

# The Presbyterian Guardian

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## LORD OF MY RETIREMENT

Lord, you have blessed all the years —  
The growing up years with bruised knees  
And childhood frustrations,  
Of joys and adventures,  
Of lessons learned the hard way;

The years of uncertainty and choice —  
Of a career, of a mate (oh, thank you!)  
And of "the way" to travel,  
The God to serve (oh, thank you!);

The years of productivity,  
Of raising a family,  
Of progress in the world,  
Of growth in the faith.

Now, Lord, be Lord of my retirement —  
Retirement means more time,  
More fluidity, more freedom,  
Retirement means less pressure,  
Less structure, less money.

Bless the seminary professor  
Whose retirement means marriage  
And a family, and establishing  
A Christian school in Scotland!

Bless the retired woman  
Who plans to serve the church  
In office work and calling  
And perhaps later abroad.

Lord, let it be for me a dedication —  
Help me fill it with reading  
Great books of the world's saints,  
And with fresh study  
Of the Book of Books.

Help me fill it with serving,  
Of using the years' experience  
In the work of your kingdom  
Here and wherever you lead.

Help me to fill it with growth,  
Sanctification does not stop at 65!  
Let me not suddenly turn inward  
To my desires, my plans.

Lord, teach me how to retire!

Teach me to lay my tears  
At your feet —  
Fears of losing health, loved ones,  
Security, faculties.

Teach me to lay my gifts  
At your feet —  
What I have learned,  
Developed, acquired.

Teach me to lay my future  
At your feet —  
Use me, Lord, more fully  
Than ever before.

— Norma Ellis

# are you on cloud nine ?

by G. I. WILLIAMSON

One of the pastoral problems that I have met more and more frequently in recent years is suggested by the title above. Let me explain.

My wife began to attend some women's meetings with others in our church, when I noticed that she sometimes came home rather discouraged and downhearted. In talking it over I discovered this was the reason: The study material used at these meetings was often some recent evangelical publication that had become popular in the wider circle of readers. And it was

usually a sort of romantic account of the way in which the writer found in Jesus the answer to all manner of problems. Suddenly they were on cloud nine, as it were, and everything was just wonderful.

## Is the Christian life a high?

The trouble was that my wife hadn't reached cloud nine. No, for her there was still a daily struggle with the flesh, the world, and the devil. Prayer was still an effort. And troubles and trials still came. As she compared her experience, then, with these wonderful and romantic stories that others related, she began to wonder about herself. "I just don't know," she would say. "Maybe I don't really know what it is to be a Christian at all."

Well, we talked this over at some length. And I urged her to put these modern evangelical books out of mind for a while, in order to think about the Scripture. I asked her to tell me of just one person in the Bible who lived on cloud number nine! I asked her to name just one who rose above the strife of battle to bask in the sunshine of perfect tranquility and peace!

And then we sat down and read some of the Psalms of the Bible — the divinely inspired directory for true Christian experience. Again and again she would say, "Well, that sounds just like me! That's the way it really is." So the powerful truth of the Word of God was all the answer that was needed.

She went back, next time, to that women's meeting and spoke about these things. Suddenly there were others who spoke up expressing their profound relief! Yes, they too had had precisely the same experience. They had heard these all too wonderful stories and then had looked at themselves! And they too had begun to say, "Well, it's not like that with me. It's not cloud nine at all. It's still a daily struggle with many discouragements and trials." Imagine what a relief it was, then, to get back to the solid truth.

## The Christian life is a battle

Now I do not want to condemn every evangelical book that tells of the wonder-working power of Christ. I myself could write one too — and it would have much the same effect, if

I only told one side of the story! Any true believer can tell these things, and should tell them too. But not in such a way as to give a distorted view of the matter. And this is all too often what happens.

That is one reason why it is so very helpful to go back and read the biographies of some of the great men of God. Yes, we often find those elements in their lives that humble us, and make us ashamed — things that make us cry out to God for more grace to walk closely with him. But they also have an abundance of trial and tribulation with the weakness of the flesh! And precisely because we see their discouragement — and weakness — and tribulations, we find the encouragement to press on with our own good fight of the faith.

Let me urge you then, if you have this problem, to turn from fiction to truth. The fact is that much of this modern evangelical material is rubbish of the worst sort precisely because it draws a pietistic picture of life — the Christian life — that never has been true in this world.

No, the true Christian life is not easy — and it is not "cloud nine" — a sort of perpetual ecstasy that lifts us "above all the din." It is rather a battle all the way, and the whole armor of God is required.

For only those who endure to the end are going to be saved in that day. Let us give special heed to the inspired words of the Psalms, then, and take heart and encouragement when we see ourselves therein. For in this — rather than in a kind of imaginary heaven on earth — we shall find our encouragement. And the very fact that we are fighting the good fight will become, as it should, a comfort to us rather than a discouragement because we don't find it so easy.

You see, there is no "cloud nine" in the Christian life. We're in a battle all the way to the end. To be misled into thinking otherwise is just another clever trick of Satan to discourage us.

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*The Rev. Mr. Williamson is pastor of the Reformed Church in Silverstream, New Zealand. This article first appeared in the Reformed Journal that serves the Reformed congregations in that country.*

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# "KEEP CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS" -- ?

## **ROLLIN P. KELLER**

The thoughtful Christian applauds the motive of an organization that displays bumper stickers or billboards with the slogan, "Keep Christ in Christmas." But the assumption of such an appeal is that Christ is somehow still present in Christmas.

I'm afraid that assumption must be challenged. If the public at large is being advised to hold the status quo on Christmas emphases, is this how we "keep" Christ in Christmas? Preachers are notoriously cynical on such subjects!

A typical American Christmas seems far removed from Christ as I view it. The holiday merchandise rush begins the day after Halloween now. Except for the supermarket, Thanksgiving is not very conducive to commercialism, and the worship of the Pilgrims is not likely to get much p.r. from the media.

Santa, however, has become the patron saint of materialism. This jolly pickpocket is a catalyst for a child's greed and a parent's fiscal irresponsibility. The living room, which in fact celebrates the present on Christmas morning, is as far removed from Christ as a locker room from a perfume counter. How do we put Christ in?

The proposition really ought to be, Can and should we try to put Christ into Christmas? As a Christian, the answer must be "Yes" because Christ must be preeminent in everything we do.

Well then, how can the Christian celebrate this holiday with a good conscience? Let us celebrate the humility of the incarnation on Christmas eve, and let Christmas morning be a time of sheer family fun. Spend the previous evening in public or private worship of our condescending God. Then if Christmas day is a time for making each other happy with gifts, we can thank God for it and enjoy it.

But rather than seeking to transform the toys, trinkets and tissue

paper of Christmas morn into a time of serious meditation—while excited children are asked to fight the distraction of their new possessions—let's seek to make Christmas eve the memorial day of the Emmanuel. Then Christmas dinner, including a devotional thanks to God for the wholesome family fun of the day, is not a surrender to the jolly red antichrist.

## **EDWARD L. VOLZ**

Around this time of year when I see the bumper sticker proclaiming "Keep Christ in Christmas," my first reaction is always, "Whoever thought they could take him out?"

Theologically, this is wonderfully true. But listening to the media and surveying the merchants, one could easily become a believer in managed news—such a well-kept secret is the living Jesus. And true it is that the commercialization of Christmas is distressful to us. We dislike seeing the Savior's name made an occasion for worldly gain.

But how do we, in a practical way, make Christmas Christian? I would suggest three things: celebration, catechism, and charity.

Celebration is always a part of Christmas. But how about celebrating Jesus instead of family trees and presents? Rejoicing over Jesus is an activity for God's people together and so a Christian Christmas should find a place for church worship. Appropriate celebration might also involve groups of Christians joining together for hymns and a time of prayer.

A Christian Christmas should also include catechism. By that I mean there should be oral teaching of the truths of Christmas and their significance. Many children have been "catechized" on the secular holiday legends. Why should we miss out on teaching the truth of Christmas and Christ at this time?

Learning about Jesus' total ministry

and its goals at Christmas time would put a new sense of awe in Christmas. Thus, adults of all ages and circumstances would do well to plan a special study of Jesus and his work at the holiday season. Certainly parents have a special responsibility to prove to their children the importance of Jesus and his teaching by making this learning an important part of holiday time.

Lastly, Christmas should include charity—not a few coins in the bucket outside the department store—but a love for God's elect children that demonstrates itself in concrete ways. John declared that if we have received the benefits of the life and work of Jesus which we celebrate, it will show in our loving care for each other (1 John 3:11-18). There are many with real needs that our abundance could supply at this time—either directly or through the Deacons' Fund. And let us not forget the intangible needs for companionship especially among the older believers.

If we are going to turn from commercialism in Christmas, let us turn to a sharing of our goals and ourselves with those who are of the household of faith. If we are going to turn from secular myths, of the season, let us turn to a clear understanding of the Word of God. And if we are going to turn from the endless procession of parties that glory in man's ability to degrade himself, let us turn to a joyous celebration of the birth of the King of kings and Lord of lords. Let's make our Christmas Christian.

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*The Rev. Mr. Volz is the assistant pastor in the First Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Long Beach, California. The Rev. Mr. Keller is pastor of the Emmanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Wilmington, Delaware. Their thoughts on Christmas first appeared a year ago in their churches' respective newsletters.*

# can i be spiritual . . . and at the same time human?

HARVIE M. CONN

What is spirituality? A worn Bible and a frown for mini-skirts? Attendance at Wednesday evening prayer meetings and Walt Disney movies only? Supernatural without natural, soul without body, sacred without secular? How can I be ME, without part of ME being shrunk to the size of a manageable family-skeleton-in-the-Christian-closet? Without my life losing the full dimension God wants it to have in the Spirit?

At least two definitions of spirituality today end up reducing Christianity's dimensions to merely one. World-centered spirituality calls for bodies without souls, and soul-centered spirituality for souls without bodies. Both are guilty of reshaping "spiritual service" (Romans 12:1), one into a framework as large as the world, the other into a framework as small as a man's vestpocket prayer list.

## World-centered spirituality

World-centered spirituality is a one-dimensional call for an end to the war between Christianity and secularization. Harvey Cox, the high priest of the movement, insists that secularization is not the enemy of the gospel but its fruit. The secular city *is* the city of God. The old definition of spirituality asked, "Where is God, that I may follow him?" World-centered spirituality asks, "Where is my neighbor, that I may love him?"

In world-centered spirituality, the lines between the church and the world are erased. So, the theme of the second Assembly of the World Council of Churches (1954) is changed from "Christ the Hope of the Church and the World" to "Christ the Hope of the World." For the same reason, the New Delhi Assembly of the World Council of Churches (1961) removed the word "our" from the phrase, "our Lord Jesus Christ" in their constitutional basis. "Our" might appear to be restrictive, to set the church off from the world.

World-centered spirituality is not simply calling for Christians to get involved. Nor are they simply saying, "If you're not involved, you're not Christian." They are saying, "If you are involved, you are Christian." World-centered spirituality does not pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." It prays, "Thy will be done on earth, your heaven." World-centered spirituality calls us to close all escape-hatches from this world into any other world, whether we call it heaven or nirvana. According to this form of one-dimensional spirituality, all we have is the here and now. The

"secular" is the only "sacred" we can ever know.

## Soul-centered spirituality

On the other end of the one-dimensional spectrum is the sacred/secular answer of soul-centered spirituality. Many evangelicals have contented themselves with this. World-centered spirituality asks, "What does spirituality mean to a man paid inadequate wages and renting a rat-infested tenement room?" Soul-centered spirituality asks, "What do inadequate wages and renting a rat-infested tenement room mean to a man when his soul is saved?"

One defines spirituality in terms of this-worldliness, the other in terms of other-worldliness; one by sanctifying revolution, the other by sanctifying the status quo. Both are one-dimensional. World-centered spirituality lives by the present tense, in the here-and-now; soul-centered spirituality lives by the future tense, in the soon-coming. One says, "Look down"; the other, "Look up." One defines spiritual in terms of the material, the other in terms of the non-material; one in terms of what you see, the other in terms of what you don't see.

In this reduction of people into souls, our contact with society is indirect. As Vernon Grounds analyzes the position, the gospel message is seen as only "incidentally social in its application and outworking" (*Evangelicalism and Social Responsibility*, p. 7). From this vantage point, world-centered spirituality can be attacked, and properly so, for "making the institutional church the agent of social revolution."

But from this abstraction comes compartmentalization, a spirituality that is less than a life-system and therefore less than God-centered. It is this compartmentalization that will turn Brazilian university students from Christ to Marx. "You Protestants," they explain, "seem to be concerned only about getting people to stop smoking, drinking, and dancing. When the communists speak to us they talk about feeding the starving, teaching the illiterate, and putting an end to exploitation and injustice."

It is this compartmentalization that turns the black community against the brand of Christianity that speaks of spirituality from the pulpit of a segregated house of worship. Against this compartment Christianity, Malcolm X rebelled in his early career as a minister of Islam. And, in rejecting it, he rejected Christ with it. "Our white slave-master's Christian religion has taught us black people here

in the wilderness of North America that we will sprout wings when we die and fly up into the sky where God will have for us a special place called heaven. This is the white man's Christian religion used to *brainwash* us black people. . . . This blue-eyed devil has *twisted* his Christianity, to keep his *foot* on our backs . . . to keep our eyes fixed on the pie in the sky and heaven in the hereafter . . . while *he* enjoys *his* heaven right *here* . . . on *this earth* . . . in *this life*" (*Autobiography of Malcolm X*, pp. 200f.).

It is soul-centered spirituality that Douglas Johnson and George Cornell may be describing in their book, *Punctured Preconceptions* (Friendship Press, 1972). In a survey of 3454 members of the church in North America, they asked them what they thought to be the local church's main task. From a list of fourteen categories, the paramount task was seen as evangelism, "winning others to Christ." Running a close second to this was "providing worship for members." Midway in the list was "serving as social conscience to the community" (pp. 31, 82).

"Most people," comment the pollsters, "do regard the church as a personal center of comfort, reassurance and refuge" (p. 30). The gap between "winning others to Christ" and "serving as social conscience" is there because of soul-centered spirituality. And soul-centered spirituality, regardless of how much in it that is so biblical, is here because it flows from a self-imposed view of the autonomy of the individual/soul who still can't believe he should eat the whole thing.

### Two-dimensional spirituality

Seeking to avoid the one-dimensional folly of body without soul and the one-dimensional fear of soul without body, many of today's evangelicals write books calling for a "social conscience" that begins with the new birth and "responds positively to society as it is." Jesus' redemptive program is seen to have a social dimension, frequently missing in the evangelicals' recent past.

The answer to that lost chord is said to be an added dimension, a subscription to *Christianity Today* as well as to the *Christian Century*, a platform that will combine the best of two worlds—the liberal's "horizontal" obligation to love and serve neighbor and the conservative evangelical's "vertical" obligation to God. Polarization must be resolved in emerging commonality.

Thus the Christian is called to obey two mandates—one cultural (Genesis 1:28), one evangelistic (Matthew 28:18-20). In the past, world-centered spirituality has been too one-dimensional in its Old Testament, prophetic emphasis on the "cultural mandate." And soul-centered spirituality has been too one-dimensional in its New Testament, evangelistic emphasis on the "evangelistic mandate." The two dimensions must correct each other, with the primary emphasis on the evangelistic mandate.

But adding one such dimension to another does not eliminate compartmentalization. It only adds another compartment. Formerly it was body or soul, salvation or social action, church or society. Now it is body and soul, salvation and social action, church and society. Two abstractions do not make a whole.

The abstractions remain, hidden in statements like, "Nothing could be more disastrous for the church and its witness in the world than for it to give the impression that it is primarily concerned with the needs of the body—economic, social and political." Or again, "The mission of

the church is preeminently spiritual—that is, its major concern revolves around the non-material aspects of life."

The abstractions remain because of a radical misunderstanding of the dimensions said to be embraced. World-centered spirituality is no more a prophet's corrective for a soul-centered evangelist's lack of balance than New Testament grace is the antidote to Old Testament Sinai thunder. The cultural mandate has been rejected by world-centered spirituality just as it has also rejected the evangelistic mandate. The mandate has been re-tooled from a call to make the earth fruitful for God's glory (Genesis 1:28) to a welfare mandate, and a call to make the earth man's kingdom by political means. How can that provide "a necessary corrective" to the evangelical "concern with evangelism and missions"?

And, in the same way, soul-centered spirituality has reduced the evangelistic mandate to something less than Matthew 28:18-20, to a spiritual/non-material mission that cannot be "primarily concerned with the needs of the body." How can that provide "a necessary corrective" to the liberal concern with social justice and political action? Its very definition has ruled itself out of the area of combat.

### Covenant-dimensional spirituality

There is a relation between cultural mandate and "great commission" mandate. But it is not an either-or, not a both-and, not even a primary-secondary. As John M. L. Young has seen it, Genesis 1:28 is *covenant* mandate, the Creator's first proclamation of his mission for his image-bearer. It is more than an isolated mandate governing man's body-life. It is the Sovereign's covenant stipulations for covenant life.

That covenant demand still stands, as surely as the curse for breaking the covenant still stands (Genesis 2:17). Only it is now grace that must meet its own demands. And grace has a name—Jesus crucified, risen and possessing "all authority in heaven and earth" (Matthew 28:18).

The so-called "missionary mandate" is the "covenant mandate's" anticipated fulfillment in redemptive grace. They are not basically two mandates but two stages in God's covenant relationship with man. In one, God speaks to covenant man of covenant obligation. In the other, God speaks to covenant breaker of covenant restoration in Christ. (John M. L. Young, "Theology of Missions: Covenant-Centered," *Christianity Today*, Vol. XIII, pp. 162ff.)

It is this covenant dimension, this "fourth-dimension," that integrates natural and supernatural to the point of questioning even the legitimacy of those terms. To ask about things spiritual is not to ask about things nonmaterial/supernatural/invisible/sacred as opposed to things material/natural/visible/secular. To be interested in things spiritual is to be interested in all of life, now touched by the healing hand of the Holy Spirit. It is to be interested in the things that interest the Lord.

God's interest cannot be programmed for action in the sacred or "spiritual." God-centered spirituality proclaims the supernatural God who created the natural in six days and pronounced a covenant benediction ("it was good") not only on each work of each day (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25), but also a special covenant benediction ("it was very good," verse 31) on it all.

The heavens and the earth, what men continue to call "the natural half of reality," are dignified by God as covenant witnesses (Psalm 19:1ff., Romans 1:20). They are witnesses to what the earth really is designed to be, the

*The Christian is a new man, living in a new world. Being "in the Spirit" is not an escape from history, "but a participation in the new reality in history" brought by the redemptive work of Christ and the applying work of the holy Spirit.*

garden of God (Ezekiel 28:13) where the Creator meets his creature in fellowship. Adam's fellowship with God is to be shown in his earthly, material activity, his subduing rule over the natural (Genesis 1:28). That is true spirituality. It totally integrates the spiritual and the physical to the point that the distinction is meaningless.

### **The true, undivided spirituality**

Adam's fall into sin (Genesis 3) gashes so deeply that it cuts a chasm not only between himself and God (verses 10, 15), but between himself and nature (verses 18-19), between himself and his fellow man (verses 12, 13). Redemptive healing by God is promised (verse 15), and it must be a healing therefore that will eradicate *all* the chasms sin has cut—with God, with man, with creation.

The "cultural mandate," as an expression of the divine purposes for Adam and his seed in the covenant of life, must await the Day of Integration for an end to its fragmentation, the Day of the New Beginnings for its fulfillment in Christ. The "evangelical mandate," God's covenant-of-grace call to discipling the nations, the work of Christ's Spirit in creating the new life of the kingdom come (John 3:3, 5), becomes the new means for that integration, that fulfillment.

It is no more two mandates than it is two ways of salvation. It is simply one call to grace, God's response to man's sin (Matthew 28:18-20) that man may fulfill God's call to culture building (Genesis 1:28). True spirituality calls men neither to be hermits nor political lobbyists, but it is the only thing that enables men to be messengers of the Lord's Word in the church, before the world, to our culture.

This refusal to see differences between "spiritual" and "material" was written into the Mosaic legislation, given by the Word of God himself at Sinai. It had brought God's people to that mountain. "Redemption," as a part of biblical vocabulary, was coined in the victory procession of God's people from Egypt across the Red Sea to Sinai. "Let my people go" was more than a call of God to save merely souls.

And it was this refusal to separate "spiritual" from "material" that made Amos storm into Bethel, thundering of the day when the Lord would send, not charity, not compassion, but justice. "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream" (Amos 5:24).

It was against people who did divide their "spiritual" habits of prayer and worship from their "material" habits of real estate profiteering (Isaiah 5:8, 9) and discrimination against minorities (Isaiah 1:23; Jeremiah 5:28) that God spoke through Isaiah. "What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor? says the Lord God of hosts" (Isaiah 3:15).

But God's final year of jubilee was coming (Leviticus 25). It would bring good news for the afflicted, healing for the brokenhearted, liberty for the captives, freedom for the prisoners (Isaiah 61:1ff.). God's "favorable time" was coming, "a day of salvation" when God would finally and fully help (Isaiah 49:8; 2 Corinthians 6:2), a day of

restoration, a day of "rebuilding the ancient ruins, raising up the former devastations, repairing the ruined cities" (Isaiah 61:4; Acts 15:13-18). God's great society, his age of Aquarius, the welfare program of the Messiah, would make the wrongs right, turn ashes into garlands, oil of mourning into oil of gladness.

### **The spirituality of the Spirit**

And all this would happen when the Spirit came. The Lord would send the Savior anointed for this task of kingdom restoration. And the Spirit of the Lord God would be upon him to do it (Isaiah 61:1). "The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him and with righteousness he will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth" (Isaiah 11:2, 4). "Behold my servant," says the Lord, "I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations" (Isaiah 42:1). True spirituality would be the mark of the Messiah and the Messiah's people. And with it would come God's new deal for his creation.

The good news that turns Old Testament into New Testament is that this day of true *spirituality* has begun. It has begun because its inaugurator has come, the one whose virgin birth is so intimately related to the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35), the one whose coming puts a new phrase on the lips of the Gospel writer seeking to explain the new wind blowing. "Filled with the Spirit" becomes the new slogan to mark off the people of the New Day—John the Baptist (Luke 1:15), Elizabeth (1:41), Zacharias (1:67), Simeon (2:25).

And the one who will baptize in the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16; Acts 1:5) is himself baptized in the Spirit (Luke 3:22), anointed for Messianic office. In fulfillment of that office, and "full of the Holy Spirit, Jesus . . . was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days" (Luke 4:1-2). He returns from that temptation "in the power of the Spirit" (4:14), and carries on his Messianic work of kingdom healing and preaching, conscious that God's jubilee year of salvation has come "in the power of the Spirit" (4:17-21). Under the Spirit's direction, he goes to Jerusalem where he will be put to death for sinners and "raised by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 8:11; 1 Peter 3:18).

Does this Spiritual work of Christ for sinners have nothing to do with social change? Mary would never have said that. "My soul exalts the Lord," she cries, "and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour. He has brought down rulers from their thrones, and exalted those who were humble. He has filled the hungry with good things; and sent away the rich empty-handed" (Luke 1:46, 52, 53). Mary "knew that the Lord God was on the verge of doing great things. The 'system' must go. The redeemer and deliverer of Israel was knocking at the door of history. Let the sons of Herod tremble. Let the keepers of empire beware. God was about to undo the work of power-hungry men and to give the earth back to his people. He would somehow liquidate the arrogant military and economic oppressors" (Sherwood E. Wirt, *The Social Conscience of the Evangelical*, p. 13).

### **The new-world spirituality**

At Calvary, Jesus begins his restoration work of society. He breaks the chains that shackle society to its own sins; justice and mercy meet and kiss each other at the blood-sprinkled throne of grace we call Golgotha.

And by faith, the world is called to join in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. The beginning of the end has

come, the previews of coming attractions when God will finally and perfectly restore the "new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13). The work of re-creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17) is the start of God's great society which he will complete at glory when Jesus comes again. Jesus, the "Lamb, standing as if slain" (Revelation 5:6), dies to restore no secular city, and no pie in the sky, but to bring down out of heaven from God "the new Jerusalem . . . and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21:1, 27).

But, in the meantime, what? As the people of the Spirit, baptized in the Spirit (Acts 1:5; 2:1-4; 1 Corinthians 12:13), do we have no calling in the world to fulfill while Christ tarries? When Paul says "we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit" (Romans 8:9), is he telling us the circle called "spiritual" has no place on its agenda for questions like politics, police, or poverty? When Paul contrasts "natural bodies" with "spiritual bodies" (1 Corinthians 15:44ff.), "natural man" with "spiritual man" (2:14), is he defining a churchman with the "extra-plus" that separates him from the ordinary, run-of-the-mill Christian? When one is "in the Spirit" (Romans 7:6; 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:3), is he thereby out of everything else?

Rather, it is the opposite. To be "in the flesh" is abnormality, not normality (to use words of Abraham Kuyper). Within the contrast of "flesh" and "spirit," "flesh" is life outside of Christ; it is "being on the wrong side, on Satan's side, in the great struggle for ultimate commitments in the world" (Galatians 5:16ff.). "Flesh" is Paul's epigram for life in hostility to Christ, life under the curse of the law, life in sin. And so, to be "in the Spirit" is to be under the domination of the Holy Spirit to be the organ through which the Spirit expresses himself (1 Corinthians 12:3).

"Spirit and flesh are both shorthand for the whole situation which each dominates. Being in the Spirit means being in the new situation, created by Christ and dominated by His Spirit" (Lewis Smedes, *All Things Made New*, p. 69). It means living in the day of new beginnings because Christ has come and because Christ has gone to glory and his Spirit has come. It means living by faith in a new relationship, with a new disposition, because of a new vitality. And all this because the Holy Spirit has come and is doing his initiating work of the new creation in our lives.

This kind of "spirituality" does not take us out of the world. It puts a new world into us, the world of the "Spiritual," that new lifestyle caused by the Holy Spirit, centered in the Holy Spirit, possessed by the Holy Spirit. It is not an inner work, as opposed to an outer work. As Geerhardus Vos puts it, "There has been created a totally new environment, or, more accurately stated, a totally new world. . . . The whole surrounding world has assumed a new aspect and a new complexion. . . ." (*Pauline Eschatology*, p. 47). The creative center is the cross. The dominant person is the Holy Spirit. The arena is history. The Christian is a new man, living in a new world. Being "in the Spirit" is not an escape from history, "but a participation in the new reality in history" brought by the redemptive work of Christ and the applying work of the Holy Spirit.

So, the New Testament letters are filled with discussions of the "spiritual life" that cover topics like political exploitation, racial intolerance, the consumption of foods used in pagan ceremonies, the position of women, family relation-

ships, the propriety of dress, relationships with non-Christians, taxation, prostitution, homosexuality, the relief of poverty. To equate the spiritual with the non-physical is completely unintelligible by New Testament standards.

In this "Spiritual life" there are new weapons for world-changing. The warlord of the universe did not enter Jerusalem on a charger, but a donkey (Zechariah 9:9). And he gives to his people for rule, not a sceptre, but a towel (John 13:12-15). The power of Rome is destroyed, not by war, but by walking a second mile (Matthew 5:41). Our weapons against social injustice, government corruption, racial slur, ghetto hatred, are the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

Where will the spiritual life take us? Into the ghettos of Philadelphia to organize a network of Christian schools, proclaiming Christ as the wisdom of the world. Into the brothels of Korea and Hong Kong to call women to repentance and a new life in the Spirit, proclaiming Christ as the love of God. Into the halls of Watergate, proclaiming Christ as King, and righteous Judge. Into the assemblies of the church, where brother is compartmentalized from neighbor. By the church becoming involved in drug rehabilitation programs. By suburban Christian schools opening to blacks.

As the "spiritual" pilgrims march, they are in agony. It is the agony of people who know that the new day of the Spirit has come and yet the world does not believe it. It is the agony of people who know that the "new exists wherever Christ is known, confessed and served as the Lord of life" (Smedes, *op. cit.*, p. 106).

And yet, there are so many who still live under the captivity of the old age. It is the agony of those who know that victory in Christ has been won at Calvary but must wait till glory to see it consummated. "The god of this age" has been defeated by the risen Christ; but so often, those in Christ see so little in society "that indicates the radical righteousness and love characteristic of the new creation."

So "the Spiritual ones" on earth continue to pray and to agonize with their brothers under the altar. "How long, O Lord?" (Revelation 6:9).

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*The Rev. Harvie M. Conn is a professor of apologetics and missions at Westminster Theological Seminary, and a former missionary to Korea.*

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This article is reprinted from *The Other Side*, John F. Alexander, editor, Savannah, Ohio.

*The Other Side* is perhaps the most provocative publication by Bible-believing Christians today. It seeks to be thoroughly Scripture-directed toward many of today's social, moral, and political problems. The articles are often disturbing to our lethargic acceptance of things as they are. Probably no reader agrees with everything the magazine says. But neither will any reader be likely to go away without examining anew the Lord's will for the "lifestyle" and attitudes needed by Christ's witnesses in today's world.

Editorial offices for this periodical (it appears six times a year) are being moved. Any reader desiring to subscribe or receive a sample copy may inquire through us; we'll forward your letter.

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# Catch the little foxes!

ROBERT D. RAGLIN

Once there was a camel so loaded down that the weight of one straw added to his burden was just too much. So the proverb goes, and we speak of "the straw that broke the camel's back."

There are many such "straws" in life. The camel is renowned for the strength of his back, but there can be too much of a load. The human back is also a remarkable structure, yet it is amazing how little it takes to throw it completely out of service. For several years now, I have suffered from what is known as a "slipped disc." Only one small vertebra in the whole spinal column is afflicted. Yet that one failure is enough to render the whole back helpless, no matter how strong it was otherwise.

So it is in the area of our spiritual lives. There is a burden of trials, temptations, Satanic assaults that our spiritual "backs" must bear. Our Christian lives may be relatively sound in discipline, reasonably Christ-like in pattern. Yet so often it is the little sins, the minor faults, that render us totally helpless and ineffective as Christians.

## The little sins

We might conform to ninety-nine percent of God's will, but the one percent of "secret sin" is still there. Whatever of rebelliousness we stubbornly reserve to ourselves, whatever failure to do what God commands, is enough to break our backs and make our lives ineffectual. Or, to use another proverb, the chain of our spiritual strength is only as strong as its weakest link.

So the bride, in *Solomon's Song*, is concerned to "catch the little foxes that spoil the vineyards" (2:15). Like a vineyard in blossom is her love for her bridegroom, and not even the little foxes must be allowed to spoil it by their destructive playfulness.

It is the little sins, the ones we think of as not worth noticing, that are so crafty and havoc-making in our lives. A sin may be "little" in our eyes, and "secret" to others, but it is plain and obvious to God (Psalm 90:8). "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love" (John 15:10). But there is a consuming wrath of God that will consume us if our iniquities, our secret sins, remain visible to God.

## The consuming anger

Is it possible, dear Christian, that you have not felt the love of your Lord for some time? Has it been a great while since you enjoyed the comfort of your Savior's presence, the warmth of his smile? Whose fault is it? Jesus has not deserted you; but you have built a wall of "little sins" that

calls forth his wrath.

"Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2). Don't suppose that only "big" sins will obscure your vision of Christ. Even a "little" unrepented sin calls forth the displeasure of God.

That is why Moses exhorts us to "number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom" (Psalm 90:12). Look back over your days, and see how futile they have been. Count it all up—and then realize what the emptiness means. Then you will be ready to follow in Moses' path to seek the Lord's mercy and grace, to confess the "secret sins" and so receive the Lord's blessing. Then we can "rejoice and be glad all our days" as we see the Lord's working in us (verses 13-16). And so too we will see our own lives made effective in the Lord's service (verse 17).

## Foxes in the church

What is true for individual Christians is true in the life of the church. Presbyterians have often tended to think rather well of themselves. But there has yet to be seen a perfect Presbyterian church; neither the Orthodox Presbyterian Church nor any other Presbyterian body is experiencing the spiritual blessings that should be expected. It's time to look for the "little foxes" that are tearing up the vineyard of the abiding love between Christ and his church. What sort of "foxes" are these?

A church that emphasizes God's sovereignty and that insists on the purity of God's Word, as true Presbyterian churches have historically done, would seem to leave little to be desired. But is doctrinal orthodoxy all that there needs to be? Our grapes may be planted in straight lines, but that hardly keeps the foxes away.

Perhaps we should compare ourselves with the church of Ephesus. "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil; and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted"—all of which would seem to be quite a commendable record. But the Lord continues: "Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Revelation 2:3, 4). Could this sin of abandoned love be one of our "little foxes," our "secret sins"?

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church was born out of controversy and a zeal for God's Word. It has been zealous for the truth, has worked for its preservation, and has not fainted. And every other true Presbyterian church has a



# Continuing Presbyterian Church

Birmingham, Ala. — The Briarwood Presbyterian Church will host the first General Assembly of the Continuing Presbyterian Church, on December 4-7.

Over 250 congregations have withdrawn from the Presbyterian Church, U.S. ('Southern') to form the new denomination. Concerned over increasing departures from Scripture doctrine in the parent body and convinced that reform from within is not possible, this denomination of Presbyterians will constitute themselves at the Birmingham gathering.

Presbyteries are already in operation, and committees for the

work of home and foreign missions and Christian education have been set up. The Assembly will begin as a fully functioning church.

Besides approving its organizational forms, the Assembly will adopt standards of doctrine, government, discipline, and worship. The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms (in the form possessed by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church) are being proposed for adoption. (Congregations are being urged to prepare training programs in the Westminster Standards.)

Considerable encouragement has come to the Continuing Church

by the addition of several important congregations, among them Trinity Church in Montgomery, Ala., and First Church in Jackson, Miss. At least one new congregation (in Atlanta, Ga.) has already been formed from home missionary efforts.

## A full report in January

A full report of the proceedings of this historic Assembly will appear in the January issue of the *Guardian*. (To allow for this report and the usual year-end delays in production and mailing, the *Guardian* will be about two weeks later in arriving than usual.)

similar history. We Presbyterians are outstanding when it comes to getting the kinks out of our theology; but how are we about trapping the little foxes that wreak havoc in the vineyard of our hearts?

## A live orthodoxy

Is it possible to be so thoroughly "orthodox" in theology that the heart of true religion can die? Can we be so doctrinally straight that the life of the Spirit is squeezed out?

I fear that there is a tendency among us to neglect feeling, to ignore the heart. If there is one thing as dangerous as a religion based entirely upon feeling, it is a religion where feeling is altogether lacking or despised. A religion with no feeling for one's own lostness apart from Christ, with no crying out of the heart to God for mercy, with no yearning for his gracious presence—such a religion is dead indeed.

A religion that has lost its zeal for seeing the fulness of God's graces poured out on poor, lost, weak, and helpless sinners is a dying religion. What else does it mean to love your neighbor but to yearn for him to taste the grace of God? And what else does it mean to love God but to long to see the glory of his grace made visible in the healing of sin-torn souls?

The woes of Christ are pronounced on the church that is insensitive to its own wretchedness, its own misery, blindness, and nakedness. A pure theology that leaves man's heart unmoved is less than useless. When we stand before the throne of judgment it will do little good to plead that we professed the "five points of Calvinism" if there was no "first love" abiding in our hearts. I rather suppose that the Lord may be more pleased with those whose hearts burned with love for sinners and for God, though their doctrine may have been awry, than with those whose minds had all the points in order, while their hearts had left the love behind.

There will, no doubt, be those who object—and they will not be wrong in so doing—that a "dead orthodoxy" is a contradiction in terms. "True orthodoxy," they will tell us,

"is by definition a living faith. Where there is genuine integrity of doctrine there is life." And this is absolutely correct.

But the distinction I have tried to make is not between theology and the Spirit, between doctrine and love—an impossible contrast—but between an organization of facts about God and a living faith in God.

The person or the church that knows the truth—in the biblical sense of knowing intimately in the heart—will in the very nature of the case heartily embrace the truth in a living faith. It is not that theology must step aside for the Spirit, or doctrine be shut off for the sake of life. Our concern is rather to become *increasingly orthodox* in appropriating the truth wholeheartedly and translating it into abundant, Spirit-filled life.

The "little fox" of Pharisaism was to be orthodox in name only. Let us be *truly* orthodox. We can begin by catching "the little foxes that spoil the vineyard" of a living faith and a believing love. If we are to return to our First Love himself, we must pray the Lord to make strong the "weak links." We must yearn for renewed power in the Spirit and joy in our Savior; we must pray that he will heal the "minor faults" we blithely ignored.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me" (Psalm 139:32). Then we may confidently and joyfully expect to see the work of our own hands established in the grace of our merciful God. And then the vineyard of our love for the Bridegroom will blossom and be fruitful.

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*The Rev. Mr. Raglin first wrote these thoughts for a school newspaper in the San Jose, California area, where he has been serving as pastor of Covenant Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Though his "slipped disc" hospitalized him for some time, he reports that he is back to full strength at present and would thank those who prayed for and helped in his period of illness.*

# A Sunday school bus ministry . . .

## hopelessly Unreformed,

"Our Sunday school is dying."  
"We simply aren't reaching the community through our Sunday school program."

"Our church isn't interested in Sunday school."  
"Our Sunday school doesn't know where it is going or what it's trying to accomplish. So, we don't seem to accomplish anything!"

Comments of this kind are not hard to hear in Presbyterian and Reformed churches. And the reasons for them are manifold. One thing seems sure, which is that many of our Sunday schools are in a state of impotence and decline.

But not all Sunday schools are like this. Some are moving ahead at an unbelievable rate. They are succeeding not only in ministering to their own people but also in reaching out into the community in an effective and productive way. And where Sunday schools are successful, churches are growing. In many cases they are growing so fast that adequate housing for meeting and worship can scarcely keep up.

These churches are accomplishing these things through a Sunday school bus ministry. Shouldn't we take a look at this?

One factor needs special mention, however. These are not Reformed or genuinely Presbyterian churches. They are evangelical churches, and in general they are unreformed in doctrine.

Does this mean that Sunday school bus ministry is not open to us? Or perhaps once we lay aside all the supersales techniques used by these churches, there would be little left of value for us. That is, could a Sunday school bus ministry be successful even if children were not being baited through all kinds of carnal rewards to ride and attend? I believe that the answer is an emphatic "Yes!"

Of course, this is not to suggest that instituting a bus ministry will be a Sunday school panacea. But if this ministry is undertaken — along with all the changes in Sunday school that it implies — then much might be done to improve the effectiveness and outreach of our Sunday schools.

Perhaps the best method to use from this point onward is a catechetical approach. We hope the questions and answers will stimulate your serious consideration of the bus ministry as a valid and Christ-honoring tool to be used as we seek to bring our communities to Christ.

### Q. Precisely what is a Sunday school bus ministry?

A. Essentially, this ministry involves the development by the church of a program in which children and adults

are recruited from the community to ride a bus to and from Sunday school and church.

### Q. If approached properly, will children and adults actually respond to this type of invitation?

A. Yes, by the thousands.

### Q. Is there a certain way in which this ministry must be organized in order for it to succeed?

A. Yes. This ministry has been developed along certain lines and has come to include certain definite practices and methods. It is the firm conviction of this writer that one must be careful to follow the plan that has been laid out by those who have enjoyed success in their efforts. Many bus ministries fail. But often this is due to following no plan at all or to some other plan than that which the "experts" have developed.

Of course, we must expunge from the program all that is in conflict with our doctrinal principles no matter what the cost. But the point is that there has been success with a particular method and failure with others; it would be stupid to ignore the experience of other Christians.

### Q. Is there some place where we may obtain literature or other information concerning this ministry as it is carried out by those who succeed with it?

A. Yes, such information is available through two channels. Of books available we suggest two that we believe are basic:

Jack Hyles, *Jack Hyles' Church Bus Handbook* (Hammond, Ind., Hyles-Anderson Publishers, 1970), concerning one of America's largest Sunday schools.  
Wally Beebe, *All About the Bus Ministry* (Murfreesboro, Tenn., Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1970).

Second, speakers are available. Churches conducting successful bus ministries are usually willing to share their experiences. This affords opportunity for questions about details not adequately covered in books.

### Q. What is the general system of organization that is employed?

A. First, there is a *bus superintendent*. This will probably be a layman. He may be a volunteer, or even a church employee. His task is to oversee the entire bus ministry.

Second, there are *bus captains*. Each bus has a captain. He/she is responsible for recruiting riders, developing motivational activities for riders, leading in evangelistic activities carried out while the bus is

# or hope for the Reformed?

ANDREW E. WIKHOLM

traveling (why waste that opportunity?), overseeing helpers who may work in recruitment visitation, contacting riders during the week for purposes of encouraging their continuing participation in the ministry; in general, engaging in an evangelistic witnessing and ministry of Christian compassion.

Third, there are the *drivers*. The driver may have other duties, but the main responsibility is to drive the bus—and to meet whatever requirements the state sets in order to drive.

Fourth, the *bus maintenance people* are responsible to keep the busses running and in conformity to state requirements.

Each of these types of persons is to do his own work and not that of the others. There is a strict definition of responsibilities for each type.

## Q. Is there a certain way in which a bus ministry must be viewed if it is to be successful?

A. Yes. The bus ministry must be viewed as precisely what it is: *Soul-winning on wheels*. Bus workers must be regarded as bus evangelists, for this is really what they are. One cannot expect this ministry to attract workers or to succeed unless the workers are properly identified as bus evangelists.

Further, each bus is to be viewed as an evangelistic unity, not merely as a means of transportation. Each bus captain is responsible to conduct a program for the bus involving evangelistic, motivational, and social activities.

When bus riders come to a public profession of faith in Christ, appropriate recognition must be given to the bus ministry that brought them under the influence of the gospel and to the particular bus workers involved.

## Q. What are some factors essential to success?

A. 1. *The pastor* must encourage the program. He must be convinced of its value; he must convince others of its value; he must oversee its inception; he must give appropriate recognition to the workers and their successes.

2. *The whole church* must gear up for the problems that an influx of unchurched people will present. Definite plans to maintain law and order in classes, to foster an atmosphere of hospitality and welcome, must be developed and put into practice.

3. *The Sunday school* will have to redesign its program to meet the needs of the newcomers. It will have to be challenging and attractive. Teaching will have to be consistent in getting the gospel message

across, and it will have to be effectively done. Sunday school teachers will have to coordinate their programs and efforts. Much study and thought will be needed to develop a successful program. But this factor alone may offset all the pain and extra effort that undertaking a bus ministry involves.

4. There must be unflinching devotion to *calling on homes*. Experts say three hours per week is a minimum as far as new contacts are concerned. Added helpers may cut this down or make more than minimal calling possible.

5. Busses will *remain for morning worship*. Those transported by bus should be expected and should expect to stay for church services as well as for Sunday school. In addition, bus workers need to attend worship services. They cannot do this if they are on the busses at the scheduled time.

## Q. What specific objectives may we expect to accomplish through a bus ministry?

A. 1. The winning of many to Christ.

2. Development of lines of communication with our communities through home visitations.

3. Opportunities to bring many people, especially children, into the life of the church and into a program of gospel and social activities that are Christ-honoring and edifying.

4. Opportunity to meet the needs for Christian compassion and mercy that come to be known through the bus ministry.

5. Building up a sound foundation among the young for the church of the coming generation.

6. The privilege of seeing a Sunday school and church program in your own church that is producing joy, enthusiasm, dedication, involvement, and every grace we long to see abound in us and others.

## Conclusion

What has been set forth here is not intended as an end, but as a beginning. We have not tried to tell enough about anything. We have merely sought to whet the reader's appetite to learn more about a program that has succeeded for many. Perhaps it can succeed in your church and community. Isn't it worth looking into and trying?

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*The Rev. Mr. Wikholm is headmaster of the Wilmington Christian School in Wilmington, Delaware. Both he and the Guardian would be interested in your reactions to this idea of a bus ministry and especially to whatever experiences with it you may have had.*

# The Elders of the Church . . . screening procedures

LAWRENCE R. EYRES

The Holy Spirit makes men bishops or elders (Acts 20:28). We must never forget this. Nevertheless, elders do not spring forth before the church, Minerva-like, fully perfected. Gifts for teaching and rule must be there, but these need to be developed. Along with that must also come the maturing and seasoning work of biblical sanctification. And this work of sanctification must have progressed to a considerable degree before a man is ordained.

In the last section, I sought to show how men ought to seek the office of elder, and how the leaders of the church ought to encourage promising men to prepare themselves to that end. In this installment, I want to counsel the church in the technique of observing, of recognizing the maturing process in gifted men, in order to choose that man Christ has given to his church.

## Waiting for the Lord's provision

Just here churches need to be cautioned against haste in electing men on the basis of *supposed need*. It is dangerous enough for a church's spiritual health to assume it has all the elders it "needs." But the danger of laying hands suddenly on a man just to fill the required number is the greater danger to most congregations. Just because the number of ruling elders has been reduced to near the zero point is no excuse for suddenly saying, "We've got to get some new elders right away!"

The sovereign Lord is fully aware of our needs. He will, if his people wait on him, raise up *his* men in *his* time. Too often the church acts in the manner of King Saul, who arrogated to himself the prerogatives of God's priest when Samuel failed to show up at the appointed time (1 Samuel 13:5-14). *It is far better to delay organizing a new congregation, or adding to an established session, until the Lord's time has come and his men have been made ready.*

But how do we discern the Lord's time and the Lord's men? It is not by "reading" the congregation to determine if the church has reached a certain level of need. Like the godly woman who concludes that the Lord doesn't want her to be married yet since no suitable man has asked her, the church may need to conclude that Lord doesn't intend for it to have any new elders just now.

God's way is rather that the church "look out among you . . . men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom" (Acts 6:3), possessing the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9. This attitude of alert observation and searching must be taught to a congregation—it doesn't come naturally. And it must be put into practice continually, not merely at certain times.

Every adult male member of the congregation should be under scrutiny. Not only ought members ask themselves, "Is this man Spirit-filled, Spirit-gifted, and therefore to be

made an elder?" but also, "Given time to mature and develop his gifts, should this man be made an elder in years to come?"

## Check-list for screening

At this point some sort of check-list should be drawn up and used by members of the congregation. This is not to "keep score" on these men for a permanent record. But members can and should check men out, privately, according to some such list as this:

*Family life:* 1. Does he rule his children with firmness and love, or are they inclined to be wild and "bratty"? 2. Does he have a good relationship with his wife, ruling her *and* cherishing her according to the standard of Ephesians 5:25-28? Is his marriage a model to young people in the church? 3. Is their home hospitable, open to the saints in need of fellowship and sustenance; is it a "home away from home" to strangers?

*Church life:* 1. Are he and his family faithful to *all* the regular services of the church, and not on-again-off-again participants? 2. Is he friendly and cordial toward members and visitors? Does he show concern for the sick, the burdened, the children, the elderly? 3. Does he give of himself in money, time and talents to the Lord's work in the church? Is he willing to take on jobs in the church, without seeking acclaim? 4. Is he firm and decisive in his attitudes about essentials of faith and living without being opinionated or contentious about details? Can he take correction gracefully when he is wrong? Is he able to disagree, without being disagreeable, and willing to see another's point of view? 5. Above all, is he a man of the Word and prayer? Is he eager to learn, able to discern spiritual things, walking close to his Lord? Does he make himself available to those with burdens, listening to their cries, comforting them in sorrows, praying with and for them in their needs? Does he keep confidences? Can he communicate the truth to others and defend it against attack? Is he slow to judge others, quick to commend, and firm in rejecting all forms of gossip?

*Worldly affairs:* 1. Is he scrupulously honest in all his money matters, giving value for value, paying his debts promptly? 2. Is he respected by those most closely associated with him in day-to-day employment? 3. Is he prudent in the use of his worldly wealth, neither slovenly nor showy, and not inordinately attached to his earthly possessions? 4. Does he respond as a Christian should to disappointment and worldly reverses (1 Cor. 7:29-31; Job 1:21, 2:10)?

## Finding the Lord's choice

These questions cover the list of qualifications given in

1 Timothy and Titus. It will not be easy to make right judgments in every case, but the church is obliged to work at it anyway. Surely if the whole congregation is prayerfully and quietly on the watch for men such as this, certain things will follow.

It will become apparent quite early that some men are ungifted and unfitted. Very early also a few, or perhaps only one, will begin to stand out from the rest. Certain young men in the church, not noticed before, will now be seen as God's men in the making. Those presently qualified will appear so to all.

In fact, if ten ordinary members of any congregation would follow these principles prayerfully and consistently for one year, and only then share their thinking about which men are truly qualified, the measure of agreement might astound them. God *does* lead his people, often even in spite of their lack of concern to be led. But when his people seek his leading through the diligent use of appointed means, their belief in the Lord's present leadership of his church is marvelously confirmed to the delight of his people and the praise of his name.

These procedures should be followed by all adult voting members of the congregation. At the same time, the existing elders should take the lead in selecting and proposing men for office. But if the whole church, with prayer for the Lord's guidance, has followed this procedure of seeking the Lord's men, there will be no rebellion or resentment in the ranks because this man or that is passed by. The reasons for passing him by will be apparent to all, and thus the people will have closed a door to the devil who often uses this situation to divide and destroy a congregation of Jesus Christ.

#### Practical means for spiritual ends

The rest is simple enough. It is a good thing to have safeguards (in the church's by-laws) against hasty and injudicious nominations. These will not do the job alone, and lack of them is not fatal if the church has been doing its homework. Naturally, no name ought to be proposed for election (either by the session or members of the congregation) unless it can be published at least one month prior to election; even three or six months' advance notice is preferable. Nor should a name be published without the nominee's own carefully considered consent.

And it should not be made more difficult for ordinary members to propose names than for the session. After all, it is the people themselves who must submit to the rule of those elders they elect. In any case, a nominee ought to be warned that nomination is not tantamount to election; his prayer should be that the Lord will provide the best for his church.

Another caution: Ordinarily a man would be wise not to accept election if a significant minority is opposed to him. Unless it is clear that he was opposed for improper motives, he should decline the office. Otherwise, he places upon the dissidents the difficult task of rendering submission in the Lord to a man they feel is unqualified to rule in the Lord's name. This would jeopardize his ministry to them from the very outset.

Then there is the matter of competition for office, as when there are more nominees than there are offices to be filled. This is an inherent danger where sessions are organized with term-eldership and a fixed number of places

*"It is far better to delay organizing a new congregation or adding to an established session until the Lord's time has come and his men have been made ready."*

to be filled in each class. To set a fixed number of elders is a dangerous precedent. True, there were twelve apostles and seven deacons; but these numbers were determined by the Lord himself. It is far better for us to seek the men of God's own choosing, however many or few there may be, and to make them elders. To fill the posts with unqualified men or to refuse those who are qualified just because we have "enough" already is to refuse the Lord's own provisions for his church.

We should be extremely cautious in choosing elders lest we tempt some men to run whom the Lord never sent (Jeremiah 23:21)! But if a man is ready to serve Christ's church as an elder, by what arbitrary rule is he to be kept back because another man is also ready? If the Holy Spirit makes men elders, then the church ought to be ruled by those men the Spirit has prepared. (But if a church insists on choosing *between* candidates, then the man chosen by majority should be voted on again to determine if the minority is prepared to submit to his rule in the church.)

The Holy Spirit makes men bishops. He makes bishops of those whom he first makes men. He makes men bishops by giving them gifts for teaching and rule. He makes men ready for this service by maturing them in their gifts and by the work of sanctification in their lives. Chronological age is not the primary rule; but we do need to beware of making *bishops* of men whom the Lord has not yet made *elders* in wisdom, discernment, and spiritual graces. To ordain a novice is only to minister confusion to the flock of Christ.

#### Questions to ponder:

1. If a man ardently desires and seeks the office of elder, but is rejected by the church, what counsel should be given to help him accept the failure of his cherished desire?
2. May a man's success in business or profession be a partial measure of his suitability for the office of elder? In what ways?
3. Should a church choose elders during a time of dissension and turmoil in the congregation?
4. What are the mechanics best suited for a congregation to arrive at consensus on the candidates proposed? How openly should a man's qualifications be discussed before taking a vote? Is there any way to prevent this process of discerning who has the qualifications from becoming a matter of common gossip?

*It is not intended that these comments and suggestions provide all the answers to every possible question. It is intended that they generate careful thought on how best to discern the Lord's will in each local situation. The Rev. Mr. Eyres is a home missionary-pastor in Dayton, Ohio, and writes out of a background of experience in pastoring the flock of Christ.*

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**Letters**

**Opposes L. Catechism changes,  
wants 'liberty' statement**

In regard to Norman Shepherd's article in the October *Guardian*, the proposed changes to the Larger Catechism seem completely unsatisfactory to me; for dubious distinctions between the terms 'day' and 'time,' for example, lack the clarity that should be found in confessional standards.

We cannot expect to effect union by forcing premillennialists to live with standards that are based on such passages as Matthew 25 and John 6, to which Mr. Shepherd refers, while they ignore completely Revelation 20.

The words of Revelation 20 are just as plain and understandable to my premillennial mind as those in the Gospels; and there is an apparent contradiction between them. As a convinced premillennialist, I prefer to seek to unravel the problem rather than confess that the language of Revelation 20 is to be spiritualized so that we need not believe that the Word of God speaks plainly. After all, we premils are in good company, for Daniel accepted the literalness of Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the seventy years.

Since the union, if it is to be effected, must include pre-, a-, and postmillennialists, why not say so in plain language as Edwards Elliott suggested in the Aug./Sept. *Guardian*?

Albert G. Bender, elder  
Trinity O. P. Church  
Bothell, Wash.

*Ed. note:* Mr. Elliott also opposed changes in the Larger Catechism, as presently included in the proposed Plan of Union for the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod. He urged that there be a declaratory statement affirming 'eschatological liberty' in a merged church.

**Object to 'disclaimer' on  
Dr. Payne's prophecy book**

Is it right to accept paid advertising for Dr. J. Barton Payne's book *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* and diminish its effectiveness by

**The  
Presbyterian  
Guardian**

EDITOR

JOHN J. MITCHELL

All correspondence should be addressed to **The Presbyterian Guardian, 7401 Old York Road, Phila., Pa. 19126**

printing a disclaimer next to it!

You alienate Reformed Presbyterian men who interpret as does Dr. Payne. If the RPC/ES and OPC do merge, will you call this type of thing "eschatological liberty"? You say, "We agree that the book is important." How? Theologically and/or monetarily?

Conversely, praise the Lord! perhaps some will buy and study his work and be enlightened because you 'distantiated' (?) yourself by your remarks.

Kyle Thurman  
James A. Weist  
RPC/ES Ministers

*Ed. note:* Sorry about 'distantiated'; try 'distanced' instead. I do hope Dr. Payne's book is studied, and if some are persuaded by it to a view differing from mine, I hope we all are allowed 'eschatological liberty' to say so. Would it be wrong to run an ad without a disclaimer, if the readers were thus misled into supposing the product was endorsed?

**A GIFT SUGGESTION**

Exciting recipes for breads of all kinds, with accompanying verses of Scripture and brief meditations — forty-eight pages of food for the body and the soul.

*The Way to the Heart Never Changes* was prepared by Mrs. Jo Ann Hackenberg, illustrated by Mrs. Suzi Wells, printed in Spiral binding. It provides a thoughtful gift combined with a testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ.

All profits from its sale go to Covenant Christian School Society of Westfield, N. J. Available for \$2, plus 25¢ for postage and handling, *The Way to the Heart Never Changes* may be obtained through: Mrs. Edwin Hackenberg, 204 N. Chestnut St. Westfield, NJ 07090

*The Presbyterian Guardian*

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## Here and There in The Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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**Schenectady, N.Y.** — Calvary Church, the Rev. Raymond M. Meiners, pastor, celebrated its 35th anniversary on November 9. Organized in 1938 with thirteen charter members, the congregation now has 136 communicants and 56 baptized children. Six of the original charter group are still active in the church, including Mrs. Meiners and Ruling Elder and Mrs. Robert McCullough.

**Alliance, Ohio** — Friends from the Nashua, Grove City, and Harrisville, Pa. churches joined Chapel members here for a fellowship supper with the Rev. and Mrs. Bruce F. Hunt, missionaries to Korea. The Rev. David King who serves the Alliance group reported it as a blessing to them. His **changed** address: 528 E. Milner, Alliance, OH 44601.

**Willow Grove, Pa.** — The annual Reformed Laymen's banquet was held on December 1 at Calvary Reformed Presbyterian Church. The evening speaker was the Rev. Norman Shepherd, professor at Westminster Seminary. Reformed laymen from several denominations joined in the evening's fellowship.

**Harriman, Tenn.** — At its stated meeting of October 16, 17 the Presbytery of the South licensed Mr. James Workman and Mr. Stephen Voorwinde to preach the gospel. Mr. Workman is a senior at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Miss. Mr. Voorwinde is a graduate of Westminster Seminary and is serving as an assistant in the West Hills Church here.

The presbytery also received the Rev. Robert A. Gramp as a ministerial member. Mr. Gramp is an instructor in Westminster Academy of Fort Lauderdale, Fla. His address: 629 N.W. 40th St., Oakland Park, FL 33309.

A request to organize a congregation in the Tallahassee, Fla. area was given to a committee for action. Persons in the Tallahassee area may contact Mr. Dan Wiper, 802 Waverly Rd., Tallahassee, 32303.

**Winner, S.D.** — The Presbytery of the Dakotas ordained Mr. Glenn D. Jerrell to the gospel ministry. Mr. Jerrell is pastor of the Winner Church. His address: 521 Lincoln, Winner, SD 57580.

**Toronto, Ont.** — The Rev. Robert L. Malarkey, former pastor of Westminster Church in Bartlesville, Okla., has answered the call of the Fellowship Christian Reformed Church here. His new address: 27 Dittmer Crescent, Rexdale, Ont. M9W 4P7, Canada.

**Novato, Calif.** — The Rev. Robert H. Graham has resigned as home missionary-pastor here. The Grahams' new address: 7411 Rainbow Dr, Apt. 8, San Jose, CA 95129.

**Silver Spring, Md.** — Knox Church held its thirteenth annual Missionary Conference, November 2–4. Conference features were an evening for the women of the church, a men's breakfast, children's rally, young people's rally, and special messages at Sunday worship services. Speakers included the Bruce Hunts (Korea), the Egbert Andrews (Taiwan), Sandra Campbell (nurse in Eritrea) and others. The visiting missionaries also taught in various Sunday school classes.

**Phillipsburg, N.J.** — Calvary Community Church has called Mr. George C. Scipione to be its new pastor. Mr. Scipione is a licentiate of the Presbytery of New Jersey, a graduate of Westminster Seminary, and is completing work on a doctoral program at Temple University. He and his wife expect to take up the work in early February.

**Lewisburg, Pa.** — The Tri-County Church has recently arranged to purchase the church building and manse of the Lewisburg Church of the Nazarene. Until the Nazarenes complete their new quarters, the two congregations will share the building. Since its organization the Tri-County Church, the Rev. L. Craig Long, pastor, has met at the Farmer's Best Restaurant.

On Sunday, October 28, the Rev. Paul Woolley, emeritus professor of Westminster Seminary, preached at a special service of thanksgiving. The morning worship is regularly broadcast over station WPGM.

**Bancroft, S.D.** — Mr. Edward A. Eppinger, a licentiate of the Presbytery of Ohio, has been called as pastor for Murdock Memorial Church here and the Manchester, S.D., Church. His address: Bancroft, SD 57316.

**Sunnyvale, Calif.** — The Rev. Lawrence G. Andres, former pastor of Faith Reformed Presbyterian Church in Quarryville, Pa. has been called as pastor of the First Church here. His address: 1210 Brookfield Ave., Sunnyvale, CA 94087.

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### OTHER NEW ADDRESSES

The Rev. James L. Bosgraf (new pastor of the Park Hill Church in Denver), 2374 Dahlia, Denver, CO 80207.

The Rev. Robert D. Scott (formerly in Gladstone, Ore.), 1845 Anderson Dr., Las Cruces, NM 88003.

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### Going someplace?

Everybody seems to be moving. But don't go without telling us where! Give us three weeks' notice so we can keep your **Guardian** coming. Please include ZIP Code!



# God's way of resolving disputes

ROBERT L. MARSHALL

Because we are sinners living in a world where everyone else is a sinner, it is inevitable that disputes, disagreements, and controversies are going to arise. To act as if we are beyond causing or having to cope with disputes is simply to ignore the biblical truths concerning sin and Satan.

Of course, our aim should be: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18). But when it is not possible to avoid disputes, how then shall we handle this problem that is common to us all?

## Let it go away by itself?

Perhaps the biggest mistake is just refusing to handle the dispute at all. We often just hope it will go away by itself. It is true that in regard to things that the Bible considers petty and small, Christian love should "cover a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). The key at that point is to make sure there is *genuine* love and *genuine* forgiveness.

More often than not, however, the dispute is going to have to be dealt with to prevent the onset of bitterness and resentment.

## Let's stop speaking to one another?

Another serious mistake that is frequently made when disputes arise between people is for them to refuse to have anything to do with one another. Husbands and wives may go for days without speaking; neighbors build permanent fences — oftentimes real ones — between themselves; church members studiously avoid one another.

The trouble with both of these philosophies toward disputes is that the wound continues to fester because the splinter has never been removed. The importance of the unity of Christ's body *demand*s that Christians resolve their disputes. But how?

## Go and tell your brother!

In Matthew 18:15-17 God has given us his way of resolving our disputes. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother" (verse 15).

Notice these elements: 1. Here is a program for those who profess to be *brothers* (or sisters) in Christ, and it is aimed at *regain*ing a brotherly relationship. 2. Endeavoring to clear the offense is not an optional matter;

the *innocent* victim is under obligation before God to "go and tell him his fault." 3. The very first step is to discuss it "between thee and him alone" — privately! This automatically prohibits all gossip, slander, complaining and griping to other people, things that produce no constructive results and are flatly condemned throughout the Scriptures. 4. There is a certain *urgency* for immediate action. "Do not let the sun go down on your anger" (Ephesians 4:26). Rather than allowing disputes to drag on and on, we must seek to deal with them the day they occur — before the sun goes down.

## Then take along witnesses.

"But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (verse 16). There is the possibility that the guilty party will not listen when confronted with his sin. But our responsibility before God to our brother does not end there. "I told him, but he wouldn't listen; so I'm finished!" — is not God's way.

Instead of "washing our hands" of the matter when the person refuses to listen, Scripture instructs us to take one step more. "Take one or two others" and go back again. These are to serve as unbiased witnesses to insure that the facts are clear in the hope that there will be real repentance and genuine forgiveness in the case of established guilt.

## Finally, tell it to the church.

"And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (verse 17). These last two steps complete the Lord's program for resolving disputes. They bring into play the authority of the organized church. They indicate also that the final outcome may not necessarily be a pleasant one. Nevertheless, the dispute is resolved in such a way that there are no loose ends remaining to hamper the work of the gospel or to shame the honor of Christ.

This is God's way. Each one of his children is responsible to make *loving* use of it when disputes do arise. Just think how much healthier the church would be if Christians followed this way rather than men's ways!

The Rev. Mr. Marshall is pastor of Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Bridgeton, New Jersey. This article is adapted from its original in the congregation's newsletter.