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J. GRESHAM MACHEN • EDITOR 1936-1937

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*The believer, according to Paul, is
in himself guilty in the sight of God.
But he is given a sentence of acquittal,
he is "justified," because Christ has
borne on the cross the curse of the Law
which rightly rested upon those whom
Christ died to save.*

—J. Gresham Machen



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He is a member of Christ's body, the invisible church. But the visible church is but the outward manifestation of that body. Every member of the invisible church should as a matter of course be a member of the visible church.

Extremely significant in this connection is Acts 2:47—"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Not only does Christ require of those who are saved that they unite with the church; He Himself joins them to the church.

Does it follow that he who is outside the visible church is necessarily outside Christ. Certainly not. It is possible that a true believer because of some unusual circumstance, might fail to unite with the church. Conceivably one might believe on Christ and die before receiving baptism. But such instances are exceptional. The Scriptural rule is that, while membership in the church is not a prerequisite of salvation, it is a necessary consequence of salvation.

A second teaching of Holy Writ on this subject is that it is the God-assigned task of the church to dispense the means of grace—the Word and the sacraments.

Rome is in grievous error when it asserts that the church dispenses *saving grace itself*. But so are they in error who overlook the fact the church dispenses *the means of saving grace*.

God employs but one means to impart faith to men. It is His Word, the Bible. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Now God has committed His Word to His church. As pillar and ground of the truth the church must uphold the Word of God (I Tim. 3:15). It is the no less sacred duty of the church to proclaim that Word to all nations (Matth. 28:19,20). When it pleases the Holy Spirit to call sinners effectually by the Word as preached by the church, believers come into being. It is because of this important role of the church in the birth of believers that the church deserves to be denominated *the mother of believers*. Believers are born of God through the church. To that truth the apostle Paul gave expression when he said: "Jerusalem which is above . . . is the mother of us all" (Gal. 4:26).

It is the function of a mother also to feed her children. The church does that too. By the preaching of the Word and the administration of the

sacraments the church nurtures her members and builds them up in the faith. And that, too, is an integral part of their salvation, for salvation is not merely a momentary experience but a process that continues to the very close of the believer's earthly life. To be sure, for results the church here also is utterly dependent on the grace of the Holy Spirit. Only when the sovereign God blesses the means of grace will they prove effective. But the fact remains that God has committed to the church the means for the spiritual growth of His children and that by faithfully dispensing these means the church, under God, makes a real con-

tribution to the salvation of God's elect.

We conclude that all the glory for man's salvation belongs to God and that none belongs to the church. But it is also true that it has pleased God to honor the church highly by committing to it the means of saving grace. The church plants and waters, but it is God that gives the increase. On the one hand, neither he that plants is anything nor he that waters, but God that gives the increase. On the other hand, the church has the glorious distinction of laboring together with God unto the salvation of men (I Cor. 3:6-9).

Unbelief in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. (4)

*Significant Lapses in the New
"Outline of the Christian Faith"*

By JOHN MURRAY

THE Shorter Catechism prepared by the Westminster Assembly is an incomparable compendium of Christian truth; of its kind and size it stands by itself. For this reason anyone who undertakes to prepare another Catechism of this type is at a great disadvantage; he is placed under the necessity of attaining to very high standards indeed if his work is to compare favorably with the Shorter Catechism.

It should not, of course, be maintained that the excellence of the Shorter Catechism renders entirely superfluous and presumptuous any further attempts at catechetical composition or simplification. Catechisms even simpler than the Shorter Catechism have been made, have performed great service and have had an honorable history. Any criticism that may be offered of the catechetical *Outline of the Christian Faith*, referred to in the title of this article, is not based on the assumption that it is unnecessary or wrong to prepare for the use of children and the uninstructed a catechism that will be shorter or more simplified than the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly. It is not the attempt or the undertaking that is being criticized; it is the character of the product.

In the criticism of the *Outline of the Christian Faith** which follows some of the language of more advanced theology will be used. In doing so it is not maintained that the *Outline* should have used such terminology. What is intended, rather, is to show how the *Outline* at certain points impinges very gravely upon the requirements of a sound Christian theology and therefore will create in the minds of those who receive its instruction conceptions which are at variance with the truth on matters concerned.

What Does the Bible Teach About God?

The answer of the *Outline* to this question is: "The Bible teaches that there is only one God, the living and true God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Regarding the distinction between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit it is noteworthy that the term "persons" is not used here, though it appears in the Children's Catechism, the Shorter Catechism, and the Intermediate Catechism of which this is a revision. Moreover one misses any

*Considerations of space make it inadvisable to include in this article a comparison of the *Outline* with *The Intermediate Catechism* (1913) of which the *Outline* is a revision.

statement regarding the attributes of God. Particularly is this the case when we are told in a preceding question that the Bible "was written by men who were guided by God to teach us about Himself and His will" and when the question here is: "What does the Bible teach about God?" We should certainly expect and would anticipate that even young people would look for some statement regarding the attributes of God. But we may allow this to pass. The "Commentary" on the *Outline*, written by Earl L. Douglass, chairman of the committee which prepared the *Outline*, quotes the Shorter Catechism answer to the question, "What is God?" and says that "human words and thoughts can probably not describe the nature and existence of God in clearer or more understandable language than this" (p. 9).

It is when we examine the way in which the doctrine of God is unfolded in subsequent questions that we discover what is patently defective and implicitly a deflection from the Christian position. This appears in connection with the answer to the question: "*Who is God the Father?*" The answer is "God the Father is the Creator of man and of all things, and He provides for His creatures and rules over all in wisdom, righteousness, and love." There are several strictures required in connection with this answer.

1. It indicates that the Father is to be distinguished by His creative, providential and governing activity. So the distinguishing property of the Father is defined in terms of His activity in connection with the created order; speaking in theological terms, the distinguishing property of the Father belongs to the economic sphere, to the *opera ad extra*. This goes directly counter not simply to Reformed and Protestant theology but also to Catholic (ecumenical). Ecumenical Christianity recognizes that the distinguishing property of the Father is immanent and eternal. There is here therefore a distinct deviation from one of the basic tenets of Christian theology.

It is not urged that a catechism of this sort should embody any *express* reflection upon the properties by which the persons of the Godhead are distinguished. That is not the point. The Shorter Catechism does not do that. It leaves such express formulation to the Larger Catechism and to the Confession. But omission is one thing; a statement which is overtly faulty and

IN 1947 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. approved for use in the home, the church school, and communicants' classes a new "Outline of the Christian Faith." This document is really a short catechism, designed to be intermediate between the Children's Catechism, and the Westminster Shorter Catechism. In form it constitutes a revision of an Intermediate Catechism adopted by the Church in 1913. It is published both separately, and with a "Commentary" which was written by Dr. Earl L. Douglass, chairman of the committee.

In the space at his disposal, Mr. Murray, who is Professor of Systematic Theology in Westminster Seminary, could deal with only a few points in this new *Outline*. That they are significant points, however, and that they clearly indicate a trend away from the truth, will be plain to the reader.

The sub-committee which prepared this new *Outline* consisted to a large extent of members of the faculty of Princeton Theological Seminary, the leading seminary of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

erroneous is another. One wonders how an answer which so obviously distinguishes the Father simply in terms of His relation to the created order could ever have been framed by Presbyterians and, particularly, how it ever could have been authorized by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Is it because theological discrimination has ebbed? Or is it due to carelessness? Or is a baneful theological bias at work?

This fault is not corrected by the answer given to a later question, "Who is Jesus Christ?" Here the answer is: "Jesus Christ is God's eternal and only begotten Son who, having humbled Himself to become man, is both God and man." Implied, of course, in the eternal Sonship of Christ is the eternal Fatherhood of the Father, and that is the property by which the Father is distinguished. But there is no explicit indication of the recognition of this on the part of the framers of this *Outline* and, more to the point, there is nothing explicit to this effect that will correct in the mind of the catechumen the conception derived from

the answer to the question: "*Who is God the Father?*" The catechumen, if he is to be guided by this *Outline*, will have to interpret that which distinguishes the Father in terms of His creative and providential activity.

2. This answer represents the Father as the agent in creation and providence. If it were said simply that the Father is active in creation, providence, and government this would be a true and all-important statement. But since these activities of the Father are mentioned in answer to the question: "*Who is God the Father?*," the idea is distinctly created and conveyed that the Father, in distinction from the Son and the Spirit, is the sole agent in creation, providence, and government. This notion and the conception created by it are not corrected or even modified by the "Commentary" at this point. They are rather confirmed.

It is true that, in reference to the Holy Spirit, this notion is modified later on. In answer to the question: "*Who is the Holy Spirit?*" it is said that "the Holy Spirit . . . is God active in the world." And the "Commentary" says at this point that "the Holy Spirit is God performing a certain office in the divine economy. He is God present and active in the world in which we live . . . The Holy Spirit . . . moved upon the face of the waters in the beginning and brought a created order out of chaos" (p. 27). But such statements cannot be said to offset entirely the erroneous conception created by the earlier answer given to the question: "*Who is God the Father?*" To say the least, the catechumen is going to be rather confused.

It is, however, in reference to Christ, the Son of God, that the seriousness of representing the Father as the sole agent in creation, providence, and government appears. In this connection it is surely necessary to be reminded that it belongs to the very essence of the doctrine of Christ as the Son to maintain that "all things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3), that "by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Col. 1:16,17). We are not insisting that in a brief catechism or outline there must be reflec-

tion upon the agency of the specific persons of the Godhead in the work of creation and providence. But since this *Outline* attributes this work *specifically* to the Father and intimates that the Father is distinguished thereby, grave prejudice is done to the agency of the Son in creation and providence, and the conception framed in the mind of the learner is one that involves a marked deviation from Christian doctrine. Furthermore, the "Commentary" when it deals with the doctrine of Christ does not correct or modify this deviation.

We are not prepared to say that these deflections which appear in answer to the question: "*Who is God the Father?*" were deliberately intended. They compel us to ask serious questions. And we must say that if the requisite theological discrimination had been exercised and if jealousy for careful definition had been maintained, the committee could never have fallen into such censurable formulation.

What Is Sin?

The answer of the *Outline* to this question is: "Sin is that evil nature within us which leads us to disobey God or fall short of what He would have us be and do." In the most elementary instruction it is well for us to be reminded of the corruption of our whole nature and it is necessary, and wholesome to avoid the notion that sin consists simply in overt acts of transgression. Nevertheless one cannot but wonder why in answer to the question, "*What is sin?*" we should be told that it is the "evil nature within us," and we are compelled to ask the question if this is really a precise and proper answer. It is significant that the Scripture itself, notwithstanding all its emphasis upon the depravity of the human heart and its insistence that it is out of the heart all sins proceed, nevertheless defines sin in terms of the transgression of the law. The Shorter Catechism has given us a faithful transcript of this teaching when in answer to the same question it says, "Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God." However much of a gain it may appear to be to lay emphasis upon the inwardness of sin, we cannot but regard this definition of the *Outline* as a lapse rather than as a virtue. For when the Scripture focuses attention upon the principle of sin, in other words, upon its definition, it concentrates our thought upon sin as

a violation of the law or commandments of God. How eloquent in this regard is the first reproof that God addressed to man. Adam had fallen. He became corrupt and afflicted with an evil nature, and that was the fountain of his overt act of sin. But when God addressed him in reference to his sin He said, "Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" (Gen. 3:11). This is fallen Adam's first lesson on the question of sin. And it is characteristic of Scripture to define sin in terms of transgression of the law. Of course there is a good reason for this. Sin has no meaning except as it has reference to a divine norm and as the violation of that norm. In other words, sin can never be reduced to lower terms than transgression of the law of God, and even the nature within us cannot be categorized as evil except as we presuppose that law of God by which it is to be measured and condemned as evil. The nature within is only evil because it is out of conformity with and in violation of that law. While, then, the emphasis upon the inwardness of sin in this definition and in the "Commentary" is to be appreciated and such emphasis regarded as altogether necessary in its own place, we cannot regard this definition of what sin is as any improvement but, instead, as a divergence from the orientation supplied by Scripture itself and followed so commendably by the Shorter Catechism.

In connection with the section in the *Outline* which deals with man and his sin, one misses any express allusion to the fall of Adam and of the race in him. It is surely important that the fall should be placed in this historical setting. But that is not done in this *Outline*. Is this a concession to the widespread rejection of the historicity of the story of the fall? The "Commentary" does say truly that "man has fallen from the perfect state in which God created him" and that the fall applies to all men (pp. 10f.). But, in dealing with this matter, it is not at all sufficient to say that "man's fall from divine perfection is not something that only a portion of humanity or certain classes of human society have experienced; it is the fate of all men. The twist of human frailty afflicts us all" (p. 10). We cannot but suspect the theology here, especially the concluding sentence. And this is just saying that the teaching of this section

both in the *Outline* and in the "Commentary" is quite inadequate for even elementary instruction, and, just because of this, is suspect.

What Is Salvation?

In the section in which this question appears, under the caption "Christ our Saviour," there is a great deal that is worthy of hearty endorsement, particularly in the "Commentary." The emphasis, for example, upon the Godhood of Christ, upon His unique and eternal Sonship, upon the virgin birth, is truly gratifying. And we would not wish to appear lacking in the proper appreciation and commendation of all that is Scriptural in this exposition. It is for that reason that the necessity of criticism is regrettable.

The answer of the *Outline* to the question, "*What is salvation?*" reads: "Salvation is the forgiveness of sin and the new life which God gives to those who believe in Jesus Christ." No person who has any intelligent understanding of the gospel would depreciate the significance of these aspects of salvation, and that they should receive distinct prominence in any Christian catechism is certainly to be granted. However, it is another matter to say that salvation is adequately *defined* in these terms. To be very pointed, one misses both in the *Outline* and in the "Commentary" any reference to *justification*. And this is quite amazing. The *Outline* and "Commentary" at this point betray an affinity with a great deal of present-day theology in which justification is thrust into the background or even discarded in favour of an emphasis upon the more restricted article of forgiveness. However important forgiveness is, whether viewed as the forgiveness dispensed once for all in justification or as the remission continuously administered to the believer, it is nothing less than a marked departure from the Christian gospel to suppress or discount the great article of justification. And that is precisely what is done here. It is thoroughly inexcusable. It is to omit from the gospel of salvation one of its most central and precious elements. The statement in the "Commentary" to the effect that forgiveness "gives us a new condition of righteousness before God, not because we are worthy but because God is willing to accept us for Jesus' sake as His children" (p. 15) cannot be regarded as remedying this conspicuous omission.

In line with this omission of justification in reference to salvation bestowed, the *Outline* contains not a word that would plainly express a forensic interpretation of the work of Christ. It is surely not asking too much that the *Outline* itself should contain something similar to the answer of the Shorter Catechism: "Christ executeth the office of a priest, in his once offering up of himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God: and in making continual intercession for us." Although the "Commentary" remedies this defect to some extent when it uses such terms as "reconciled to God through Jesus Christ" (p. 16), "the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross was a perfect sacrifice, a divine sacrifice" (pp. 19 f.), yet it will have to be said that even the "Commentary" is rather distinctly lacking in exposition and definition that would set in the forefront and unmistakably express a truly expiatory and redemptive interpretation of the meaning of Christ's death. One wonders what theology underlies such statements as the following: "The sin of man put Christ on the cross. He died because He would not yield to the ways and desires of a sinful world. By His death He removed the barrier that stood between sinful man and holy God."

"His death defied sin and broke its power. The death of Jesus Christ was on our behalf. It was for us. It manifested the eternal heartbreak of God. And because the Son—even in the face of great anguish—gave Himself unto death, our whole relationship to God has been changed. Men may now know Him as a loving Father" (p. 19).

Another striking fact is that neither in the *Outline* nor in the "Commentary" do we have any reference to election or to the covenant of grace. God's saving provision for lost men, therefore, is not oriented to that which is its source nor conceived of as the fulfillment of God's covenant purpose. This is not a peripheral defect. The more we study the Biblical revelation the more we become convinced that God's redemptive and saving action in the world is covenantal and that no true account can be given of salvation in any of its aspects except as it is grounded in an appreciation of God's covenant provisions and purposes.

There are other features of this *Outline* that merit comment. However we

cannot extend this appraisal any further. Many true and fine things are said in the *Outline* and "Commentary," but if we were to assess both in a few words we should be compelled to say that they evince that decline which has been developing in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. for a long time. Though this decline may not be as obvious in these documents as in the others being considered in this series,

yet certain symptoms are here present. To change the figure, the deep and wide breakthroughs in the line of witness to the truth of the gospel may not be as apparent in the *Outline*. But the line is broken, and it is sad to know that the witness to be borne in "Communicants' Classes," in the "Church School" and in the "Home" is a broken line and therefore open to alien incursions.

Orthodox Presbyterian Church News

Franklin Square, L.I.: On Sunday evening, January 2, Mr. Walter Vikestead, a student at Houghton College, was speaker at the Franklin Square church . . . Three persons were received into church membership on January 9 . . . The Loyalty Fund drive is meeting with a good response.

Portland, Me.: The Second Parish Sunday school has decided to meet before the church service, instead of after. The changed schedule began on Sunday, January 16, and it is hoped that an increase in attendance will result . . . A fellowship dinner was held at the church, Tuesday, January 11, at which plans for the re-decoration of the church building were discussed . . . The pastor, the Rev. Calvin Busch, with some of the young people, conducted services at the City Hospital on Sunday afternoon, January 16 . . . Three persons were received into church membership on January 9.

Fairlawn, N.J.: At the Bible School program on December 23 there were 80 persons in attendance, some of whom were visiting the Grace Chapel for the first time. On January 20 a sub-committee of the denominational Committee on Home Missions visited the community and met with representatives of the Chapel to discuss the future of the work. Considerable enthusiasm is being aroused for the building of a church home. A member of the church, Mr. Van Putten, who is an engineer with a construction firm in Paterson, has drawn revised plans for a beautiful colonial type of building . . . Miss Barbara Shepard, a member of the First Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Hamden, Conn., who is now teaching in the North Fourth

Street Christian School of Paterson, is part time pianist for the church.

Hamill, S.D.: The Westminster Church enjoyed a visit from the Rev. John P. Galbraith, general secretary of the denominational Committee on Home Missions, the second week of December. Though the weather was unfavorable and attendance at the scheduled meeting small, Mr. Galbraith was able to visit most of the homes, and new interest and confidence in the work of the church at large was awakened . . . A men's society has been organized and meets twice each month. A period of Bible study begins the meeting, followed by a 15 minute recess during which light refreshments are served. Then there is a discussion of some topic of current interest, suggested and introduced by the leader of the evening.

Schenectady, N.Y.: On Sunday, January 9, three covenant children were baptized at Calvary Church . . . On Sunday, January 2, the pastor, the Rev. Raymond Meiners, was assisted by the Rev. Herbert DuMont of Rochester, in the administration of the Lord's Supper.

Albany, N.Y.: The Machen League of the Church of the Covenant sponsored the New Year's Eve service, which was featured by the playing of recorded selections from Handel's *Messiah*. The pastor, the Rev. Herman T. Petersen, has been conducting a communicant's class for persons desiring to unite with the church.

Oostburg, Wisc.: At the service of Bethel Church on January 2, the Rev. Egbert W. Andrews, missionary to China now home on furlough, was the guest speaker. On Monday evening