

The Presbyterian Guardian

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That roaring lion . . .



still walketh about

That roaring lion . . .

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith . . . (1 Peter 5:8, 9).

Mike Newell was a twenty-year-old weirdo who lived in the lazy, sprawling town of Vineland, New Jersey. Or at least, he used to live there until that hot, summer afternoon some years ago when this young man succeeded in shocking the nation.

It was Satanism that interested Mike. He frequented the public library, reading everything he could about the occult, witchcraft, incantations, and the devil. He soon began to practice the strange rituals of Satanism. He would invite his friends, lay out a triangle on the floor, placing an artificial human skull at each of the three vertices of the triangle. Then, with candles burning and a hamster in each hand, he would intone incantations to the devil. And after that he would scream at the top of his lungs, smash the hamsters in his hands, smear their blood all over his arms, and solemnly voice a closing incantation to the devil.

Joining the devil

Mike's final ritual was the one to top them all off. He was convinced, through his reading of various Satanist materials, that if a person were murdered by his friends, he would be reborn as an ally of the devil and a commander of demons. Not only that, but through his own personal calculations he had determined that through his own death in a certain way at a certain time and a certain place, he could be reborn as a captain of forty legions of Satan's demons.

And Mike was overheard urging his friends, Richard Williams and Wayne Sweikert, "Why don't you kill me? Then I can join the devil." So, on that hot, humid, summer afternoon, Mike and his two friends drove out into an area populated only by scrub oak. They approached the edge of a small stagnant pool. After an incantation and a worship service to the devil, Mike's friends bound his hands and feet with tape. Mike looked out over the pond, turned to his friends and said, "Proceed, as friends." They taped his mouth and eyes and then shoved him into the pond and watched him sink. Three days later his body was discovered.

Serving the devil

And then in Miami, a twenty-two-year-old girl named Kim Brown, who claimed to be under the influence of Satan, stabbed a sixty-two-year-old man to death. When she came before the judge for trial, she said, "I really enjoyed killing him." She received a remarkably light sentence — seven years—and attributed this to the influence of the devil in her behalf.

Recently in Los Angeles, a teacher was murdered. After

the burial, the grave was raided and the woman's heart, lungs and other parts of her body were removed. They were later used in a Satan worship service.

These are only a few examples of what is happening currently. Some of it is near us. Some of it may be found on nearby university campuses. Students from prominent families are often involved. Satan worship and organized Satan churches are a reality today. And occult practices, some serious and some "for kicks," are to be found many places.

Who believes in the devil?

Several years ago while I was a student in college, a teacher surveyed the class and asked, "No one believes in the devil anymore, do they? Is there anyone here who is foolish enough to believe something like that?" Only one person in the room raised a hand.

Scarcely twelve years later we find people actually worshipping Satan, engaging in witchcraft, studying the occult seriously. The unthinkable of fifteen years ago has become the contemporary reality. Who could have thought it? Yet hundreds, even thousands of people are involved and openly serving the devil. It is bizarre — it is also entirely real!

The Scripture "believes in" the devil

One thing should be clear to everyone: *The devil is real.* As one person remarked, "You may not believe in the devil; but he sure is doing a lot of damage for something that's not real!"

The Bible makes it plain that the devil is real and is busy trying to accomplish evil. It was the devil in the beginning, you remember, who deceived Eve and introduced all our trouble into this world. Anything bad, when traced back to its root, can be attributed to the devil and his influence on the human race.

It was the devil who afflicted Job. It was the devil who tempted Jesus. It was the devil who entered into the heart of Judas and influenced him to betray his Lord. The record from Scripture is very plain.

Just as God is real, just as Jesus is real, just as the angels are real — although we see none of them — even so evil forces are real, including Satan and his demons. Consequently, we are involved in a struggle against evil forces and a real devil in this world (Ephesians 6:12).

In a world that was getting better and better, where science and technology were conquering all the "natural evils," people could readily laugh away the idea of a devil. But today, people are quite ready to acknowledge the existence of personified evil. The devil is no figment of the imagination, spawned in the ignorant mind of superstition. It is not as *Time* magazine blithely claimed: "Out of ancient lore and

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still walketh about

LUDER G. WHITLOCK, JR.

the minds of medieval churchmen came the devil."

Not at all! The devil is real. He has been active in deceiving and destroying, and he would attempt to destroy God's own if he were allowed. So Peter warns, "Be on the alert because your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). And in our own age, this modern age, he has found many to devour as the news shows us. There is no doubt about it: The devil is real, and he is active.

What to do about the devil?

Well, what do we do about him? Some of you may be wondering about this. You may have read the lengthy report some months ago in *Time* magazine. You may have seen reports in the newspapers about what is happening. And you wonder, what are we to do about all of these things?

Again, the message of Scripture is plain. Peter urges, "Resist the devil" (verse 9). Be firm in the faith and *resist* him! James says, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). This is what God expects you to do about it. You are to oppose the devil, not flirt with him, not dabble in his works, nor are you to quit or give in, or be overcome or shaken by the things that are happening today.

We have always known that the devil was around and that he was busy — but too often we thought of him as being busy somewhere else. Yet I remember one of the first things I heard after becoming a Christian: "Wherever God builds a church, the devil erects his chapel." That is true, for Satan's greatest hatred is concentrated on those who belong to God. So God says, "Resist the devil." That is what you must do.

Resist, in the strength of God

We are not to be discouraged, or dismayed, or disillusioned by the things that are happening in our world. God may be bringing judgment on our own nation, on our own culture, for having deserted the faith that was once delivered to our ancestors here in America. Since so much of our nation has forgotten God, he may well be giving them up to worship the lie (Romans 1:20-32).

However, it is never too late to turn around. It is never too late for people to see the error of their ways. It is always, until our Lord returns in glory, time for even the chiefest sinners to return to God.

And we, who have turned in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, are not to be discouraged. For we know that if God is on our side, then we shall prevail. As Paul says, "If God is for us, . . . [and] spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:31, 32).

Of course! That is precisely the point here. God is on our side — how can you doubt it when you think of Christ's death! God is on our side, and *just as the devil is active*

in the world, so God is active, so Jesus is busy praying for us, so the Holy Spirit is working in us. Perhaps the devil is accomplishing some things; but our God is at work also!

The working of God today

There is as much of a spiritual awakening today as there has been in the last thirty years. There is a spiritual ferment in the land. The Spirit of God is at work. We can see it among our own, see it in some of our young people, see it also in those who are old.

There is a promise in the Scriptures that we need to remember: "Greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). What a great comfort this is to the Christian! So what if the devil is real and hard at work? God has promised that Jesus is much more powerful to save, that he can accomplish much more, for greater by far is Jesus and his Spirit than the devil and his legions.

In fact, Jesus came into the world to destroy Satan and his works (1 John 3:8). It is Satan who has caused all of our troubles by bringing sin into the world. He would love to corrupt everyone, and he would succeed — except for one thing: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, entered into the mainstream of history, clothing himself in human flesh, living without sin, dying on the cross to pay for your sins, and so breaking the chains of sin that enslaved you. Thus our Lord crushes the power of Satan.

When Jesus rose from the grave, the devil was a beaten enemy. "O death, where is thy victory? O grave, where is thy sting?" Gone! Gone! Gone, because of what Jesus has done. That is the great Christian message. God has conquered through Jesus Christ, who died, and who lives now and forever to make intercession for his own.

And Satan? Yes, he still walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He still has power, still uses it to destroy many. But the devil is not someone to worship, not someone to serve, for his power is crushed. One day the devil and all his helpers will be punished forever. Those who serve him now will join him in eternal punishment.

But for those who believe in Jesus, the promise is quite different. You will be more than conquerors with him. If you believe in Jesus, you can look your own world in the eye, without fear, because the power of God is with you, and the strength of Christ is stronger in you than that of the devil himself in this present world.

Believe in Christ Jesus. Resist the devil. Walk in the Lord's way, and know that God will make you more than a conqueror over Satan both now and into all eternity!

The Rev. Mr. Whitlock is pastor of the West Hills Presbyterian Church in Harriman, Tennessee. His timely message is adapted from a sermon preached to the congregation there.



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Our western civilization, too enlightened to believe in such things as ghosts, witches, or for the most part in the devil himself, now finds itself engulfed in the dark cloud of the occult. Why?

We could speak of man's frustration in seeking individual identity in a mechanized and computerized world. We could point to his innate need for a spiritual dimension to his life that humanistic, atheistic philosophies have all but obscured. We could view the invasion of reality-denying Eastern religions as the natural result of man's disenchantment with materialism.

All of these are factors. But if we recognize all of history as the outworking of God's will, we must see the rising tide of the occult as very largely due to the fact that Christians view it with head-shaking bewilderment. What derisive delight Satan must take in our naivete!

The reappearance of Satan

The devil has always walked the streets of the pagan world openly, revelling in and rewarding its idolatry. But where men dwelt within the sure defense of Christ's blood and righteousness and met Satan's attacks with the sword of the Spirit, the devil has been forced to go underground. If he could persuade men that he didn't really exist, that their Christian walk was a comfortable stroll in the summer sun, then they would leave their fortress and go forth unarmed. Satan has been eminently successful in his strategy.

Subtly the old serpent focused men's attention away from his presence and reality, so that Christians would not see Satan and sin as the enemy. Instead, they came to see sin's results as the enemy, to see poverty, sickness, and political injustice as the evils to be fought. It naturally followed that men would not give glory to Christ for his victory over Satan if there were really nothing for Christ to be victorious over that man couldn't take care of himself.

Many a "Christian" is right back where Satan wanted him. Many who call themselves "Christian" think of themselves as gods, knowing good and evil on their own standards, living by their situation ethics and new morality, considering themselves more righteous than God since they would never have allowed a character like Satan to exist and certainly would never send anyone to a place like hell.

Battling with the visible Satan

Where Christ once ruled the hearts of many, Satan now walks openly and boldly in the streets. Should the Christian despair? Never! He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world! Indeed, the Christian should rejoice; God has allowed the enemy to appear openly before the gates so that Christians should awake and cast out the enemy of unbelief

from within.

But if we are to battle the enemy we must not only strengthen our defenses and sharpen our weapons. We must also know the enemy.

What makes sophisticated, intelligent men and women seek out the hidden mysteries of the mind, the powers of sorcery, the keys to the future? Let's permit these people to speak for themselves.

• Elijah Hadynn, well known witch: "Magic is a power in much the same way that nuclear energy or electricity is a power."

• Merlin, self-proclaimed sorcerer: "I decide what action to take. When I take it, it happens."

• Anton LaVey, head of the Church of Satan: "No one on earth ever pursued occult studies . . . without ego gratification and personal power as a goal."

• Beowulf who sold his soul to the devil at age ten: "My head expounded [sic] with knowledge, knowledge of all things, more than text book knowledge."

• The National Spiritualist Association of Churches, "Declaration of Principles": "The doorway to reformation is never closed against any human soul here or hereafter."

• Charles Dexter Ward, minister of the Church of Satan in Louisville: "We try to see what we can make of man, whether we can lift him above animal status and turn him into a god."

[All quotes taken from Walker L. Knight's *The Weird World of the Occult*, Tyndale House, Wheaton, 1972; pp. 21, 75, 89, 82, 28, 99.]

As we look carefully at these statements we see these men and women denying the reality of death and judgment. They are seeking knowledge from other than normal sources. They desire personal power and the ability to control their own destinies. They want to be as gods.

They tell us that the appeal of the serpent is still essentially the same today as it was when he enticed Eve with his lying promises: "Ye shall not surely die. Your eyes shall be opened. Ye shall be as gods."

The warning of Scripture

Few have difficulty recognizing Satan-worship and witchcraft as belonging to the realm of anti-Christ. We are at once repelled and yet fascinated by the fearful rumors of witches' powers and tales of ritual orgies and the Black Mass.

But as most heroin addicts began their drug experience not with heroin but with such "harmless" things as mari-

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juana, so most of those who delve into the occult began with “harmless” and socially accepted forms like astrology, palmistry, Ouija, I Ching, or some other form of fortune telling. Are these “games” undertaken “just for fun” really harmless?

The Bible clearly says, “There shall not be found among you any one . . . that useth divination, or [is] an observer of times [astrologer], or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination to the Lord” (Deuteronomy 18:10-12).

It is the experience of those who dare to dabble in the occult that, at the very least, their spiritual life, Bible study and prayer, suffered from neglect. At worst, under certain circumstances — particularly where occultism has been inherited (the sting of the Second Commandment) — it resulted in demon oppression or possession. Those who have turned in some sense to Christ, and then go on to “investigate” the occult, are surely in danger of being those emptied sepulchres into which seven worse devils soon enter (Luke 11:24-26).

However, the most common result of dabbling in the occult is the urge to move on to more exciting experiences. If the dabbler has no religious leanings and is inclined toward materialism and satisfaction of fleshly appetites, he may be drawn toward either witchcraft or Satan worship or both.

Satan’s “promise” of power

Witchcraft and sorcery particularly appeal to the person who wants power. These practices are older than recorded history and as widespread as sin itself. Indeed, it seems to be a common heritage of all peoples, and its methods are essentially the same whether performed by an Eskimo medicine man, an African voodoo witchdoctor, or a suburban American housewife.

Is the witch’s power real? Satan does indeed seem to reward some of his faithful with the power they seek. Should the Christian fear it? If he is truly Christ’s, then the powers of darkness have forever been defeated for him. But if he is not fully committed, his reservations may cost him dearly. The fact that witchcraft has often been regarded as a joke and the witch trials as a matter for shame only emphasizes the truth that Satan’s kingdom profits by the deaths of its martyrs just as much as Christ’s has by his.

A Satan worshipper may be an intelligent, though egotistical, hedonistic humanist who really denies the reality of Satan as well as of God. What could please the Father of Lies more than that even the worship of his devotees be a lie?

Or the Satanist may be the most debased captive of his own flesh who has signed a pact with the devil in his own blood. He may be a sadistic murderer, demon-possessed. But they all serve the same master.

Witchcraft and Satanism are the black side of the occult. But the Bible tells us the devil is able to disguise himself even as an angel of light. He keeps something for everyone in his occult grabbag.

The occult dabbler may even be a sensitive idealist. Then Satan will maneuver him toward spiritism or one of the oriental pantheistic religions or a power-of-positive-thinking cult.

It is interesting to note that of all the religions of the world, only Christianity condemns mediumistic contacts and magic and sorcery of all kinds. All others who “sacrifice to devils and not to God” (1 Corinthians 10:20) welcome the use of the occult in their worship.

The attractions of the occult

One wonders how any spiritist dare use Christ’s name when from Mount Sinai God thundered, “A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death” (Leviticus 20:27). But the Bishop Pikes are becoming more numerous each day.

What is the attraction of spiritism? Primarily it is an attempt to authenticate Satan’s lie, “Thou shalt not surely die.” It is a rejection of the judgment, and it paints life hereafter as little different from the present except that it lacks material form. Or it may be accompanied by the concept of reincarnation, the belief that each person is a small part of God passing through successive incarnations seeking reunion with the All.

To the “lying wonders” of the seance, Satan adds the attraction of miracle healing. Can Satan indeed heal? Why not? If he can impose terrible physical suffering to induce a job to curse God, can he not also remove his oppressive hand if by so doing he can draw men away from Christ? But Satan can only heal the body; the cost to the soul may again be demon oppression or possession — an increasingly common occurrence in the Western world.

One and all, the counterfeit Christians of the spiritist movement and the cults deny in one way or another the deity of the incarnate Christ. He is “honored” as the supreme intelligence, the greatest medium, man attained to his full spiritual stature — anything but the Son of God come in the flesh.

It is also interesting to note that the occult experimenter

may move from one to another of these occult practices with no feeling of inconsistency. Through them all runs the common thread of psychic experience — knowledge not gained by normal means, the sense of personal power.

Satan even has a trap for the scientist who has found his study of the material world singularly unrewarding in the spiritual realm. He has explored his time-and-space world right out of existence and watched it disappear into intangible energy forms. He has been forced to agree with the writer of Hebrews that things which are seen are not made of things which do appear.

But in all his experiments with the cause-and-effect-governed real world, and in spite of his acknowledgement of the expression of light in terms of time and space as his only absolute, the scientist has been unable to search out the First Cause (who will also determine the last effect) or lay hold on the One who says, "I am the light of the world." So now the field of parapsychology offers the scientist new hope of discovering underlying causes, new means of creating effects. He delves into it eagerly.

God's own mysterious ways

The Christian has had clear warnings from God regarding other occult practices. What about mental telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, psychokinesis? True, these are common marks of the occult, and there is no reason to suppose they are all delusions. Satan is certainly able to "reveal" whatever will serve his own purposes.

But there are equally common occurrences among God's people. Did God not give visions to the prophets? Did not Elisha cause the ax head to swim? Is there not a spiritual dimension in man's created nature, a spiritual communication system? Its origin and purpose were to provide the means through which the Holy Spirit himself might communicate to us. But sin has broken this lifeline and left it open to manipulation by Satan and his spirits, and man has willingly perverted it to his own use.

Why then should this spiritual dimension of man's nature be Satan's trap for the scientist? It is basically a matter of proper use. Every Christian knows that the Holy Spirit has somehow communicated to his heart and mind the glorious truth of God's Word, has made him see himself not as the god that Satan wants him to believe himself to be, but as the created being who is guilty of rebellion against his Maker. The Spirit of God has touched his heart and brought him to kneel before the cross where he can pour out his praise and thanksgiving to God for the grace that gave the Son to die while he was yet a sinner.

The Christian has no need to study this communications system clinically. His need is to use it and to have it used by God's Spirit. And God has even provided us with an "operations manual" — the Bible itself.

Ephesians 6:10-18 is our battle strategy as we confront the occult revival. Let us as Christ's own meet the challenge and the opportunity presented by this resurgence of interest in the occult and in Satan's promises to his followers, knowing that we are more than conquerors through him that loved us (Romans 8:37).

Mrs. Vandervalk, housewife and mother of five, has been a member of Sharon Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Hialeah, Florida, for fifteen years. This article is written in her gratitude to God for his deliverance from cultic darkness.

There is the "Coral Ridge Method", and there is "Key 73", and there are countless other programs of larger or smaller scope designed to enlist church members in a program of witnessing for Christ.

Just what is the believer expected to do for his Lord in the matter of witnessing? Is every Christian obliged to make a verbal testimony to someone else? Is it part of being a member of the church that each of us "confronts" another with the claims of Christ? Are we all, in some sense or other, to be oral proclaimers of the gospel?

Two brief editorial comments are reprinted here. We do not intend to add our opinion, but simply ask you to consider carefully what the path of obedience requires of you. If you have some comment to add, we will be glad to consider publishing it also. But as you study the matter over, be careful indeed that your own inclinations are not the deciding factor. And you might read Ephesians 4 several times before jumping to conclusions.

J. J. M.

I Can't Witness

There are so many things Christians can do to share the good news of Jesus Christ with others. Home Bible studies in your neighborhood, door-to-door surveys, market place public opinion polls, VBS followups—these are some of the ways we have tried at Emmanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church. There must be a thousand other ways God's resourceful people could utilize, if they want to.

And right there is the real issue: Do you want to? If an elder volunteered to go calling door-to-door in your neighborhood, would you be willing to go with him? If a Bible study could be started by this calling, would you be willing to hold it in your home? Would you be ready to lead it?

Or is Hebrews 5:12 speaking about you? "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat."

Witnessing for my Lord

How many people have heard you talk about Jesus since you became a Christian? Have you ever been required to teach someone as part of your employment? Have you ever enthusiastically recommended a certain movie or TV program? Have you explained in pleasant detail what you did for vacation? Have you engaged in animated conversation with neighbors or fellow employees about a recent sports event?

If your answer to any of the above is "Yes," then you cannot truthfully say you have no ability to witness for Christ. You may understandably say it is more difficult; but you can do it.

The question therefore comes with even greater force: Why don't you witness for Christ? Do you really want to?

Rollin P. Keller

This challenging note is by the pastor of the Emmanuel Church in Wilmington, Delaware, and is reprinted from the church's newsletter.

Let us not love in word or speech . . .

I am led to write briefly of a visitor I can't quite forget.

He sat clasping and unclasping toil-worn, calloused hands—silently eloquent witnesses, I thought [to the very similar people—shepherds, a carpenter and his young wife, stable workers—to those hard-working people who were privileged to witness the birth of the Savior of the world]. His aging face spoke louder than his lips of strength mellowed by love. His children, I doubted not, rise up now to call him blessed; even as he was saying this of wife and mother at home.

His problem: *witness.*

He had somewhere encountered the challenge to "witness."

No, not the witness of his hands, face, and long years

of devotion to calling. Not, either, his wife's witness through risk of life to give life, and endless toil to make a house a home. Nor their witness by support of church, school, state, and society. The light of Christian home and family, of Christian commitment through rain and sunshine, through storm and quiet, to callings and avocations, all this turns out to have been—as he has been led to see it now—insufficient witness, if witness at all.

What is "witness" then?

Confronting another with Jesus!

Something he, and she, cannot do and have not done—*by word of mouth.*

So we talked for a while.

Like this:

Is "confronting" another with the oral challenge "to accept Christ" required by the Commandments, either in Decalogue or our Lord's summation?

No.

Is such "witness" taught by our creeds and confessions?

No.

Is such "confrontation" included in the lists of Christian duties supplied by our Lord in the Gospels or by the prophets and apostles?

No.

Is it one of the characteristics of love as defined in 1 Corinthians 13?

No.

Is it mentioned among the grounds for the Last Judgment in our Lord's parable?

No.

By what right, then, is it laid upon the conscience?

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works. . ."

This binds the conscience.

"Little children, let us not love in word or speech . . . but in deed and in truth."

This binds the conscience.

But do not add to your burdens, humble brothers and sisters, the commandments of men.

Lester DeKoster

This careful thinking aloud is by the editor of The Banner, official organ of the Christian Reformed Church. It is reprinted here with permission from the December 15, 1972 issue.

The Pattern of the Lord's Day

JOHN MURRAY

If we accept the witness of Scripture there can be no question that the weekly Sabbath finds its basis in and derives its sanction from the example of God himself. He created the heavens and the earth in six days and "on the seventh God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it" (Genesis 2:2, 3). The fourth commandment in the decalogue sets forth the obligation resting upon man and it makes express appeal to this sanction. "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:11).

Many regard this sabbath institution as a shadow of things that were to come and, therefore, as an ordinance to be observed, it has passed away because that of which it was a shadow has been realized in the full light of the new and better covenant. At this point suffice it to ask the question: has the pattern of God's work and rest in creation ceased to be relevant? Is this pattern a *shadow* in the sense of those who espouse this position? The realm of our existence is that established by creation and maintained by God's providence. The new covenant has in no respect abrogated creation nor has it diminished its relevance. Creation both as action and product is as significant for us as it was for Israel under the old covenant. The refrain of Scripture in both Testaments is that the God of creation is the God of redemption in all stages of covenantal disclosure and realization. This consideration is invested with greater significance when we bear in mind that the ultimate standard for us is likeness to God (*cf.* Matthew 5:48; 1 John 3:2, 3). And it is this likeness, in the sphere of our behavior, that undergirds the demand for sabbath observance (Exodus 20:11; 31:17).

REDEMPTIVE PATTERN

It is noteworthy that the sabbath commandment as given in Deuteronomy (ch. 5:12-15) does not appeal to God's rest in creation as the reason for keeping the sabbath day. In this instance mention is made of something else. "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day" (5:15). This cannot be understood as in any way annulling the sanction of Exodus 20:11; 31:17. Deuteronomy comprises what was the reiteration of the covenant made at Sinai. When the sabbath commandment is introduced Israel is reminded of the earlier promulgation: "Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee" (Deuteronomy 5:12). And we should observe that all the commandments have their redemptive sanction. The preface to all is: "I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exodus 20:2; *cf.* Deuteronomy 5:6). So what we find in Deuteronomy 5:15 in connection with the Sabbath is but the

application of the preface to the specific duty enunciated in the fourth command. It is supplement to Exodus 20:11, not suspension. We have now an added reason for observing the Sabbath. This is full of meaning and we must linger to analyze and appreciate.

The deliverance from Egypt was redemption. "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed" (Exodus 15:13). It is more than any other event the redemption of the Old Testament. It is the analogue of the greater redemption accomplished by Christ. The sabbath commandment derives its sanction not only from God's rest in creation but also from redemption out of Egypt's bondage. This fact that the Sabbath in Israel had a redemptive reference and sanction bears directly upon the question of its relevance in the New Testament. The redemption from Egypt cannot be properly viewed except as the anticipation of the greater redemption wrought in the fullness of the time. Hence, if redemption from Egypt accorded sanction to the sabbath institution and provided reason for its observance, the same must apply to the greater redemption and apply in a way commensurate with the greater fullness and dimensions of the redemption secured by the death and resurrection of Christ. In other words, it is the fullness and richness of the new covenant that accord to the sabbath ordinance increased relevance, sanction, and blessing.

This redemptive reference explains and confirms three features of the New Testament.

1. The Retrospective Reference

Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week (*cf.* Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2, 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1). For our present interest the important feature of the New Testament witness is that the first day of the week continued to have *distinctive religious significance* (*cf.* Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2). The only explanation of this fact is that the first day was the day of Jesus' resurrection and for that reason John calls it "the Lord's day" (Revelation 1:10). The first day took on a memorial significance appropriate to the place the resurrection of Christ occupies in the accomplishment of redemption and in Jesus' *finished* work (*cf.* John 17:4) as also appropriate to the seal imparted by the repeated appearance to his disciples on that day (*cf.* Matthew 28:9; Luke 24:15-31, 36; John 20:19, 26). When Christ rose from the dead he was loosed from the pangs of death (*cf.* Acts 2:24), he entered upon life indestructible (*cf.* Romans 5:10; 6:9, 10), became "life-giving Spirit" (1 Corinthians 15:45), and brought "life and immortality to light" (2 Timothy 1:10). In a word, he entered upon the rest of his redeeming work.

All of this and much more resides in the emphasis which falls upon the resurrection as a pivotal event in the accomplishment of redemption. The other pivot is the death upon the cross. The sanctity belonging to the first day of the week as the Lord's day is the constant reminder of all that Jesus' resurrection involves. It is the memorial of the resurrection

as the Lord's supper is of Jesus' death upon the tree. Inescapable, therefore, is the conclusion that the resurrection in its redemptive character yields its sanction to the sacredness of the first day of the week just as deliverance from Egypt's bondage accorded its sanction to the sabbath institution of the old covenant. This is the rationale for regarding the Lord's day as the Christian Sabbath. It follows the line of thought which the Old Testament itself prescribes for us when it appeals to redemption as the reason for sabbath observance. The principle enunciated in Deuteronomy 5:15 receives its verification and application in the new covenant in the memorial of finalized redemption, the Lord's day.

2. The Manward Reference

Under this caption we have in mind our Lord's saying: "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath" (Mark 2:27, 28).

The title our Lord uses to designate himself is one that belongs to him in his messianic identity, commission, and office. The lordship he claims is, therefore, redemptively conditioned; it is his lordship as Mediator and Savior. As such, in accord with his own testimony, he is given all authority in heaven and earth (*cf.* John 3:35; Matthew 28:18). So every institution is brought within the scope of his lordship. Since he exercises this lordship in the interests of God's redemptive purpose, it is particularly true that institutions given for the good of man are brought within the scope of his lordship and made to serve the interests of the supreme good which redemption designs and guarantees. It is this governing thought that is applied in the text to the institution of the Sabbath. The account falls upon the beneficent design of the Sabbath—it was made for man. "Therefore the Son of man is Lord" of it.

When Jesus speaks of the *Sabbath*, he is specifying the institution defined by the fourth commandment, and he asserts his lordship over it in that precise character. There is not the slightest intimation of abrogation. For it is the Sabbath in that identity over which he claims to be Lord. Too frequently this text is adduced in support of an alleged relaxation of the requirements set forth in the commandment as if Jesus on this ground were, in the exercise of his authority, defending his disciples for behavior that went counter to Old Testament requirements. This totally misconstrues the situation in which the words were spoken. Jesus is defending his disciples against the charge of desecration brought by the Pharisees (*cf.* Mark 2:24). But in doing so he shows by appeal to the Old Testament itself (*cf.* Matthew 12:4, 5; Mark 2:25, 26) that the behavior of the disciples was in accord with what the Old Testament sanctioned. It was not deviation from Old Testament requirements that our Lord was condoning but deviation from pharisaical distortion. He was condemning the tyranny by which the sabbath institution had been made an instrument of oppression. And he did this by appeal to the true intent of the Sabbath as verified by Scripture itself.

Of special interest is the relation of the redemptive sanction of the fourth commandment to the claim of Jesus on this occasion. The lordship over the Sabbath is, as observed, redemptively conditioned and thus only within a redemptive design can his lordship of the Sabbath be understood. This is to say that the sabbath ordinance in its beneficent character comes to full expression within the realm of our Lord's mediatorial lordship. The Sabbath is not alien to redemption

at the zenith of its realization and blessing. As made for man it continues to serve its great purpose in that administration that achieves the acme of covenantal grace. This Jesus' words seal to us—"the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath."

3. The Prospective Reference

"There remains therefore a sabbath keeping for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9).

The context of this passage is all-important for its interpretation and for appreciation of its implications. At verse 4 there is quotation of Genesis 2:2: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." This, of course, refers to God's *own* rest. At verse 5 there is allusion to the rest of Canaan and quotation of Psalm 95:11 (*cf.* also verse 3 and 3:11) in reference to the failure of too many to enter into it (*cf.* Psalm 95:10).

The remarkable feature of verse 5 as of Psalm 95:11 is that this rest of Canaan is called God's rest ("my rest"). Why this characterization? It is not sufficient to say that it was the rest God provided. The proximity of reference to God's own rest in verse 4 requires more than the thought of mere provision by God. We cannot say less than that God calls it his rest because the rest of Canaan was patterned after God's rest—it partook of the character of God's rest. The same kind of identification appears in verse 10 with reference to the rest that remains for the people of God. "For he that has entered into his rest, he also has ceased from his own works, as God did from his." So the rest of Canaan and the rest that remains for the people of God are called God's rest because both partake of the character of God's own rest in resting from his creative work on the seventh day. Here is something highly germane to the present topic.

It is clear that the rest of Canaan and the rest that remains for the people of God are redemptive in character. Since they are patterned after God's rest in creation, this means that the redemptive takes on the character of that rest of God upon which the sabbath institution for man originally rested and from which it derived its sanction. We cannot but discover in this again the close relation between the creative and the redemptive in the sabbath ordinance and the coherence of Exodus 20:11 and Deuteronomy 5:15. We are reminded again that likeness to God governs man's obligation and is brought to its realization in the provisions of redemption. In the consummation of redemption the sabbath rest of God's people achieves conformity to the fullest extent. "For he who has entered into his rest, he also has ceased from his own works, as God did from his" (*cf.* Revelation 14:13). The sabbath institution in all its aspects and applications has this prospective reference; this whole movement of redemption will find its finale in the sabbath rest that remains. The weekly Sabbath is the promise, token, and foretaste of the consummated rest; it is also the earnest. The biblical philosophy of the Sabbath is such that to deny its perpetuity is to deprive the movement of redemption of one of its most precious strands.

Redemption has a past, a present, and a future. In the Sabbath as "the Lord's day" all three are focused. In retrospect it is the memorial of our Lord's resurrection. In the present with resurrection joy it fulfils its beneficent design by the lordship of the Son of man. As prospect it is the promise of the inheritance of the saints. With varying degrees of understanding and application it is this prospective

that dictated the observance of the Lord's day in catholic, protestant, and reformed tradition. Shall we forfeit an institution so embedded in redemptive revelation and recognized as such in the history of the church of Christ? In the faith and for the honor of the Sabbath's Lord may we answer with a decisive, no! In devotion to him may we increasingly know the joy and blessing of the recurring day of rest and worship.

Professor Murray was the professor of systematic theology at Westminster Theological Seminary almost from its in-

ception until his retirement. Now living in Scotland, he continues to study and write, continuing that work of reformation and submission to Scripture and its Lord begun by John Knox and epitomized in the work of the Westminster Assembly of Divines.

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The Changing Scene

HENRY W. CORAY

That Super-Bird

Richard Bach's astonishing *Jonathan Livingstone Seagull*, published in 1972 after being rejected by several prominent publishing houses, has turned out to be the "sleeper" of the decade, if not of the century. To date it has sold over a million copies. Bookstores find it impossible to keep the book in stock. Unquestionably it is destined to become an American classic. It has burst upon us like a napalm bomb.

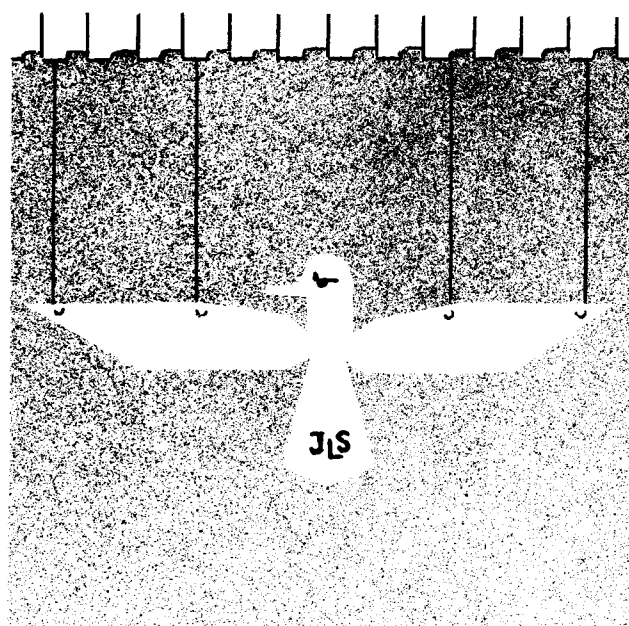
On the plus side, one must concede that it has two excellent virtues: It is remarkably clean in contrast to a great deal of modern fictional filth; and it is beautifully put together. Its aviator-author knows how to paint a word-picture that glows like the fire in a diamond. One should not be condemned as a stodgy Puritan, therefore, for hoping the story might represent a sharp reversal in moral tone and structure among the literati. *Love Story* was supposed to do that; but instead of turning the tide, like the troubled sea its waters cast up mire and dirt.

Human nature self-purified

Because Bach's contribution is so appealing it is the more dangerous. If I understand the symbolism, Jonathan, the flying hero, stands for human nature purified by the alchemy of Mary Baker Eddy. (Bach used to be a reader in the Christian Science movement.)

This underlying religion comes out, for instance, in such bold constructions as: "No, Jonathan, there is no such place [as Heaven]. Heaven is not a place, and it is not a time. Heaven is being perfect." Sic! "Heaven isn't a place or a time, because place and time are so meaningless." "I am a perfect, unlimited gull." "Your whole body, from wingtip to wingtip, is nothing more than your thought itself, in a form you can see. Break the chains of your thought, and you break the chains of your body, too."

"You have the freedom to be yourself, your true self, here and now—and nothing can stand in your way. It is the Law of the Great Gull, the Law that Is." "The only true law is that which leads to freedom. There is no other." "Are they [four other seagulls] also special and gifted and divine? No more than you, no more than I. The only difference is that they have begun to understand what they really are and have begun to practice it."



Human nature deified

This view of anthropology you will recognize as the deification of humanity. If there is one outstanding message in the fable it is that man is "infinite, eternal—but changeable—in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth."

Yet ironically, according to *Time* magazine (November 15, 1972), the novelist has left his wife and six children. True, he has settled them in a fine home in the Midwest and makes ample provision for their physical needs. But he cannot stand the "impingements of marriage." So he lives in his private plane. Where, one wonders, is this beautiful divine compassion so heavily underscored in *Jonathan Livingstone Seagull*?

Candidly, the symbolic mysticism of Bach leaves this reviewer "underwhelmed." The title of the book is a misnomer. It should have been called *The Flying None*.

The Presbyterian Guardian

EDITOR
JOHN J. MITCHELL

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LETTERS

"Have a nice day" . . . ?

America has more than enough people who claim that they comply with Christ's "Love thy neighbor." Admitted pagans and humanists claim to love their neighbors. The word 'love' is everywhere. Bumper stickers blare out, "Have a nice day!" Our permissive and peace-oriented society claims 'love' as its motivator. As for churches, both conservative and liberal, the 'love thy neighbor' emphasis has not turned the tide of today's increasing social unrest.

Much of our nation's 'love' effort is claimed to relate directly to our Lord's 'second great commandment' (Matthew 22:39). People should be told loudly and clearly that compliance with the second is not possible without compliance with the first: "Love the Lord thy God."

Until Americans love God, know God, and keep God's Word as given in the Scriptures, they will not be able truly to love their neighbors. The second great commandment, Christ said, is "like unto the first" — not a substitute for it.

Pagan and humanist Americans must be led through 'the door' of the first great commandment. Today their failures are evident in the increasing crime and acts of violence, dope peddling, war, child abuse, and divorce. Americans must be led away from their "Have a nice day" bumper stickers into attendance at Bible-believing churches and into a genuine love of the Lord God. When that happens, "Love thy neighbor" will truly become the love that Christ meant.

Ross F. Rogers
Vienna, Virginia

More on Alleine's "Alarm"

I commend you for the critical view of Joseph' Alleine's *Alarm to the Unconverted* (in the December *Guardian*). For a long time I have felt — and so have a number of pastors of my acquaintance — that this book is more law than gospel. I share the latter two criticisms made by Mr. Coray, but he could easily have added at least two more:

1. Alleine's list of 16 "directions" to the unsaved, the 3-page prayer he recommends, and then the 5-page "soliloquy," are all more suited to a veteran soldier of the cross, who has at least had a 3-year Bible school course, rather than to the unsaved sinner. (My reference is to the Banner of Truth Trust edition as to number of pages; cf. pp. 100, 117-120, 124, 129.)

2. Alleine's terminology throughout the book savors more of salvation by works than salvation by the free gift of God. The terms 'labour,' 'work,' 'strive,' 'duty' and the like create the impression that one is to conform to legal standards *before* he can benefit from Christ.

One other very special criticism I have of the Banner of Truth Trust edition is the use of Charles H. Spurgeon's name in the introduction in such a way that it completely misrepresents his attitude about the book. A quote from Spurgeon is cut short; if continued, it would have included the words: "it was like sitting at the foot of Sinai."

In a sermon in the 1863 volume of the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Spurgeon refers to Alleine as a "better preacher of the law than of the gospel" (p. 531). Arminians have been criticized for tampering with Spurgeon's writings to delete the Calvinism in them; but it is just as wrong for Alleine's admirers to delete parts of Spurgeon's remarks to make a recommendation when in fact he was critical of the Puritan approach of Alleine.

These remarks have been written to complement what Mr. Coray said. Certainly Alleine's *Alarm* has received too much of an unguarded commendation, and a more objective view of it is needed by any reader.

Bob L. Ross, Director
Pilgrim Publications
Pasadena, Texas



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An INVITATION plus

ROBERT H. GRAHAM

A few days with the missionary-pastor in Novato is a fresh reminder that "our sufficiency is of God." The Seed is being sown, but it is the Holy Spirit who gives the increase.

On an afternoon in mid-summer, the pastor leaves his study about 11 o'clock. He goes to the office of the county water district where he is given the file of homes where water has been turned on during the past ten days. To his dismay there are 104 new names added to those he copied down the week before, and he hasn't even yet visited all of those.

For an hour and a quarter he takes down the new addresses on cards divided in sixteen sections of the Novato area. When he returns home he spends about two hours properly organizing the cards so as to consume a minimum of mileage in his calling. The rest of that afternoon is spent on revisiting former contacts and visitors at the church who have not been out for some time.

The next morning about 10 o'clock the missionary starts out to visit homes in one section of town. He approaches the first home with prayer for wisdom, boldness and encouragement.

The day looks good because the lady responds favorably, not so much to the invitation to visit the church as to the missionary's presentation of the gospel. She promises to come, and the oft-disillusioned missionary wonders, "Will she?" He hopes to see her Sunday, but it is in God's hand.

After two not-at-homes he finds a Roman Catholic. She is a little taken aback when her magic formula — "Oh, I'm a Catholic!" — doesn't drive her caller meekly away. Unless a contact shows unwillingness to listen, the missionary continues to present the message of God's Word that all are sinners deserving God's wrath, and that salvation and peace with God is not found in the church or sacraments but in Christ alone.

There is no visible result; but she does listen and accepts a tract that asks "Are You Sure?" So the missionary leaves with a prayer for God's blessing on his Word.

After several more not-at-homes, one good reception, and several disinterested people, the missionary returns home for lunch. After lunch he goes forth again to a house where the door is thrown open and he is invited to come in and sit on a big pillow. His hosts, a young hippie-type couple, are surrounded by a very oriental atmosphere. They are students of religion, but not of the religion of Jesus Christ.

For over half an hour the missionary listens to their message of the universal love of "God." But when he begins to tell them what God's Word says about them as sinners, and of the claims of Christ and his Word to be the only way of salvation and peace with God, they lose interest. It was an experience, but also an opportunity. After receiving the honest answer that they would not visit our church, the missionary moves on.

More not-at-homes, and then a delightful reception! This lady is an expert with canvassers and religious salesmen. She has one devastating answer to everything said to her at the door. She simply says "Yes" to all—and sweetly slams the door.

Next the missionary finds an old man living alone who is lonely and wants to talk. More important, he freely confesses his great unhappiness and lack of peace with God. But when the missionary begins to present the gospel of law and grace, the man insists on talking about Saturday as the only Sabbath. When it is pointed out to him that his greatest need is not the answer to which Sabbath day, but rather the answer to his sin and ignorance of Christ, he loses interest in any further conversation.

More Roman Catholics; more cool receptions; more not-at-homes; more vague promises to visit the church; the afternoon is nearly over. As the missionary returns home for dinner, he thinks over the high and low points of the day's work. He is sustained only by the assurance that some Seed has been sown and the Lord of the harvest must give the increase. Then he recalls with a start that just forty years ago today he was ordained into the ministry of the gospel of Christ. He thanks God again for grace and strength that after these four decades he still has opportunities to present the gospel of salvation by grace alone.

The next day the missionary's calls receive mild interest or rebuff. After more than an hour of seemingly fruitless effort, he comes to a street that has only one "prospect" on it. Yet as he parks the car he notices a husband and wife and boy working in the yard across the street from his "prospect." As the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near, and join thyself to this chariot," so the missionary turns aside to visit this family.

It takes only five minutes to discover that here is a family eager to know of a church where the gospel is being preached in Novato. They seem impressed with what the Orthodox Presbyterian Church teaches and in its separation from liberalism and the National Council of Churches.

It is a joyful visit, and the missionary's high point for that day. This is the kind of contact that recompenses for the many apparently useless ones. Yet even in this he could be wrong, for the missionary has learned in the past that some of the best fruit has come from calls where he thought he had utterly failed. At least he is encouraged by this family, and turns from them to the home he came to visit at first. The lady is friendly and receptive, both to his invitation to church and to the presentation of the gospel. And so the missionary returns home, a little weary but more buoyed in the spirit that God has given him a good day.

It has taken this missionary many years to learn what should be learned early by every pastor and missionary. Invitations to church services will quickly be forgotten—unless they are supported by a simple uncompromising statement of the gospel: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Such a visit brings the assurance of God's own blessing and is never wasted effort.

So the missionary in Novato covets the prayers of God's people upon the work which, he is frank to admit, is quite discouraging at times. But he would also invite you to rejoice with him that this field is white unto harvest, and there are signs that God is blessing his feeble effort to help build the church in Novato which is "the apple of his eye."

A heart's desire and prayer to God for the nation

Weep for your children, Rachel

Where is the sound of Rachel's weeping? What we hear is a sound of rejoicing that unwanted children can be neatly disposed of.

The U. S. Supreme Court has solemnly declared — after two years to make up its mind — that the unborn child is not a person.

Over a century ago, the Court — with equal solemnity — declared a

man, one with arms and legs and fully human actions, to be a non-person. In that case, the human so reduced to nonentity was a black slave, and the Dred Scott decision has been rightly viewed as the all-time worst in Court history.

A slave-killer at least damaged his own pocketbook. Today a woman may seek welfare funds to pay for slaughtering her own child.

Granted the Court was under pressure. Granted that 'experts' do not agree on when newly conceived life first becomes truly human. And granted that equally sincere people cannot agree on what Scripture says of this matter. Even so,

'Whatever is not of faith is sin,' said Paul. This is not to say that whatever one thinks is right is necessarily right. But it does suggest that even a little doubt should have been enough to stay the hand of the Court.

We may be thankful that God is not bound by Supreme Court rulings. He is free to call as persons unto himself however many aborted lives he chooses. But we should be con-

cerned as Christians and citizens to determine what we should do.

Perhaps we should work toward a Constitutional amendment to protect the rights of the unborn. We may need to refuse to pay taxes that support aborting procedures.

One thing that is clearly our duty is the need, more urgent than ever, to provide women with support, help, and love in seeking alternatives to abortion. Yes, love too. Sin may well be the cause of her dilemma. But then, are you not yourself a sinner saved by grace?

So often an appeal for prayer is something we tack on at the end. Yet our God is still sovereign, and we have the right and duty to pray that our Lord will call this nation of ours to seek his righteousness and not its own desires.

My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, . . . have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God (Romans 10:1-3).

— J. J. M.

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IN MEMORIAM

HILLIS M. PARTINGTON

Hillis M. Partington, a former professor at Gordon College, in Wenham, Mass., died on January 27 at his home in nearby Riverdale. He had been in failing health recently.

Mr. Partington was Professor of Education at Gordon from 1956 until retiring in 1969. He had earlier served as a public school administrator in Westfield, N. J.

Surviving are his wife, Florence C. Partington; two daughters, Mrs. Dorothy (Robert W.) Anderson, and Mrs. Barbara (Robert H.) Osborn, and six grandsons, all of Jenkintown, Pa.; two brothers and a sister also survive.

A memorial service on January 30 was held at the First Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Hamilton, Mass. The Partingtons had been leaders in organizing this congregation, and Hillis had served it for years as elder and clerk of session.

Establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

OSWALD T. ALLIS

Oswald T. Allis, Ph.D., D.D., renowned Old Testament scholar and member of the original faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary, died on January 12 at age 92.

A professor at Princeton Seminary, he joined with Dr. J. Gresham Machen in 1929 to establish the new seminary that would be faithful to declare the whole counsel of God. When Dr. Machen and others were forced to leave the Presbyterian Church, USA, Dr. Allis chose to remain, but retired from his teaching post in 1936.

Since then, Dr. Allis continued to write, and has been a strong defender of the infallibility of the Scriptures particularly against the attack of 'higher criticism.' Of his many writings, *The Five Books of Moses*—one of his earliest—still stands as a classic defense of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.

Dr. Allis' most recent work, *The Old Testament: Its Claims and Its Critics*, may well serve as fitting memorial to a lifetime of study in the Word of God.

The Church's Open Door

As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him . . . (Romans 14:1).

THE CHURCH OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS TO RECEIVE INTO ITS FELLOWSHIP ALL THOSE WHO, IT HAS GOOD REASON TO BELIEVE, HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED INTO THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. THE DOOR OF CHRIST'S CHURCH, OF EVERY LOCAL CONGREGATION CLAIMING TO BE PART OF THE BODY OF CHRIST, SHOULD BE AS WIDE OPEN AS THE DOOR OF HEAVEN ITSELF.

ACTUALLY, THIS IS NOT THE POLICY AND PRACTICE OF MANY CHURCHES. MOST BAPTISTS REQUIRE PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS TO BE IMMERSUED. SOME REFORMED CHURCHES REQUIRE MEMBERS TO AGREE WITH THE CHURCH'S DOCTRINAL STANDARDS. BUT THE FAMILY OF PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES HAS TRADITIONALLY—THOUGH NOT IN EVERY CASE—WELCOMED ANYONE WHO COULD MAKE A "CREDIBLE PROFESSION OF FAITH" IN CHRIST.

THAT OPEN-DOOR TRADITION HAS OFTEN BEEN FORGOTTEN AND IGNORED, PARTICULARLY AMONG AMERICAN PRESBYTERIANS. WE TEND TO THINK THAT EVERY CHURCH MEMBER SHOULD BE IN MORE OR LESS FULL ACCORD WITH THE DOCTRINES AND PRACTICES OF HIS CHURCH. ANYONE

WHO DOES NOT AGREE WITH OUR STANDARDS, WE SEEM TO FEEL, SHOULD HIE HIMSELF OFF FROM OUR FELLOWSHIP AND SEEK ONE MORE CONGENIAL TO HIS NOTIONS.

IN A LAND WHERE EVERY CONCEIVABLE VARIETY OF CHURCH FELLOWSHIP IS AVAILABLE, THIS ATTITUDE IS UNDERSTANDABLE. BUT THE ATTITUDE IS WRONG. THE CHURCH IS NOT A COUNTRY CLUB WITH THE RIGHT TO TURN AWAY THOSE IT MAY NOT WANT. THE CHURCH MUST CONFORM ITS PRACTICE TO SCRIPTURE, AND A CAREFUL READING OF ROMANS 14 SHOULD CAUSE US TO RECONSIDER SOME OF OUR OPINIONS.

WHAT FOLLOWS IS A CONDENSED AND SLIGHTLY PARAPHRASED VERSION OF AN ARTICLE BY DR. CHARLES HODGE. IT WAS WRITTEN IN ANSWER TO A SERMON THAT SET FORTH A VERY RESTRICTIVE VIEW OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS. THE ARTICLE FIRST APPEARED IN THE *Princeton Review*, 1840, PP. 589FF., AND IS INCLUDED IN HODGE'S *Church Polity*, PP. 218–224. MUCH HAS CHANGED SINCE HODGE WROTE THESE WORDS, PARTICULARLY AMONG MANY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES, SO-CALLED; BUT WHAT HE SAYS IS STILL VALID FOR THOSE PRESBYTERIANS WHO WOULD OBEY SCRIPTURE IN ALL THINGS.

The Terms of Communion

—credible evidence of conversion alone required

CHARLES HODGE

It is the leading doctrine of this sermon [which Hodge is refuting] that no man is to be regarded and treated as a Christian who does not adopt the standards of the Presbyterian Church, or some equivalent doctrinal formula.

Now we confidently affirm that this is not the doctrine of the Presbyterian Church. On the contrary, it is in direct opposition to her spirit and principles. The fact that our Church nowhere requires adoption of the Confession of Faith as a condition for Christian communion is proof positive that she does not consider it necessary. She does wisely demand adoption of that Confession of all who are admitted to the office of bishop, or ruling elder, or deacon; but she has never required it of the private members of the Church.

Our standards from beginning to end teach that we are bound to regard and treat as Christians, and to receive to our communions as such, all who give credible evidence of being true Christians. Nowhere does our Church prescribe, as part of that evidence, the adoption of the whole system of doctrine contained in our Confession of Faith. The Confession itself says: "All ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with [God], so are they unworthy of the Lord's table" (XXIX, 8). But this plainly teaches that those who *are* fit for communion with the Lord *should* be admitted to his table.

What a monstrous doctrine is the opposite assumption! Who are we, that we should refuse communion with those with whom Christ and the Holy Ghost commune?

Nothing more is required than credible evidence of Christian character as the condition of Christian communion. Of that evidence the Church officers are to judge. Not one word is said of the adoption of the Confession of Faith, or of any thing but the evidences of piety. Any man, therefore, who gives evidence of being a Christian, we are bound by the rules of our Church to admit to our communion.

Stricter requirements for office

The doctrine here contended for has been repeatedly recognized by the General Assembly [of the Presbyterian Church of that time]. So recently as May 1839, the Assembly said: "We have ever admitted to our communion all those who, in the judgment of charity, were sincere disciples of Jesus Christ." They add, however, that "this has no reference to the admission of men to offices in the house of God." With regard to all office-bearers, they say: "The founders of our Church, and all who have entered it with enlightened views and honest intentions, have declared to the world and to all other Christian Churches that the system of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, is that sound doctrine, which we are to require of all those who seek the office of a bishop."

"Such are the principles," adds the Assembly, "on which our Church was founded, and on which, for more than a century [in 1839], it was faithfully administered. It is believed that during all this period no one was ever debarred

from the communion of saints, who was regarded as a sincere disciple of Christ, and that no one was admitted to any office in the Church, or, if admitted, was allowed to retain his standing, who dissented in any material point from the system of doctrine contained in our standards."

The teaching of the Scripture

The doctrine so plainly taught in our standards, that Christian fellowship should be extended to all who exhibit the Christian character, is no less plainly taught in the word of God. We are there commanded to receive all those whom God has received. In Romans 14, it is in various forms required of Christians not to reject any who live on Christian principles. True religion consists in "righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he who in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men." And surely those who are acceptable to God may well be acceptable to his Church.

There is no duty more frequently or pointedly enjoined in the New Testament than love of the brethren. It is made the badge of discipleship. "Hereby," say Christ, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

This duty involves of course the recognition as brethren of all those who are really such, and the exercise of cordial affection and confidence towards them. It matters not by what name they may be called, whether they follow with us or not; if they bear the image of Christ, those who fail to recognize and honor it, fail to love the brethren; they reject and despise those whom Christ has received, and have reason to consider seriously lest Christ should say unto them, "In as much as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me."

It would avail as little in such a case to say, "We did not regard him as a brother"—for this is the very heart of the offence. If a man is a brother and gives the scriptural evidence of the fact, not to see and recognize that evidence is an indication of that very state of mind which is so offensive to our Divine Master. Will it avail us in that day to say, "We did not think any man could be a Christian who sang Watts' Psalms, or who did not wear plain clothes, or who refused to give a pledge of total abstinence, or who declined to join an abolition [of slavery] society, or who denied the authority of the Pope, or who did not adopt the same standards of doctrine as we did"?

The question will be: Did you refuse to recognize those as Christians who were really such, and who gave scriptural evidence of their being disciples of Christ? What that evidence is, is recorded in the word of God, and every man and every Church must apply it upon their own responsibility. One thing, however, is plain: we are bound to receive all those whom God has received; and are forbidden to require more for communion with us than he requires for communion with him.

The responsibility of the church

There is a prevalent misconception on this subject which ought to be corrected. It is said that by communing with any Church we recognize or sanction their errors. This is not so. We recognize them as Christians, and nothing more. If a Presbyterian commune in a Congregational or Episcopal church [in a day when it was easier to assume they were Christian churches!], no man regards him as sanctioning their distinctive views of church government. It is simply

in their character of fellow Christians that he sits with them at the table of the Lord, to which they have a common right. *And great is the guilt of those who refuse that right to any to whom it properly belongs* [emphasis added].

Our standards tell us that particular Churches "may err in making the terms of communion too lax or too narrow." No one, it is presumed, can accuse our Church of going to either extreme in requiring, as the condition of Christian communion, nothing more and nothing less than Christian character. And no individual congregation or presbytery in our connection has a right to alter those terms.

In applying the rule the responsibility rests upon the officers of each particular church, and no doubt errors in this matter are often committed. The Bible contains a perfect rule of faith and practice; and we are bound to believe all the Bible teaches, and to do all that it commands. But perfect faith is no more necessary to true discipleship than perfect conduct. There are some things which, if a man does, would afford conclusive evidence that he is not a Christian. And there are some truths the rejection of which affords no less decisive evidence of the same fact. But as there are infirmities of temper and behavior, so are there errors in doctrine which are consistent with true religion, and we have no more right to exact a strict conformity to our own belief of the true import of the rule of faith than we have to demand perfect conformity to the rule of duty. "Those who are to be admitted to sealing ordinances," says our Directory, "shall be examined as to their knowledge and piety." *Beyond this no Church session has a right to go* [emphasis added].

We have ever regarded the erroneous views and practice of the Churches in relation to Christian communion as one of the greatest evils of the Christian world. It is not the existence of sects, for that perhaps is unavoidable, but it is the refusal to recognize as brethren those who really love and serve Christ, that is to be condemned and deplored. It is this that has turned the ancient eulogy—See how these Christians love one another—into the condemning testimony—See how these Christians hate one another.

It is our presumptuously declaring that to be common which God has cleansed that has arrayed the different parts of the Church against each other. There is such a thing as a faithful adherence to the truth, without anathematizing all who differ from us. We may guard our ministry and admit none to the office of teacher in our churches who do not hold that system of doctrine which we believe God has revealed, and which cannot be rejected in any of its parts without evil to the souls of men; but we may still recognize as Christian brethren all who hold the essential doctrines of the gospel and who love the Lord Jesus Christ.

THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE CHURCH SHOULD WELCOME HERESY. IT DOES NOT MEAN THAT SESSIONS SHOULD EXAMINE PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS CARELESSLY. IT CERTAINLY DOES NOT MEAN THAT IT WILL ALWAYS BE EASY TO KEEP THE DOOR OPEN TO CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS WHILE KEEPING IT GUARDED AGAINST HERETICAL BELIEFS.

IT DOES SAY THAT, WHATEVER THE DIFFICULTIES AND PROBLEMS INVOLVED, THE CHURCH MUST CONFORM ITS PRACTICE AS WELL AS ITS BELIEF TO THE SCRIPTURE. A CHURCH WITH AN OPEN DOOR TO ALL WHO GIVE EVIDENCE OF FAITH IN CHRIST IS THE TRADITION OF PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES; IT IS ALSO THE TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE.

— J. J. M.

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