; it is interesting to note that the book was highly praised on its dust jacket by the liberal Episcopalian bishop James A. Pike). However, in the area of personal salvation, Küng concurs with the formulas of Trent; he states, "The decree on justification, which is the glory of the Council, accepts what is valid in the Reformers' position to a surprising degree" (p. 78).

There was no significant change when Vatican II met in the 1960's. The decrees of that council still required works along with faith for justification. The recently published massive *Catechism of the Catholic Church* likewise defends the traditional Roman teaching, referring to the Council of Trent for authority (Libreria

Editrice Vaticana, Liguori Publications, 1994, No. 1987-2029). Pope John Paul II heartily approved this catechism, as "indispensable, in order that all the richness of the teaching of the Church following the Second Vatican Council could be preserved in a new synthesis and be given a new direction" (*Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, p. 164). In spite of this "new direction," the old Roman doctrines still predominate. It is important for us to realize that this new catechism also still teaches that our faith should come not from the Bible alone, but from the Bible and church tradition:

The Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, "does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 82; quoting from the Vatican II statement *Dei Verbum*)

To further confuse the issue, the current pope, John Paul II, is an attractive and intelligent theologian who is seeking to emphasize the similarities of the Roman Catholic Church to other churches, and even other religions. His book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1994) is a personal testimony to his own faith and thoughts as pope. In it he also explains his opinions about salvation, the world at large, and

the various major movements of thought and religion, including Protestantism, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism. The pope writes with skill and diplomacy. While not denying Catholic dogma, he does seem to indicate that all these people are in a positive relation to God. One example is his statement concerning his childhood memories of a Jewish friend in Poland: "Both religious groups, Catholics and Jews, were united, I presume, by the awareness that they prayed to the same God" (p. 96). This statement contradicts that of Jesus, when he declared that those who do not recognize the Son do not recognize the Father either (John 5:23).

John Paul II's recent papal encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (English translation *The Gospel of Life*, Random House, 1995) illustrates the modern Roman Catholic approach to salvation and the gospel. The major thrust of the proclamation is the defense of human life as a divine right and its preservation as a human duty. Evangelical Christians can heartily agree with much in this encyclical, such as its strong opposition against abortion and euthanasia; however, not all would agree with his opposition to any form of contraception or his opposition to the death penalty for criminals. But his strong stand against abortion, especially, puts many Roman Catholics alongside of evangelical Protestants in the current social and political conflicts in America and Europe. For this reason, we must be careful

not to let down our guard and compromise in the more important area of the gospel message itself, for spiritual life far outweighs physical life. Carefully reading the encyclical, one will find many statements which are true in themselves, yet, of course, there is an absence of a clear statement of the gospel of salvation through faith in Christ alone. The pope accepts the documentary hypothesis about the book of Genesis (referring to the "Yahwist account" in Genesis 2, as distinct from Genesis 1; *E.V.* 35), showing his agreement with modern critical scholarship. When he discusses the spiritual life promised in the gospel, he ties it in closely with the Catholic sacraments ("the waters of Baptism" in *E.V.* 79 and "the Sacrament of Reconciliation" in *E.V.* 99). At the same time we see a universalistic tendency in such statements as these: "[The Gospel] is the proclamation that Jesus has a unique relationship with every person, which enables us to see in every human face the face of Christ" (*E.V.* 81).

We Must Evangelize Roman Catholics

It is clear that one can say many things about God, Christ, and the gospel, which are true as far as they go. But that does not constitute one as a Christian in the biblical sense. Each of us is called upon to believe personally in Christ, to trust in him alone for justification, adoption, and sanctification. The Roman

Catholic Church includes a wide spectrum of belief, along with various degrees of superstition. It recognizes its traditions as equal to Scripture, and denies the doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone. Many of its teachings and practices continue to contradict Scripture. In addition, the Roman church in our day is deeply influenced by modern critical scholarship and by universalism. Those Catholics who follow their church's teachings still need the gospel of Christ, and any who are saved in that church need to honor the gospel by joining a church that clearly preaches it. Evangelical Christians need to renew our efforts to reach Roman Catholics with the true, simple gospel, and to encourage them to leave that communion. We do not view this as evil proselytizing, but as obedience and loyalty to our Savior. †