



the
WRS Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

February

**This Issue: *A Frank Critique of the
Modern Ecumenical Movement***

EDITOR'S NOTES, *inside cover*

EXEGESIS

The Doctrine of Separation as Taught in 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1, page 1
Dr. John E. Janbaz, San Bernardino, California

HISTORY

Impressions and Implications from American Presbyterian History, Part 1, page 8
Dr. Victor Hall, Pastor of Outreach, Bible Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, NC

ANALYSIS

Cooperative Evangelism and the Doctrine of Separation, page 21
Mr. Brad Gsell, Elder, Bible Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, NC

Update on the National Association of Evangelicals, page 25
Rev. Christopher Lensch, Registrar and Assistant Professor of Old Testament

The End of the Road: Apostasy of the NCC and WCC, page 28
Dr. John Battle, President and Associate Professor of New Testament

A Survey of Prevailing Conditions, and a Prospectus for our Times, page 33
Rev. Tom Lyon, Adjunct Faculty in Greek

PROCLAMATION

"Religious Separation," page 35
Dr. Mark Evans, Pastor, Hope Independent Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC

BOOKS

Beyond Promises: A Biblical Challenge to Promise Keepers (Excerpt), page 40
Mr. David Hagopian, J.D., and Rev. Douglas Wilson

*** **

**Next Issue: *Hodge and Princeton: A Bicentennial
Reminder of Our Roots***

WESTERN REFORMED SEMINARY
5 South G Street
Tacoma, Washington 98405
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Non-profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Tacoma, WA
Permit No. 741

Is Separation Biblical?

As the only minister in the Portland area community choir I belong to, I get asked questions about religion a lot. Many of the other members are church people of varying sorts, and they are genuinely interested in what I do. Not long ago I was asked what I meant by "separatist" when I used that word to describe our denomination. As I explained the biblical teaching, further questions came out: why can we not join hands with other "Christian" churches when that has been the practice of American churches time out of mind? what is the standard of union? (One of the questioners is a Unitarian.) does that mean you won't recognize anyone else as being a Christian? what about the Roman Catholics?

Well, these questions reflect the general misunderstanding of the doctrine of separation that characterizes the ranks of the Christian church. We hope this issue will clear up some of those misunderstandings. This is a special issue for several reasons. First, biblical holiness (separation), both personal and ecclesiastical, is a seminal issue for Bible Presbyterians and ought to be revisited every once in awhile. Second, we've added a new department to the *Journal* concerned with sermons and sermon-making. It's called "Proclamation." Look for ideas on how to present the Bible's truths in an effective way. Third, this is the first issue to which nationally-known authors have contributed their work. We hope you'll let us know what you think! If you need extra copies to pass out to friends, just ask.

To our new subscribers, welcome! We're glad you're with us! 📖

Subscription Information

The WRS Journal is published semi-annually, with issues appearing every Winter and Summer. Subscriptions are free, and multiple copies are automatically sent to the congregations of the Bible Presbyterian Church. We welcome other churches and individuals to join our readers: please write or call to be added to our mailings.

*** **

the WRS JOURNAL

5 South "G" Street, Tacoma, Washington 98405

(206) 272-0417

WESTERN REFORMED SEMINARY

*"Standing for the Principles of the
Protestant Reformation"*

Since 1983, Western Reformed Seminary has been proclaiming the truths of Reformation Christianity to students from the Pacific Northwest and the world. Taking our cue from old Princeton and the Scotch-Irish Presbyterian tradition, we staunchly adhere to the Westminster Standards, recognizing at the same time that "God is the Lord of the conscience." This attitude helps us maintain our Presbyterian perspective without alienating those from other traditions. Though initially founded as a school to train Bible Presbyterian ministers, WRS has become a resource for a wide variety of denominations which still desire to stand on the Word of God. Our programs are designed to train the student in practical as well as scholastic knowledge, that the student may be "thoroughly equipped to every good work."

"In Spirit and in Truth"



WESTERN
REFORMED
SEMINARY

*Please call or write for more
information
and a free catalog.*

*5 South "G" Street, Tacoma, Washington 98405
(206) 272-0417*

hypocrisy. The bottom line is that doctrine divides. It divides truth from error. Ideas have consequences. If you have the idea that you need to save yourself by what *you* do, it could have devastating eternal consequences. Someone who loves you would make it an issue.

Christians in times past unified around what they believed. Now we are called to unify around a common experience that we can share with thousands of others who may not believe that Christ is the only hope of salvation. What kind of unity is this, really? We do not believe it is the unity commended to us in the Bible. Unfortunately, Promise 6 requires us to blur certain distinctions which Scripture requires us to keep sharp.

In the end, those who refuse to embrace the true gospel are the ones who have separated themselves from the body of Christ. *They* are the ones who need to repent. *They* are the ones who need to be reconciled—first to God, and then, to their brothers, whether they be black, yellow, red or white. The only reconciliation possible is on the rock solid foundation of the gospel. Any other foundation is sinking sand. 

¹ *Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper*, p. 8, 153.

² Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990), p. 113.

³ *SPPK*, p. 19

⁴ Christian Van Liefde, quoted in John Dart, “‘Promise Keepers,’ a Message to L. A. Men,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 6, 1995, p. B4

⁵ Mike Nelson, “‘Promise Keepers’ Promises Spiritual Renewal for Men,” *The Tidings*, March 31, 1995, p. 3, quoted in James Albert Dager,

“Promise Keepers: Mormons, Catholics Laud Men’s Movement,” *Media Spotlight*, vol. 16, no. 1, p. 1.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Letter quoted in “Promise Keepers Update: Mormons, Catholics Laud Men’s Movement,” *Media Spotlight*, vol. 16, no. 1, p. 1.

....

¹³ *The Awesome Power of Shared Beliefs*, (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1995), p. 22.

¹⁴ Quoted in *TAPSB*, p. 25.

¹⁵ *TAPSB*, p. 22.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 34-35.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

²⁰ Dart, John, “Promise Keepers, a Message to L. A. Men,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 6, 1995, p. B13.

²¹ *TAPSB*, p. 9.

Our thanks to David Hagopian and Douglas Wilson for allowing us to use part of their fine book for this issue of the WRS Journal.

—Editor

EXEGESIS

THE DOCTRINE OF SEPARATION AS TAUGHT IN 2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-

7:1

by John E. Janbaz

Dr. John E. Janbaz prepared this study in 1984 at the request of the moderator of the Bible Presbyterian General Synod. It is a small part of a large report studying the doctrine of separation. The report, with contributions from men throughout the Synod, was called for at a seminal time in the history of the Bible Presbyterian Church. The issues addressed by the report remain as important—and as controversial—today as they were almost thirteen years ago, and require the same kind of humble, intense, and prayerful study to deal with them properly. Dr. Janbaz’ effort is an appropriate starting point for this issue of the WRS Journal.

—Ed.

A WHOLE BIBLE PRINCIPLE

Second Corinthians 6:14-7:1 is the key Scriptural passage presenting in a capsule the biblical principles for the historic separatist position. Therefore it calls for a careful exegesis in order that we might understand grammatically and historically the teaching of this portion of God’s Word relative to separation and then apply these principles to our own lives and ministries.

The context of this passage is Paul’s dealings with the many problems in the Corinthian church, exhorting the believers to turn

away from idolatrous practices to a mode of life consistent with their profession, faith in Christ as their Savior. For example, 2 Cor. 5:17 reads, “Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” Verse 20 states, “Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ....” And 6:4 urges, “Giving no offense in anything, that the ministry be not blamed; but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God....” After this series of exhortations to a holy life in the midst of many trials, in our text the Apostle lays down the basic requirements for a life will-pleasing to the Lord.

However, this doctrine of non-fellowship with, or separation from, sin and unbelief is not only a New Testament teaching. The Spirit of God laid down the groundwork for this clear command for separation from sin and doctrinal impurity in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 7:1-11 is a key passage. First, in the second verse, the children of Israel are commanded to make no covenant of any type with the seven heathen nations of Canaan. No alliances or political treaties were to be made with the surrounding pagans. Also, see Exodus 23:31-33 and Judges 2:1, 2. Second, in verse three the Israelites were commanded not to intermarry with non-believers. Exodus 34:16 and Joshua 23:11-13 speak to this command also.

Third, in verse five, though we are not in our day to resort to the physical violence necessary then, surely the strong command here is that every Christian should not in any way, either by association or by silence, of both, encourage the founding or growth of any religious teaching or practice contrary to the revealed Word of God.

A COMPELLING ARGUMENT: 2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-16

Second Corinthians 6:14 simply states, “Be ye not unequally yoked together.” This command translates γινεσθε, a 2nd person plural imperative meaning “become not,” or “never let it happen,” in the sense of “God forbid!”—a strong exclamation from the verb γινομαι; and the present participle ετερζυγουντες, formed from the words ετερος, “another,” and ζυγος, “a yoke.”

The combined words used in the present participle could be taken as yoked with one of another yoke, since ετερος has to do with the difference in essence of a thing being compared, that is, it is “not of the same kind.” With γινεσθε, then, the thought is clear: do not seek an alliance with someone yoked to another, and if you are in such a yoke, do not continue in it. The yoke is indicated as being unequal if one party in the ζυγος is “unbelieving” or “without faith,” or in fact an infidel. We are instructed then not to be joined with those who are without faith, referring at this point primarily to

marriage, but introducing a much wider application to any situation where our faith is in danger of being compromised. When we study the seventeenth verse it will become evident that the command of verse fourteen cannot apply to marriage alone. The Apostle Paul now enlarges the application of the whole area of separation in terms of five contrasts, or antithetical propositions. Let’s now follow Paul’s argument step by step to its logical conclusion so clearly commanded in verse seventeen.

Proposition #1—“What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?” (14b)

μετοχη: “fellowship,” “sharing.” This is the only time this word is used in this form in the NT. Other forms of the word are translated “partakers” (Hebrews 3:14) and “fellows” or “partners” (Hebrews 1:9). The root of the verb is μετέχω, “to share in,” “to partake with.”

ανομια: “lawlessness,” or “iniquity.” The dative feminine singular form of ανομος, “without law,” “not subject to law.” Used of the Gentiles in I Corinthians 9:21. Used substantively in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 for the Antichrist, ο ανομος, “the Lawless One, the Wicked One.”

δικαιοσυνη: “righteousness,” or “justice.” The dative singular from the verb δικαιωω, meaning “to pronounce or treat as righteous,” “to show to be righteous.”

The Christian’s righteousness is a gift of God. Read Romans 5:17, 2 Corinthians 5:21. We have no

fears of those who believed it was compromising the gospel. So it sanctioned *The Awesome Power of Shared Beliefs*. But then the movement still continues to work with institutions that are avowed enemies of the gospel as defined in that book. Promise Keepers now has the best of both worlds. They have an answer for every critic—with one exception: the critic who points out inconsistencies. If the dividing line is as announced in *The Awesome Power of Shared Beliefs*, then it must be enforced across the board and down the line. If not, Promise Keepers must say so.

Drawing the Line

The problems caused by this type of compromise are not going to stop at the differences between Catholics and Protestants. Principles, or lack of them, can be applied in any number of situations. During the Promise Keepers 1995 conference in Los Angeles, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that “because of Promise Keepers’ interdenominational approach, attorney Chip Rawlings and fellow Mormon leaders...are urging members of the Latter-day Saints to participate in the movement.” Why? Because to Rawlings, “The movement’s ‘Seven Promises’ are like something straight out of the men’s priesthood manual for the [Mormon] church.”²⁰ Earning one’s salvation is evidently a crowd pleaser. The only question is whether it pleases God.

We wholeheartedly agree that Christians are not to squabble and fight over whether we should baptize with heads upstream or downstream. An emphasis on truth includes the truth that Christians are to love the

peace of Christ’s kingdom, and are to maintain a sense of biblical priorities. As Wagner himself put it,

We must be careful not to call people to an inferior cause. We need to stop championing causes that are divisive to the body; instead we must call people to a unifying cause, which is the proclamation of the gospel and the expansion of the kingdom.²¹

Absolutely.

But what is the gospel? And what is involved in the expansion of His kingdom? Do we shy away from controversy, say, over the deity of Christ, for example, because we might offend those, like the Mormons, who claim to be in the body of Christ but who deny that doctrine? Do we shy away from the doctrine of the Trinity? If not, why not? The answer is that we must speak where Scripture speaks. But if we must speak where Scripture speaks, then we must make sure that we are speaking *everywhere* Scripture speaks. We must not shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God, as Paul says in Acts 20:27. True integrity demands nothing less.

Besides, who is divisive? Those who teach false doctrine as gospel truth or those who correct false gospel with gospel truth? The answer which Scripture gives is the former, not the latter. If the heretic or errant brother can claim a soapbox why can’t the true believer correct him in love? Isn’t that what Priscilla and Aquilla did with Apollos? Even thought he was “mighty in the Scriptures,” he needed to be taken aside and have the way of God explained to him more accurately. Paul, too, was divisive when he corrected Peter and Barnabas in their

never for peace at the expense of truth, for unity which has been gained by means of such a sacrifice is not worthy of the name.”¹⁴ This is wonderfully stated. In this same book, Wagner goes still further by saying, “Unity is not an ecumenical endeavor to find the lowest common denominator among people even if it means denying cardinal doctrines such as the deity of Christ or the inerrancy of the Scriptures.”¹⁵ Amen.

But the practical application of this concept by Promise Keepers is quite different. Elsewhere, in the very same book, unity is described as ultimately being a matter of *relationship*. Unity is “being in relationship to one another.”¹⁶ “It is this idea of relationship that will bring us into unity.”¹⁷ No. It is truth that unites. It is truth that results in our relationships with one another in the body of Christ. It is the truth of the gospel that makes us brothers in the first place. We know certain facts to be true—that we are sinners, that Christ lived a life of perfect obedience for us and died in our place, that He rose again; we assent to or agree with those truths; and we trust in them for our salvation. Then, we are brought into relationship with one another. We can have no true fellowship with those who part from the core truths of the faith. Relationship is the result of unity, not the other way around.

Wagner argues that doctrine divides truth from error and unites us around the truth.¹⁸ He then gives the example of a friend who believes that we can be saved based on our good works and shows how he cannot be unified with him in this belief. We concur, but hasn’t Wagner just contradicted the official Promise

Keepers stance on fellowship with those who deny the doctrine of justification? On the one hand, Promise Keepers has affirmed the fundamentals of the faith, but on the other, they have stated that we must overcome denominational barriers—barriers which were created by a denial of these fundamentals. If Roman Catholicism is considered just another denomination, then this emphasis on primary truth is inconsistent. And if the truth on the primaries of the gospel cannot be compromised, then the stance toward Roman Catholicism is inconsistent. Promise Keepers cannot have it both ways.

Part of the problem regarding the Promise Keepers stand on unity stems from a misunderstanding of Matthew 18:15-17. Says Wagner,

If someone disagrees with us in one of the five fundamentals [the doctrines of Scripture, God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and Redemption] Matthew 18 comes into play. The so-called believer who does not hold to the truth is committing sin—specifically the sin of heresy—and therefore he or she must be put out of the local church fellowship and/or the denomination.”¹⁹

But can Wagner truly say that the Roman Catholic Church adheres to the five essentials as Promise Keepers has defined them in *The Awesome Power of Shared Beliefs*? We have a problem here. If Promise Keepers truly believes that the five truths articulated in *The Awesome Power of Shared Beliefs* are the dividing line, then it has acted inconsistently with that dividing line.

As we see it, Promise Keepers wanted to have an official position it could “point to” in order to calm the

warrant therefore to bring this righteousness, which is not our own but Christ’s, into an ungodly relationship, or partnership, with one who lives outside the law of God, and indeed, is not subject to the law of God. The sinless Son of God was made sin for us that we might receive His righteousness, and this, His righteousness, we must not compromise by being in partnership with lawlessness. There can be no stronger basis for separation from sin and unbelief.

Proposition #2—“What communion hath light with darkness?” (14c)

κοινωνια, dative singular from the verb κοινωνεω, “to have in common,” “to share, to associate, to associate one’s self with (by sympathy and assistance). This word (κοινωνια) is used in 1 Corinthians 10:16 by Paul in reference to the Lord’s Supper: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (κοινωνια) of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion (κοινωνια) of the body of Christ?” If anything, κοινωνια is a stronger word than μετοχη, indicating that our communion or fellowship is based upon the broken body and the shed blood of Christ and therefore should never be corrupted by an unequal yoke. The obvious truth is that light and darkness cannot possibly simultaneously exist in one person at any given time. Light and darkness are mutually exclusive.

φως, neuter noun from the verb

φαινω, “to shine.” The word is used in two ways:

1. Literally, “a light, a blaze of light” See John 11:9, Matthew 17:2. A source of light, Luke 22:56.
2. Figuratively, a light as an appellation of God. See I John 1:5. Also a symbol of truth and purity, especially the truth of Christ. See John 3:19-21. Used of Christ in John 1:7,8.

σκοτος, “darkness,” from verb (σκοτιζω), “to darken, shroud in darkness,” also used in two ways:

1. Literally, “in darkness”
2. Figuratively, in moral and spiritual darkness, and the meaning here is just that.

The light, Who came into the world, was rejected by man in preference for darkness, and therefore, as followers of the Lord, Who is the Light, we must not be found in communion with the darkness of sin and unbelief. See Romans 13:12 and 1 John 1:5-7.

Proposition #3—“And what concord hath Christ with Belial?” (15a)

συμφωνησις, nominative feminine singular, “agreement,” from the verb συμφωνεω, “to agree with, agree together.” Other derivatives of the verb include συμφωνια, “harmony” (of instruments in music), also translated “music” in Luke 15:25; and συμφωνος, meaning “harmonious,” or “agreeing with.”

See 1 Corinthians 7:5, “consent.”

Χριστος, a verbal adjective from Χριω, “the anointed one.” A proper name, its Hebrew equivalent is *Messiah*.

βελιαρ: “worthless, lawless.” The Devil personified, Judges 19:22. Just as the Lord Jesus Christ is the personification of righteousness (δικαιοσυνη), the Devil is the personification of iniquity (ανομια). See 2 Thessalonians 2:8.

Since it is not possible for harmony or agreement to exist between Christ, the Anointed of God, and Belial, the personification of the Devil, we, who are followers of Christ, cannot find agreement, or harmony, with those who are in agreement, or harmony, with the Devil in their unbelief and rejection of the historic Christian faith.

Proposition #4—“Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” (15b)

μερις: “a share, a portion.” This word is also used in Colossians 1:12, where Christians are called “*partakers* of the inheritance of the saints in light.” We are, as believers, shareholders in the household of the faith—a part of the body of Christ, the church invisible. There is a line of demarcation between those who are shareholders in God’s kingdom and those who are shareholders in the Devil’s kingdom, for what portion does one who has faith (πιστος) have with one who has no faith (απιστος)? The call for

separation here goes beyond marriage and things social into the realm of the religious and spiritual. An obedient Christian cannot be found in a religious yoke with one who denies the faith. A believer cannot be in fellowship with a non-believer on any spiritual basis. He can have no share nor portion with unbelief, or with a denial of any aspect of the fundamentals of the faith, based on the self-evident fact that Christ, the anointed Messiah, cannot be in agreement or in a harmonious symphony with Belial, the Devil.

Proposition #5—“And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” (16)

συγκαταθεσις, from συγκατατιθημι, “to set down together with, to be in alliance, to be in accord.” Again the Apostle is asking, “Is it possible for there to be an alliance, an accord, an assent between God’s holy temple in Jerusalem and the temples of the heathen gods?” The answer implied is, “Absolutely not!” No article is used here before ναω θεου, but the term is almost a technical one, and in the mind of the Apostle clearly expresses “the temple of God.”

Surely every Christian would say without a doubt that there can be no agreement between God’s house and the house of idolatrous worship. But in 1 Corinthians 3:16 also, we read that we, in application, are the temples of the living God. Therefore, we as God’s holy temples, should find no agreement with, or toleration for,

Questions About Unity

We began this chapter with a discussion of the nature of the gospel--the only possible foundation for biblical unity. Contrasted with this is the humanistic desire for unity—“c’mon, people now, smile on your brother”—which appears to be based on nothing more than our common humanity. Obviously, blacks and whites, Catholics and Protestants, evangelicals and Rotary Club members all share a common humanity. Consequently, the law of God requires that we treat one another as created in the image of God. But treating one another with the dignity which a common humanity requires, and treating one another as brothers in Christ are two entirely different things. The first is based upon the authority of God over creation, while the second is based upon the truth revealed in Christ in redemption.

Now Promise Keepers has clearly fallen into the trap of accepting a blurred humanistic vision of unity, rather than the unity *in Christ* which the Bible sets before us. This can be seen in how this year’s theme of “Break Down the Walls” is being promoted. As one Promise Keeper letter put it, the enemy which we must overcome is “racial and denominational distrust.” The language of Promise 6 is very similar. We are to reach past any “racial and denominational barriers” in order to achieve unity. Clearly, racial and denominational differences are being lumped

together, and we are urged to overcome them in the same way. But racial differences are God-given and part of His creation design, while denominational differences are the result of our sinfulness, ignorance, and shortsightedness.

Racial harmony is achieved when we learn to accept Christian brothers the way God made them. Denominational differences are to be reconciled by coming together to study the Scriptures (Acts 17:11), in a spirit that is willing to strive for “likemindedness” (Rom. 15:5; Phil. 2:2,20). Where denominational differences exist, they are to be removed as a result of one side, or the other, or both, *changing* in order to submit to the teaching of Scripture. We must affirm racial differences; we must never affirm our sinful disagreements. Doctrinal differences can and should be resolved through Bible study. But you could study the Bible until you turned blue, and that wouldn’t change your color..well, you know what we mean. Until we arrive at likemindedness, we should certainly not be disagreeable. And if this were all that Promise Keepers meant in Promise 6, there would be no difficulty. But much more is involved: the authority of truth.

This principle, as with so much else, *is* acknowledged at some points by some representatives of Promise Keepers. For example, Promise Keepers Vice President of Ministry Advancement, E. Glenn Wagner admits that “unity is not a oneness at the expense of the truth.”¹³ He even goes as far as quoting the accomplished Bible commentator, William Hendriksen, who, in expositing Christ’s prayer for unity in John 17, wrote, “Believers, therefore should always yearn for peace, but

faith alone is entirely at odds with the biblical position. Regardless of the personal standing of individual Catholics, the formal Catholic position must be formally rejected by any self-professing evangelical organization, movement, or institution. Through explicit statements, such as those given above, and the policy of accepting Catholics as simply members of “just another denomination,” it seems clear that Promise Keepers as an institution is not willing to take the stand that doctrinal integrity requires.

At best, the stand Promise Keepers has taken is the result of doctrinal confusion. At worst, it is the result of conviction—a conviction that salvation by faith alone is a peripheral doctrine. In either case, whether it stems from a deep-seated confusion or an erroneous conviction, the men involved with Promise Keepers are effectively hindered in fulfilling Promise 1. Recall that Promise 1 speaks of “honoring Jesus Christ through worship, prayer, and obedience to God’s Word”—the very thing Promise Keepers renders impossible by its own doctrinal compromise. Justification by faith alone is the heart of the gospel, and one of the central teachings of Scripture, and it is this truth which sets us free to study and understand the rest of God’s Word. Not only is this gospel true, it is declared at the point where we enter into all truth. “Behold the proud, his soul is not upright within him; but the just shall live by his faith” (Hab. 2:4).

In order to obey the gospel, we must first understand it. “For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God: and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of

those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Pet. 4:17). Paul says something very similar when he refers to those who will be judged because they “do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 1:8). In Scripture, if we truly believe the gospel, we will obey the gospel.

But we cannot obey the gospel if we have not heard and understood it. As we showed earlier, a proper understanding of the gospel is not natural to the natural man. In order to understand the saving gospel, it must be declared faithfully, clearly, plainly, bluntly, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. “And how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom. 10:14).

Jesus Christ cannot be honored through a disobedient or confused approach to the knowledge of His Father. Because of Christ’s perfect obedience, a sinner may come to the Father through the instrument of faith alone. But if he confuses the obedience of Christ with his own obedience through faith, then he has confused the difference between grace and works. And that confusion, the Bible tells us, is eternally fatal.

By blurring the central doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone on account of Christ alone, Promise Keepers has tragically obscured and confused the way to the Father. And because Promise Keepers’ theology of vertical reconciliation with God is flawed, so is its theology of horizontal reconciliation with man. We will never be able to effect true vertical reconciliation since the latter is the basis of the former. Without being reconciled to God by grace alone through faith alone on account of Christ alone, we can never be truly reconciled to one another.

the godless idolatry being practiced in the eucumenical heathen temples of our day. Then in the last part of verse 16, he presents a blessed promise for those who agree with God’s Word in recognizing the clear line of separation in the five antithetical questions just proposed. Citing Leviticus 26:12, he assures the separated believer of a closer walk with the Lord who promises to dwell in us, to walk in fellowship with us, to be our God, and, finally, to give us the blessed joy of knowing that we are His people.

A COMMAND WITH PROMISE: 2 CORINTHIANS 6:17 & 18

“Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing. . . .” (17a, b)

Knowing man’s proclivity towards disobedience and knowing that some of the Corinthian Christians were in an unholy alliance, Paul’s next statement in conclusion is a clarion call for separation from any form of religious unbelief and sin. Any denomination that has officially denied one of more of the fundamentals of the historic Christian faith can legitimately and Scripturally be viewed as an idolatrous temple. Paul does not call for schism from the invisible church but from the idolatry and impurity of his time. He deals with the erring brethren in other epistles. In this passage he deals with unbelief and impurity with the clear-cut command for separation.

Let us be certain, however, that this verse cannot be applied to a believing wife married to an unbelieving husband and vice-versa. Paul has previously dealt with this problem in 1 Corinthians 7:13-15. Please read. Clearly, 2 Corinthians 6:14 is a command for Christians not to intermarry with non-believers, but the rest of the passage reveals how untenable it is for any Christian to be in a yoke with godless religious individuals or organizations, such as the eucumenical churches and councils of our time.

ἐξέλθετε, second person plural imperative from ἐξέρχομαι, “to go away,” to depart,” “to go forth.” Here a command, “Depart ye.” It clearly means that the believer must depart, in obedience to God’s command, from the company and fellowship of any so-called religious organization that is not committed to doctrine and practice to the historic Christian faith once delivered unto the saints.

ἐκ μεσους αυτως, “out of their midst,” “out of their gathering,” with preposition ἐκ, “from among them.” For separation in the OT please read Psalm 1:1. In Isaiah 52:11 we read סרר, סרר, second person imperatives from סר, translated here, “Depart ye” (repeated for emphasis) or “go ye out from hence.” Verse 17 of our text is remarkably similar to this verse in Isaiah. If not a quotation, surely a citation from the passage in which Isaiah, in the midst of a Messianic section, calls upon Judah to depart and have no fellowship with the unbelieving

Gentiles (called unclean and uncircumcised).

αφορισθητε, second person plural imperative, from αφορίζω, “to separate from.” Here translated, “be ye separate,” i.e., “in a separated condition.” God commands us to take definite action and a stand in relation to unbelief and compromise. It is a call to depart from it, if we are indeed in it, and to remain in a separated condition from it, in obedience to God’s Word. This is a command. There are no options.

The religiously and morally unclean (ακαθαρτος, “impure;” see Acts 10;14 and Ephesians 5:5) is not even to be touched, let alone embraced. In fact, Ephesians 5:11 clearly states that not only are we not to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but we actually are to bring them to the light (ελεγχω, “to convict,” “refute,” “reprove”) so that they might be exposed lest others stumble in spiritual darkness.

“And I will receive you. . .” vs. 17c

εισδεξομαι, future indicative from εισδεχομαι, “I will receive you with favor.”

In obedience to God’s command for separation from sin and unbelief, we have the assurance of a joyful reception into His fellowship with His blessing and favor.

“And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” (18)

As a reward for our obedience

we not only find fellowship with Him, but actually enjoy a closer family relationship as obedient children as we read in Romans 8:17, “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be glorified also together.” This promise of a very close family relationship between us as obedient children and our heavenly Father is irrefutable, for it is made to us by the Lord Almighty.

A SIMPLE APPLICATION:
2 CORINTHIANS 7:1

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

This verse is properly the conclusion and application to ourselves of the passage in the previous chapter. Paul now concludes that in view of these promises (επαγγελιας)— the promise to dwell in us, to walk with us, for Him to be our God, and we to be His people, climaxed with the promise that He will be our God and Father—we must then obey God’s command and live separated from worldliness and unbelief. This passage concludes with a strong exhortation to obedience. As Christians who enjoy these blessings (2 Cor. 4:7, 14; 5:17, 21; 6:17, 18), we must cleanse ourselves (καθαρίζω, “to cleanse,” “render pure”) from filthiness (πολυσμος, “pollution,”

we are not maintaining that all Catholics are unregenerate. We are convinced that many members of that communion have been converted while in her midst. They are in good company. The same can be said of Wyclif, Hus, Luther, and Calvin, just to name a few. The issue is not *individual* Catholics, but rather, the formal stand taken by the institution of the Roman Catholic church itself, repudiating the gospel and cursing those who understand and embrace it. Therefore, the duty of those Catholics who have come to saving faith is to leave that church as soon as they possibly can. Further, it is the duty of all confessing Protestants to encourage and aid them as they leave. The position taken by Promise Keepers is not merely that individual Catholics can be regenerate. If that were the issue, there would be no controversy. The problem is the formal position of the Catholic church, that of repudiating the gospel, and the formal position of Promise Keepers accepting that church as a Christian church regardless.

Given Promise Keepers’ position, it is not surprising that Roman Catholic leaders have supported the movement wholeheartedly. Assuaging any possible fear that Promise Keepers is out to proselytize Roman Catholics, one priest in the Los Angeles area was recently quoted by *The Los Angeles Times* as saying that “Promise Keepers places a very strong emphasis on returning to your own church congregation or parish and becoming an active layman.”⁴ This same priest was previously quoted in the official newspaper of the Los Angeles Archdiocese, *The Tidings*, as commending Promise Keepers

because “(t)here is no attempt at proselytizing or drawing men away from their faith to another church.”⁵ *The Tidings* thus endorsed the Promise Keepers movement and encouraged Roman Catholic men to attend the Los Angeles conference in 1995:

Promise Keepers is a basic program of evangelization for men of faith, begun among more fundamentalist and evangelical Christian communities, but now being expanded to include Catholic congregations.⁶

Months earlier, Cardinal Roger Mahoney of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, had written that he was “very interested to know how the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and I could be of assistance in the fuller promotion of Promise Keepers” and said that he “would be open to any suggestions...[regarding] an expansion of the Promise Keeper concept among our Catholic men.”⁷ Since then, Roman Catholics have been involved promoting Promise Keepers in many states. Quite a few of the many “Wake Up Calls” sponsored by Promise Keepers have featured the Roman Catholic clergy as key speakers, as though the Roman Catholic church were just another denomination. Even then, however, Promise Keepers plays down denominational differences.

In the end, the official Promise Keepers position calls us to transcend and overlook the barriers between Catholics and Protestants. By so doing, Promise Keepers calls us to transcend and overlook the gospel.

The Heart of Reconciliation

The formal position of the Roman Catholic church on justification by

proclaimed by classical and orthodox Protestants. Are we saved on the basis of the goodness of Christ alone, received through the instrument of faith alone? Or are we saved by the goodness of Christ in combination with other efforts and decisions?

In the sixteenth century, the Roman Catholic church held an ecumenical council which is known as the Council of Trent. During this council, the Roman Catholic church unambiguously repudiated the gospel of justification by grace alone through faith alone on account of Christ alone. In fact, it pronounced anathemas on anyone who believed it: "If any one saith, that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake; or, that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified: let him be anathema [cursed, ed.]"²

The issue was whether or not the ground of our salvation is the righteousness of Christ alone, and whether or not we receive His righteousness by and through the instrument of faith alone. The ramifications of this doctrinal disagreement were and are immense. Nothing less was at stake than fidelity to the gospel itself. In the years since Trent, the Roman Catholic church has done nothing which modified her horrifying repudiation of the gospel.

Properly understood, it was not the Protestants who separated themselves from the church, but rather, the Roman Catholic church which separated itself from the gospel and hence, from the church.

Unequally Yoked?

But what does all this have to do with Promise Keepers? Promise

Keepers plays down the rift between Protestants and Catholics, treating it as unimportant. Jack Hayford, in *Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper*, for example, says, "Whether your tradition celebrates it as Communion, Eucharist, the Mass, or the Lord's Supper, we are all called to this centerpiece of Christian worship."³ Hayford has reduced the centrality of the cross to a matter of personal preference: you may like chocolate, and I may like vanilla, but we all call it ice cream.

In an address at more than one Promise Keepers conference, the founder of Promise Keepers and former Roman Catholic, Bill McCartney, said, "Now hear this. Promise Keepers doesn't care if you are a Catholic. Do you love Jesus? Are you born of the Spirit of God?"

Promise Keepers could not make these claims if it believed that the doctrinal issues traditionally separating Protestants from Catholics are central. This means that classical Protestants who still believe the gospel is central, are excluded from Promise Keepers based on the stand Promise Keepers has taken. In other words, unity is possible between Catholicism and Promise Keepers, but is impossible with convinced Protestants as long as Catholicism separates itself from gospel truth. We are not trying to strain at gnats here, but we must see that this is not a dispute over whether the choir should walk up the left or right aisle—this question concerns the very definition of what it means to be a Christian. However, Promise Keepers is treating the differences between Protestants and Catholics as just another "denominational" difference.

Even while we object to the false unity promoted by Promise Keepers,

"defilement") of the flesh (σαρξ, i. e., "outer man") and the spirit (πνευμα, "inner man," i. e., spiritual, unbelief), perfecting (επιτελουντες, present participle from επιτελεω, "to perform," "to bring to a completion," i. e., the continuous process of sanctification) holiness (from verb αγιαζω, "to set apart") in the fear of God, as day by day we die unto sin (of the flesh and the spirit) and day by day we are made alive unto

“Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”

Ephesians 5:11

Letters to the Editor

Questions? Comments? Thanks? Rebuttals?

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. So, please, *write* to us!

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

First, your letter must include your name, address, phone number, and signature. Unsigned letters will not be published.

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

Please understand that we may have to edit your letter somewhat to conform to our space requirements. All letters become the property of *the WRS Journal*. Please mail to:

Letters to the Editor
the WRS Journal
5 South "G" Street
Tacoma, Washington
98405

E-mail:

HISTORY

IMPRESSIONS FROM THE HISTORY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CONTINUING CHURCH IN THE BIBLE PRESBYTERIAN SYNOD (PART 1)

By Victor Hall

It is unusual for us to run a multi-part series, since each issue stands on its own. However, we deem the information in this extended article to be vital for understanding the ecumenical movement today, especially in the Presbyterian Church. Part 2 will appear in the August 1997 issue. —Ed.

“. . . be it resolved, that this General Synod, conscious of human frailty and weakness, but in humble dependence upon God alone, declares its firm intention to maintain, until our Lord appears in glory, the spiritual succession and witness which has been so tragically abandoned. To that end we earnestly pray the Great Head of the Church to give grace and strength for this task which is inescapably laid upon us by simple loyalty and by love for Him.”

Resolution passed by the First General Synod of the Bible Presbyterian Church, 1938.

AN EVANGELISTIC MISSION

It is difficult to underestimate the place of leadership and influence that was filled by the Presbyterian church

in shaping the religious life of our country. This was due to the clear defining of the doctrine and government of the church and to its relationship to civil government. The former preserved the church from the insidious errors which were already, before the end of the seventeenth century, emanating from the European continent; the latter delivered it from the interference and control of the secular state which was so destructive to the spiritual life of the church in England.

The church thus grounded and liberated became the most potent force in shaping the cultural and social character of the emerging nation. God, in His providence, used the oppressive government of Great Britain to drive the men with the strongest convictions of Calvinistic doctrine and commitment to the Presbyterian form of church government from Britain to find refuge and freedom in the American colonies. This large immigration of mostly Scotch and Irish Presbyterians established their places of worship, swelling the number of churches leading to the establishment of Presbyteries and the erection of the first Synod in 1716. The number of Scotch-Irish immigrants continued to grow unto by 1740 there were tens of thousands in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. After the great revivals under Whitefield and Edwards, these Presbyterians became a great wave of church planters as they spread westward and southward building their churches, erecting new Presbyteries and bringing their influence into the life and institutions of the

with whom we must be reconciled.

He is good, and we are not. In our own nature, we are dead in our trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1-2). Apart from Christ's intervention, we are slaves to our sinfulness (Rom. 6:6). As natural men, we cannot even understand spiritual things (I Cor. 2:14), much less trust in them for salvation. Paul teaches that the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. This is indeed a desperate situation. The cross is our only hope of salvation, and apart from Christ, that message is foolishness to us (I Cor. 1:18). Without God and without hope in the world, our situation apart from God is utterly desperate. We need a Savior, and the Bible teaches that salvation is found in Jesus Christ alone.

Now the exact meaning of this word *alone* is very important. Not only does it mean that there are no Saviors *in addition* to Jesus Christ, it also means there are no Saviors *in combination with* Jesus Christ. As evangelical Christians, we reject the idea that salvation is found apart from Christ; our Lord is not one of four available Saviors. But also as evangelical Christians, we should reject the idea that Christ needs help in saving us since He also is our salvation. Because Christ alone is our salvation, we can say that salvation is all of grace. And grace, by its very nature, does not combine at all with any human effort or work. As Paul put it, "And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work" (Rom. 11:6).

This is the biblical message. The grace found in Jesus Christ does not mix with anything else. The ground of our salvation is the person and work of Christ alone. Now as we look at church history, we see many attempts to subvert or twist this message so that it is no longer the biblical good news, the gospel message which saves.

Some such attempts at twisting the message have had more success in deception than others, and of course none of them has been completely honest in the advertising. No one comes to the front door, hands you a tract, and says, "Hello, I am here representing my father the devil, and I would like to share a false gospel with you." Rather, these subversions of the gospel have regularly come in the name of Christ. "For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:14-15).

As shown above, a doctrine central to the Christian faith is the truth that we are saved by faith, on the basis of the goodness of somebody else. Faith is the instrument of salvation, and the cross of Christ, its ground. To reverse this emphasis is to subvert the gospel. This reversal says we are saved by Jesus Christ on the basis of our faith. But the great Reformer, Martin Luther, said that the proper understanding of justification by faith alone is the mark of a standing or falling church. This issue, this point of division, was one of the central points of controversy in the Reformation of the sixteenth century. As a result of this controversy, the gospel was recovered, and clearly

BOOKS

BEYOND PROMISES: A BIBLICAL CHALLENGE TO PROMISE KEEPERS

(Excerpt)

by David Hagopian and Douglas Wilson

[Editor's Note: The following article is adapted with permission from *BEYOND PROMISES: A BIBLICAL CHALLENGE TO PROMISE KEEPERS* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1996). *BEYOND PROMISES* takes a balanced look at the Promise Keepers movement, applauding what it has done well and pointing out where, in the movement's own language, it needs to "raise the standard" in the days to come. The book is divided into four parts. Part One ("At Its Best") commends the movement for what it has done well and responds to unfounded criticisms of the movement. Part Two ("Some Causes for Concern") raises several general concerns with the movement. Part Three ("Promises, Promises") examines the now-famous seven promises. And Part Four ("Beyond Promises") challenges the movement and its followers, to move beyond human promises to the only Promise Keeper there ever was—our Lord Jesus Christ. To order a copy of the book, please call 1-800-488-2034.]

Chapter Fourteen: Breaking Down the Walls—Promise 6

A Promise Keeper is committed to reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity.¹

In order to be right with anyone or

anything else, men must first be right with God. In order to be biblically "unified" with others, we must first find unity and peace with God. But how can a man be right with God? This question is really at the heart of the Christian faith—the good news of the Christian message—which, as we have seen, addresses this question directly.

But this same question also reveals a significant problem with how Promise Keepers seeks to communicate this gospel message. In this chapter, we will look first at the gospel message itself, and then the problems this gospel message causes for the vision of racial and denominational unity sought by Promise Keepers in Promise 6.

Start Spreading the News

As Christians, we are called to spread the good news of the gospel. But what is that good news? We might classify two types of good news. The first is good news out of the blue—when one inherits an unexpected but vast fortune, for example. But the second kind of good news depends upon a previous understanding of some kind of bad news. The Greek word for gospel literally means "good news," but it is good news which falls in this second category. Just as a man cannot understand the good news of a governor's pardon if he does not understand himself to be on death row, so we cannot understand salvation from sin if we do not understand our own sinfulness. The Bible teaches that this understanding of sinfulness comes only from the law of God (Rom. 3:20; 5:20). The law is a perfect reflection of the character of a holy God—the God

developing territories of the new country.

The church was prepared for this evangelistic mission by two important events: The Adopting Act of 1729 which required all ministers to subscribe to *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, and the great revivals, generally known as "The Great Awakening" of 1740-45. The former erected the walls guarding the doctrinal standards and integrity of the ministry and perhaps even more importantly setting the agenda for the religious training in the schools that were to be established as the church spread throughout the advancing frontier. The latter event, the great revivals, awakened a renewed devotion to the duties of godly living and a zeal for winning the lost to Christ.

This preparation was not without its opposition. There were some who objected to the Adopting Act saying that "Such required subscription [to the Westminster Confession] was a violation of the right of private judgment [conscience] and inconsistent with Christian liberty and true Protestantism."¹ Others feared it would be divisive, requiring a narrow view of Christian doctrines to which many could not subscribe, and objected on that ground. It required two full years prior to adoption of the Confession to allay the fears and overcome opposing arguments and then, after the adoption in 1729, it required seven more years of discussion to overcome the scruples and questions of some and gain full support of the Presbyteries. In regard to "The Great Awakening," disagreement over welcoming and participating in it ultimately led to an open schism that lasted 17 years (1741-1758). Such was the travail of

our forefathers which ultimately resulted in the establishment and propagation of a truly Presbyterian church in the United States of America.

This was the church that was to provide the dominant leadership in the establishment of a great part of the most influential and prestigious religious and cultural institutions of our early history. Benjamin Rice Lacy, Jr., in his book *Revivals in the Midst of the Years*, quotes a historian of Old Redstone Presbytery as stating, as concerning the early Scotch-Irish Presbyterian immigrants and their sojourn in Eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey,

A sublime mission for them and their children was intended, though altogether concealed from their view. They were not yet prepared for that mission. They must receive that preparation through the great revival under Whitefield, the Tennents, the Blairs, and a host of others, whom God raised up in the earlier parts of [the eighteenth century], to be instruments in His hands of spreading a new life through the church.

Dr. Lacy then adds,

As in 1625 [year of a great revival among Presbyterians in Ireland] so now the fire fell and religion flamed again in Scotch-Irish hearts, and men and families were rededicated to God before they began the long trek down the valleys of Pennsylvania, through the valleys of Virginia, to the valleys of the Catawba and the Yadkin, to the Waxhaw settlement in South Carolina, and into the hill country of North Georgia. They went to establish churches and schools and Presbyteries as well as

homes.

THE DOMINANCE OF CALVINISM

It is true there were other church bodies in the colonies during this time of early development. However, the relatively strict regulation of religious suffrage permitted to the settlers in the colonies was limiting factor keeping the Protestant denominations to a small number. The only denomination of large enough numbers and wide enough distribution to make a significant contribution and which was not Calvinistic in doctrine was the Church of England, or Episcopal Church, which opposed the revival and did not participate. The Congregational churches in New England were thoroughgoing Calvinists with many of them leaning toward Presbyterianism. There were also the Dutch, German, and French Calvinists but all except the latter kept pretty much to themselves while the French, for the most part, ultimately merged into the Presbyterian and Anglican folds.

This dominance of Calvinism was almost complete in the churches that participated in the revivals of "The Great Awakening." Thus the doctrines that were preached during this time of the great outpouring of God's Spirit upon His church in the American colonies were thoroughly Calvinistic and those who were converted were added to these Calvinistic churches or, in many cases, started new churches propagating the Reformed faith. The Presbyterian church had two advantages in this situation. The first was that the most effective and prominent

ministers closely associated with Whitefield were the Tennents, Finley, and the Blairs, along with others—for the most part Presbyterians. These men were much in demand to preach in all parts of the country; and the doctrines of Whitefield, as well as these men, were Calvinistic Presbyterian doctrines, although he was ordained in the Episcopal church. Thus Calvinist doctrine is what these churches had been taught, convinced of, and what they desired. The second was that the Presbyterian form of government facilitated a concerted effort to train and deploy ministers to fill the demands of the many new churches needing pastors. It is a thrilling experience to read excerpts from the Presbyterian and Synodical records of the period immediately following the revival as they are given to us by Charles Hodge in his *Constitutional History of the PCUSA*. These records are filled with accounts of the Presbyteries and Synod sending their ministers on two-, three-, or six-month preaching tours to minister to the many new churches springing up in new areas of the frontier country who were without ministers. In fact, the demand for ministers was so great that the Presbyteries could not produce enough trained men, and this resulted in a great number of these churches being picked up by the Baptists and the Methodists who did not require such high standards for their ministers. Thus these two denominations, which were quite small before the "Awakening," grew greatly by these acquisitions and became a major presence in the frontier territories of the Midwest and the South.

THE LOG COLLEGE

In John 9, the Lord Jesus healed a man who had been blind from his youth. This man defended Christ before the apostate religious leaders and was promptly removed from the synagogue. However, he received a most glorious blessing. The Bible records: (Read John 9:35-37).

Those who separate from apostates and compromisers follow Christ. Separation is not an end in itself. It is a means of glorifying Christ and bearing His reproach. When John Calvin was accused of schism, he answered his opponents as if he were before the judgment seat of Christ:

With regard now to the accusation which I have been compelled to hear so frequently, that I am an apostate from the church, my conscience accuses me not, unless he ought to be called a traitor who, when he sees the soldiers in a battle leave their ranks and take to flight, seizes the standard, and raising it on high calls them back to the fight.... On which side the sin is, do Thou, O Lord, determine! Often have I, by word and deed, evinced how desirous I am to preserve unity; but that is to me the right unity which has its beginning and its end in Thee. Whenever Thou hast commanded us to preserve peace and unity, Thou hast also taught us that Thou alone art the bond of this unity. But to continue in peace with those who pretend to be the rulers of the church and the pillars of the faith, I must have purchased it at the expense of denying Thy truth. All danger however would have been

preferable to incurring the guilt of yielding to such a condition; for Christ has told us, 'Though heaven and earth pass away, yet shall not My Word pass away.' I did not therefore consider that I was apostatizing from Thy church, because I contended against these oppressors; for Thou didst warn us by Thy Son, that leaders of the church would arise with whom we must not be of one mind. It was not said of strangers, but of the pastors themselves, that they would be ravaging wolves, of whom we must beware. How then could I give the hand of fellowship to such? [Stebbing, Henry, *The Life and Times of John Calvin* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1853), pp. 152, 153]

Conclusion

God's elect will separate from false religion because their hearts are knit with Christ. Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they will refuse to bow to the false idol. The fiery furnace may be their lot, but the Song of God is their salvation. There will come a final day of separation. (Read Matthew 25:31,32)

The prophet Isaiah asked, "What will you do in the day of visitation?" Jesus Christ is still the Refuge for sinners. Though Satan and his followers use all their hellish schemes to destroy the people of God, those who come to the bleeding Lamb with true faith and repentance, will be forever with the Lord. The shepherd will lose none of His sheep and He will deliver each one of them from the Devil's lie: (Read John 10:3-5).

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen." (I John 5:21) 

prevail against it.

When J. Gresham Machen made his valiant stand against apostate liberalism in the early 1900's, he lost the day. The defeat was not because of liberals, but because of compromising moderates who did not want trouble in the Church. The northern Presbyterian Church is reaping the consequences to this very day. There are few, very few, who understand that compromisers are Christ's enemies. Instead, compromisers are crowding into places of leadership and directing the professing Church into a storm of chastening. One of the reasons they gain these positions is because the message they preach appeals to so many. By removing offensive doctrines and devising their own methods of worship and ministering, churches are inundated with unregenerated members. Because compromisers serve large churches, and are loved by all, they are thrust into the highest levels of denominational power. The tragedy is that Christ's sovereignty over the Church is trampled under foot and eternal souls are cruelly deceived. The Lord Jesus told the Laodicean Church: (*Read Revelation 3:17, 18*).

III. *Another reason why the Church should separate from apostates and compromisers is that fellowship with Christ's enemies will bring the Lord's judgment.*

Christ warned the Church in Pergamos: (*Read Revelation 2:14-16*)

The Lord Jesus walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, that is, in the midst of His Churches. He knows if His enemies are finding refuge in His Church. Pergamos received a solemn warning because of failure to rid the Church of the Lord's enemies. The modern Church is no different. To harbor apostates and compromisers is an offense to the Head of the Church. He has the power to humble His people and to separate the wheat from the chaff. "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17)

IV. *Finally, the Lord's people must separate from apostates and compromisers because Christ is pleased with those who honor Him in this way.*

Our Savior commended the Church of Ephesus for its refusal to accept His enemies: (*Read Revelation 2:1,2*).

When a Church becomes corrupt and lacks the will to discipline, the faithful follower of Christ must still separate from apostates and compromisers. He is comforted by God's Word: "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." (Hebrews 13:12, 13)

An equally important factor in shaping the character and the direction of the Presbyterian church in this country was the founding of the "Log College" by William Tennent in 1726. This marked the beginning of the Presbyterians in America to assume the responsibility for training young men and equipping them for the gospel ministry in their churches. This was an essential move if the church was to be kept on its doctrinal course and to fulfill its God-given mission in the expanding colonies. The contribution of this institution to the shaping of the nature and development of the Presbyterian church in this country is perhaps one of the least known and appreciated facts of American Presbyterian history.

William Tennent, Sr. seemingly founded the "Log College" without consultation or the cooperation of others in the Synod. There is no mention of any discussion of any effort to found such a school except for that which was made at New London by the Old Side Synod, at a later date. There is no indication either by Hodge or Baird of any mention in the Presbyterial or Synodical records of any discussion regarding the College under Mr. Tennent at Neshaminy. In fact, Archibald Alexander, in his book, *The Log College*, reveals much evidence that Tennent's school was greatly disparaged and opposed by some of the men in the Old Synod. Thus it would appear that it was an entirely independent undertaking rising as a result of his sense of the paramount need of emerging communities and churches destitute of qualified men to minister the Word of God. It should be noted that the

founding of this institution as a means to meet this need demonstrated a conviction that the work of God cannot be done by and must not be entrusted to unqualified men. An examination of the preaching and writings of these men reveals a thorough understanding of Reformed theology and the disciplines of a sound liberal education. Nothing that has been written of the men who graduated from this institution has successfully established any evidence to disprove this. In fact, there is no know serious attempt to do so. Gilbert Tennent, whose education was received entirely under the teaching and supervision of his father, was thorough and uncom-promising in his insistence upon strong academic standards with a strict adherence to both the system of doctrine and the form of government set down in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* with its attending Directory of Church Order. This is documented by Charles Hodge in his *Constitutional History*. Dr. Hodge documents quite clearly, in dealing with the history of the schism of 1741-1758, that there was no difference as to adherence to the doctrines set down in the Confession of the form of government required in the Directory between the Old Side, constitution the old Synod, and the New Side, led by men associated with the College. Yet the College was much involved in the issues that brought about the schism. Indeed, the fear of division over the issues, pressed by the Old Side men, in behalf of the Adopting Act was ultimately realized in the issues, pressed by men and friends of the Log College, in behalf of the revival.

When we seek to find what, in the

College's teaching or practice, precipitated the straining of relationships and ultimate division in the Synod, two things stand out. The emphases of the school seemed to develop outstanding qualities of godly piety of personal life and zeal for evangelism in its students. There is ample recorded testimony from their contemporaries, both friends and foes, to establish that there was a dominant manifestation of these qualities of piety and zeal in the lives of these men of the College. Both Charles Hodge and Samuel Baird thoroughly debunk any suggestion that there is any evidence of self-righteousness or hypocrisy in the bearing or attitude of these men. They were sincere, godly, self-sacrificing ministers. Still it was the presence of these qualities that ultimately precipitated the division.

In connection with this issue which so divided the church at this time, we must consider two things. First, the part played by the Log College in the Great Awakening and second, the place of the Great Awakening in the plan and purpose of God for the church in the emerging republic in the thirteen colonies. First, let us consider the latter from our perspective in time, and we must begin by considering the effect of the great revivals upon the church of that period of our history. Dr. Lacy, in his history of the revivals says,

He who designated the religious movement in the colonies during the eighteenth century as 'The Great Awakening' had a touch of genius. It was for America an awakening of dead churches and the calling of many sinners from death unto life.

In this quotation we have a rather

unfavorable assessment of the church that for love and zeal for sound doctrine and its concern to assure its preservation from corrupting influences had persevered through nine years of controversy and earnest debate to secure the adoption of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* making it mandatory as the personal confession of every minister through-out the entire Synod.

This, perhaps surprising, assessment for the state of the spiritual condition of this sound, militantly Calvinistic church is also the assessment of some of its most respected leaders of that time. Samuel Blair, in a letter to the Rev. Mr. Prince in Boston dated August 6, 1744, declares concerning the state of the church just prior to and at the beginning of the revivals,

I doubt not then but there were some sincerely religious people up and down; and there were, I believe, a considerable number in the several congregations, pretty exact, according to their education, in the observance of the external forms of religion, not only as to attendance upon public ordinances on the Sabbath, but also as to the practice of family worship and, perhaps, secret prayer; but with these things the most part seemed to all appearance to rest contented, and to satisfy their consciences with a dead formality in religion.... The nature and necessity of the new birth was but little known or thought of. The necessity of a conviction of sin and misery by the Holy Spirit opening and applying the law to the conscience, in order to a saving closure with Christ, was hardly known at all to the most... There was scarcely any suspicion at all, in general, of any danger of depending

Church: "And I heard another voice from heaven saying, Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." (Revelation 18:4)

The Devil's false Church is no place for professing Christians. There is a plague upon those who remain in fellowship with it. There is also a plague for those who are outside of Satan's false Church but still give aid to Christ's enemies. Jehu the prophet asked King Jehoshaphat: "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord." (2 Chronicles 19:2)

Although the compromiser justifies his attachment to the enemies of God, the Bible condemns him. The compromiser may claim a deep love for his fellow man, but God warns him to reject Christ's enemies: (Read 2 John 9-11).

II. *Another reason why the Lord's people should separate from apostates is that the Bible directly commands them to do so.* (Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

A. Here is clear instruction for those who have ears to hear. When men turn from Christ and His doctrines the followers of the Lamb know they must turn from these enemies of their Lord.

John Knox said:

This is the league betwixt God and us: that He alone shall be our God, and we shall be His people. He shall communicate with us of His graces and goodness; we shall serve Him in body and in spirit. He shall be our safeguard from death and damnation; we shall seek to Him, and shall flee from all strange gods. In making which league, we swear solemnly never to have fellowship with any religion, except with that which God has confirmed by His manifest word. [John Knox, *Selected Writings of John Knox* (Dallas, Texas: Presbyterian Heritage Publications, c. 1995), 172.]

B. The Bible also demands that believers in Christ separate from compromisers. (Read Romans 16:17 & 2 Thessalonians 3:6.)

How blessed would the modern Church be if it would separate from those who cause "divisions and offenses" and from those who walk "disorderly." Of course, the Church would lose great numbers. No longer could it boast of its riches and worldly power. Instead, it would have the glorious presence and blessing of Christ. Compromisers have multiplied and now dominate the professing Church. Yet Christ is not discouraged or confused. He is in sovereign control of it all. God's elect rest in the truth that the Lord Jesus will build His Church, and the gates of hell will not

There is another kingdom identified in the Bible. It is the kingdom of darkness. Its head is Satan. Beginning with Cain, the Devil built his kingdom into a massive structure including all his human subjects in hell and upon earth. It also includes the hosts of demons, or fallen angels, who are reserved for judgment. The Devil's subjects have obtained immense earthly power and wealth. It has also established a false Church which has a form of godliness, but denies the power thereof. This system of antichrist is the bitter enemy of the Son of God and His true Church. Although the Devil's kingdom prospers on earth, each of its members will suffer untold torment in the burning lake of fire forever. They will share hell with Satan and the fallen angels.

Satan is a relentless enemy. He has determined to destroy Christ and His Church. In order to accomplish this goal, he attacks Christ's kingdom from without. He attempts to overcome true worshippers of Christ by slander, persecution, torture, and murder. But the more he spills the blood of Christ's martyrs, the more the Church prospers.

Satan devised another scheme to subdue the kingdom of Christ. His plan involved an attack from within. By making his servants appear as angels of light, he tries to lead professing followers of Christ astray. This internal warfare is presently raging in the Church.

The Devil realizes he needs two special kinds of servants to effectively execute this plan. One is the apostate and the other is the compromiser. The apostate is one who professes the truth faith of Christ, but turns from it and rejects its essential teachings. Apostates devote themselves to deceiving others by attacking Christ and His doctrines.

The other servant is more devious. He is the compromiser, who professes

the true faith of Christ, but encourages and helps apostates. Compromisers have different policies. Some are in obvious sympathy with apostates. Others appear to protest against apostasy, yet they encourage God's people to allow apostasy to grow without resistance. Apostates and compromisers are deadly enemies to the Church.

What should the true Church of Christ do to defend itself against apostates and compromisers? Its weapons are not carnal, but spiritual. While calling upon the Head of the Church for deliverance, it must also look carefully into God's Word to see if there is a way to escape Satan's subtle attack. There is a way. **The Bible reveals that true worshippers of Christ must separate from apostates and compromisers.**

I. *The first reason why they must separate is that God's wrath is upon apostates.*

A. The Lord's people must separate from apostates.

Paul warned the Galatian Christians: (*Read Galatians 1:7, 8*). Why would true worshippers of Christ give support to those who are under God's curse? Lot left Sodom and did not turn back. He fled from the wrath to come. How foolish to remain in fellowship with the objects of God's anger.

B. The Lord's people must not only separate from apostates, they must also separate from those who compromise with apostates.

God's wrath is upon the compromiser as well. The Lord Jesus warned the

upon self-righteousness, and not upon the righteousness of Christ alone for salvation.... The common notion seemed to be that if people were aiming to be in the way of duty as well as they could, as they imagined, there was no reason to be much afraid.... People were very generally, through the land, careless at heart, stupidly indifferent about the concerns of eternity.... It was sad to see with what careless behavior the public ordinances were attended.... Thus religion lay, as it were adying, and ready to expire its last breath of life in this part of the visible church.

This same quotation is cited by Charles Hodge in his description of the condition of the church at that time. This is a contemporary description of the spiritual condition that prevailed in the Presbyterian Church less than four years after the protracted struggle that successfully secured through the Adopting Act, the safeguarding, and assurance of the purity, of the doctrines that would be preached and taught in her pulpits. Deadness with orthodoxy may be just as tragic and fatal as zealous heresy.

The church, though orthodox and zealous for the truth, was woefully lacking in that which was equally essential; namely, that personal experience of Christ's redeeming love that would send her forth with compassionate hearts to seek lost souls, suffering in misery and enslavement to sin, and to seek to bring them to Christ. This was the preparation which she was, as stated by the historian of Old Redstone Presbytery,

...to receive through the great revival under Whitefield, the Tennents, the Blairs, and a host of others whom

God raised up...to be instruments in His hands of spreading a new life through the church.

Dr. Hodge demonstrates through the written testimony of godly men who were contemporaries of the revival and its aftermath that the evidences produced by the Great Awakening were evidences of genuine revival. It resulted in the salvation of thousands who gave evidence of their conversion by continuing in holy lives and fruitful service for Christ; saints were awakened to new devotion, churches were revitalized and filled with a new desire and purpose to spread the gospel. Dr. Hodge states in his evaluation of the genuineness and effectiveness of the revival, "To the Presbyterian Church particularly, it was the commencement of a new life, the vigor of which is still felt in all her veins."

We can see the hand of God in the foundation of the Log College in preparation for the revival. It was here that the men would be equipped who were to prepare the middle colonies, much as Edwards did in New England, for the coming of Whitefield and the outpouring of the Spirit that God would graciously give under his ministry. These men of the Log College were closely associated with Whitefield in the Awakening and became the evangelists to spread the flame to all parts of the church during its course. They continued after the Awakening as the tireless perpetrators of its benefits throughout the growing church as it spread into the developing new territories to the South and West. Dr. Lacy again says, "...in reality our church [the Presbyterian Church in the South] was reborn through this movement." All church historians of

this period of the aftermath of the Awakening give testimony to the indefatigable labors of these graduates and friends of the College as they toiled to establish the new converts, minister the Word of God among the many churches without “settled pastors” and establish new congregations in every part of the spreading frontier.

Thus the church, grounded in sound doctrine and quickened by the Spirit of God, through the adoption and strict adherence to the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, was prepared to be the instrument in God’s hands to spread the gospel and plant sound churches in every part of the nation soon to be born on these shores. Without either aspect of this preparation, the church would have been weak and disastrously ineffective. Without the permanent foundation of the *Westminster Confession*, through the persistence of the Old Synod and the resultant Adopting Act, the church would have been unstable and soon fallen into apostasy, division, and false teaching. Without the baptism of evangelistic fervor supplied by the Log College, its graduates, and friends, the church would have stagnated in complacent formality. The history of the New England churches exemplifies the former while the history of the Old Side Synod during the schism of 1741 to 1758 exemplifies the latter. We see, through the circumstances of the controversy, schism, and ultimate reunion, God’s hand supplying and equipping the church for His purpose.

THE SEEDS OF SCHISM

It is profitable for us to consider

examples of history from which we may learn something of human frailty and God’s sovereignty. We may from our viewpoint wish the schism had never happened. Indeed, the need for the revival is quite clear; also, the need for doctrinal zeal and vigilance is equally vital. Perhaps if there had been more temperance and less impetuosity on the part of the New Side men and more patience and meekness on the part of the Old Side men, this problem could have been solved with harmony. However, under God’s sovereign intervention, both of these needs were met and unity was ultimately restored in the reunion of 1758. Hodge, in his *History*, gives a great deal of space to demonstrate that doctrine was not neglected in the revival but prominently proclaimed and the doctrines were sound Calvinistic doctrines. Dr. Hodge says,

Is there any doubt as to the doctrines taught by Whitefield, the Tennents, Blair, Dickinson and the other prominent preachers of that day? They were the doctrines of the Reformation, and of the standards of the Presbyterian Church. Indeed, these men often went to a length in their statements of the peculiarities of those doctrines, that would shock the delicacy of modern ears. These great truths were not kept under a bushel during this period. The doctrines preached by those famous men, who were owned as the principal instruments of this remarkable revival of God’s work, were the doctrines of the reformers; the doctrine of original sin, of regeneration by the supernatural influences of the divine Spirit, and of the absolute necessity of it, that any man might bear good fruit, or ever be admitted into the kingdom of God;

of preaching!

God’s people are warrantably appalled and distressed by a survey of the prevailing ecclesiastical atmosphere. But rare indeed are those occasions when it has not been so. And perhaps rather than being on the brink of the demise of the Church, we are on the brink of that which portends a revival of true religion. It has happened before, and always in the darkest hour imaginable. 📖

acceptable offering and enjoyed communion with God. According to truth, his offering was a slain, bloody sacrifice from the flock, picturing the bleeding Lamb of God. “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain” (Hebrews 11:4).

Cain’s worship lacked faith. His offering was without sacrificial blood and was likely the invention of his own imagination. God rebuked and warned him. Yet Cain, with a corrupt and hateful heart, arose in anger to slay his brother. He committed this horrible crime “because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.” (1 John 3:12).

God’s ways are not man’s ways. The Lord’s enemies seem successful in their attempt to remove faith from the earth, but Christ preserves His people. The history of the Bible is a history of this great conflict.

The Lord Jesus Christ reigns over His true worshippers. They constitute His Kingdom or Church, which He purchased by the sacrifice of His precious blood. On earth, the Church often appears as a “bruised reed” and “smoking flax.” It does not have power, wealth, public esteem, or mighty armies. Yet God’s sovereign grace brings each member of His Church safely to heaven. Following the Lamb, even through the furnace of suffering, His Church is triumphant over all its enemies.

While on earth, this body of true worshippers is the Church militant. In heaven, it is the Church triumphant. Having journeyed through the wilderness of this world, leaning upon their Beloved, members of Christ’s kingdom are received into a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. In that place, they see the face of their Savior, have every tear wiped away, are forever with the Lord, and dwell with unfallen angels and the souls of just men made perfect.

PROCLAMATION

“RELIGIOUS SEPARATION”

by Mark W. Evans

Thesis: The Bible reveals that true worshippers of Christ must separate from apostates and compromisers.

Read Genesis 4:3-8.

Introduction

Following the fall of Adam and the human race, the Bible records the struggle between Cain and Abel. This event gives us understanding of God’s way of preserving true religion through all generations.

Abel worshipped God in spirit and in truth. By faith, he brought and

slay a sin, nor suggest a virtue.”

2. CONDITIONS PRIOR TO THE REFORMATION

Farrar (*History of Interpretation*) condemns the spiritual life of the Church prior to the Reformation as

...a sacerdotalism at once arrogant, intolerant, immoral, and idle, headed by a Pope who might be once a priest, an atheist, and a god.... It had poisoned the veins of all Christian life by substituting a visionary satisfaction for a true recon-ciliation, and a mechanical conformity for a holy life. Impunity was sold to the living and deliverance to the dead.... A priesthood, calling itself the Church, claimed absolute authority over men's bodies and souls, shut the Bible from the many, made it easier for the rich than the poor to escape damnation, and gave to the grace of God the aspect of capricious concession to the purchased intercessions of the Virgin Mary.... The name of faith was prostituted by being bestowed on the abject acceptance of unproved postulates; the name of morals was conferred upon a blind obedience to human traditions; the name of grace was confined to the mechanical operation of perverted sacraments; the name of orthodoxy to the passive repetition of traditional ignorance...the whole Papal system had, even on the confession of its own historians, sunk into a formalism and corruption which made it a curse to mankind.

Calvin was more to the point:

If Peter were now alive, they would tear him in pieces; they would stone Paul; and if Christ himself were still in the world, they would burn him with a slow fire.”

(*Synoptic Gospels*, III)

3. CONDITIONS PRIOR TO THE GREAT AWAKENING

J. C. Ryle summed up the character of the age pointedly:

Sermons everywhere were little better than miserable moral essays, utterly devoid of anything likely to awaken, or alarm. Both parties seemed at least agreed on one point, and that was to let the devil alone, and to do nothing for hearts and souls.... The celebrated lawyer, Blackstone, had the curiosity to go from church to church and hear every clergyman of note in London. He says that he did not hear a single discourse which had more Christianity in it than the writings of Cicero.... When they did preach, their sermons were so unspeakably and indescribably bad, that it is comforting to reflect they were generally preached to empty benches.

(*Five Christian Leaders*)

CONCLUSION

Note that in each of the above cases the existing religious structures were not extinguished. Each continued and continues to flourish to this day! Again, Ryle:

Our Lord knew well that Pharisee-doctrines and Sadducee-doctrines would prove the two great diseases of His Church, until the end of the world. Their successions shall never fail. Their generation shall never become extinct. Their name may change, but their spirit will always remain. (*Expository Thoughts*)

Note also that in each instance the primary instrument of reform was not a sustained frontal attack or withering tirade against existing religious structures. Even the Reformation was primarily a revival

effectual calling; justification by faith, wholly on account of the imputed righteousness of Christ; repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ; the perseverance of the saints; the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in them, and its divine consolations and joys.

Thus sound doctrine was preserved through the revival, and reunion was possible to the divided church. This certainly reveals the fallacy of the often heard contention that doctrine is divisive and stifles revival.

One contributing cause to the schism in 1741 seems rather scantily noticed and may only be perceived by relating several rather random references from different sources. It is mentioned by both Baird and Hodge in their *Histories* of this period. Neither of them seems to assign it a really significant role; yet a serious reflection on subsequent events would seem to indicate it may have had a far more significant role than even those of that time would openly indicate. The Log College was the first literary institution of higher education to be founded in the bounds of the Presbyterian Church. The Presbyterian Church, up to this time, had been dependent on ministerial supplies mostly from Scotland or Ireland. There were some few occasional men who came from England or Wales. There had been colleges established in New England during the middle and latter part of the seventeenth century and this was accomplished with a high degree of participation with the Congregationalist churches in those colonies. Thus the Presbyterians on these shores were relying for their supply of ministers generally to

come from Ireland, Scotland, or one of the colleges of New England. This constituted a hardship and a hindrance to the development and growth of the Presbyterian Church in America.

It was into this situation that the Log College was introduced. William Tennent, Sr., its founder, was, himself, a native of Ireland where he received his liberal education, though from which college or university it is not certain, but very likely from Trinity College in Dublin as he originally belonged to the Episcopal Church of England. Not a great deal about Mr. Tennent or the details of his leaving the Episcopal Church to embrace the doctrines and form of government of the Presbyterians is known. He was originally ordained a priest in the Episcopal Church. He became acquainted with a distinguished Presbyterian minister, Rev. Mr. Kennedy, in Ireland, who, because of great persecution that arose in Great Britain against Presbyterians, moved and exercised his ministry with “great success” in Holland. William Tennent married one of Rev. Mr. Kennedy's daughters and emigrated to America in 1716. He was closely examined by the Synod of Philadelphia regarding his doctrines and reasons for leaving the Church of England, and fully satisfied them with his answers and was received into the membership of that Synod.

After residing for some time in New York, Mr. Tennent received a call to serve a small congregation at Bensalem in Pennsylvania. He served in this place until 1726, when he accepted a call to Neshaminy in the same county of Pennsylvania

where he erected the Log College during the same year. There he ministered for the rest of his life. There is nothing written of the details of the founding of this school, nor is there any record of the reasons for which Mr. Tennent felt moved to his course. We may look only at the conditions which prevailed in the church at that time, and what emphases were evidenced by the College and the character and ministries of its graduates. From these we may glean some indication of the purpose of its founder.

Archibald Alexander describes the condition of things in the Presbyterian Church at this time. He says,

...the state of vital piety was very low in the Presbyterian Church in America.... The ministers composing the Presbyterian Church in this country were sound in the faith, and strongly attached to the *Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechism*, as were also the people; and there were no diversities or contentions among them respecting the doctrines of the gospel; but as to vital power of godliness, there is reason to believe that it was little known or spoken of.... Indeed, it was very much a matter of course for all who had been baptized in infancy to be received into the communion at the proper age, without exhibiting or possessing any satisfactory evidence of a change of heart by the super-natural operations of the Holy Spirit. And the habit of preachers was to address their people as though they were all pious, and only needed instruction and confirmation.

This, of course, agrees with the description given by Samuel Blair and others cited elsewhere.

Whatever Mr. Tennent felt and thought concerning this state of affairs in the church at the time he came into it as a minister, he seems to have kept it to himself. There is no record of any discussions he had with others, in or out of the Synod, about it. Nevertheless, from subsequent differences over the emphases and zeal of its graduates, it would appear that he had a concern to address these problems in the church and infuse new life into its ministry.

Several men had been graduated from the College and gained admittance to the Synod before the controversy over its ministry arose. It is admitted that they were all sound in their Calvinistic Presbyterian doctrine, they exhibited exemplary piety in their personal lives, and the blessing of God was evident in their ministries; it was objected, however, by many in the Synod that in certain branches of learning not related to theology they were not up to the standards of the European and New England colleges and they did not want to admit them into the Synod, judging them "unqualified." They could hardly have objected that the College was deficient in the classics. Archibald Alexander, quotes Elias Boudinot, a highly respected man of letters and a contemporary of Mr. William Tennent, as stating that Tennent

...was well skilled in the Latin language, that he could speak and converse in it with as much facility as in his vernacular tongue, and, also, that he was proficient in the other ancient languages.

The writer of a sketch of William Tennent, Sr.'s life in the Assembly's magazine for May, 1805, says

Oct. 18, 1888, p. B1.

¹² Errol Simper, *The Australian*, Feb. 11, 1991.

¹³ Patricia Lefevere, *Religious News Service*, Feb. 8, 1991.

¹⁴ Ralph G. Colas, "Report on the Fifth World Conference of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches," *Fundamental News Service*, Aug. 20, 1993.

¹⁵ Cf. *Christian Century*, Oct. 19, 1994, p. 945, for the lack of reaction by the Presbyterian Church (USA).

¹⁶ Don Jenkins, *The News Tribune*, Feb. 10, 1996, p. C7.

¹⁷ Peter Jones, "God Need Not Apply," *World*, Feb. 10, 1996, pp. 24-25.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁹ "Gay Couple Celebrate Their Union at St. Mark's," *The News Tribune*, May 21, 1996.

²⁰ *Channel: Associated Ministries*, 28:18 (Nov., 1996), p. 1.

A SURVEY OF PREVAILING CONDITIONS, AND A PROSPECTUS FOR OUR TIMES

by Tom Lyon

"It would be easy to show that at our present rate of progress the kingdoms of this world never could become the kingdom of our Lord. Indeed, many in the Church are giving up the idea of it except on the occasion of the advent of Christ, which, as it chimes in with our own idleness, is likely to be a popular doctrine." (Spurgeon, ca. 1867)

It is rarely heard nowadays, but one or two still remember seasons of God's reviving of true religion. Of course this prospect finds little

sympathy among those who have parleyed the 'revival' of Whitefield's preaching for the 'revivalism' of Finney's 'new measures.' And even those few who have not jettisoned all hope of repair are insecure as to the means of recovery. Nevertheless, perverted theology cannot readily dismiss the witness of history. Consider the prevailing religious climate prior to three true awakenings of the past:

1. CONDITIONS PRIOR TO COMING OF OUR LORD

The religious establishment was ruled by the ecclesiastical clerks and librarians of antiquity, trafficking in useless pedantry and endless citation, addicted to casuistry and pettifoggery; inter-mixed with pious-sounding ex-pletives and self-applauding legal mechanics. "To this day it is hard to conceive the arid dreariness of the teaching of the scribes." (Lenski)

Farrar described Judaism's spirituality by declaring that it was

...at once erudite and foolish, at once contemptuous and mean; never passing a hair's breadth beyond the carefully watched boundary of commentary and precedent; full of balanced inference, and orthodox hesitancy, and impossible literalism; intricate with legal pettiness and labyrinthine system; elevating mere memory above genius, and repetitions above originality.... It was not indeed wholly impossible to find here and there among the debris of it a noble thought; but it was occupied a thousandfold more with Levitical minutiae. (*Life of Paul*)

Or, as Spurgeon observed, "They were at home upon such rubbish, which would neither save a soul, nor

no contradictions.”¹⁶ Apparently the United Methodist Church had no problem with one of its ministers practicing another religion at the same time.

Many of the scholarly leaders of the NCC are active in the Society of Biblical Literature and the American Academy of Religion, large academic organizations which hold their annual meetings jointly. The extremely radical, non-Christian nature of much of the thinking in these groups is exposed in a recent article by Peter Jones.¹⁷ Jones summarizes the progress of heresy in the SBL: “In addition to the massive rehabilitation of the ancient heresy of Gnosticism as an authentic version of early Christianity, radical feminism and the homosexual movement find in SBL a willing platform for the spread of their agenda.”¹⁸ An example of the homosexual movement in NCC churches is found in the recent “same-sex union” celebrated in St. Mark’s Episcopal Cathedral in Seattle, Washington, this year. In attendance were the state governor and city police chief; the dean and pastor of the cathedral officiated.¹⁹ Now it’s socially as well as religiously acceptable to persist in open perversion.

On a more local note, this year’s annual Thanksgiving Eve Interfaith Worship service, sponsored by the Associated Ministries of Tacoma met in the First Christian Church. The advertisement for the meeting notes that participating groups include “Judaism, Protestants, Catholic, Latter Day Saints, Bahai’s, Islam, and Buddhism.”²⁰ Now routinely God is only one among many in NCC churches.

Is this “the end of the road”?

Probably not. There are still believers who belong to the NCC or the WCC. Things can still get worse. Yet these church bodies plainly reveal themselves to be apostate by biblical standards. God commands his people to be separate from apostasy, and thus to “come out from among them.” The true worship of God cannot be accompanied with worship to idols. Let us build true churches that honor God and his Word! 

¹ Tracy Early, *Ecumenical News International*, Nov. 25, 1996. For an analytic summary of the efforts of the WCC to work with Evangelicals, see David J. Bosch, “‘Ecumenicals’ and ‘Evangelicals’: a Growing Partnership?” *The Ecumenical Review* 40:3-4 (July-October, 1988) 458-472.

² United Methodist News Service, Release #590, Nov. 25, 1996.

³ Information in these paragraphs from World Council of Churches Press Release, Office of Communication, Sept. 16, 1996, pp. E3/2-4.

⁴ Steve Maynard, “Argentine mixes Christian, Marxist theology,” *The News Tribune*, July 16, 1988, p. A4.

⁵ “Evangelical Leader Identifies Fatal Flaws in WCC ‘Affirmations,’” *The Presbyterian Layman*, November/December, 1990.

⁶ *National Review*, June 6, 1990.

⁷ WCC Press Release, Sept. 16, 1996, p. E3/7.

⁸ *One World*, Jan./Feb., 1987.

⁹ Steve Maynard, *The News Tribune*, Oct. 8, 1988, p. A4.

¹⁰ Steve Maynard, *The News Tribune*, July 16, 1988, p. A4.

¹¹ Leslie Brown, *The News Tribune*,

regarding Tennent, “He was eminent as a classical scholar.”

In 1738 they enacted a rule requiring that all candidates applying to a Presbytery for licensure and admission who had not first received a diploma from some European or New England college must apply to the Synod and be approved by it before being received by the Presbytery. This is a rather surprising act of the Old Synod seeing that they had already much evidence that doctrinal error had gained foothold in some of the European (including Scotch and Irish) schools and some of the New England schools had become seriously affected by false teaching (notably Harvard, though Yale followed soon after in the latter part of the eighteenth century). It seems there was a strange lack of discernment of this danger and an inordinate regard for some of the sciences which they professed they found lacking in these Log College men whom all acknowledged to be thoroughly grounded in Calvinistic doctrine and godly piety in their personal lives.

The New Brunswick Presbytery had been erected shortly before this time by the Synod and was composed almost entirely of graduates or supporters of the College. This rejection of its credentials was a hard blow to these men. They objected that such a restriction on the Presbytery’s jurisdiction over the examination of candidates in their Presbytery was improper and con-trary to Presbyterian principle and an attempt to impose the will of the Synod upon a local Presbytery. Charles Hodge states in regard to

Gilbert Tennent’s opposition to this act of the Synod requiring ministerial candidates to have a degree from an European or some New England college, “Mr. Tennent’s opposition... did not arise from a disregard of learning, but from want of confidence in the existing colleges.” Might this not reveal a discernment in Mr. Tennent that was far in advance of his contemporary brethren? This same sympathy and benevolence toward the “College” was shared by many members of the New Castle Presby-tery and the New York Presbytery. This contributed as much as any dispute over participation in the revival to the open rupture in the Synod and is noteworthy because of the strong influence that the College had on the subsequent development and history of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

The excising of the New Brunswick Presbytery, and with it the ministry of the College, brought an almost immediate awareness to the men of the Old Synod of the urgent need of a school for training young men for the ministry. Though they may not have been happy nor would they fully approve of the College, it had supplied a good portion of the most recent additions of men to the Synod. Now, it seemed as if a sudden new awareness struck them that there was no place for their young men to go. In consequence, they began now in earnest to establish a school under the guidance and support of the Synod. This effort started with the purpose of raising up a school in New London 1744 and this endeavor continued for several years during which time the operation was moved to

Philadelphia. Various providential difficulties and hindrances, however, kept them from realizing their purpose. God, it seemed, had other plans.

THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY

The school which had performed such a needed service of the church in the early years of the Synod and which had a singular role in preparing the church for the Great Awakening was now, after the schism, waning. Mr. William Tennent, Sr. was aging and unable to exert his former vigor in conducting its affairs, but the Log College was about to enter a new phase of its influence and usefulness through the ministries and activities of its graduates who are all remembered with a high degree of veneration for their service in, and lasting effect upon, the development of the Presbyterian Church. These were men of great spiritual stature, thoroughly grounded in Calvinistic Presbyterian doctrine, committed to Presbyterian government and possessed of a zeal that was commensurate with the task of establishing and nourishing the church in every part of the rapidly developing colonies.

As the church advanced in its growth and development, it became evident that this humble institution which had performed such a noble task in the early years of the church was now inadequate for the greatly expanded need for more ministers. (The only description we have of the physical aspects of the Log College is a short reference in George Whitefield's journals. It was an unrefined structure about 20' x 20'.

From this, it is clearly evident it could hardly accommodate more than a dozen scholars.) It should be noted that there was never a thought by the Presbyterians of either the New or the Old Side of employing inadequately trained or lay preachers in an attempt to fill the needs of vacancies or urgent needs in unreached areas. This gave rise to a more ambitious plan by the New Side Synod to establish a college that would maintain high standards and compare favorably with any institution of learning in the land. Thus while the Synod of Philadelphia (the Old Side Synod) was laboring to erect a school at New London, the New York Synod (New Side Synod) gave themselves to the endeavor of raising a school in New Jersey. The New York (or New Side) Synod was blessed in the providence of God with the interest and aid of the Acting Governor of New Jersey, Mr. Belcher, who obtained a charter for the college which was designated as the College of New Jersey.

The men who were involved in the establishment of the College of New Jersey were members of the Synod of New York and all friends of the Log College. Most of them had received their training there or in schools "instituted by its graduates." Mr. Jonathan Dickson, a graduate of Yale and a friend of the revival was the first president. As this enterprise was undertaken during the schism, the men of the Old Side had no part in it but they did support it and worked readily with it after the reunion was effected. The college was ultimately located at Princeton and became the precursor of Princeton University and Princeton Seminary. Thus the legacy of the

Seattle Council of Churches in 1988 held a joint ceremony with representatives of American Indian tribes, apologizing for past Christians who tried to convert the Indians away from their native religion. The Council recognized "Christian complicity in the destruction of Indian religions." Indian leader Long Crane, a Sioux, said,

This here is to help smooth the way for Indians and to say our God is the same as your God. Before, it was like a slap in the face. And now they're saying they're sorry.¹¹

Similar sentiments abound in NCC and WCC circles. Dr. Wesley Ariarajah, director of the WCC's Inter-Faith Dialogue said in Australia,

It is inconceivable to me that a Hindu or a Buddhist, or anybody, is outside God. My understanding of God's love is too broad for me to believe that only this narrow segment called the Christian church will be saved.¹²

The 1991 WCC assembly in Canberra, Australia, not only featured observers from these other religions, but incorporated native religious aboriginal dancing into its program:

Aboriginal men girded in loincloths and feathers, their bodies painted in tribal decoration, danced around an altar and beat drums in a traditional purification ceremony that opened the Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches here February 7. Standing near them at the altar were aboriginal women clothed in traditional black and red dresses and colorful aboriginal clergymen garbed in western vestments.¹³

The WCC also is pursuing its union with the Roman Catholic Church. At its meeting in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, the WCC's Faith and Order Commission's worship service "began with processions from three sides of the Cathedral and the placing of two icons and the Bible on the altar. Roman Catholic Archbishop Antonio Mario Rouco Valera of Santiago de Compostela welcomed participants as the service began; and at the conclusion he gave the benediction."¹⁴

A well publicized American meeting was the "Re-Imagining" conference held in Minneapolis in 1993. About 2,000 people attended these meetings from most mainline NCC denominations. This conference included open denial of biblical teachings in many areas of doctrine and life, and openly engaged in worship of "the goddess Sophia." In spite of many complaints by members, this conference has not been repudiated by any participating denomination.¹⁵

This spirit of forsaking the exclusive claims of Christ for acceptance of all religions is stronger today. No longer does it cause raised eyebrows among most American churchgoers. One example is the Rev. Roy Wilson, half native American from the Cowlitz tribe and half white. He accepted both religions as a youth, and now, at the age of 68, is both a retired United Methodist minister and practicing Cowlitz "spiritual leader." Wilson believes there are "similarities between the Indian practice of arranging stones for spiritual guidance and biblical theology." He says, "For me the medicine wheel and Scriptures come together. I find

of the member churches themselves are not biblical in their beliefs; for example, a constituent member of the NCC since 1966 is the Swedenborgian Church, which holds to an extremely allegorical interpretation of the Bible and denies many basic Christian doctrines. When the NCC and WCC first started in the 1940s, it was feared by many that they were seeking to unite their member churches and eliminate denominational distinctives. They denied this. However, through the years that purpose has grown and become bolder. Not only do they seek to unite their members, but also they desire the union of the Protestant churches with the Orthodox churches and the Roman Catholic Church. Their ecumenical ambitions do not stop there either. Now the WCC regularly holds joint worship with other religions altogether. In the process of this drive for union, all loyalty to “the faith once delivered to the saints” must be abandoned. Evidence and documentation for this trend is voluminous. In this article a few typical examples will be given.

The World Council began including “dialogues” with people of other religions in their world assemblies in Nairobi (1975) and Vancouver (1983). The Vancouver assembly featured native American religions as a part of its program. In response to some criticism, the Council addressed the subject in its own publication:

Do they [people of other faiths] pray to the same God? Does the God whom we worship listen to the prayers of those who are not Christians—which must surely outnumber our own prayers? If

God refuses to accept their prayers simply because they are incorrectly addressed—as many of us think—then what kind of a god is the Christian God?⁸

This article went on to declare that Christians need “a radical re-examination of some of our basic assumptions — theological assumptions — about other religions and their adherents.”

One leader in this dialog is Diana L. Eck, a professor at Harvard and moderator of the WCC’s ecumenical commission, the Dialogue with People of Living Faiths. Eck promotes Christians’ adopting what is good in other religions. She approves of Japanese Christians who now practice Buddhist meditation, learned from Buddhists. “Our God is the same God,” she says. She advocates this approach with all world religions, as Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Moslems. In an interview held in our area in 1988, our local newspaper reported,

She added that some people—most notably Christian fundamentalists—want to “roll the clock back” and pretend they don’t live in a pluralistic society. This view represents an exclusivist attitude that maintains ‘we are the people who see things right.’⁹

Another example of this thinking is Robert Schultz, former professor of theology at the Lutheran Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina. Professor Schultz declared that Christians should learn the techniques practiced in the New Age movement, which delves into “dimensions of life experience that the church doesn’t address.”¹⁰

As an expression of this new openness to other religions, the

Log College lived on in these institutions to have a profound effect in the Presbyterian church for many years.

REUNION AND UNITY

It is well to note that the church that reunited in 1758 was a church with marks of both the Old and New Sides. Dr. Hodge states that the church that came out of the reunion was a New Side church. This was largely because of the great growth experienced by the new Side while the Old Side after the seventeen years was just about identical to the size which it was at the beginning of the schism. At the same time he notes that there was no deviation in doctrine or church government at all between the Old Side and the New Side. It is well to remember that this faithfulness to sound doctrine was the result of that commitment to the *Westminster Confession of Faith* that was secured through the arduous labor of the Old Synod in The Adopting Act of 1729; and it was this unity in doctrine and polity that made reunion possible without compromising the Word of God or altering the character of the church.

This sound doctrinal foundation insured, from the standpoint of human responsibility, the steadfast adherence of the church to Biblical truth that kept it from deviating in its teaching and practice. Indeed, the church was kept on this course for near a century by virtue of its strict adherence to this stand on the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *Catechism*.

We should also consider a contrasting note by a brief reference to the conditions prevailing in the New England churches. Please recall

that the first colonies in New England, while they were Calvinistic in doctrine, were Congregational in church government. Also remember that they had not enacted an Adopting Act requiring a strict (in the sense of unreserved and definitively expressed) subscription to the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *Catechism* as the condition of admission and ordination. This, together with the Congregational system of government, was conducive to a certain doctrinal laxness and during the last half of the eighteenth century there were deviations from Calvinist doctrines beginning to be disseminated which were ultimately to bring much division and confusion.

There were large numbers in the New England colonies who were not only Calvinistic in doctrine but who favored Presbyterian government; however, there were restrictive laws in these colonies which would not permit the Presbyterians to organize there. Thus the doctrinal and ecclesiastical protection of The Adopting Act was denied to the Presbyterians in New England. Not being allowed to organize presbyteries, they did form associations on certain doctrinal platforms to facilitate cordial and effective means for dealing with doctrinal standards of the ministry and church disciplines. These, however, had to be effected with Congregational elements mingled in them. The closest of these associations to the Presbyterian model was the Connecticut Association, but all of these associations having elements of Congregationalism in them were clearly distinguished as a separate

entity from the Presbyterian church which pervaded the Middle and Southern colonies.

The history of the Presbyterian Church in these Middle colonies extending southward and westward in the migrations and missionary endeavors, during the years from 1729 until 1801 was marked by solid and rapid growth and characterized by purity and unity in Calvinistic Presbyterian doctrine, both during the Old Side/New Side schism and after the reunion. Keep in mind that doctrinal unity continued undisturbed, and agreement on the principle of church government was unchanged throughout the schism of 1741-1758. Note: doctrinal unity may, and often does, exist where organizational unity is not present and may produce much blessing. Vice versa, organizational unity may exist when doctrinal unity is wanting, and will always cause strife and discord to the spiritual impoverishment of the church. There were other denominations, notably Methodists and Baptists, who had profited greatly from the revival. They became prominent presences throughout the Middle and Southern colonies and were actively extending their work into the westward and southward expanding frontier. There was inevitably an element of competitiveness in settlements and communities where these groups were ministering in proximity with ministers and congregations of the Presbyterian Church; however, the doctrinal unity and Presbyterian supervision provided in the *Westminster Confession and Form of Government* effectively reduced the danger of doctrinal encroachment of these groups and resulted in a strong

united, doctrinally sound, Presbyterian Church.

The effectiveness of the Westminster doctrinal standards and militancy against error in the Presbyterian oversight of the ministry and the churches within their bounds was a strong deterrent against infiltration by doctrinal aberrations or corruption from some of the deviant theologies that were beginning to emanate from some of the New England schools and their disciples. The church was kept pure by her militant adherence to her doctrinal standards. 

¹Principle Sources:

Charles Hodge, *The Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*

Samuel J. Baird, *A History of the New School and of the Questions Involved in the Disruption of the Presbyterian Church in 1838*

Archibald Alexander, *The Log College*



We urge you to read the second and final installment of this article in the next issue of the WRS Journal, due out in August of 1997. The theme of that issue is "Hodge and Princeton Seminary," and celebrates the bicentennial of Princeton Seminary, the roots of which Dr. Hall has examined here.

—Ed

over the Council's decisions. One delegate said the Council is

...hopelessly enmeshed in governing structures that call people together to make decisions that are neither clear nor well-implemented. Our decision-making structures should be small.³

RADICAL IN POLITICS

One reason for the financial problems facing the NCC and WCC is the way these groups promote a very liberal political agenda. Many individual members and churches resent these stances being taken in their names. Typical of many WCC leaders is Methodist Jose Miguez-Bonino from Argentina, a well known exponent of "liberation theology," who served on the WCC executive committee for eight years. On a speaking tour in the US in 1988 Miguez said that

In some cases in the Third World countries, using Marxist principles is the best way to understand economic struggle. For example, Marxist analysis is helpful in understanding the world economic system, including the relationship between the United States and Third World countries.⁴

Even politically liberal writer Ronald J. Sider has noted this radical liberal agenda of the WCC. Speaking of their stance on ecology, Sider said, "the WCC drafters went overboard in their emphasis and failed to state what the Bible clearly teaches, that humanity has a special status in creation as bearer of the divine image... It is both unbiblical and ridiculous to deny the special status of persons." Sider also criticized the WCC's concern about the fall of Communism in Europe and its "one-

sided attacks on market economies," joined by "near silence on the evils of the Eastern block."⁵

An example of this one-sidedness in our own country was the refusal by the governing board of the National Council of Churches to participate in any official celebration of the 500th anniversary of the coming of Columbus to America. Declaring that Columbus "invaded" America, the NCC said he was responsible for inflicting "slavery, genocide, theft, and exploitation" upon the Indians.⁶ When asked by an Episcopal bishop to add a list of "positive" things about America, the NCC committee voted that idea down.

This radical attack in the political area is not letting up. In its latest meeting the Central Committee of the WCC proposed that the Council condemn the actions of the US in placing sanctions against Cuba as "economic aggression against the people of Cuba," and also expressed its "concern" about US missile attacks on Iraq.⁷

This is just a small sample of the types of actions the NCC and WCC have taken over the years. From supporting leftist terrorist groups to denouncing the liberties that permit their own existence, these church leaders have been promoting a political agenda directly in conflict with God's Ten Commandments and with established Christian ethics. The recent collapse of Communism in much of the world has not cooled their ardor.

RADICAL IN RELIGION

Of greater significance is the stance these councils have taken regarding the Christian faith. Many

Evangelical official made this pilgrimage to their assembly. For many years now the popularity and influence of these ecumenical councils has been declining. Most of the mainline denominations in the NCC are shrinking in membership, and many of the remaining members are upset by the radical stance promoted by these councils. Therefore, the NCC and WCC are desperately are seeking an influx of support from churches outside their membership--particularly from the Roman Catholics and from Evangelicals. This is seen in the recent meeting mentioned above. Not only did the NAE president address the assembly, but he offered a prayer at a NCC ceremony honoring Roman Catholic Joseph Cardinal Bernardin. Later a delegation of twenty NCC leaders went to Holy Name Cathedral to offer prayers "in honor of" the cardinal.²

Why are the NCC and the WCC seeking to include these others? One reason is that their own base of support is shrinking. At its last meeting in Geneva the Central Committee of the WCC heard from its general secretary Konrad Raiser that, in spite of "strenuous efforts to cut expenses," the Council still faces a debt for next year of over one million dollars. The past seven years have seen "a decline in income of nearly 50 percent." According to Raiser, "income is no longer sufficient to maintain the present level of activities of the WCC." The Council is planning to reduce its full-time employee equivalent from 237 to 190 this coming year.

Some delegates saw the needed reorganization as an opportunity to tighten the grip of the leadership

THE END OF THE ROAD: APOSTASY OF THE NCC AND WCC

by John Battle

Recently there has been a major move on the part of Evangelical leaders to join with the mainstream liberal denominations, particularly with the National and World Councils of Churches (NCC and WCC). In November, Don Argue, an Assemblies of God minister and current president of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), addressed the NCC General Assembly in Chicago. This is the first time a NAE representative has done this. Argue told how he now has a "good relationship" with NCC General Secretary Joan Brown Campbell, and said he does not know how future relations will develop between the NAE and the NCC. He recognized the NCC leaders as fellow Christians and distanced himself from "the more combative and anti-intellectual fundamentalists." Argue was pleased to report later that the NCC delegates' response to his speech "was overwhelming.... They gave me a standing ovation."¹

It is no wonder the liberal church leaders of the National Council were happy that America's top

ANALYSIS

COOPERATIVE EVANGELISM AND THE DOCTRINE OF SEPARATION

by Brad Gsell

The emergence of Evangelist Billy Graham in the last half of the 20th century has caused many to examine the issue of cooperative evangelism as it relates to the Biblical doctrine of separation. Although cooperative evangelism is certainly nothing new, the acceptance or rejection of the methods employed by Graham and a host of lesser-known evangelists has to a large degree become a defining point in determining a professing Christian's view of the holiness of God and the purity of His church. The subject at hand involves several Biblical principles, including the commands to: 1) "go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature..." (Mark 16:15); 2) have love for and unity with our brethren as the sign Christ says will mark us as His disciples (John 13:35); 3) be separate from disobedient brethren and unbelievers (II Corinthians 6:14-17; II Thessalonians 3:6). All of these principles must be obeyed if we are to be servants of the Lord with whom He is pleased.

BIBLICAL COOPERATION IN THE PAST

Throughout history, particularly in the United States, there have been many instances of united effort to preach the Gospel of Christ. Indeed the "Great Awakening" and the

"Ignorance is the Mother of HERESY."

—Cotton Mather,

*Speaking to all who
desire to keep the
Church in doctrinal
darkness for the sake of
unity and devotion*

(Continued on page 24)

(Continued from page 23)

“Second Great Awakening” cut across denominational lines. Many instances are recorded of cooperation between leaders in various denominations. Ian Murray, writing in his book *Revivals and Revivalism*, states: “As was seen in the time of Edwards, Whitefield and Davies, one mark of an outpouring of the Spirit of God is the presence of a stronger catholicity of spirit among believers.” At another place, Murray writes: “True revivals rarely remain within denominational boundaries.”

As the westward migration began at the end of the eighteenth century, even more cooperation was seen. Peter Marshall and David Manuel, in their popular book *From Sea to Shining Sea*, describe the “camp meetings” in western Kentucky in which ministers from various denominations would preach. Although some questionable practices surfaced, there appears to be a genuine united effort. Francis Asbury, the Methodist Bishop, recorded in his *Journal and Letters* his reflections on a meeting held in a Presbyterian Church in Kentucky in October of 1800: “Methodists and Presbyterians united their labours... mercy flowed in abundant streams of salvation to perishing sinners.”

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, no evangelist was more prominent than Dwight L. Moody, who preached to huge crowds and received wide support from virtually all Protestant denominations. Where Rev. Charles Finney, beginning in the 1830s, put great emphasis upon human ingenuity and initiation in converting souls, Moody appeared to give glory to the Lord. It is important to note that such Reformed leaders as the Bonar brothers in Scotland and

Charles Haddon Spurgeon in England, although not approving of all aspects of Moody’s theology, gave him their warm support. Spurgeon, who ably defended the doctrine of separation from apostasy, appeared to be quite ready to lend support to Moody’s endeavors. Even J. Gresham Machen, the stalwart Presbyterian defender of orthodoxy, allowed room for cooperation with others who deviated from the Reformed faith in certain regards. In his book *Christianity and Liberalism*, Machen writes:

A Calvinist is constrained to regard the Arminian theology as a serious impoverishment of the Scriptural doctrine of divine grace.... Yet here again, true evangelical fellowship is possible between those who hold, with regard to some exceedingly important matters, sharply opposing views.

Of course Machen was not one to tolerate doctrinal sloppiness and insisted on a clear and accurate presentation of the Gospel. This is paramount in any evangelistic endeavor.

UNBIBLICAL COOPERATION TODAY

As has briefly been shown, various levels of cooperation have been encouraged and blessed by men of God through various periods of our country’s history. Some may wonder then what is the difference between the level of cooperation seen in previous centuries and that seen in the cooperative evangelistic endeavors of our day. Up until the 20th century, virtually all denominations held to the inerrancy of Scripture, the virgin birth and bodily resurrection of Christ, and other cardinal doctrines of God’s Word. Although

of “cooperative evangelism.”

REACHING OUT TO APOSTATES

Equally disturbing is the NAE leadership’s open rapprochement with the National Council of Churches. This late development, as well as the hosting of a Roman Catholic observer, is the natural outcome of sacrificing truth for the sake of religious unity.

The Charismatic world view generally tends to exalt present experience over the tested truths of time. Without too much exaggeration we may safely say that a charismatic’s “experience” is often “felt” as valid in meaning as a first century apostle’s message from God. Therefore, often ignorant of the Scripture and steeped in an existential approach to life, charismatic decisions and lifestyles often will contradict biblical Christianity.

For the same reason, charismatic denominations downplay the importance of teaching church history to their ministerial candidates. Accordingly, if God the Spirit today is giving instant revelations, then why bother with the painstaking work of studying and learning from the church of the past? Why even bother with studying apostolic history?

Those who assert the importance of experience over reality live in an historical vacuum. Hence there is little wonder that the present NAE leadership operates as if oblivious to the great fundamentalist-modernist dispute of the 1920s and ’30s in America. To know this history is to know the identity of the NCC and of its member denominations. It is a sad account of departure from historic Christianity and of open apostasy.

So what do “evangelicals” in the NAE have to do with apostate Protestants and Roman Catholics? Are these groups no longer part of the Christian mission field? Has the “neo-evangelical” movement come to the place where it not only doubts the Bible in areas of scientific and historical statement, but now also in areas of faith and obedience? Apparently, Christ’s demands for holiness and unity in the truth are not as important to NAE leadership as building bridges to false churches.

CONCLUSION

Intent on expanding an already broad image, the NAE in 1996 promoted Charismatic and female leadership, accredited the National Council of Churches, and extended a palm branch to the Roman Catholic Church. Some NAE members are nervous about these sweeping developments.

To those who have a conscience enlightened by Scripture and are concerned about the diluting of Christian orthodoxy, we say (1) God demands instant obedience, and (2) there are other avenues of evangelizing and addressing social issues without being entangled in the snare of the NAE.

Even as God calls us to personal holiness, He also demands our best efforts toward ecclesiastical purity. Especially, Reformed groups in the NAE should recognize this. The Reformed heritage of “reformed and always reforming,” dictates that church bodies ever be examining themselves in the light of God’s Word. The National Association of Evangelicals is overdue for reformation. 

National Council of Churches of Christ.

In 1942 another organization was born. Refusing the call of the conservative American Council of Christian Churches to join in the stand against mainline liberalism, while avoiding direct involvement with the Federal Council of Churches, “new evangelical” leaders organized the National Association of Evangelicals with two main objectives—to promote cooperative evangelism and to encourage the American church to address social concerns.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE NAE

In direct opposition to the commands of Scripture, the NAE has often followed a course of compromise in pursuing these two stated objectives. Now the current leadership is intent on broadening its bases of support and appeal. Consider the following developments from 1996:

- The latest NAE president, Donald Argue, is a charismatic from the Assembly of God;
- A majority of members on the NAE leadership council are from charismatic or Pentecostal churches;
- The NAE uses women pastors on its platform for religious functions;
- Member denominations and congregations in the NAE have always been able to hold dual membership in the modernistic NCC. Now the new NAE president is actively dialoguing with the NCC General Secretary, Joan Brown Campbell. Both have made courtesy visits to the other’s headquarters, and Dr. Argue of the NAE has affirmed their

“mutual respect” and has preached for the NCC staff;

· Finally, the new NAE president found a way with several other new evangelical leaders to meet with the pope when he visited the U.S. This was followed by the NAE’s hosting an official Roman Catholic observer at its 1996 Convention.

ANALYSIS

These developments confirm the drift of the National Association of Evangelicals. When it comes to questions of ecclesiastical cooperation, the NAE operates as if in an historical vacuum. It is more in tune with ephemeral cultural concerns than with biblical principle and the ongoing struggles in the Church to preserve those principles. There appears to be no appreciation for boundaries of purity and claims of truth laid down in the Bible.

CHARISMATIC DRIFT

Especially in the latter half of this century the Charismatic movement has been a leading force in breaking down church barriers. Truth generally is sacrificed when differing religious bodies line up together and their only common ground is a subjective charismatic experience.

Now a precedent has been set. In its fifty-five year history the NAE generally has had an orthodox identity, at least on paper. In 1996, however, not only did the Association elect a president from a Charismatic denomination, but it also chose a majority of the leadership council from among Charismatic or Pentecostal denominations. This development is not surprising in view of the NAE’s original objective

there were important differences which cannot be trivialized, the situation as it exists today, with many in the mainline denominations denying these major doctrines, was not an issue. Such groups as the Unitarians did exist, but they were not accepted as orthodox.

The present day situation is not limited to the ministry of one man, but it certainly is represented by the practices of Evangelist Billy Graham. His influence has been enormous, and he has forged the path followed by most evangelicals of our day. Graham left his strict adherence to Biblical teaching on separation and now includes men on his sponsoring committees who openly deny the plain teachings of God’s Word. This has been well documented in other places, but one example will suffice here. Bishop James Pike was on the platform and delivered a prayer at Graham’s Detroit Crusade in 1960. Graham also preached in Pike’s pulpit and had various joint appearances with him through the years. Pike’s denial of God’s Word was well known. Even as recently as this year, Pike was used as an example in a secular magazine for his rejection of orthodoxy (*Newsweek*, February 26, 1996). The article reported: “Bishop James Pike, who died in 1969, rejected orthodox Christianity (he dismissed the Trinity as a ‘committee god’)....” Second John tells us that if a man denies the doctrine of Christ you are to “receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”

It is hard to imagine a Jonathan Edwards or even a Dwight Moody accepting such a man as a sponsor! However, when it became clear that

Graham had abandoned his separatist stand in the 1950s, it was not long until one of his supporters attempted to justify the change. In 1958, Dr. Robert O. Ferm published a book entitled *Cooperative Evangelism: Is Billy Graham right or wrong?* In it he attempts to justify from Scripture the practice of including these unbelievers in cooperative evangelistic endeavors. Dr. Gary Cohen, presently president of Cohen Theological Seminary, wrote a masterful rebuttal to Dr. Ferm’s arguments. It would do the interested reader well to read both Dr. Ferm’s and Dr. Cohen’s books. A major reason for this shift we see in much of modern-day evangelism can undoubtedly be seen in the understanding of what the Bible teaches about revival. As mentioned before, Charles Finney, in the early part of the nineteenth century, rejected the Calvinistic understanding of revival which placed it entirely in the hands of God. Finney declared: “WILLING to obey Christ is to be a Christian. When an individual actually chooses to obey God, he is a Christian.” This is in marked contrast to the beliefs of Jonathan Edwards, a major leader in the first Great Awakening. Edwards wrote:

There is an absolute and universal dependence of the redeemed on God. The nature and contrivance of our redemption is such, that the redeemed are in every thing directly, immediately, and entirely dependent on God: They are dependent on Him for all, and are dependent on Him every way.

Finney thought that human persuasion and innovation could bring men to accept Christ. Much of the results were in the planning and

execution, rather than being a “surprising work of God,” as Edwards put it. Over the last 150 years, this vital change has permeated the understanding of many of God’s people. Although Graham speaks of the work of God’s Spirit, he also makes it clear that “... God has never designated anyone to go to hell because man does have that free choice, that free will” (*The Charlotte Observer*, September 25, 1996). *The Charlotte Observer*, March 20, 1996, states concerning Graham:

With rare exception, he does not tackle theological questions or deal with issues that divide or distinguish denominations from one another, lest his comments disrupt the peaceful ecumenical cooperation he needs for a successful crusade or conference.

Graham’s own *Christianity Today* (November 13, 1995), states:

To others, whatever theological difficulties may be involved for contemporary Protestantism, [Rev.] Graham’s ministry demonstrates the pragmatic success of his evangelistic message.

The host of celebrities, race car drivers, rock musicians, etc., which Graham employs in his crusades is a clear example of the use of human means to attempt to convert the lost. The *Charlotte Observer* (March 20, 1996), in discussing this use of human means writes:

By that time, said Graham biographer Bill Martin, the evangelist will have driven home one of his ministry’s central points: ‘Use whatever techniques to hook ’em in, then punch ’em with the gospel,’ said Martin. ‘Whatever it takes to

get their attention.’

This philosophy is being used by a host of new evangelists including Graham’s son Franklin and Greg Laurie of Harvest Ministries in California. When man depend upon these innovative means, it is not long before he must compromise the Biblical principle of separation from worldliness (I John 2:15) and separation from unbelief and compromise. The pragmatic soon becomes pre-eminent. “We can reach so many more people if...” Certainly, including people and events which appeal to the flesh are going to attract a bigger crowd, but is it pleasing to God? Certainly, involving influential men on the Crusade committees who deny the Word of God will increase one’s influence and perhaps draw more people, but is it a policy of obedience to God’s Word? A true evangelistic endeavor can only be conducted by those who love Christ and his Word. Unregenerate men have no place in such a work. J. Gresham Machen wrote in *Christianity and Liberalism* that

...Christian service consists primarily in the propagation of a message, and specifically Christian fellowship exists only between those to whom the message has become the very basis of all life.

The oft-stated maxim applies so clearly: “God’s work must be done in God’s way in order to receive God’s blessing.” Dr. Charles H. Spurgeon, in his lectures on soulwinning, commented on the call of Christ: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). Spurgeon states:

I understand this, first, in this sense:

Be separate unto Christ... We are called most distinctly to come out from among the ungodly, and to be separate, and not to touch the unclean thing. We cannot be fishers of men if we remain among men in the same element with them. Fish will not be fishers. The sinner will not convert the sinner.... The worldly Christian will not convert the world.

Elsewhere, Spurgeon speaks of liberal ministers such as Graham regularly welcomes on his platform as “traitors,” and states: “They have given the people the name of the gospel, but the gospel itself has evaporated in their hands.” Rather than advancing the true Gospel, Spurgeon says that such men are a hindrance to soul-winning. Yet, those making “decisions” at Graham’s crusades are regularly sent to churches where they will be fed by such men.

CONCLUSION

The servant of God who seeks to be faithful to Christ will have love for lost souls and for his brothers in Christ. However, he must preach the Word faithfully, in accordance with Scripture and trust God for the results. When we see salvation as coming from Christ alone, we no longer have the need to be preoccupied by the results. Our witness may be to large crowds, or it may just as easily be one-to-one or in small groups. Our comfort will lie in being busy doing what Christ commanded: “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15), and trusting Him for the results. 

See Mr. Gsell’s booklet *The Legacy of Billy Graham: The Accom-*

modation of Truth to Error in the Evangelical Church *for a compelling look at the ministry of Rev. Billy Graham, published by Fundamental Presbyterian Publications, P.O. Box 26164, Charlotte, NC, 28221.* —Ed

UPDATE ON THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EVANGELICALS

by Chris Lensch

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE NAE

Ever since *The Readers’ Digest* published two exposés of the World Council of Churches in the ’70s and ’80s, people in the pews of member WCC denominations have begrudged their denominations’ financial support of the WCC. Others have seen the light and have forsaken their liberal churches.

The National Council of Churches is the U.S. affiliate of the WCC. The NCC has its roots in the Federal Council of Churches which was so discredited for its liberalism and its social gospel that it reorganized in 1950 under the new identity of the