

ARPTalk(9)

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Welcome to the first issue of ARPTalk in 2009, the ninth issue of *ARPTalk*. Featured in *ARPTalk(9)* are three articles. The first article by Rev. Gary Jones deals with the issue of universalism. This article is timely. It is alleged that a minister in Second Presbytery has been teaching universalism from his pulpit. The second article by Rev. Tim Phillips compares the Westminster Confession with the Confession of 1967, a document which is included in the PCUSA Book of Confessions and which reflects the powerful influence of Karl Barth and Neo-orthodoxy on mid-20th century American mainline Presbyterianism. The third article by Dr. Robert Belding, MD, explains the operation of the Christian Hospital Sahiwal in Pakistan. Interestingly, the primary focus of the hospital is "EVANGELISM."

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ARPTalk is posted on a blog site (<http://arptalk.weebly.com>) by a friendly blogger. This makes it possible to archive past issues of *ARPTalk* and to make them readily available to those who would like to read them. It also makes it possible to post resource materials that you may find interesting but are too long for the regular issues of *ARPTalk*.

ARPTalk is an attempt at being an e-magazine. The editor of *ARPTalk* doesn't know how to blog. The editor of *ARPTalk* is thankful for friends with computer skills.

If you are new to *ARPTalk*, *ARPTalk* is NOT an official voice of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. The purposes of *ARPTalk* are two-fold: (1) To inform and educate the ministers and laypeople of ARPdom on significant issues that are before ARPdom; and (2) To give voice and encouragement to those who feel they have been ignored and marginalized.

If you have thoughts, articles, reviews, criticisms, or news that are of interest to the ministers and laypersons of ARPdom, and if you submit them, they will most likely be published in *ARPTalk*.

If you have missed past issues of *ARPTalk* and would like to see them, the above blog site should assist you in your search. If that doesn't work, e-mail me at wilson6114@bellsouth.net and copies will be sent to you.

I hope you find *ARPTalk(9)* interesting and informative. I look forward to hearing from you.

The opinions expressed in the articles of *ARPTalk* are the opinions of those who write them.

Charles W. Wilson

Charles ("Chuck") W. Wilson

(continue to the first article)

Why Universalism Is Incompatible with Biblical Christianity

By Gary L. Jones

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Numerous surveys reveal that a large percentage of Americans cling stubbornly to the belief that all “good” persons will be saved. Such survey results are unsurprising. Scripture declares: “See, this alone I found, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many schemes” (Eccles. 7:29). The human tendency is to embrace schemes or proposals which seem to validate whatever behavior they wish to indulge in, no matter how selfish and evil such behavior might be.

Centuries before the virgin birth of Christ, the Lord lamented the mindset of a sin-sick society: “Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush” (Jer. 8:12a). Likewise, our present-day American culture believes that anything goes. It is expected that such a culture would also be pleased to affirm that anything goes theologically.

What is disturbing, though, is the eagerness with which a substantial percentage of the American Church has welcomed this thinking. Various polls show a significant portion of professing Christians who believe that many (or most) persons will go to heaven, even if they spend a lifetime rejecting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Can you imagine members of the *Mothers Against Drunk Driving* organization applauding others for driving while intoxicated? Yet, there are members of Christian churches who publicly align themselves against the Jesus of Biblical Christianity.

Denying the exclusivity of Christ Jesus for salvation goes beyond the parameters of Biblical Christianity. Universalistic belief is incompatible with Biblical Christianity. *Webster’s Dictionary* defines

'incompatible' as "incapable of or unsuitable for association or use together." Biblical Christianity affirms the Perfection and Sinlessness and Sufficiency of Jesus Christ as He is presented in the Bible. If a Jesus is appealed to who is believed to be merely one of many avenues to God, such a Jesus is most emphatically NOT the Jesus of the Bible. As will be shown in the pages to come, the Jesus of the Bible is revealed as Savior and Lord. Apart from Him, human beings have no salvation and no hope of salvation.

Biblical Christianity unswervingly contends that salvation, Divine forgiveness and everlasting blessedness are found exclusively in Jesus Christ. The theological opposite of this exclusivity is Universalism, the belief that every individual (or most individuals) will be saved, whether or not they have faith in Jesus Christ. A concise, but helpful summary of current Universalistic belief has been put forth by the *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*:

One of the most influential twentieth-century theologians to embrace Universalism was Karl Barth (1886–1968). Philosopher John Hick is a contemporary proponent of the view. A small number of otherwise evangelical theologians, such as Clark Pinnock and John Stott, have embraced forms of Universalism and/or annihilationism. Most liberal theologians and cults hold to some form of Universalism or its cousin, annihilationism, the view that persons who cannot qualify for heaven simply go out of existence. The common principle throughout Universalist and annihilationist theologies is that there is no eternal punishment.¹

Universalism: Variations on the Theme

One can readily comprehend why Universalism is treasured by many. The common principle referred to above is: No human being will be subjected to an eternal punishment. In order to achieve the benefits of paradise or heaven, the only thing a person has to do is die.

¹Geisler, Norman L.: *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids, Mich. Baker Books, 1999 (Baker Reference Library), p.746 [Electronic file; Libronix software]. Some may object to Geisler's depiction of Barth here. To be sure, Barth does not explicitly affirm that all without exception are saved. On the other hand, the structure of Barth's thought on Christ and salvation tends toward Universalism in his contention that God's saving love in Christ embraces all—non-Christians and Christians alike—and that what non-Christians lack is not salvation itself but the knowledge that they are saved. See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1: 92-93.

It has been said: "Dying is rather like approaching a customs post, nervously hoping that officials will not spot the contraband we are carrying, only to find that when we get there the post is deserted and we can march straight through."² There is no need for concern or anxiety about the afterlife because everybody is going to make it. Whatever transgressions have been committed will be instantly erased and forgiven by God(s). Those who have perpetrated the vilest crimes without remorse are going to be everlastingly blessed because God(s) love(s) every human being who has ever lived.

Of course, not every pagan buys into this way of thinking. More than a few persons are troubled by the prospect of Adolph Hitler, Josef Stalin, Idi Amin and Saddam Hussein being included among the heavenly multitude. So a modified version of Universalism has been crafted: All *good* people will go to heaven after they die, but bad people will be blotted out of existence when they die. This modified Universalism seems 'more fair' than the belief that all people are rewarded with eternal life after death.

The modified version of Universalism is in keeping with full-scale Universalism in that the exclusivity of Jesus Christ continues to be denied: One can still dodge a relationship with Jesus and yet receive everlasting life. Bill O'Reilly, host of "The O'Reilly Factor", champions this perspective:

I respect all religions that espouse goodwill toward men. I am not a missionary and will not tap on your window urging you to embrace Jesus. I believe that all human beings are equal in God's sight and all sincere beliefs that do not cause injury are acceptable under heaven. Right away this philosophy puts me at odds with many who believe that if you don't believe what they do, you are bound for Hades.... If a human being lives a good life, holds sincere beliefs, but just happens to be a Hindu, an all-just and all-merciful God is going to set the guy on fire for eternity? I don't think so.³

You can see the appeal of what I call "Selective" Universalism, an outlook which elevates "sincere, good" people above a Holy God. In other words, sociology trumps theology. The mindset is: "People I like should go to heaven because I think they're nice. I enjoy a

² Quoted unapprovingly by John Blanchard, in his pamphlet *Where Do We Go From Here?* Darlington, England, 2008, p.13

³ O'Reilly, Bill. "Who is Looking Out for You?" C.2003. Broadway Books, NY. p. 112

personal chemistry/affinity/rapport with them. Since I like them, God must also like them enough to save them, no matter what they believe.”

Another outworking of selective Universalism is Inclusivistic Christianity, which speculates: Jesus Christ is indeed the only Savior, but faith in Christ Jesus is unnecessary for one’s salvation. If people try hard to frame their lives according to the precepts of any religion, or if they believe in a Divine Being, Jesus can still be their Savior. Sincere people can belong to Jesus without knowing Him as Savior and Lord.

Accompanying these variations of the universalistic theme is the stubborn, unyielding conviction that God has to adapt to human ways of thinking, The God of the Bible needs to make adjustments and concessions, The Holy, Omnipotent Divine Being MUST go against His infallible Word merely because sinful human beings want Him to.

A Motivation Killer

For the sake of argument, let’s assume that at least the selective brand of universalism is true. What are the practical implications for the Church of Jesus Christ?

For one thing, we should bring back to America all missionaries on foreign soil, especially those in hazardous environments. Why should they bother trying to spread the Gospel if nice people can be saved without ever hearing it? Why should they undergo personal danger if people are saved anyway by virtue of ignorance? What’s the point? We can save a great deal of money by bringing all missionaries back home and subsequently instructing them to do something more meaningful with their lives.

While we’re at it, let’s discourage all attempts at Christian evangelism. For that matter, let’s forego all opportunities for the corporate worship of God. After all, it doesn’t really matter. Why worship the God of the Bible anyway? Why bother thanking God for His Son, since nice people can go to heaven without any appreciation of Christ whatsoever? We could spend our time better by doing something more productive. In short, Universalism is a motivation killer.

In startling contrast to the premises of Universalism, Scripture discloses life in Christ as being of eternal significance. Why? Because Jesus Christ Himself is of eternal significance. The written Word of God testifies powerfully to the living Word, Christ Jesus. It is to this written Word that we now turn.

The Biblical Jesus

Biblical Christianity informs us of a Biblical Jesus WHO is King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16). This Jesus has given His people words of challenge and assurance known as the Great Commission:

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:18-20).

Observe that Jesus instructed His followers: "Go and make disciples of all nations." These words clearly inform us that the message of Christ is to be proclaimed throughout the world. Note the Messiah's words of assurance: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." "All authority" has been given to Christ, not to Mohammad, Gautama Buddha, L. Ron Hubbard, or anybody else.

In Matt. 11:27, Jesus declared: "No one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." Those who claim to know the Father, but who spurn the unique Lordship of Jesus Christ, do not truly and savingly know the Father. Additionally, John 1:11-13 indicates that only those people who are born of God and who receive Christ are given the right to become children of God. This truth strikes a decisive blow to Inclusivistic Christianity.

In the Great Commission, the Biblical Jesus instructed His followers to observe all He commanded. This "observing" all Jesus has commanded translates to taking the words of Jesus seriously. It means you embrace the statements of Jesus in the Bible, even if some statements might seem unpalatable.

Jesus spoke and taught things that some present-day churchgoers find offensive. For example, He taught that there is an everlasting Hell and that human beings actually go there. One of Jesus' most vivid stories was of the rich man and a beggar named Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). In that story, Hell/Hades is referred to as "a place of torment." The one sent to Hell acknowledged: "I am in anguish in this flame." If you take the words of Christ seriously, then there is no way you can logically conclude that bad people merely cease to exist when they die.

The Biblical Jesus is no Universalist. At the conclusion of His Mount Olivet Discourse, Jesus spoke of persons who would most certainly go to a realm of eternal fire: "And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matt. 25:46). Jesus also made it abundantly clear: He Himself will separate the nations and enact judgment (Matt. 25:31ff.; see also Matt. 7:13-14; 2 Thess. 1:10). In other words, the Biblical Jesus will trump sociology. Universalists recoil at the prospect of Hell; nevertheless, Jesus taught this reality.

But reality often does not conform to our wishes. If you go to the doctor's office and wait for over an hour to see the doctor, such is the reality. You can wring your hands; you can mutter obscenities; you can pace the floor in disgust; you can angrily and frequently complain to the receptionist that this waiting time is a personal inconvenience to you. All of that will not overturn the reality that you have waited over an hour to see the doctor.

A common human reaction to the Biblical Jesus is to manufacture a more pleasant and palatable Jesus. Some who allege devotion to Jesus want little to do with the Jesus of the Bible. Some welcome a Jesus of their own making, a Jesus who surely didn't mean it when He said: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Adherents of Inclusivistic Christianity yearn for a Jesus who saves many Muslims and pagans, in spite of their ongoing denial of Jesus as Lord. But, how exactly does such theological compromise exhibit a "contending for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3)?

It is insufficient to believe in a Jesus "of some kind." A phony, unbiblical Jesus is incompatible with the core beliefs of historic, Biblical Christianity. The true Jesus has authority and is worthy to be believed in and obeyed. Since Jesus is the Truth, He is always and

forever faithful and true (Rev. 1:5; 19:11). His words are true. It follows, then, that the Biblical Gospel of Jesus is true.

The Biblical Gospel

It is important that we grasp up front that there is but one Biblical Gospel rather than a motley collection of gospels. Granted, we read of the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Even so, these gospel writers emphasized the one true Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The exclusivity of Jesus Christ (instead of the supposed gospel of Universalism) was foundational for the gospel writers and for the writers of the epistles as well (see Gal. 1:6-9).

Is this Gospel for "good, sincere" people? No! Actually, the Gospel is for sinners. Rom. 4:4 speaks of the One who "justifies the ungodly." God justifies those persons who are not always commendable in word and behavior. Romans 8 begins with these words: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." There is NOW no condemnation for those who were previously under condemnation.

1 Peter 3:18 says: "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit." Don't miss the import of the phrase "the righteous [suffered] for the unrighteous." The Biblical Jesus suffered and was sacrificed on the Cross in place of sinners. In Matt. 20:28, Jesus declared: "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Jesus was sacrificed for "many," but not all sinners.

Jesus also stated: "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32; see also Matt. 4:17; 2 Cor. 7:10). We should remember that Jesus said this to an audience well acquainted with Eccles. 7:25: "Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins." The lesson is clear: Jesus called sinners to repentance and He died for sinners who, by the grace of God, repent and trust Him for their salvation.

Imagine a young man approaching a football coach. Imagine the young man informing the coach: "I like the game of football. But, there are a few things we need to get straight. I want my best friends on the team with me, even if they don't like football. I want to be a running back and I want to get the ball on every play. I also

want the players on the opposing team to get out of my way so that I score a touchdown on every play. And, by the way, I don't want to come to scrimmages, either." What reasonable coach would be thrilled to have this young man on the team?

Yet, there is the warped public expectation: God is obligated to "go along" with those persons who seem good to us, even if they reject Christ and steadfastly despise His Gospel. The mentality is: "It's all right to restructure Biblical Christianity and to add our own conditions so as to include good people in heaven apart from Christ." The problem is: There are no people good enough for God.

Isaiah 64:6 bluntly declares: "We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away." Rom. 3:10-18 asserts: No human being is good enough to be saved. Thus, the Biblical Gospel is not about "good people" pulling themselves up by their own bootstraps into the glories of heaven. The Gospel is about the perfection and greatness and compassion of the Biblical Jesus Who died for His people.

Sin and the Savior

Universalism in its varied forms is in agreement on one key issue: Sin is really not that bad. Therefore, even if human beings are sinners, most human beings are pretty good sinners because sin itself is no big deal. We humans deserve compassion from God because we're such nice sinners.

A more Biblical attitude is evident in Jude's doxology: "Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen" (Jude 24-25). The Divine Being is able to present His own people blameless before the presence of His glory. To dismiss Jesus Christ as being no more special than Mohammad or Buddha is to sneer at the Heavenly Father's gift of His Son, the Savior.

Jesus, with reference to Himself, told an audience: "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent" (John 6:29). No other religious leader has achieved what the heaven-sent Savior has achieved. Acts 4:12 is very clear about this: "There is salvation in

no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." He alone is Savior.

The all-too-human tendency is to ascribe reverence to almost anyone else besides Jesus Christ. We are told by news media pundits about persons who are so remarkable that they are "super." It is presently inadequate to describe a model as being "successful"; the highly successful model is now termed a "supermodel." During recent political conventions, certain influential leaders were revered as "superdelegates." Yet, in the eyes of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ is less than super, i.e., there is no way Jesus could possibly be a 'super-Savior.' Such is the mindset of Universalistic thinking, and it is a most abominable sin, fully incompatible with Biblical Christianity.

The popular opinion, "Jesus is just one way to God," shortchanges the Biblical Jesus. This opinion devalues the clear teaching of God's Word. It belittles the magnitude of the Savior's sacrifice. It trivializes His wonderful Resurrection and Ascension into heaven. It scorns His continual intercession for His people (Heb. 7:25). It deeply insults His honor and His Person. It seeks to rob Him of His rightful glory.

A more Biblical viewpoint was promoted by J. Gresham Machen, who bore powerful testimony to the Savior. In 1923, Machen published a work contrasting the historic, Biblical Jesus with the so-called "modern" Jesus devoid of all supernatural qualities and Divine power. We conclude with his words:

The Jesus who is supposed to be left after the elimination of the supernatural element is at best a very shadowy figure; for the elimination of the supernatural logically involves the elimination of much that remains, and the historian constantly approaches the absurd view which effaces Jesus altogether from the pages of history. But even after such dangers have been avoided, even after the historian, by setting arbitrary limits to his process of elimination, has succeeded in reconstructing a purely human Jesus, the Jesus thus constructed is found to be entirely unreal. He has a moral contradiction at the very center of His being—a contradiction due to His Messianic consciousness. He was pure and humble and strong and sane, yet He supposed, without basis in fact, that He was to be the final Judge of all the earth! The liberal Jesus, despite all the efforts of modern psychological

reconstruction to galvanize Him into life, remains a manufactured figure of the stage.

Very different is the Jesus of the New Testament and of the great Scriptural creeds. That Jesus is indeed mysterious. Who can fathom the mystery of His Person? But the mystery is a mystery in which a man can rest. The Jesus of the New Testament has at least one advantage over the Jesus of modern reconstruction--He is real. He is not a manufactured figure suitable as a point of support for ethical maxims, but a genuine Person whom a man can love. Men have loved Him through all the Christian centuries. And the strange thing is that despite all the efforts to remove Him from the pages of history, there are those who love Him still.⁴

(continue to the next article)

⁴ Machen, J.Gresham *Christianity and Liberalism*. P.63-64. [Electronic file]

A Comparison of the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Confession of 1967

By Tim Phillips

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The adoption of the Confession of 1967 by the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (UPCUSA) was seemingly a watershed moment in American Presbyterianism. The secular media lauded the confession, which was nine years in the making, as “something of a milestone,”⁵ and one religious journal declared that the confession “marked the first major change in an official Reformed statement of faith since adoption of the Westminster Confession in 1647.”⁶ Many consider the Confession of 1967 deserving of such accolades. After all, it sought to supplant a document that had shaped American Presbyterianism for 320 years. However, was all of this necessary? Could the Confession of 1967 truly replace the Westminster Confession of Faith, which has been called “the most perfect statement of Systematic Theology ever framed by the Christian Church?”⁷ The Confession of 1967 was the result of the theology of the twentieth century, much as the Westminster Confession had grown from the Reformed theology of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. While they are both products of the theology of their respective times, the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Confession of 1967 have substantial differences. One of the major areas of difference is found in the way the two documents view the inspiration of Scripture.

Before beginning a comparison of the two confessions, it should be noted that the passage of the Confession of 1967 (C67) was not the first attempt by twentieth-century American

⁵ “Radical Confession,” *Newsweek*, 5 June 1967, 63.

⁶ Raymond E. Balcomb, “The Confession of 1967,” *The Christian Century* 84, no. 24 (June 14, 1967): 788.

⁷ William Maxwell Hetherington, *History of the Westminster Assembly of Divines* (3rd ed., 1856; reprint, Edmonton: Still Waters Revival Books, 1993), 345.

Presbyterians to alter the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF). The Northern branch of the Presbyterian Church added two chapters to the WCF in 1903, and the Southern church did likewise in 1942.⁸ The two chapters were entitled "Of the Holy Spirit" and "Of the Gospel of the Love of God and Missions," since it was felt the WCF lacked "a sufficiently full doctrine of the Holy Spirit" and hampered men by "rigid predestination limits."⁹ This attitude was highlighted by the fact that the Northern church also added in 1903 two declaratory statements, the first of which dealt directly with misgivings on the subject of predestination: "Contrary to the implication that Christ had died only for some, and that others were foreordained to damnation, the Declaratory Statement made clear that Christ's sacrifice for sin was sufficient for all and offered to all."¹⁰ The second declaration, which objected to the WCF's statement that elect infants dying in infancy are saved, added that all infants dying in infancy are saved.¹¹ In addition to these changes, in the 1950's both the Northern and Southern Presbyterian Churches amended the WCF's prohibition on divorce and remarriage (except in cases of adultery or desertion), preferring to allow greater flexibility in this area.¹² As with the other additions and modifications, the reasons for change were not because the Westminster Divines were ignorant of any particular doctrine, but rather because "great resources in Scripture and in experience [were not] brought to play."¹³ Exactly what these great resources were is uncertain, because no one can accurately accuse the Divines of not being dependant on Scripture when writing the WCF. However, the mention of experience sharing a sort of equal footing with Scripture is troubling, and it hints at the problems that resulted in the decision to write a new confession. This attempt to downplay the sufficiency of Scripture would be a major factor in leading the Northern church to write the C67.

Another consideration in understanding the factors that led to the composition of the C67 is the rise of the theological development of the 20th century known as Neo-orthodoxy. Based on the teachings of Swiss theologian Karl Barth, this system "stems

⁸ Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), *Book of Confessions: Study Edition* (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 1996), 170. It should be noted that the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church has also added these two chapters to its Confession of Faith.

⁹ Edward A. Dowey, Jr., *A Commentary on the Confession of 1967 and an Introduction to "The Book of Confessions"* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), 234.

¹⁰ Office of the General Assembly, 170.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Dowey, 230.

more than anything else from the profound sense of the otherness of God,” who “is immeasurably beyond human beings and has nothing in common with them.”¹⁴ One of the consequences of this view of God’s transcendence is found in Barth’s view of revelation. For Barth, “revelation comes exclusively through Christ, the Word of God. It is mediated through the Bible and the teaching of the church.”¹⁵ Thus, it is surmised that “human language cannot be used to speak truly about God; God is simply too great for human language.”¹⁶ Such concepts rarely exist in isolation. Barth’s conclusions were further developed by theologians like Rudolf Bultmann, such that they “carried neoorthodoxy’s [sic] epistemological implications to their logical conclusions by denying, through its program of ‘demythologizing’ the Jesus of the New Testament, the very possibility of discovering any historical facts about him.”¹⁷ As a result Neo-orthodoxy tends to hold to an understanding of biblical revelation that is very different from the traditional Reformed view of Scripture that preceded it:

The neoorthodox [sic] theologians ... subscribe to the ... Bible as the “Word of God.” This does not mean that they take the Bible literally; they agree with the liberals in accepting the principles of literary and historical criticism of the Bible. Myths like the creation stories are considered symbolic ways of stating truths that cannot be presented in their fullness with rational consistency. These theologians speak of the “Words behind the Words” and insist that God is found in special events and in His relationship with men. The Bible merely reports these happenings, and the accounts are subject to the errors of human reporting and transmission.¹⁸

¹⁴ Jonathan Hill, *The History of Christian Thought* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 268.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 269; cf. Diogenes Allen, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 246-7. Hill adds that according to Barth, the Bible and the teaching of the church may also be called the Word of God, but only “in a secondary sense.”

¹⁶ Ronald H. Nash, *The Word of God and the Mind of Man* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1982), 118.

¹⁷ Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 16. This denial of the historical nature of Scripture would eventually extend, of course, beyond the pages of the NT.

¹⁸ Harold H. Titus, *Living Issues in Philosophy*, 4th ed. (New York: American Book Company, 1964), 423. In demonstrating this tendency among Neo-orthodox theologians, it should be noted that at least one contemporary of Barth claims the Swiss theologian never “denied the validity of the established results of historical-critical research. ... He dared to take thoroughly in earnest the voices of the biblical witnesses, and indeed to the very last letter.” See James D. Smart, trans., *Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth-Thurneysen Correspondence 1914-1925* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1964), 21. Hill points out that Barth actually seemed largely uninterested with questions about history. See Hill, 275, 282.

Hence, the view among many Neo-orthodox theologians is that “revelation does not disclose supernatural knowledge.”¹⁹ A denial of inerrancy with regard to the Scriptures is especially troubling when considering Neo-orthodoxy. It is difficult to see, even if one affirms a “high view” of inspiration through a Barthian rubric, how a subsequently low view of the Bible cannot inevitably follow.

There can be little doubt that a high view of the Scriptures was a primary concern of the Westminster Divines. In fact, the WCF begins with a chapter entitled “Of the Holy Scripture.”²⁰ For the Divines, Scripture was the foundation, the starting point from which all other doctrines found in the WCF were to be derived. This was due in part to the fact that the members of the Westminster Assembly were bound by Parliament to base every statement in the WCF on the Bible, a rule which they would have necessarily been obliged to observe because of their Puritan background.²¹ Because of their beliefs, the Divines held the Bible itself to be the inspired Word of God, and it was on this presupposition that the WCF was built. According to Leith, “there is no question that the authors of the Confession believed that the Bible was inspired and that God revealed himself in propositions. In fact, no one with whom the Assembly dealt seriously denied the inspiration of the Bible.”²² When the WCF declares the Scriptures are “given by inspiration of God, to be the rule and faith of life” and have been “kept pure in all ages [by God’s care and providence],”²³ there can be little doubt as to the emphasis placed upon the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible. Warfield states it is an “obvious fact that the Westminster Confession teaches the verbal inspiration and infallibility or inerrancy of the original Scriptures.”²⁴ Hence, “the Confession affirms the providential preservation of the inspired Scriptures in purity in the originals, and the adequate purity of the Word of God in

¹⁹ Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 5. Although sometimes sympathetic to the theological contributions of Barth, Grenz recognizes the inherent danger of the subjective nature of Neo-orthodoxy, asking the following question: “Might we not be tempted to make the inspiration of the Bible dependent upon our hearing the voice of the Spirit in its pages, losing thereby the objective reality of inspiration in a manner reminiscent of the older neoorthodoxy [sic]?” See Grenz, 387-8.

²⁰ “The Westminster Confession of Faith” in *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present*, 3d ed., John H. Leith, ed. (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1982), 193.

²¹ John H. Leith, *Assembly at Westminster: Reformed Theology in the Making* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1973), 75.

²² *Ibid.*, 76-77.

²³ WCF, 195-6.

²⁴ Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work*, vol. 6, *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield* (reprint; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 263.

translations.”²⁵ In addition, “inspiration is asserted to be pervasive, to belong to all the books enumerated without exception, and to all their parts and elements without discrimination....”²⁶ Because the Scriptures were seen as the true and pure Word of God, they were perceived to be absolutely authoritative, and this proved to be foundational for the entire WCF.

The view of the supremacy of Scripture in the WCF is not shared by the C67. While the WCF was not accepted by Parliament until Scriptural proof texts were provided for each article, C67 does not, as a rule, cite Scripture. According to Edward A. Dowey, Jr., C67 does not quote Biblical passages “on principal.”²⁷ Not only does C67 not quote Biblical passages, it never explicitly mentions the inspiration of the Scriptures – a move that is quite deliberate.²⁸ Instead, C67 refers to the Scriptures as “the words of men.”²⁹ This conviction was implicit on the part of Dowey, who, as chairman of the committee responsible for composing C67, had a greater influence than any other committee member on the document.³⁰ For example, when commenting on the subject of sin in the confession, Dowey states:

There is no mention of Adam, Eve, and the serpent in the Confession of 1967. While the story of the Fall will not cease to reveal the nature of sin, *it can no longer be taken as a literal account of sin’s origin*. It is set in views of life, history, and the cosmos that in the providence of God have become antiquated by the advancement of human learning.³¹

James D. Smart, who also served on the committee that wrote C67, believes that the teachings of the WCF on inerrancy and inspiration have “made it possible in the past for men to torture the faith of their fellow Christians with the demand that they accept as fact whatever is reported anywhere in Scripture, that the world was created in six days, that Elisha made the axe-head float, that Jonah was swallowed by the whale.”³² Dowey claims that a correct view of Scripture should not be based on inspiration as in the WCF, “but on revelation, not on how the books were written, but how they

²⁵ Ibid., 237.

²⁶ Ibid., 202-3.

²⁷ Dowey, 41.

²⁸ James D. Smart, “Scripture and the Confession of 1967,” *Theology Today* 23 (April 1966): 40.

²⁹ “The Confession of 1967” in *Book of Confessions: Study Edition*, 325.

³⁰ Arnold B. Come, “The Confession of 1967: Its Place in Twentieth-Century Theology,” *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 9:2 (1988): 124.

³¹ Downey, 61. Emphasis added.

³² Smart, “Scripture and the Confession of 1967,” 38.

continue to communicate the message of salvation.”³³ These comments, of course, speak volumes as to the views and presuppositions of the committee. As George M. Landes comments, “It is striking that [C67] has no discrete statement in which the authority of the Bible is specifically and directly mentioned.”³⁴ Actually, it is not striking when one considers the words of Jack B. Rogers, who declares that the doctrines of inerrancy and inspiration were actually faults of the Westminster Assembly.³⁵ Rogers attempts to argue that the Divines had departed from the teachings of the sixteenth century Reformers, and he even goes as far as virtually equating Neo-orthodoxy with John Calvin’s view of Scripture.³⁶ The effects of Neo-orthodoxy on C67 are clear. Instead of declaring Scripture to be the Word of God, only Christ is referred to in this way. Landes states:

[This] indicates that the Scriptures are not God’s word in the same sense Jesus Christ is ...because these human words are the Spirit’s instrument for interpreting the Christ event to humanity.... [Thus] we are able to interpret the same scriptural words in fresh and differing ways, depending upon our new historical situation and concerns.³⁷

This view of Scripture may be the most glaring difference between the two confessions, and it represents a shocking departure from the beliefs of the Westminster Assembly.

Is C67 correct in reserving the phrase “Word of God” for Christ alone? Of course, Jesus Christ is the Word of God Incarnate. On that point there can be no doubt, and the Divines would have been quick to agree. The central issue (at least on this question) is not with Christ, but with the Scriptures. This is the one issue in which C67 admits it is making a change.³⁸ Presumably, this is because of a

³³ Ibid., 101.

³⁴ George M. Landes, “The Confession of 1967 and the Issues of Biblical Authority and Interpretation,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 61:1 (Spring 1983): 74.

³⁵ Jack B. Rogers, “Biblical Authority and Confessional Change,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 59:2 (Summer 1981): 142; see also Jack B. Rogers, *Scripture in the Westminster Confession: A Problem of Historical Interpretation for American Presbyterianism* (N.V. Kampen: J.H. Kock, 1966), 21.

³⁶ Rogers, “Biblical Authority,” 135-8. Rogers is apparently so enamored with the work of Charles Augustus Briggs that he will go through all manner of contortion to bring sixteenth century Reformed theology in line with his own. See *Scripture in the Westminster Confession*, 28-38. Briggs attempted, in his pursuit of higher Biblical criticism, to prove that the Reformers and Puritans did not believe in inerrant Scripture. See Gary L. Johnson, “Briggs vs. Warfield: Rogers/McKim Revisited,” (M.Th. thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary; Portland, OR: Theological Resource Exchange Network, 1987), 61-62. Johnson refers to Briggs’ effort to place himself with the Reformers and Divines as “raping history.”

³⁷ Landes, 75.

³⁸ John H. Gerstner, “A Church Historian Warns: Presbyterians Are Demoting the Bible,” *Christianity Today* 10 (December 3, 1965): 11.

disagreement with the WCF on the issue, but, as Gerstner points out, this view was not unique to the Westminster Assembly; nearly every creed or confession in Christendom either states or implies the doctrine of inspiration.³⁹ Instead, it is C67 that is turning new ground, since “never before has a church spoken of the Bible without bearing witness to its Inspiration.”⁴⁰ The Bible is not, as Rogers claims, “a fallible, but adequate witness to the one revelation of God, Jesus Christ.”⁴¹ Certainly Jesus is the Word of God, but this does not discount the validity of Scripture. The Scriptures are true and reliable, and as such testify to the truth of Jesus Christ as the Word of God. Gerstner rightly asserts it is preposterous to think the Divines did not believe this: “Do [the supporters of C67] suppose for one moment that our fathers in the faith thought that the Bible as the Word of God had any other pre-eminent and primary meaning than Jesus Christ?”⁴² Perhaps all the discussion about the phrase “Word of God” in C67 misses the point entirely. Edmund P. Clowney rightly states “the issue is not whether a seventeenth century view of the Scriptures can be maintained in the church today. The issue is whether the Lord’s view of the Scriptures can be maintained.”⁴³ It would be interesting to see how the supporters of C67 would deal specifically with Christ’s view of the Scriptures. That, however, may be too much to ask, because it is entirely possible that the Christ mentioned in C67 is different from the true Christ revealed in Scripture. Cornelius Van Til makes this point when he writes, concerning the theology behind C67, “The God and Christ of this contemporary theology have very little in common with the God and the Christ of historic Christianity. There is good reason to believe that the *new* theology has virtually manufactured a *new* Christ, a person who is essentially different from the Savior of the Scriptures.”⁴⁴ It is this “new” theology, rooted in Neo-orthodoxy, which is at the heart of C67. The Christ spoken of is not Jesus of Nazareth, God Incarnate, but the Jesus of the “Christ event,” subjectively revealed when one reads the Scriptures.

In comparing the two documents, it would seem they are irreconcilable when it comes to the doctrine of Scripture. When one document attributes the words of the Bible to God and the other

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Rogers, “Biblical Authority,” 135-6.

⁴² Gerstner, 12.

⁴³ Edmund A. Clowney, *Another Foundation: The Presbyterian Confessional Crisis* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1965): 15.

⁴⁴ Cornelius Van Til, *The Confession of 1967: Its Theological Background and Ecumenical Significance* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1967), 2. Emphasis is in the original.

merely calls them the words of men, the diametrically opposed presuppositions of those on the composing committees become apparent. The PC(USA) still has C67 in its *Book of Confessions*, alongside the WCF. How can these two documents, so different in their positions on Scripture, peacefully coexist? Such is not without the consequences of a fractured denominational life. The official website of the PCUSA makes this statement:

The great strength of Presbyterianism is its uncanny knack of fostering a fellowship in which people of different viewpoints continue to dialogue. *Not only in the same denomination but also in the same congregation* it is often possible to find folks who believe every word of the Bible to be factual worshipping alongside sisters and brothers in Christ who treat the Bible as true in meaning but not necessarily factual, and still others who would not even agree that the Bible is wholly true in meaning, let alone factual. *None of these viewpoints contradicts our Presbyterian Constitution.* The church is charged with giving full expression to the rich diversity within its membership. Our Constitution requires us to promote inclusiveness, which means including all the different theological positions *that are consistent with the Reformed tradition.*⁴⁵

It is submitted to the reader that the theological position of C67 on Scripture is in accord with neither the Reformed tradition nor historic Presbyterianism, unless one wishes to gut those phrases of their meanings. Such an official position by the PC(USA) does not lead to peace and unity but discord, particularly with regard to that which should be its foundational document: the Bible. The website also states:

What do Presbyterians believe about the Bible? We believe that through it God speaks to us – that it is inspired. For some, that means the Bible is inerrant. For others, it means that even though the Bible is culturally conditioned and not necessarily factual or even always true, it breathes with the life of God.⁴⁶

How can darkness and light have fellowship in this matter? In an age in which those who would call the very word of God into question and take refuge in the word “inspired” (which, very clearly, can be taken to mean something quite different from “inerrant,” even to the point of suggesting it is “culturally conditioned and not necessarily factual or even always true”), a document such as C67

⁴⁵ David Robert Ord, “What Presbyterians Believe: The Bible”; available from <http://www.pcusa.org/today/archive/believe/wpb9504.htm>; Internet, accessed 1 September 2008. Emphasis has been added.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

should serve as a warning to those denominations which wish to be a part of the historic Reformed tradition. The word of God cannot be reduced to the mere words of men, for if it is, there is no trustworthy standard, only the subjective musings of sinful human beings, destined to change along with the new winds blown by every emerging generation that seeks to live apart from the written revelation of God.

(continue to the next article)

Christian Hospital Sahiwal

Robert H. Belding, MD

4-11-08

The stated purpose of Christian Hospital Sahiwal is:

- **Evangelism.**

The strategy for achieving this purpose is three fold:

- **Quality medical care**
- **Employee relationships with each other and with patients that reflect Christ**
- **Clear, non-offensive, communication of the Gospel by the pastoral staff**

The goal of the hospital is to become financially independent. In achieving this, the basic operating budget of the hospital will be funded by the income of the hospital, allowing contributions from World Witness and others to be used on capital improvements and indigent care. We are currently on track to achieve this goal by the end of 2009.

The structure of management and chain of command is outlined as an attachment. We are emphasizing to our staff that we will not allow variance from the chain of command in regard to discipline, complaints, requests, or other activities that occur in the course of business at the hospital. The three Department Heads and the Director are the decision-making body of the hospital, implementing the policies of the NFHS Board. The Hospital Advisory Committee (HAC) serves as an advisory committee to the Department Heads to improve responsiveness to employee needs and desires and to improve communications between management and labor.

I. FINANCIAL STATUS

The Financial/Administration Department is led by the newest member of our administrative team, Mr. Peter Massey. Our goal is to obtain financial independence for our daily operating expenses and to restore integrity in the business dealings of CHS. Since April of 08, many things have been undertaken. To summarize, we begin with the reorganization of our staff into the three defined departments previously mentioned. With this came a move back to the Administration block, to enhance security and improve our operational efficiency by having all of the administration in one place. This included refurbishing the building, moving the IT department into the administration area, and adding some new office equipment.

Building on Dr. Brunson's work, we have tried to improve the credibility of our business practices by:

- Registering NFHS, the Nursing School, and the x-ray facility with the government
- Settling the tax exempt status of the hospital and applying for NPO status
- Defining the liability of our pension plans and promoting a plan to restore them to their legitimate level of funding
- Developing a single NFHS Board Policy Manual, to assist in making Board policies clear and easy to follow
- Finalizing employee contracts
- Developing an equitable salary scheme based on the government categories and scales.
- Setting criteria for the filing system of the business and administration offices. Salvaging records and filing them in proper order
- Creating standard financial reporting forms for our reports: including balance sheet, cash flow summary, and income and expense summary
- Addressing the budget in a less aggressive and more realistic manner
- Streamlining the accounting by eliminating unnecessary bank accounts, as well as initiating a ledger entry method of accounting to prevent excessive check writing
- Updating our Employee Manual

What we have seen is an increase in income based primarily on an increase in patient load. With this, as expected, expenses for supplies have increased. Unexpectedly, our utility costs and hostel food costs have increased at a much higher percentage than can be explained by our increased census.

Our 2009 budget reflects the projected increase in utilities and the increase in salaries. There is also an allowance for the proposed 10% increase in charges. We are asking WW to increase its subsidy for the first half of the year, to balance these increases. In addition, we are requesting help from WW to strengthen all of the pension and retirement funds.

II. SPIRITUAL DEPARTMENT

The spiritual staff consists of three male and four female Bible teachers. The hospital's chief purpose, evangelism, depends on the work of the spiritual staff in evangelizing patients, families, and staff. It also includes helping to equip our staff in living Godly lives in obedience to God's Word, as well as personal evangelism. The spiritual staff is in need of a trained pastor/hospital chaplain who can raise this staff to a separate department level. Currently the administrator, Mr. Massey, is providing training and oversight while the staff is doing the work.

Our strategy is to reflect Christ and Christian principles in all areas of hospital work. This strategy begins with the Administrative staff. We believe

integrity in our work is taught by example. We depend on our spiritual staff to help teach and encourage our medical staff to reflect Christ in their daily work. This strategy lends credibility to our message of Christ and His death and resurrection. We want our patients and their families to understand who Christ is by receiving both medical and personal treatment at our hospital that reflects Christ excellence.

III. NURSING SCHOOL

The strategy of quality medical care begins with quality medical education. To ensure that, we have done several things to improve the students' education. First we have increased the tutor faculty to four. There is now a PNC qualified tutor for each class. Secondly, we have increased the patient load to give better clinical exposure. Thirdly, we have hired qualified nurses to work on the wards and assist in teaching of the students. We have begun a computer course and provided a computer lab for the nursing students.

The policy of charging nurses for their education and then paying them while they are students, plus requiring a bond period, was an accounting nightmare that was a zero net gain. For that reason, we no longer charge students or pay them. We changed the bond period to one year of service at half pay.

Promoting nurses who have not passed our internal exams is a policy that the tutors and current administration feels is counter-productive. For that reason, we have instituted a policy that a student does not advance in grade if she does not pass the internal exams. Also, if she does not pass after repeating the grade, she is dismissed.

We are encouraging continuing education for our faculty and their participation in PNC activities.

The Nursing School costs the Hospital Rs. 4,564,351 per year and saves the hospital Rs. 500,000 in nurses' salaries per year. In addition, it provides a service to the Christian hospitals in Pakistan, it provides a source of nurses for CHS, and it develops young women into independent, Christian nurses. We have begun a scholarship program for nurses through private contributions to World Witness to the "Nurses Scholarship Fund". The one year scholarship for a student is \$500.00 US per year. This provides room, board, tuition, and fees. You can contact Judy Hall at World Witness to participate in this program.

IV. MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

Our strategy in the medical department has been to focus on providing quality medical care to give credibility to our message. We require as a basic minimum that our physicians be PMDC qualified and practice according to the CHS, adopted Code of Ethics modeled after that of the PMDC. In a similar manner we require that each nursing unit have a PNC licensed nurse as the

Unit Supervisor and that the ICU, Pediatric ward, and Labor and Delivery have a licensed staff nurse on each shift.

Currently, having no specialist on our staff, we have chosen to practice as a family practice facility with inpatient care, limiting our services to the training and qualifications of our staff. We have developed a referral list of specialists and we refer patients we are not qualified to handle. We are working hard and exploring every opportunity to hire a qualified General Surgeon, OBGYN, and Internist. We are looking at ways to have local specialists admit their patients to CHS, allowing that doctor to administer care and charge the patient for his services, while the hospital charges for the hospital services. If you know a general surgeon who is willing to give two or more years of service please contact the director of the hospital or Rev. John Hopkins at World Witness.

Our current census is over half of our potential bed level of 165. We have had over one-third of our beds closed for the last three years. We do not plan to open more beds until we consistently reach a census of over 100, or secure a general surgeon. Then we will open a surgery ward.

V. CAPITAL PROJECTS COMPLETED SINCE APRIL 08

- ASHA Grant – received laparoscopic equipment and oxygen generators and concentrators
- Chapel – replaced windows, some doors, painted, refinished pews
- Mechanical- serviced and repaired central AC
- Nursing Hostel – painted
- Security- installed security cameras with recorder, added wall top security, replaced security doors, added grill to administration doors and windows, developed a security plan
- Doctor’s housing- rewired the electric and telephone, added AC to each unit, provided individual generators to each unit, landscaping, repaired damaged houses.
- Spiritual video and waiting room project – painted waiting rooms, added new video equipment to the spiritual and medical education program & opened a privacy area in the male waiting area.
- IT project- replaced pirated software, completed the computer network in the wards, added a computer lab for the Nursing School, replaced old computers, printers, and ups.

VI. ONE YEAR PLAN

The one year plan includes first continuing to focus the hospital on its primary purpose of evangelism through the three strategies of quality medical care, Christ like relationships in our staff, and a clear presentation of

the gospel. If NFHS Board, WW Board, and the leadership of the hospital can focus our projects in the above way, we can be successful in our mission.

- Achieve our goal of financial independence
- Hire the following key employees: General Surgeon, trained technical person to oversee our maintenance department. Send key technicians in the maintenance department for continuing education
- Accumulate a three month financial reserve for operations
- Pay off out pension obligations and fund the depleted retirement fund. Discontinue the Providence fund, Christmas fund, and old pension funds. Qualify all those eligible to participate in EFU. Develop an alternate annuity retirement plan for those employees that do not qualify for EFU due to age.
- Provide increased support for our Spiritual team by developing a written strategy for the evangelism work. And promoting continuing education for the Spiritual staff.
- Return to a 20 member nursing class and obtain scholarships for the students through the ARP churches, US & Pakistan
- Complete organizing our hospital administrative and financial records
- Implement a capitalization plan for the hospital and clarify the capitalization of the buildings and equipment.
- Complete the NPO status of the hospital thereby making the tax-exempt status of the hospital permanent.
- Review the employee policy manual, NFHS policy manual, and memorandum of association for accuracy and completeness
- Reregister the society, the school, and the x-ray department
- Begin to refurbish the hospital facility
- Trade our three vehicles for one Toyota Hylux truck

VII. FIVE YEAR PLAN

The five year plan like the first year plan includes continuing to focus the hospital on its primary purpose of evangelism through the three strategies of quality medical care, Christ like relationships in our staff, and a clear presentation of the gospel.

- Complete our medical staff with PMDC qualified physicians to include:
 - Five family physicians
 - One general surgeon
 - One OBGYN surgeon
 - One internist
 - One nurse anesthesia
- Recruit a missionary pastor to work with the spiritual team
- Recruit a missionary doctor, preferably a surgeon to work with our national staff.
- Increase our charity spending to equal 10% of our budget
- Develop a Public Health program to offer village services on a regular basis

- Reopen the hospital to full capacity.
- Accomplish routine maintenance on our buildings and equipment
- Better utilize our auditorium by promoting continuing medical educations for the local medical staff and lay population
- Assure that all patients hear the gospel message while in the hospital.
- Evaluate the potential for a management shift to an outside organization such as Cure International.

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