

# REDEEMING THE TIME

*“Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:16).*

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## The Dimming of “Freedom’s Holy Light”

BY BRAD K. GSELL

### RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN AMERICA

*Our fathers’ God to Thee, Author of liberty, To Thee we sing.  
Long may our land be bright, With freedom’s holy light,  
Protect us by Thy might, Great God our King.*

#### Recent Attacks on Religious Liberty are Real and Tangible

“Who’s going to Walkerton, IN to burn down #memoriespizza w me?” tweeted public high school coach Jess Dooley. The owners of Memories Pizza had just answered in the negative an unsolicited question from a reporter as to whether they would be willing to cater a “gay wedding.” Some might dismiss this call to arson as the angry fulmination of a single, overly-zealous, gay activist, not intended to be taken literally. However, the rage against this small Christian business was carried on by so many irrational people, spewing ill-informed invective and placing fake orders in order to harm the business, that Memories Pizza had to temporarily shut its doors. They had good reason to be concerned for their own wellbeing and that of their business. Fortunately, hundreds of Christians donated to keep Memories afloat as they endured the wrath of these misguided thugs.

In Washington State, Attorney General Bob Ferguson turned the power of his office against Grandmother Baronelle Stutzman and her 40-year florist business. Ferguson attempted to get her to settle by paying a fine and promising to give up her Constitutional right to the “free exercise” of religion.

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## “God Be Merciful to Me a Sinner”

BY JOSEPH MCKNIGHT

*This article is an edited form of a message delivered by Rev. McKnight at the Faith Presbytery, Bible Presbyterian Church, Camp, August 2014.*

“Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth: not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous: not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone: not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God.

“Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love.”<sup>1</sup>

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine ...” (2 Timothy 3:16). All doctrine is important. Yet, there are some doctrines to

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# “OCCUPY *till* HE COMES”

BY MARK W. EVANS

**O**ur country owes much to the Bible. Fierce struggles and persecutions were necessary to preserve the sacred Writings. During the sixteenth century, the Bible was translated into many known languages and became available to multitudes. Before that time, few had access to this precious volume. Only those who knew Latin could read it. Copies were rare. Sometimes a priest or a monk might repeat a few verses, but most of the Bible was unknown. A gleam of hope appeared in the fourteenth century when John Wycliffe translated the Scriptures into English. His students hand copied the holy Book and went forth as missionaries, called Lollards, sowing the good seed. Rome resisted the intrusion upon her authority and responded by burning Lollards at the stake with Wycliffe's translation chained to their necks.

In the fifteenth century, Bohemian priest John Huss became familiar

with Wycliffe's writings and publicly taught the Scriptures in the city of Prague. The teachings of the Bible changed a notoriously wicked city into a place of uprightness. The other priests chafed at having their sins denounced. When the pope heard of Huss, he summoned him to Rome. Bohemia's king and queen, along with the university leaders and other influential citizens, requested the pope to allow representative counsel to take the place of Huss's personal appearance. The pope refused, condemned Huss in his absence, and placed Prague under interdict. Huss left the city in order to protect his friends.

Rome's actions caused him to consider the question of authority. He realized that the Bible judged the priests. Church historian, J.A. Wylie, wrote, "In other words, that God speaking in the Bible, and not the Church speaking through the priesthood, is the one infallible guide of men. This was to adopt the fundamental principle of Protestantism, and to preach a revolution which Huss himself would have recoiled from, had he been able at that hour to see the length to which it would lead him."<sup>1</sup> The priest submitted to the Scriptures and brought the corrupt doctrines and practices of Rome under the searching light of God's Holy Word. Rome burned Huss at the stake on July 6, 1415.

In the sixteenth century, the German monk Martin Luther discovered from the Bible that a sinner is justified through grace alone, by faith alone, in Christ alone. Rome's fastings, self mutilations, confessions and other works could not atone for even one sin.

In a debate with the papacy's champion, John Eck of Ingolstadt, Luther was astounded to hear his opponent's pronouncement. J.A. Wylie wrote: "When the doctor of Ingolstadt found that despite his practiced logic, vast reading, and ready eloquence, he was winning no victory, and that all his arts were met and repelled by the simple massive strength, knowledge of Scripture, and familiarity with the fathers which the monk of Wittenberg displayed, he was not above a discreditable ruse. He essayed to raise a prejudice against Luther by charging him with being 'a patron of the heresies of Wicliffe and Huss.'"

Wylie explained, "Luther well knew the peril in which Eck had placed him, but he was faithful to his convictions. 'The Bohemians,' he said, 'are schismatics; and I strongly reprobate schism: the supreme Divine right is charity and unity. But among the articles of John Huss condemned by the Council of Constance, some are plainly most Christian and evangelical, which the universal Church cannot condemn.'

"Eck had unwittingly done both Luther and the Reformation a service. The blow which he meant should be a mortal one had severed the last link in the Reformer's chain. Luther had formerly repudiated the primacy of the pope, and appealed from the pope to a Council. Now he publicly accuses a Council of having condemned what was 'Christian' — in short, of having erred. It was clear that the infallible authority of Councils, as well as that of the pope, must be given up. Henceforward Luther stands upon the authority of Scripture alone."<sup>2</sup>

Later, standing before Charles V, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, along with princes, noblemen, archbishops, bishops and papal nuncios, the monk defended his writings based upon God's Word. He was told: "You have not answered the question put to you. We did not call you here to bring into question the

## REDEEMING THE TIME

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authority of Councils; there can be no dispute on that point here. We demand a direct and precise answer: will you, or will you not, retract?"

Luther answered: "Since your most Serene Majesty, and your High Mightiness, require from me a direct and precise answer, I will give you one, and it is this. I cannot submit my faith either to the pope or to the Councils, because it is clear as day they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Unless, therefore, I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture, or on plain and clear grounds of reason, so that conscience shall bind me to make acknowledgment of error, I can and will not retract, for it is neither safe nor wise to do anything contrary to conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. May God help me. Amen."

J.A. Wylie wrote that "A solitary and undefended monk stood up as the representative of conscience enlightened and upheld by the Word of God. Opposed to him was a power which, wielding the armies of emperors, and the anathemas of popes, yet met utter discomfiture. And so has it been all along in the great war. Victory has been the constant attendant of the one power, defeat the constant attendant of the other. Triumph may not always have come in the guise of victory; it may have come by the cord, or by the axe, or by the fiery stake; it may have worn the semblance of defeat; but in every case it has been real triumph to the cause, while the worldly powers which have set themselves in opposition have been slowly consumed by their own efforts, and have been undermining their dominion by the very successes which they thought were ruining their rival."<sup>3</sup>

John Calvin, in the same century, read the Scriptures, proclaimed its truths, and watched the mighty hand of God overthrow Rome's superstitions and false doctrines. Calvin became the leader of the Reformation — writing, teaching, preaching,

organizing, and ministering to the Lord's growing flock. The sovereign Head of His Church placed the frail scholar in the city of Geneva. His enemies once forced him to leave. Now, he could study and write in peace. Events soon brought the city to realize their desperate need of Calvin. They persuaded him to return and the fierce battle for truth continued.

Charles V, the pope, and many others attempted to destroy Geneva. God protected the little city.

**"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."**  
(2 Corinthians 10:4,5)

The Turks showed up at the king's borders and the royal armies were diverted from crushing the city. The pope and monarchs fought among themselves and had to leave Geneva unmolested. Within the walls of Geneva, vicious enemies, called Libertines, mocked, insulted, and attempted to expel Calvin and his followers. In God's providence, after many years of strife, the Libertines were banished. J.A. Wylie wrote of the city: "It had not been built up by human hands; it was not defended by human weapons; yet here it stood, a great lighthouse in the center of Christendom, a mother of Churches, a nurse of martyrs, a school of evangelists, an impregnable asylum of the persecuted, a font of civilization...."<sup>4</sup> About 50 years later, persecuted Pilgrims, called Separatists, arrived at the shores of the New World. They brought their Geneva Bibles and

possessed burning hearts for the infallible Word. They sought liberty to worship God "in spirit and in truth." In time, other heirs of the Reformation followed. Egbert Watson Smith, in his book *The Creed of Presbyterians*, wrote: "If the average American citizen were asked, who was the founder of America, the true author of our giant Republic, he might be puzzled to answer. We can imagine his amazement of hearing the answer given to this question by the famous German historian, Ranke, one of the profoundest scholars of modern times. Says Ranke, 'John Calvin was the virtual founder of America.'"<sup>5</sup>

Today, our liberties and Christian faith are under fierce attack. Our Savior said, "Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13). Our hope is in the Lord. He will never be defeated and will reign until He puts all enemies under His feet. The King of kings provides us the same spiritual weapons possessed by the Reformers and the Lord's people in every age. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:4,5). •

<sup>1</sup>J.A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, vol. I (London: Cassell and Company, n.d.), p. 139.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 298.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 344.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 353.

<sup>5</sup>Egbert Watson Smith, *The Creed of Presbyterians* (New York: the Baker and Taylor Company, 1901), p. 119.



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THE DIVISION OF 1937

Between the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Bible Presbyterian Church

PART 5

# Presbyterianism and the Reformed Faith: A Historical Background

BY BRAD K. GSELL

*It is important to have read Parts 1 through 4 of this series, which have been published in successive issues since the winter 2014 issue of Redeeming the Time. They serve as the general background for understanding this segment and those to come. These may be found on our website ([www.rttpublications.org](http://www.rttpublications.org)), or we would be glad to mail copies to you.*

The study of history greatly informs our present beliefs and actions. Nearly every discipline relies on history for its present success. Soldiers study important battles, analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the strategies used. Automakers learn from history how to improve every part of a car — what failed in the past, the things that worked well, and what can make these things even better.

A study of church history often shows us those things which were Scriptural and those things which led to error. Since we cannot trust “our own understanding,” history can help us, in hindsight, see those things which were done by the arm of the flesh, and those things which evidence God’s leading and blessing.

The Word of God is replete with historical accounts. All of them are there to show us “what man is to be-

lieve concerning God, and what duty God requires of man”<sup>1</sup> Oh, what lessons we can draw from Jonah fleeing God’s command when he was told to go to Nineveh, in contrast to David’s going in the right direction when he went to slay Goliath, the Philistine.

2 Chronicles 26:4 says concerning King Uzziah: “And he did that which was right in the sight of the

**“The Reformed faith stands in testimony to man’s complete inability to save himself, and in recognition that God’s sovereign grace in election is totally responsible for our salvation.”**

Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah did.” Contrast this with King Ahab: “But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up” (1 Kings 21:25). Both of these kings were greatly affected by the influence (really, the historical actions) of individuals — one for good and the other for evil.

Following is a brief overview of some of the historical events which

greatly impacted and influenced the thinking of those in the 1930s who sought to have a Presbyterian church which would be faithful to the Lord.

## The Protestant Reformation

The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century resulted in many having their eyes opened to Biblical truth, which had been obscured for centuries in the Roman Catholic Church. The Scriptures were made available in the languages of the people, and were no longer the sole possession of the clergy. The great truth that “the just shall live by faith,” emphasized by Martin Luther, brought joy to the hearts of many.

Despite unity on many essential teachings of the Scriptures, there arose different theological emphases and positions. All the Reformation groups were, in the widest sense, known as “Reformed.” However, as time passed, Luther’s followers were uniformly known as Lutherans, and many of the anabaptists, and groups in what is known as the Radical Reformation, likewise took the name of their leaders, or denied any connection to the Reformation. Today we often refer to all non-Roman Catholic / non-Eastern Orthodox churches as “Protestant.”

However, all do not accept this designation.

Unlike many of these groups, those holding the system of doctrine most famously propounded by John Calvin (1509-1564), in Geneva, Switzerland, did not as a rule refer to their leader in the names of their churches. The French Huguenots, the English Puritans, the Scottish Presbyterians, and the Dutch Reformed are just a few of these groups. Although often called Calvinists informally, the word “Reformed” eventually became the standard designation for all of these churches and the common system of doctrine associated with them. Even some churches which were not known as “Reformed” *per se* — such as Anglicans, Methodists and Baptists — included large elements holding to some form of Reformed theology.

When Mary Tudor (“Bloody Mary”) ascended the throne of England in 1553, she reestablished Roman Catholicism and began a severe persecution of Protestants. John Knox, who had been a royal chaplain under King Edward VI, was forced to leave the country, fleeing to Geneva, Switzerland. There, he studied and learned much under the tutelage of John Calvin.

Knox eventually returned to Scotland when Elizabeth I ascended the throne and restored Protestantism to the realm. With his Reformed convictions, Knox’s preaching was widely received in Scotland, and he is considered to be the father of Presbyterianism.

During this period, a number of great confessions of faith were produced by those of the Reformed faith. The impetus for the formulation of most of these creeds was the need to counter widespread doctrinal corruption and compromise and to give a unified and systematic expression of Bible teaching. Often, the growth of false teaching on certain doctrines had the effect of causing the church to study the Biblical

teaching on that subject in such a focused way as to bring greater understanding to God’s people. The Belgic Confession (1561), the Heidelberg Confession (1563), the Canons of Dordt (1618-19) are just a few of the most prominent.

### **The Westminster Confession of Faith**

Presbyterians were strong in their belief that the Scriptures were the “only infallible rule of faith and practice.” Yet, over the centuries, most have held the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, produced in the middle of the 17th century, as their “subordinate standard.” It was believed to be one of the finest systematic expressions of the teaching of the Word of God ever produced.

The Westminster Assembly included those with various views on church government and some doctrinal differences, but the document they produced has for centuries had a profound effect throughout the world, and is still the “subordinate standard” of the Church of Scotland and many other Reformed groups. It was so admired even by non-Presbyterians that the Savoy Declaration (1658 [Congregational]) and the Second London Baptist Confession (1689) are based largely on the Westminster Standards.

A staple for millions of children (and adults) since that time has been the memorization of the Westminster Shorter Catechism. There are many references throughout history, often in secular literature, to the fact that Scottish children were raised on “porridge [or ‘oatmeal’] and the Shorter Catechism.”<sup>2</sup> Of Robert Moffat, the famous missionary, it is said that his first book as a child was the Shorter Catechism. It had the ABCs on the title page, and from it he learned to read. This was the experience of a very large number of children in America as well.

### **The Five Points of Calvinism and the Reformed Faith**

Reformed churches in general hold to the “Five Points of Calvinism” (sometimes referred to as “the doctrines of grace”) — commonly stated by using the acrostic TULIP: Total Depravity of man; Unconditional Election; Limited Atonement (also known as Particular Atonement); Irresistible Grace; and Perseverance of the Saints. However, these five points do not encompass all that the Scriptures or “the Reformed Faith” profess.

It is the tendency of natural, sinful man to seek to place his own initiative and action as playing some role in his salvation, rather than it being a work of God while we were “dead in trespasses and sin” (Ephesians 2:1). This has been a persistent error throughout church history. The rise of Pelagianism<sup>3</sup> at the dawn of the fifth century AD and the Biblical response by Augustine of Hippo, is just one such notable occurrence. A somewhat more subtle error, Semi-Pelagianism<sup>4</sup>, also arose around that same time. Variants of these teachings have endured. At the beginning of the 17th century, Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) and the Remonstrants denied or compromised much of the teaching of Calvinism, with five points of their own. Man’s will was elevated to a place of importance and cooperation in his salvation.

In contrast, the Reformed faith stands in testimony to man’s complete inability to save himself, and in recognition that God’s sovereign grace in election is totally responsible for our salvation. Since we cannot begin to give a full discussion of the Reformed Faith in this series of articles, further study would be advantageous to the reader. A careful reading and study of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms,

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with the proofs from Scripture, is highly recommended, and would be a blessing.

These issues of Calvinism versus Arminianism have arisen in the Presbyterian Church (and in most other denominations) in every century since the Reformation. They were likewise made an issue by some in the Presbyterian Church of America (OPC) in the 1930s.

### The Beginnings of Presbyterianism in America

The first seeds of organized Presbyterianism in America are usually dated to 1683, when the Rev. Francis Makemie arrived in America and established the first Presbyterian church in Spring Hill, Maryland. He had been sent as a missionary by the Presbytery of Laggan in Northern Ireland. As many Presbyterians emigrated to North America, particularly in the area of Philadelphia, a number of new congregations were established.

This led, in 1706, to the establishment of the first presbytery in North America, organized in Philadelphia by Makemie and others. As growth continued, three other presbyteries were erected. Together, these four presbyteries formed a Synod in 1716. In 1729, this Synod voted to make the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms the “subordinate standard” of the church. Adherence to the system of doctrine found in the Confession was required of all who would be ordained as ministers or elders.

Largely written by the Rev. John Thompson, the Adopting Act read in part: “Although the Synod do not [sic] claim or pretend to any authority of imposing our faith upon other men’s consciences, but do profess

our just dissatisfaction with, and abhorrence of such impositions, and do utterly disclaim all legislative power and authority in the Church, being willing to receive one another as Christ has received us to the glory of God, and admit to fellowship in sacred ordinances, all such as we have grounds to believe Christ will at last admit to the kingdom of heaven, yet we are undoubtedly obliged to take care that the faith once delivered to the saints be kept pure and uncorrupt among us, and so handed down to our posterity; and do therefore agree that all the ministers of this Synod, or that shall hereafter be admitted into this Synod, shall declare their agreement in, and approbation of, the Confession of Faith, with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, as being in all the essential and necessary articles, good forms of sound words and systems of Christian doctrine, and do also adopt the said Confession and Catechisms as the confession of our faith. And we do also agree, that all the Presbyteries within our bounds shall always take care not to admit any candidate of the ministry into the exercise of the sacred function but what declares his agreement in opinion with all the essential and necessary articles of said Confession....”<sup>5</sup>

The Act also gave room for Presbyteries to decide concerning any “scruples” a candidate for the ministry might have as to whether they were “essential and necessary in doctrine, worship, or government.” In fact, on the same day, the Synod declared its “scruples” to sections of the Confession which could be understood as allowing the civil government to have any control over the ministerial authority of the Synod or any power to persecute any on account of their religious beliefs. This answered the objections of most who strongly advocated the avoidance of even the appearance of de-

claring a man-made document to be infallible. That place belonged to the Scriptures ALONE. In 1730 and 1736, the Synod reiterated its adherence to the Westminster Standards and made clear that subscription to the Standards was not to be taken lightly, and that the phrase concerning “essential and necessary articles” was not to be viewed as a loophole to accept those who believed contrary to the Confession.

Presbyterians have always been fastidious in their attempts to be precise in their articulation of sound doctrine, while at the same time emphasizing the need for godly Christian living. Seeking the proper balance has sometimes created controversy.

### Old Side / New Side Controversy (1741-1758)

In the mid-1700s, this issue arose in the Presbyterian Church during what is now known as the Great Awakening. Thousands of souls came to Christ, and Christians throughout the American colonies gained a new zeal to live in obedience to their Saviour. Many Presbyterians were active participants in these revivals, and enthusiastically supported them. The Rev. Gilbert Tennent was a leading Presbyterian evangelist. He, along with Methodist Evangelist George Whitefield and New England Puritan Jonathan Edwards, are perhaps the three most prominent ministers whose preaching took the colonies by storm.

Others warned against these “revivals,” believing that they were based far too much on emotion and less than precise doctrine. The differences became so acute that the Presbyterian Church divided between 1741 and 1758, in what has become known as the Old Side / New Side Controversy. After 17 years, both sides recognized some of their own excesses and the church was reunited. In many ways the results were beneficial — the maintenance

of clear, precise doctrine, combined with a zeal for the proclamation of the gospel and the importance of godly Christian living.

Dr. Charles Hodge, born long after this controversy, defended the beliefs of the Old Side ministers and offered criticism for actions of some of the New Side men. Nonetheless, he wrote very favorably of many adherents of the New Side. In fact, Hodge was raised in the Second Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, a church which was born out of the revivals of the Great Awakening, with the Rev. Gilbert Tennent as its first minister.

### **The Log College, the College of New Jersey and the American Revolution**

Another important event during the first half of the 18th century was the establishment of the “Log College” by the Rev. William Tennant, Sr. (Gilbert’s father), who favored the New Side. The name of the college was originally a pejorative used by those who had known the great universities of England and Scotland, and disparaged this primitive school. However, the Log College became famous for its intertwining of rigorous scholarship with “experimental religion,” and was a “precursor”<sup>6</sup> of the College of New Jersey (renamed Princeton University in 1896).

Interestingly enough, all three of the revivalists mentioned at the beginning of this section were very supportive of and involved with the Log College and Princeton. Gilbert Tennent had helped his father in the founding of the Log College in 1726/27. Whitefield was a dear friend of the Tennents and wrote fondly of his visits to the Log College. Edwards served as president of the College of New Jersey in 1758. He died two months after taking office from a fever, following a small pox vaccination. A number of those

educated at the Log College were chosen to serve on the Board of Trustees of the College of New Jersey, including: Gilbert Tennent, William Tennent, Jr., Samuel Blair, Samuel Finley and Richard Treat. Finley later became the fifth president of the institution. The Rev. John Blair was Acting President while the College was waiting for its new president, John Witherspoon, to arrive from Scotland in 1768. Witherspoon became a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and he and many Presbyterians actively supported the American Revolution. Some, such as Witherspoon, took an active role in the government, and other ministers led the men of their congregations off to battle.

### **Old School / New School Controversy (1839-1869)**

At the beginning of the 19th century, the Presbyterian Church was fervent in its desire for the advance of the gospel throughout the American continent and around the world. Missionaries in frontier lands faced many obstacles. How does one establish a church with elders, when there are NO seasoned converts? How do you maintain the work and ensure consistently faithful preaching of the Word in these distant outposts?

In 1801, the Congregational churches in New England (Calvinist in doctrine) and the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. adopted a Plan of Union, which allowed cooperation between their churches in these areas. It permitted either group to accept or hire ministers from the other.

Concurrent with this action was the beginning of what has often been called “The Second Great Awakening.” Churches of different denominations saw their attendances swell throughout the first few decades of the 19th century, largely through the efforts of revivalist preachers and the thousands who were stirred by their messages.

This likewise brought controversy as the Presbyterian Church grappled with some of the same issues faced a century before. Unfortunately, a measure of Arminianism had by this time crept into some quarters of the Presbyterian Church.

By 1839, the Old School / New School Controversy erupted into a new division of the Church. The New School men once again were considered those who favored revivalism. However, in this conflict, many were rightly alarmed that a gospel which included man’s volition in his own salvation was being proclaimed in some quarters, and excessive emotionalism and reliance on feelings were often in evidence.

One of the most prominent examples was the ministry of the Rev. Charles Finney, who seriously departed from Presbyterian teaching on the sovereignty of God. Finney stated that: “In choosing his elect, you must understand that he [God] has thrown the responsibility of their [each individual] being saved upon them: that the whole is suspended upon their consent to the terms; you are perfectly able to give your consent, and this moment to lay hold on eternal life. Irrespective of your own choice, no election can save you, and no reprobation can damn you.”<sup>7</sup> This was indeed an attack upon God’s sovereignty in election. Many in the church were more subtle in their doctrinal departures.

### **Growing Doctrinal Laxity, Toleration and Apostasy**

The Civil War saw the Presbyterian Church divide further into Northern and Southern churches. Our discussion concerns events in the Northern Church. This Church saw the reunification of the Old School and New School bodies in 1869, following the War. Many believe this was a tragic event, as the

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compromises required to effect the union yielded many men who maintained doctrinal aberrations and a Church increasingly unwilling to take steps of discipline to preserve its purity. The venerable Dr. Charles Hodge voted against the reunion.

At the same time, a new enemy was beginning to eat away at the foundations of the Church. Some men who studied in Europe — particularly in Germany — were bringing back beliefs in what was termed the “higher criticism.” It was a clear attack on the Word of God. This came to a head in 1892 and 1893 when Union Theological Seminary (New York) Professor Charles Augustus Briggs was tried for heresy by the Presbytery of New York. Briggs taught that the Bible was not infallible or inerrant, and that many of the prophecies of Scripture could never be fulfilled. Among other things, he placed human reason as an equal source of divine authority with the Scriptures. The Presbytery of New York was so compromised by this time that it acquitted Briggs, calling for the “peace and quiet of the church!”<sup>8</sup> One cannot help but observe that the ordination vows at that time required all candidates to promise to “study the peace, unity, and *purity* of the church” (emphasis ours). The Presbytery now appeared to be more interested in “*quiet*” than “*purity*”!

On June 1, 1893, the General Assembly reversed the acquittal of the Presbytery of New York, stating: “that the said Charles A. Briggs has uttered, taught, and propagated views, doctrines, and teachings as set forth in said charges contrary to the essential doctrine of Holy Scripture and the standards of the said Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, and in violation of the or-

dination vow of said appellee, which said erroneous teachings, views, and doctrines strike at the vitals of religion, and have been industriously spread....” The judgment against Briggs was suspension from the ministry.<sup>9</sup>

Although Briggs was found guilty and put out of the Church, the foundations were beginning to crumble. Briggs and other Modernists continued to teach in the seminaries which were producing new ministers for the church. A few other heresy trials were held, but more and more unbelief was seeping into the church, and men soon had less and less willingness to go through the arduous and unpalatable task of mounting heresy trials.

### **“How would the new Presbyterian Church of America (OPC) relate to its history? Would it be the ‘true spiritual succession’ of the PCUSA, or would it be ‘another kind of church’?”**

In 1910, 1916 and 1923, Bible believers were successful in getting the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church to pass what has come to be known as the “Five Fundamentals” (see footnote 2 in the Winter 2015 issue of *Redeeming the Time*). The “Fundamentals” were excellent in what they stated, yet they really represented a retrenchment. These mere five points were a final stand by Bible believers to defend the “vitals of [the Christian] religion.”<sup>10</sup> The enemy was on a steady march of destruction across the vital territory and fruitful fields of this grand system of doctrine found in the Scriptures and the Westminster Confession.

By the 1920s the ascendant Modernists had taken off their gloves. The Rev. Harry Emerson Fosdick

preached his well-known sermon “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?” on May 21, 1922, from the pulpit of New York’s First Presbyterian Church. The following year, the infamous Auburn Affirmation, signed by 1,293 Presbyterian ministers and elders, declared that even the grand doctrines proclaimed in the “Five Fundamentals” were mere “theories.” Dr. Machen declared, with good cause, that the 1927 General Assembly was “probably the most disastrous meeting, from the point of view of evangelical Christianity, that has been held in the whole history of our Church.”<sup>11</sup>

A paper officially received by the 194th General Assembly of the PCUSA<sup>12</sup>, in 1982, declared: “The inerrantist view [of the Scriptures] was the predominant view in the church from the 1700s until 1927. At that time the denomination debated the extent to which the General Assembly had constitutional power to issue binding definitions of ‘essential and necessary doctrines’ for ordination. In 1927, the General Assembly repudiated earlier declarations that named five fundamental doctrines as essential and necessary for subscription for ordination (the Deliverance of 1910, again adopted in 1920 [sic] and 1923). In its action, the General Assembly permitted theological diversity within the limits of the confessions. Thus, the view of biblical authority and interpretation that was held from the mid-1700s gradually made room for new theological perspectives, first as moderate liberalism in the 1930s, then as strong neo-orthodoxy in the 1940s and 1950s. From the 1960s to the present, new currents, such as process, liberation, and other theologies, have provided additional perspectives.”<sup>13</sup>

As Modernism took over most of the mainline churches in the first few decades of the 20th century, faithful men of God in various denominations joined together to stand

for the inerrancy of the Scriptures. They drew a line in the sand between Modernism and historic Christianity. While maintaining their denominational distinctives, they recognized and thanked the Lord for all those who were standing “for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:9). They came to be commonly referred to as “Fundamentalists.”

This overview of 250 years of American Presbyterian church history — as woefully brief and incomplete as it is — is vitally important to understanding the events in the 1930s which are the object of our discussion. How would the new Presbyterian Church of America (OPC) relate to its history? Would it be the “true spiritual succession” of the PCUSA, or would it be “another kind of church”? We shall examine this in our next issue. ●

<sup>1</sup>Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 3.

<sup>2</sup>“Porridge and the Shorter Catechism used to be the food for growing lads in Scotch households; and each in its own way, made bone and muscle. If, in after years, the doctrine of that most logical of catechisms was rejected, at any rate it was understood...” (Alexander Maclaren, in the introduction to *W.P. Lockhart, Merchant and Preacher: A Life Story (compiled by his wife)*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1895), p. v.

<sup>3</sup>“A heretical doctrine, first formulated by Pelagius, that rejected the concept of original sin and maintained that the individual takes the initial steps towards salvation by his own efforts and not by the help of divine grace” (*Collins English Dictionary* [http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/pelagianism]).

<sup>4</sup>“The semi-Pelagians believed in the universality of original sin as a corruptive force in man. They also believed that without God’s grace this corruptive force could not be overcome, and they therefore admitted the necessity of grace for Christian life and action.... But contrary to Augustine, they taught that the innate corruption of man was not so great that the initiative toward Christian commitment was beyond the powers of man’s native

will” (*Encyclopædia Britannica* [http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/533895/semi-Pelagianism]).

<sup>5</sup>“Minutes of the Synod of Philadelphia, 1729,” *Records of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Education and Sabbath-School Work, 1904), pp. 94-95.

<sup>6</sup>(http://www.princeton.edu/pub/presidents/finley/. Some have questioned the connection between the Log College and Princeton. However, even the Princeton University website refers to it as “a precursor of Princeton.”

<sup>7</sup>Charles G. Finney, *Sermons on Important Subjects* (London: Printed for Thomas Tegg by Bradbury and Evans, Printers, 1839), p. 264.

<sup>8</sup>*One Hundred Fifth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Washington, D.C., May 1893: The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America Against the Rev. Charles A. Briggs, D.D., Notice of Appeal* (New York: John C. Rankin Co., Printers, 1893), p. 8.

<sup>9</sup>*Presbyterian Digest of 1907: A Compend of the Acts and Deliverances of the General Presbytery, General Synod, and General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1706-1906* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-School Work, 1907), p. 55.

<sup>10</sup>This phrase was used by the prosecution in the heresy trial of Professor Briggs. *The Defence of Professor Briggs Before the Presbytery of New York* (New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1893), p. 47.

<sup>11</sup>David B. Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary: The Majestic Testimony, 1869-1929* [Vol. 2] (Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), p. 379.

<sup>12</sup>The name of the denomination at that time (from 1958 to 1983) was the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Upon merging with the Southern Presbyterian Church (PCUS) in 1983, the name reverted back to PCUSA.

<sup>13</sup>“Presbyterian Understanding and Use of Holy Scripture” / “Biblical Authority and Interpretation” (Louisville, KY: Office of the General Assembly of the PCUSA, 1999), p. 20.



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## “GOD BE MERCIFUL TO ME A SINNER”

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which special weight is given. All of the Reformed creeds and confessions have variations within them. There are some areas of interpretation. But the matter of justification by faith is one doctrine concerning which we can find no other ground on which to stand. Either we are justified by faith, or we are left to ourselves to be justified. And, if we are left to ourselves to be justified, we have no justification, because we are corrupt and evil in all that we do.

Martin Luther was led by the Holy Spirit in the Word of God to find that man is justified by faith alone, apart from works. A few verses that Luther would have encountered in his study were Galatians 3:11: “But that no man ... [but] by faith”; Romans 1:17: “For therein ... by faith”; Romans 3:28: “... by faith without the deeds of the law....” Luther stated: “This one firm rock which we call the doctrine of justification is the chief article of the whole of Christian doctrine, which comprehends the understanding of all.”<sup>2</sup>

Since the beginning of time, Satan has hated the doctrine of justification by faith. It is repugnant to man, as well. Genesis 4:3 states: “And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.” I’m sure Cain did not bring anything but the very best fruit he could produce. But it was not acceptable to God. It was his own work, and he could not find justification before the righteousness of God by his own work.

In contrast, Abel brought a lamb. That lamb, sacrificed, looked forward through time to THE Sacrifice. “... without shedding of blood is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22).

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## "GOD BE MERCIFUL TO ME A SINNER"

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When man is faced with his need for salvation, the best response he can make is "What must I DO to be saved?" But, there is nothing you can do. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Acts:16:30,31). But, you can't believe. You are dead. Lost man is "dead in trespasses and sins," and his only hope is to be awakened from death by Jesus Christ.

This doctrine of justification by faith was the heart of the Reformation itself. It was the soul of that which began a spark within Luther, which grew into the Protestant Reformation.

The 16th century Dutch theologian Wilhelmus à Brackel was a part of what is referred to as the Dutch Second Reformation (which might better be termed the Dutch further reformation). It was a time which paralleled the Puritans in England. The writings of those in the Dutch Second Reformation are very similar to those of the Puritans. This Second Reformation brought a heart to Reformed theology. It was very experimental or experiential in its nature.

In *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, à Brackel begins his chapter on Justification by saying: "Having discussed calling, regeneration and faith, we shall now proceed to Justification, which is the soul of Christianity and the fountainhead of all true comfort and sanctification. He who errs in this doctrine errs to his eternal destruction. The devil is therefore continually engaged in denying, perverting, and obscuring the truth expressed in this chapter and, if he does not accomplish this, to prevent exercise concerning this truth. When new errors appear on the horizon, even when they initially do not pertain to justification at all, they in time will eventually culminate in affecting this doctrine. One

must therefore be all the more earnest to properly understand, defend, and meditate upon this doctrine."<sup>3</sup>

Basically, what à Brackel is saying is that when any new error comes into the church, whatever it relates to, it will eventually in some way affect this doctrine of Justification. That's what happened within the Roman Church. Errors began to creep in, and by the time of Luther they were selling the right to sin! They were coming up with all kinds of new, creative ways to take care of sin. The error within the Roman Church did not begin with the doctrine of Justification. It began with other things, but in time it centered on this doctrine — how is a man justified before God?

In Christ's day, you had the scribes and Pharisees. They were trying to be justified by God. They had long lists of things they did. They had taken the Old Testament ceremonial law and had heaped mountains of additional laws and regulations upon it. Why? They wanted justification. In Paul's day, you had the Judaizers, who were attacking the young believers and telling them that they must keep the law, and that they had to do certain things to be justified before God.

In our own day, there has been the movement of Catholics and Protestants working together, heading towards a return to Rome. There are those even who teach that Paul taught justification by faith plus works rather than by faith alone! Some go so far as to say that justification by faith is not found in the teachings of Jesus Christ.

They believe the Protestant Reformation was a big mistake, that we should have stayed with Rome, that we have perverted the truth, and that our understanding of justification by faith is simply a misinterpretation of what Paul was saying.

### **Justification by Faith in the Teaching of Jesus.**

I would like for us to look at the doctrine of justification by faith,

which is indeed in the teaching of Jesus Christ — not just in Paul. Turn in your Bibles please to Luke 18:9-14: "And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

In the introduction to this parable, Luke tells us that Christ was addressing this to "certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous." This is just like Luther, who was trusting in himself. Because he was trying to find righteousness in himself, he went through all kinds of rigorous exercises. He had even crawled on his knees up the steps of the Scala Sancta in Rome, like many others. People gave money to be justified, to get people out of purgatory. All these things have been attempts by men to be justified. The reason for these things is that there are certain ones who trust in themselves that they are righteous.

One of Job's "friends" hit the nail on the head when he asked, in Job 25:4: "How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?" This goes to the heart of the Biblical doctrine of Justification.

### **The justification of the publican was not based on works.**

The first thing that we notice in this parable of the publican and the

*"This man went down*

*to his house justified ..."*

Pharisee is that the justification of the publican was not based on works. Jesus sets forth here two men. Naturally we find that He intends a comparison and contrast between these two. The one was a Pharisee. The Pharisees were very religious, they considered themselves very righteous, and that they lived holy lives.

We tend to be very critical of the Pharisees. I am not trying to condone what they did, but will say that they were extremely sincere, extremely vigorous and diligent. We as believers must likewise be diligent about the condition of our souls, but the Pharisees placed their trust in the wrong things.

I know some folks in the Catholic Church who are the same way. They get up early in the morning to go to mass, they go to their rosary beads, they go to confession, they give their money. They do every single thing that the Church tells them to do, and they do it religiously, and they do it earnestly, and they do it sincerely.

If anyone could trust in himself that he was righteous, the people of Christ's day would say, "Yes, the Pharisees are very religious, they're very righteous." Paul himself, in giving his pedigree, in Philippians 3:4,5, says: "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee."

This pharisee in our parable was the one putting trust in himself. He prayed: "... God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." "Here's my pedigree! God, look at this! This is my claim to justification. This is my claim to righteousness."

Remember what Christ said in Matthew 23:14: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for

ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation." The Pharisees loved to pray on the street corners. They wanted everyone to hear and to see their piety.

This Pharisee prayed: "I thank thee, that I am not as other men are." In other words, he was saying, "I thank you that I am not as a wicked drunk out there in the gutter. I thank you that I am not an adulterer. I thank you that I am not a fornicator. I thank you that I am not a thief. Look at all these things — all this that I have accumulated for my justification."

But, the Scriptures teach: "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). Christ said of them: "They that are whole need not a physician" (Luke 5:31). In other words they were very sick, but they didn't know their own sickness of soul.

The Pharisee is correct in the condemnation of these sins. Is it good to be an adulterer? Is it good to be a fornicator, a thief, or any of these other things? It obviously is not. He erred in his answer to the question: "What is the solution to my sin?"

The other man in this parable was a publican. Now the continual complaint of the Pharisees against Christ was that he ate with publicans and sinners. The thing that most bothered the pharisees was that Jesus was a friend of sinners.

Matthew was a publican. Zaccheus was a publican. These men were looked down upon because they were publicans — they were tax collectors. They worked for Rome. Even in our day, most of us are not fond of IRS agents. These publicans

were unjust. They were Jews who were working for the Romans. They also handled all of the civil and municipal contracts. In other words,

if a Roman legion was stationed in your town, the publican was the one who arranged for all their food and housing. If you wanted to get one of those lucrative contracts, you had to go to the publican, and he was going to take a big piece off the top. So there was a good reason why people did not like the publicans.

We see the publican's prayer, in Luke 18:13: "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." He stood afar off, not to be heard by the multitude, not to make a big show. He "would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven," out of shame and remorse for his sins. Have you ever had to go apologize to somebody for something you've done wrong, or maybe even to your parents. "Dad, I know you told me not to, but I did such-and-such." Do you want to look him in the eye? No, when you have to "eat crow," as they say, when you have to go apologize, the head wants to go down, and the eyes want to turn away. Why? It is hard to look into the face of one whom you have wronged.

This publican knows that he is a sinner. He knows that he is an offense to the righteousness of a holy God. We find that he smote upon his breast.

The Augustinian monks, Luther among them, would take whips and flail themselves in order to gain favor with God. They would beat their flesh. That is not what this publican is doing. His beating on his breast is an acknowledgment that he is corrupt, and his corruption is so great that it makes him sick. It is an acknowledgement of his guilt — "Lord, it is I!"

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## "GOD BE MERCIFUL TO ME A SINNER"

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It is also an acknowledgment that he has no hope and no help within himself to deal with his sin. It must come from another source. He doesn't pray a long, elegant prayer, yet it is beautiful and eloquent: "God be merciful to me, a sinner." It was not proclaimed loudly for men to hear, but God heard that prayer!

Remember the psalmist David: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18). Yet, the Lord hears the genuine prayer: "Lord be merciful to me, a sinner."

*No merit of my own  
His anger to suppress  
My only hope is found  
In Jesus' righteousness<sup>3</sup>*

### The justification of the publican was not a process.

The justification of the publican also was not a process. He did not have to throw money in the coin box before he left the temple, or look forward to spending time in purgatory to gain his justification. It wasn't a process. It was an immediate thing.

Christ tells us in the parable that he went down to his house justified. Isn't that another glorious phrase? Remember Job's "friend" who asked, "How then can man be justified with God?" The publican went down to his house justified!

Remember the Pharisee, who gave the whole list of his pedigree. Remember Paul, who said, "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more ..." (Philippians 3:4). But where did Paul find his righteousness? He writes: "... not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Philippians 3:9).

I believe the publican went down to his house KNOWING that he was justified. He was very earnest. He was seeking. The Scriptures tell us: "... seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Luke 11:9). Even more glorious, this publican not only went down to his house justified, but he went to his grave justified, because he was justified by faith alone!

### The justification of the publican was a judicial declaration.

Further, the justification of the publican was a judicial declaration. Christ declares: "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other ..." (Luke 18:14). Who's speaking? Jesus Christ, the righteous — the only one who can justify a man. He declares this publican righteous — rather than this Pharisee, with all his pedigree of works. The one who declared this man justified is the one before whom "every knee should bow ... and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10,11).

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1-4).

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's

elect? It is God that justifieth" (Romans 8:31-33).

God declared this wicked publican just. It was a judicial declaration. He went "down to his house justified, rather than the other."

### Conclusion

Are you justified by faith alone? Or, do you say, "Lord I thank thee that I am not like my friends. I thank thee that I am not like the kids I go to school with. They don't go to church. They don't even have Bibles. They use foul language. On the other hand, I go to church three times a week. I even tithe my allowance. My parents are believers."

That is not what the Bible is looking for, is it? It is not how we find peace with God. The publican obviously was troubled, but, unlike the Pharisee, he went to the only source of help.

Young people, I'm glad if you try to live righteously. I'm glad if you come from a Christian family. I'm glad if you are in church. But, those things are not enough. Those things do not save. One of these men prayed: "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and that man "went down to his house justified." •

<sup>1</sup>Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 11:1,2.

<sup>2</sup>Herbert Bouman, "The Doctrine of Justification in the Lutheran Confessions," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, No. 11:801. (November 1955), p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>Wilhelmus à Brackel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 1992), p. 341.

<sup>4</sup>Norman Clayton, "My Hope Is in the Lord" (Norman Clayton Publishing Company, 1973).



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## THE DIMMING OF "FREEDOM'S HOLY LIGHT"

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Her powerful response reads in part: "Since 2012, same-sex couples all over the state have been free to act on their beliefs about marriage, but because I follow the Bible's teaching that marriage is the union of one man and one woman, I am no longer free to act on my beliefs.

"Your offer reveals that you don't really understand me or what this conflict is all about. It's about freedom, not money. I certainly don't relish the idea of losing my business, my home, and everything else that your lawsuit threatens to take from my family, but my freedom to honor God in doing what I do best is more important. Washington's constitution guarantees us 'freedom of conscience in all matters of religious sentiment.' I cannot sell that precious freedom. You are asking me to walk in the way of a well-known betrayer, one who sold something of infinite worth for 30 pieces of silver. That is something I will not do...."

### Equality and Freedom: the Language of the Debate

Tragically, Christians have largely abdicated the field to the so-called "secular progressives" in the debate over equality and freedom. It has been stated that "he who controls the language controls the debate, and he who controls the debate wins." Many words have been commandeered by the enemies of freedom and used as weapons to silence opponents — before a rational debate can even begin.

If you believe in the Biblical view of marriage as between one man and one woman, you are immediately labeled as a hater, and are said to be intolerant, bigoted and homophobic. Those supporting gay marriage are painted as being for equality and tolerance — even though their public ac-

tions often prove they are champions of neither. Therefore, many shrink from the debate rather than being called "haters" and possibly opening themselves up to real persecution and harm.

This pervasive strategy of using the *ad hominem* attack is the common resort of those whose arguments are not sound and do not hold up under careful and rational scrutiny. It is so much easier to yell "Hater" and "Bigot" than to rationally and honestly discuss a matter for open evaluation in the free marketplace of ideas.

Many questions need to be asked. Is the "Bake me a cake or I'll throw you in jail"\* crowd tolerant of the "right of conscience," considered of supreme importance by our Founders? Are all the folks who terrorized Memories Pizza to be considered "loving," "tolerant" and for "diversity"? Why are the anti-Religious Freedom folks not coming out in sincere outrage at the way this business and its owners have been treated? Are their rights not important in our diverse society? Do Bible-believing and -practicing Christians terrorize homosexuals — let alone at this level? The answer to all of these questions is a decided No!

Further, it should be asked if a sincere belief that any given "practice" is wrong indicates that "hate" is present. Again, No. Is a person homophobic (having a fear of homosexuals) simply because he considers homosexuality to be a sin. Of course not.

One definition of tolerance is: "a fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward those whose opinions, beliefs, practices, racial or ethnic origins, etc., differ from one's own." Are the anti-Christian proponents "fair, objective, and permissive" toward our Christian values and beliefs — which "differ from their own" — when they seek to do real damage to Christian

\*a tongue-in-cheek description of those who seek to force Christians to violate their consciences.

citizens who won't conform to their beliefs and practices? When one looks at who is really intolerant and against diversity, it is not the Bible believer!

### Redefining Christianity

Not only are words used dishonestly to *attack* Christians, but the attempt is made to silence Christians by *redefining* what it means to be a Christian. Verses are cherry picked completely out of context — more to be used as a weapon against Christians than as a legitimate defense of their position. If you do not accept their views on the matter, then your beliefs are not to be protected.

President Obama has on several occasions spoken as if he had been designated Theologian-in-Chief. His views, informed by the Liberation Theology of his long-time pastor, Jeremiah Wright, are a far cry from the teachings of the Bible. He has the right to hold them, but he does not have the right to speak as if he, in his capacity as President, can declare the historic Christian faith no longer acceptable.

We are told that we are to "Love thy neighbor." That, amazingly, is twisted to mean that the Christian businessman should gladly participate in a "gay wedding." But never do they tell us that Biblical love "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:6); nor are the words of Christ present in their arsenal: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

We are told that "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matthew 7:1) means Christians must be silent on the matter. Yet it is not the believer — but God — who judges sin, and the Bible declares homosexuality to be a sin. Nowhere do these same folks tell us: "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20), and that we are to "judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24).

Concerning Matthew 7:1, John Calvin points out well that it is a com-

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## THE DIMMING OF "FREEDOM'S HOLY LIGHT"

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plete misapplication to use these words as "a pretence for setting aside all distinction between good and evil. We are not only permitted, but are even bound, to condemn all sins; unless we choose to rebel against God himself, — nay, to repeal his laws, to reverse his decisions, and to overturn his judgment-seat. It is his will that we should proclaim the sentence which he pronounces on the actions of men... [and] make it manifest that he is the only Lawgiver and Judge (Isaiah 33:22)." It would be interesting to ask the secularist what he would have us do with Isaiah 58:1: "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."

Many say that Christ did not condemn homosexuality. Christ considered the Old Testament to be the Word of God and declared: "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18). Further, historic Christianity has always held the words of Christ recorded in the Gospels and those of the Apostles to be a harmonious whole.

Some also argue that since Christ sat with publicans and sinners, He would certainly make it a point to be part of a "gay wedding." Yet, nowhere is the command of Christ repeated which he gave to the woman taken in adultery: "Go, and sin no more" (John 8:11). In fact, Christ stated clearly that He sat with publicans and sinners NOT to comfort them in their wickedness, "but to call sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32).

### **Redefining the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution**

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is remarkably clear. It

states that Congress is not to establish a state church or religion, nor is it to do anything to impede the individual in "exercising" his religious beliefs. Sadly, it is the penchant of sinful man, when he has an agenda to accomplish, to pervert the definitions and clear meanings of statements in any given document, when it gets in the way of his goals. This is increasingly being done with regards to these freedoms.

In recent years we have heard the First Amendment protections subtly redefined as "freedom of worship." We are told that men are "free to believe" whatever they desire. These statements are true in a certain sense.

However, the actual language of the First Amendment is seldom quoted because it involves so much more! These other phrases are put forth in an attempt to make religious faith something that is merely in one's inner being and practiced in the home and within the four walls of a church building.

It is often stated by the redefiners that religion is a "private matter." A man certainly is free to declare that his own religious beliefs are a "private matter," but he has no right to define the faith of others. In fact, the Bible teaches that Christianity is by its very nature both private and public. The Apostles had very public ministries all across the Roman world with very public results involving the citizenry and elected officials. Paul's preaching against idolatry caused a great uproar in Ephesus, with the people crying: "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." His ministry was cutting into the profits of the silversmiths who created shrines to the goddess.

The secularists would like nothing more than to shuffle Christians into a corner, far outside the public square, so that they can carry on unopposed with their ruinous philosophy and agenda. They are saying, in effect, "Believe what you want to believe, but don't you dare allow your

beliefs to have any influence on our society!"

It must never be forgotten that there was "freedom to believe" in the darkest days of Soviet Russia, Red China and Castro's Cuba. These governments did not have access, nor could they control, what was in a man's mind — as long as he did not state it publicly or conduct himself according to those principles. This should not be lost on us as we see our society casting a nod in that direction.

### **The Free EXERCISE of Religion**

In the 1701 Charter for what is now the State of Delaware, William Penn declared that "no people can be truly happy, though under the greatest Enjoyment of Civil Liberties, if abridged of the Freedom of their Conscience...." He further declared that "Almighty God [is] the only Lord of Conscience." The very first protection granted in this charter was, in part, that no man: "shall be in any Case molested or prejudiced, in his or their Person or Estate, because of his or their conscientious Persuasion or Practice, nor be compelled to frequent or maintain any religious Worship, Place or Ministry, contrary to his or their Mind, or to do or suffer any other Act or Thing, contrary to their religious persuasion."

Penn stated that even with all other liberties granted, a man could not be truly free if his liberty of conscience was violated. It was also clearly understood that freedom of conscience and religion were something that involved every aspect of a man's life. Both his "persuasion" and his "PRACTICE" were equally involved, and he was never to be "compelled" "TO DO OR SUFFER ANY OTHER ACT OR THING, CONTRARY TO [HIS] RELIGIOUS PERSUASION."

Shortly after Delaware became the first state in our nation, the Pre-

amble to its Constitution (1792) declared: “Through divine goodness all men have, by nature, the rights of worshipping AND SERVING their Creator according to the dictates of their consciences, of enjoying and defending life and liberty, of acquiring and protecting reputation and property, and, in general, of attaining objects suitable to their condition, without injury by one to another; and as these rights are essential to their welfare, for the due exercise thereof, power is inherent in them....” (emphasis ours).

These principles of liberty, expressed here and in many other important early documents, found their way into the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. In fact, many in the colonies opposed joining the United States until they were assured of religious and other liberties.

The State of North Carolina met in August 1788 in Hillsborough and voted NOT to ratify the U.S. Constitution at that time because of fears that their religious and other liberties were not adequately protected.

Governor Samuel Johnston, who favored immediate ratification, nonetheless stated that “True religion is derived from a much higher source than human laws. When any attempt is made by any government to restrain men’s consciences, no good consequence can possibly follow.”

The convention voted that a Declaration of Rights should be presented to the national government before the State of North Carolina would consider joining. One of the points was: “That religion, or the duty which we owe to our Creator, AND THE MANNER OF DISCHARGING IT, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence, and therefore all men have an equal, natural and unalienable right to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience” (emphasis ours).

Particularly Protestants, from the time of the Reformation, be-

lieved that everything they did in life was part of their Christian faith. This made for some of the most skilled and creative workmen. One need only look to the effects of the Edict of Fontainebleau in France in October 22, 1685. This Edict began a great persecution of the Protestants (Huguenots), which led to hundreds of thousands fleeing the country. France was devastated by the great loss of some of its most skilled workmen and creative minds. Other lands greatly profited from the arrival of the Huguenots.

**“It must never be forgotten that there was “freedom to believe” in the darkest days of Soviet Russia, Red China and Castro’s Cuba. These governments did not have access, nor could they control, what was in a man’s mind — as long as he did not state it publicly or conduct himself according to those principles.”**

These and other Protestants across Europe believed that “Man’s chief end is to glorify God” (Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 1) and “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). This placed their work as MUCH MORE than just a way to earn money. It was their “calling” from God, and they strived to excel, quite apart from the motive of selfish gain — in order that they might glorify God. This resulted in what has often been referred to as the “Protestant Work Ethic.”

These Christians believed that their strength, abilities and talents were given them by God, and thus said with David: “For all things come of thee [God], and of thine own have we given thee” (1 Chronicles 29:14). Therefore, to use one’s talents spe-

cifically for an unscriptural event or purpose would have been unthinkable to them.

Our Founders understood these things, but today’s secularists are disdainful and dismissive of men’s deeply held religious convictions. Thus, they either cannot comprehend or don’t care to comprehend (probably a combination of both) how these are interconnected with the Christian’s very being and his responsibility before God. To the secularist, a man is allowed to believe whatever he wishes, but that man better not live his life according to those beliefs or he might find himself and his livelihood under the heavy boot of government tyranny and repression.

The Bible believer does not use his talents to actively further such events as a lewd bachelor party, a drunken celebration, a “divorce ceremony” — or a “gay wedding.” It is one thing to sell items in a store or restaurant to any who lawfully enter the premises. However, it is quite another to be forced to use one’s creative gifts specifically to promote and further an event which violates one’s conscience.

### **When the Economy Becomes God**

In the midst of the bizarre hub-bub over Indiana’s Religious Freedom Restoration Act, much of the media made bold assertions as to how this and similar laws would be bad for business in their states. Leaders of some top corporations (such as Wal-Mart, Apple, Angie’s List, IBM, etc.) made threats and strong condemnations of any state which would dare uphold religious rights against some perceived threat against a newly minted “civil right” for “gay marriage.” Many leaders in government and the private sector were all too ready to jettison religious rights if it meant it would affect the Almighty Dollar.

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## THE DIMMING OF "FREEDOM'S HOLY LIGHT"

Continued from page 15

The present generation is quickly losing any concept of man being a spiritual being responsible to his Creator. The man of the Darwinist model is no different from any other living creature selfishly seeking his personal gain in a hostile world. Economic gain and pleasure are substituted for the "glory of God" as the "chief end of man," and then comes death. Man, according to this evolutionary philosophy becomes responsible to the State, and is placed under the tyranny of an ever-encroaching government.

Whenever those who govern begin to believe they are the final authority, the progression is always toward a larger, more powerful and intrusive government. This invariably results in the violation and restriction of man's natural freedoms. In contrast, our Founders designed a limited government — where freedom could flourish.

### How Should Christians Live in This Evil Day?

Whether in good times or bad, Christians must ever strive to live closer to Christ and to obey His Word. The Christian's comportment must not be a reaction to events, but must rather be anchored in how the Bible tells us we should live at all times.

**"Love Your Enemies":** As Christians are unfairly targeted by secularists and the "gay rights" lobby in particular, this gives us a wonderful opportunity to show forth the love of Christ. May we cheerfully obey the words of Christ to "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). "See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever fol-

low that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men" (1 Thesalonians 5:15).

**Stand for Freedom and for Our God-Given Rights:** One of the reasons we have come to this place in America is because of the misguided view of many evangelicals in the twentieth century up through the present day who retreated into their Christian enclaves and failed to be "salt and light" in the society where God had placed them. Many displayed a total aloofness and intimidated a superior spirituality over those who did engage. All through the Bible, the Word of God was brought to bear on governments, culture and every aspect of society. Many of America's Founders were ministers or devout Christians of various denominations, taking their principles from God's Word.

Further, those who follow in the train of the New Evangelical movement have caused much damage. With their interest in being considered respectable, they have seemingly compromised on every issue which has come along. They seem incapable of standing "without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Hebrews 13:13). Thus, the trumpet has put forth an "uncertain sound" (1 Corinthians 14:8) instead of a clear presentation of Biblical truth.

Paul also used his Roman citizenship to stand up against infringements of his rights and for the freedom guaranteed to him and his fellow citizens. In Acts 22:25-30, when Paul was about to be persecuted for his faith, he asked the attending centurion: "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" When the centurion told the chief captain, it brought fear into his heart. Later, Paul's nephew told him of a plot of the Jews to kill him. Paul sent his nephew to tell the chief captain, so that he would be protected. Later, in Acts 25, Paul was heard before Festus and Agrippa, and announced

that he was appealing his cause unto Caesar.

The Christian should not shrink away from the threats of bullies, like we are now experiencing from some who are promoting the "gay rights" agenda. With courage, we must stand up boldly for our God-given rights, but do so with love and without seeking harm to those who afflict us.

Like Peter and the other Apostles, when hailed before the council for the way they lived their Christian lives, we should say: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Like Baronelle Stutzman, quoted earlier, we must not compromise with the world, or an unjust government, that which is of infinite worth for "thirty pieces of silver."

**Proclaim the Gospel as the ONLY Remedy for America's Problems:** Ultimately, the great need America has is for a genuine revival. The Gospel of Christ, and that alone, will bring America back to its roots and away from its present degradation. Only the saving work of God's Spirit in the hearts of individual Americans can turn men from their sins. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

**"Rejoice and Be Exceeding Glad":** We in America have been so blessed with the unparalleled freedom our Founders gave to us. We are beginning to see cases of very real persecution of Christians in our country. For the born again Christian, the Bible says that such occurrences are to be expected! Our response is not for revenge, to cause harm or to become bitter. NO! Christ tells us in the Beatitudes: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:11,12). •