

Theology Matters

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Truth Creates Boundaries

by Susan Cyre*

University of Chicago professor, Allan Bloom, wrote in his 1987 book, *Closing of the American Mind*, that “almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative.”⁽¹⁾ Objective truth had been trampled on university campuses by relativism promoted under the banner of tolerance, inclusivity and diversity.

This problem of relativism, however, does not exist just in liberal academic corridors. It exists in the culture and most disturbingly in the church even among evangelicals. Charles Colson, in his book, *The Body*, describes a 1991 George Barna poll which found 67 percent of American people believe there is no such thing as absolute truth.⁽²⁾ Absolute truth did not fare much better even among conservative believers. Colson writes, “53 percent of those claiming to be Bible-believing, conservative Christians said there is no such thing as absolute truth.”⁽³⁾ “A majority of those who follow the One who says, ‘I am the truth,’ profess not to believe in the truth,” Colson observes.⁽⁴⁾

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This rejection of absolute truth has not led to belief in *nothing*, but belief in *everything*. Michael Novak, recent recipient of the Templeton Prize, said in his acceptance address, “ours is a cynical age...Ours is not an age of unbelief. It is an age of arrogant gullibility.”⁽⁵⁾ Objective truth is the plumb line which divides truth and falsehood creating a boundary. Without that boundary, everything is believable.

This denial of boundaries with its resultant gullible acceptance of everything as truth, dramatically alters our

understanding of who God is and who we are. When there is no objective truth about who God is (and therefore who he is *not*) then everything is worshiped as God. G.K. Chesterton identified the gullibility malady when he wrote, “When people stop believing in God, they do not believe in nothing. They believe in anything. And everything.”⁽⁶⁾ The rise of pagan and neo-pagan cults, even within mainline denominations as evidenced by the 1993 Re-Imagining Conference, shows the popularity of the “anything god.”

This “anything god” originates in the imagination of its worshippers and its function is to make authoritative the subjective, inner, self-affirming “truth” of its worshiper. Speaker Rita Brock encouraged Re-Imagining participants to use the mirror as a guide in creating the anything god. She challenged, “what re-imagining of God... would allow us to look in the mirror and see someone we love.”

When the “anything god” blesses our subjective truth as authoritative, we become gods and goddesses. After all, the one who authoritatively defines truth is a god. The pagan teachings at Re-Imagining bear striking similarity to feminist witchcraft described by Naomi Goldenberg in her 1979 book, *Changing of the Gods*. She writes, “In feminist witchcraft however, since each woman is considered a Goddess, all of her creations are in a sense holy. No one has the right to put another person’s feelings into categories of sacred or profane, religious or secular. Thus, not only are the inner dynamics of a woman’s psyche seen as religious processes but she is perceived as capable of evaluating these processes herself. Each is the priestess of her own religion.”⁽⁷⁾

When the boundaries which define God are denied, everything becomes god. Not only are we gods and goddesses but creation becomes divine. In *The Spiral Dance*, witch Starhawk proclaims, “The Goddess does not rule the world; She *is* the world. Manifest in each of us, She can be known internally by every individual, in all her

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magnificent diversity....In Witchcraft, each of us must reveal our own truth. ...Sexuality is a sacrament. Religion is a matter of relinking, with the divine within and with her outer manifestations in all of the human and natural world.” (8)

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When the boundaries created by the biblical truth about God are denied, the boundaries which define us disappear. Not only do we cease to be bound by our fallenness and instead rise to become gods and goddesses but all action becomes permissible. Feodor Dostoevsky rightly observed, “If God did not exist, everything would be permitted.”(9) When the boundaries which define God disappear, the boundaries which define moral and immoral acts disappear.

“Witchcraft has no concept of a primal sin committed by our ancestors nor does it have a concept of a covenant against which one can sin,” writes Goldenberg.(10) All actions are permissible as long as they reflect the one truth of paganism: “be true to yourself.” A person’s will is sacred. According to Goldenberg the only restriction placed on the will is the “golden rule” of witchcraft: “Do what thou wilt, so long as it harms none.”(11) Of course the individual god or goddess decides what harms another.

In contrast to paganism’s rejection of boundaries, God’s Word of truth in Scripture creates boundaries. The Ten Commandments, for example, define boundaries. They are boundaries between us and God as well as between us and our neighbor. God says, “thou shalt not steal” because everything belongs to God and to take what God has not given us is to steal from God. Yet “thou shalt not steal” also creates boundaries around our neighbor’s possessions. Similarly the other commandments stipulate that my neighbor has a boundary around his or her life, spouse, and reputation.

If by denying objective truth, we deny the existence of boundaries, how can we recover truth and its resultant boundaries? Donald Bloesch suggests in *Crumbling Foundations*, “the surest way to reaffirm orthodoxy is to rediscover heresy.”(12) To affirm truth, we must identify what is false. If we attempt to reaffirm orthodoxy without rediscovering heresy we deny the boundaries and we embrace the syncretism of pagan religions.

Pagan syncretism was the constant pitfall of the Israelites. They never rejected God, they just worshiped him and all their other gods. They were masters of theological tolerance, diversity and inclusivity. They refused to recognize the boundaries imposed by God’s truth. God’s first commandment clearly sets the boundaries that his being

demand, “I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have no other gods.” Yet in Exodus 32 we read that the people impatient for Moses to return from Mt. Sinai, dance around the golden calf having “a feast to Yahweh.”

The Gospel of Mark describes how Jesus confronted a culture and religious community that had rejected the boundaries imposed by God’s truth and embraced heresy. In Mark, Jesus interacts with three groups of people: the multitudes, the disciples and the religious leaders. Jesus teaches the multitudes but we rarely hear the actual teaching. Instead Jesus teaches by action. He displays his authority by healing and feeding and calming seas. Jesus teaches the disciples about coming events in order to equip them for the days ahead and their ministry.

The bulk of Jesus’ teaching in Mark is directed toward the religious leaders who are promoting the heresy. Jesus reestablishes the boundaries imposed by truth in response to their questions. He uses various techniques in forming his response. Sometimes his response involves logic, as in the exchange in Mark 3 when the scribes accuse Jesus of healing by the power of Satan. At other times it is a rebuke showing that the leadership is rejecting God’s clear Word, as in Mark 7. Sometimes it is an exposition of Scripture as in Mark 10 when Jesus discusses marriage. Jesus always begins with the questions people ask, even when those questions are not asked in serious inquiry but are intended to ridicule Jesus. Jesus shows how the truth of God creates boundaries as it cuts like a two-edged sword between truth and falsehood.

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We have a unique opportunity today to witness to the truth of the Gospel by responding to the questions raised by the heresies and false teachings which are currently embraced by so many. In the midst of their rejection of Jesus Christ are questions. These are the questions Christian faith must address. They are the context of faith today.

Re-Imagining speakers were asking questions in the midst of their rejection of Christian faith. Why isn’t Scripture uniquely authoritative? Why can’t we worship the god within us? Why is God transcendent and not pantheistically immanent? It’s not enough to reject their teachings, although that is certainly part of our response. We also have to answer the question, “why not believe what they claim?” Is truth relative and subjective? Can we shape a god from our human experience? Why not? Our response has to use logic and reason to reflect the truth revealed in Scripture and to defend it as the only plausible explanation of reality.

If we deal with the heresy by beginning to redraw the boundaries set by God and for a long time rejected by us, two things will happen: the questions being raised will get

harder and we will recover truths we have long forgotten. We will be changed by the engagement.

Scripture details Moses' metamorphosis from the burning bush, where he is a whining complainer who does not know God's name, to Exodus 33, where God speaks to him, "as a man speaks to his friend." Moses' metamorphosis begins with the Pharaoh's question, "who is this god that I should obey him?" It is only as God through Moses answers the Pharaoh again and again that the Hebrew people understand who God is and Moses grows in his faith and understanding of God. The boundary between God as the only Lord of heaven and earth and the false Egyptian gods is drawn when God directs the plagues against the false gods and frees the people. It is in the midst of drawing the boundaries that Moses grows in his relationship with God.

We live in a world where a significant number of people have rejected Jesus Christ and his truth. To some degree all of us have lost the ability to articulate the truth of our faith. Biblical and doctrinal illiteracy are wide-spread. A 1979 *Christianity Today* survey revealed that while 81% of the people in this country claim to be Christian, only 26% of the general public and 43% of evangelicals believe Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. (13) Only 42% of those who considered themselves Christian knew Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount and only 46% could name the four Gospels. (14) A recent poll in Great Britain found that while 85% of those polled professed to be Christian, only 34% knew what happened on the first Easter. (15)

The heresies of our day, including the pagan radical feminism taught at Re-Imagining, have given us an opportunity to reaffirm orthodoxy, not by offering an alternative, but by rediscovering heresy; by showing that there is only One who is the way, the truth and the life. We

Reaffirm orthodoxy ...to logically and biblically show that Christ is the only answer

can only do that by engaging the heresy in debate and argument to logically and biblically show that Christ is the only answer. Only Christian faith with its boundaries is internally self-consistent and leads to hope. All other belief systems either are not self-consistent or lead to nihilism and despair. In the process of reaffirming orthodoxy, our faith and understanding of who God is will deepen.

As we respond to the questions raised by the heresies, we will be forced to think deeply about our faith and the One in whom we believe. Biblical and doctrinal illiteracy will disappear as we hungrily study Scripture and our confessions for answers. We may stumble and struggle just as Moses did. We will be driven to our knees in humility and repentance. We will beg God to create a new heart in us as we realize how many heresies we have accepted and how faithless we have been. The struggle will not be easy. Yet, we are called to the struggle, in obedience, for our sake as well as our

neighbor. Only God's Word in Christ accurately describes reality: the truth about God and us and the universe. Our challenge is as Peter instructed us, to give a defense of our hope in Jesus Christ. He is the only hope of the world.(16)

By discussing the boundaries of Christian faith beginning with the claims and questions of the feminists, Presbyterians for Faith, Family and Ministry will provide resources to help us as Presbyterians respond to the issues being raised and, as we do, to grow in our own understanding of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

1. Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc, 1987), p. 25.
2. Charles Colson, *The Body* (Dallas: Word, 1992), p. 165.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 178.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 178.
5. Michael Novak, "Awakening from Nihilism: The Templeton Prize Address," *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life* 45 (Aug/Sep 1994): 20.
6. Martin Marty, "Pointy-Power," *Christian Century*, Mar 9 77, p. 239.
7. Naomi R. Goldenberg, *Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), p. 96.
8. Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess* (San Francisco: Harper, 1979,1989), p. 23.
9. Donald G. Bloesch, *Crumbling Foundations* (Grand Rapids: Academic Books, 1984), p. 7.
10. Goldenberg, p. 112.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
12. Bloesch, p. 107.
13. Charles Colson *Who Speaks for God? Confronting the World with Real Christianity* (Westchester: Crossway Books, 1985), p. 88.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
15. Colson, *The Body*, p. 234.

Resources Available from PFFM which critique feminist theology:

ABC's Nightline Program on Re-Imagining, televised May 24, 1994 with guests Susan Cyre and Re-Imagining speaker Rita Brock. (video available for loan)

PBS McNeil/Lehrer Program on Re-Imagining, televised June 17, 1994 including interview with Rev. Dr. Kari McClellan and others. (video available for loan)

Presbyterians Pro-Life GA Commissioner luncheon with Susan Cyre speaking on Re-Imagining Conference. (video available from PFFM, suggested donation \$20)

TV38 Chicago, "Among Friends" interview with Susan Cyre and Re-Imagining speaker Mary Hunt. Although the moderator did not remain objective, the video contains valuable insights into feminist theology. (video available for loan)

"Notes for Additional Study of 1994-95 PW Bible Study"

A woman pastor contrasts the PW Bible study with Scripture and the Confessions. It contains "Comments" and "Questions for Discussion" which make it appropriate for group discussion . (suggested donation \$2)

God in the Dock: The Authority of Scripture

C.S. Lewis wrote, “The ancient man approached God (or even the gods) as the accused person approaches his judge. For the modern man the roles are reversed. He is the judge: God is in the dock. He is quite a kindly judge: if God should have a reasonable defense for being the god who permits war, poverty and disease, he is ready to listen to it. The trial may even end in God’s acquittal. But the important thing is that Man is on the Bench and God in the Dock.” Feminists have put God and the Christian faith in the dock. How has the church responded to the charges throughout its history?

On the issue of the authority of Scripture, feminists claim because Scripture was written by men it reflects male experience, excludes female experience and affirms male dominance. According to feminists, because of this patriarchal bias, only those portions of Scripture which affirm women’s experience can be considered authoritative. In other words the *women grant authority to Scriptural texts when and if the feminists believe it affirms their experience*. The women themselves are the source of authority and it is they who pronounce as authoritative those teachings from Scripture or from non-biblical writings which agree with their views and experiences. For example, in both the Inclusive Language Packet and the College Women’s Network Packet produced and distributed by the PCUSA, the following statement appears, “I have spent the past two years in search of the femininity of my God. This is an ongoing struggle that has led me through the Bible and back to study the ancient Greek goddesses and back further still to Gaia and ancient fertility goddesses. These pagan myths and histories have served as a paradigm to help me to redefine and revisualize a more complete and omnifarious Christian God.” Other sources which the feminists often deem authoritative are writings from women mystics, poets, feminist writers like Alice Walker, the Apocrypha, Gnostic texts which were declared heretical by the early church, and ancient goddess texts.

The church throughout its history has taken a very different view of the authority of Scripture. According to Scripture itself, and attested to by the creeds and confessions of the church, the church does not grant Scripture authority but witnesses to the authority that *Scripture possesses*. Neither the church, nor individuals assign authority to Scripture.

In the Gospel of Mark 1:22, the people are amazed at Jesus’ authority. The multitudes do not *give* Jesus authority. They acknowledge the authority that Jesus possesses. Jesus not only does not affirm their experience but his authority evokes amazement because Jesus contradicts the people’s experience. Just as the original witnesses responded to Jesus’ authority, so too the church acknowledges the authority Scripture possesses as it witnesses to Jesus Christ. The church does not assign authority to Scripture because the texts agree with the church’s self-understanding. Quite the opposite. The church derives its self-understanding from Scripture precisely because it is authoritative. The Book of Order states, “the mission of the Church is given form by God’s activity in the world as told in the Bible...” The church did not create Scripture. Rather, the church came into existence as women and men responded to the Word Incarnate attested to by Scripture.

Scripture possesses authority from God himself, the only true source of authority. 2 Timothy 3:16 states, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness...” 2 Peter 1:20 tells us, “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” The confessions express the same understanding of the authority of Scripture. The Westminster Confession declares, “the authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God(who is truth itself)...”

In the midst of the political and ideological take over of the church by the Third Reich, the signers of the Barmen Declaration reaffirmed the church’s teaching that human beings, governments and ideologies do not determine the church’s witness. The signers declared, “We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church could and would have to acknowledge as a source of its proclamation, apart from and besides this one Word of God, still other events and powers, figures and truths, as God’s revelation.” They went on to say, “We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church were permitted to abandon the form of its message and order to its own pleasure or to changes in prevailing ideological and political convictions.”

Unlike the Old and New Testaments which are inspired by God and therefore authoritative, the Apocrypha is not inspired and carries no authority in the church. Although the feminists frequently view portions of the Apocrypha as authoritative, (especially those portions which speak of ‘wisdom’), the Westminster Confession says of the Apocryphal texts, “[they] not being of divine inspiration ..therefore are of no authority in the church.”

While the feminists claim that revelation has not ended and therefore their experiences possess the same authority as Scripture, the confessions are clear that “nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men” to the “Counsel of God” in Scripture.

The following excerpts contrast the positions of feminist writers with the church's historic understanding expressed in the Westminster Confession and Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion, on the authority of Scripture..

Feminist's view of Scripture

Chung Hyun Kyung from Re-Imagining Conference, November, 1993 in Minneapolis.

"I always ask my students, 'if you are a citizen of some nation and all these people say they are the congress men in your place but you never voted for them and one day they got together and they made a constitution and they said you have to follow everything they said in this constitution, would you follow the constitution?' All my students say, 'hell, no.' Yes that's right. That's the way the Bible is constituted, you are not there. Most of the people who decided the canon were men, so if you are not represented in that process, you have to really think about this constitution.

So this morning I want to bring out this Asian and Gnostic understanding of salvation. I'm sure as an Asian person, if Gnostic gospel is canonized as gospel, we Asians would not have much problem to receive gospel because we know what is in the light within you and what is divine spark within you."

Aruna Gnanadason from Re-Imagining Conference, November, 1993 in Minneapolis.

"Even the Bible, that sacred book which is the primary source of Christian faith, did not escape the influence of patriarchy, it was written, translated, interpreted and taught from a particular vantage point that excluded women and all those in the margins of societies."

Chris Smith, from Re-Imagining Conference, November, 1993, in Minneapolis

"...believing that revelation never ends and that perhaps our revelations are as normative as ancient revelations."

Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Women-Guides* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), p. ix.

"Feminist theology cannot be done from the existing base of the Christian Bible. The Old and New Testaments have been shaped in their formation, their transmission, and finally, their canonization to sacralize patriarchy. ...Thus the doing of feminist theology demands a new collection of texts to make women's experience visible."

Rita Brock, *Journeys By Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), p.xiii, Brock was a speaker at Re-Imagining, 1993 and the reunion in October, 1994 as well as the Bible study leader at the Ecumenical Student Gathering co-sponsored by the PCUSA held in

St. Louis, December 28- January 1, 1995 which 1800 college students attended.

"The third branch of the unholy trinity seems innocuous enough. The holy ghost is the divine presence in the church. But the interpretations of the biblical and doctrinal texts, supposedly inspired by the holy ghost, proclaim silence and subordination for women, the polluting nature of the female body, and the rightful exclusion of women from equality in the church. These words of the ghost haunt every attempt by women to gain full citizenship in the Christian community. The ghost has been used to protect the past at the expense of the liberation of real people in the present."

Letha Dawson Scanzoni and Nancy A. Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be: Biblical Feminism for Today* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), p. 9.

"However, even in considering the whole Bible, we must remember that the book was primarily written by men in patriarchal cultures; that the canon was defined by men, who left out many books now known to us to be more favorable to women; that the Scripture has been interpreted for two thousand years by male exegetes and theologians in support of male supremacy."

Letty Russell, ordained PCUSA minister, professor at Yale, *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1985), p. 139.

"The particular interpretive key that assists me in continuing to give assent is the witness of scripture to God's promise (for the mending of creation) on its way to fulfillment. That which denies this intention of God for the liberation of groaning creation in all its parts does not compel or evoke my assent (i.e., it is not authoritative)."

Joanna W. H. van Wijk-Bos, a speaker at Re-Imagining, November, 1993, ordained PCUSA minister and professor at Louisville Seminary, *Reformed and Feminist: A Challenge to the Church* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), p. 63.

"If not all the news in the Bible is good news for women, we need to ask, Is it good news, women? when we look at a text. We need to learn to differentiate between the bad news and the good news, between what is conducive to newness of life and what is damaging to it. The admission that the Bible suffers from a patriarchal cast is a good beginning. Second, not only is the text patriarchal, the religion of ancient Israel and the faith that sprung from it, Judaism and Christianity, are patriarchal as well."

Westminster Confession

From the *Book of Confessions* which together with the *Book of Order* comprise the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church(USA)

1. Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet they are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation; therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his Church; and afterwards for the better preserving and propagation of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased. (6.001)
2. Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testaments, which are these:All which are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life. (6.002)
3. The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of the Scripture; and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, not to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings. (6.003)
4. The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God. (6.004)
5. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverent esteem for the Holy Scripture; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts. (6.005)

Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion

From CALVIN: *Institutes of the Christian Religion* edited by John T. McNeil (Library of Christian Classics Series). Used by Permission of Westminster John Knox Press.

BOOK I CHAPTER VI

SCRIPTURE IS NEEDED AS GUIDE AND TEACHER FOR ANYONE WHO WOULD COME TO GOD THE CREATOR

1. God bestows the actual knowledge of himself upon us only in the Scriptures

^e(b)That brightness which is borne in upon the eyes of all men both in heaven and on earth is more than enough to withdraw all support from men's ingratitude—just as God, to involve the human race in the same guilt, sets forth to all without exception his presence portrayed in his creatures. Despite this, it is needful that another and better help be added to direct us aright to the very Creator of the universe. ^eIt was not in vain, then, that he added the light of his Word by which to become known unto salvation; and he regarded

as worthy of this privilege those whom he pleased to gather more closely and intimately to himself. For because he saw the minds of all men tossed and agitated, after he chose the Jews as his very own flock, he fenced them about that they might not sink into oblivion as others had. With good reason he holds us by the same means in the pure knowledge of himself, since otherwise even those who seem to stand firm before all others would soon melt away. Just as old or bleary-eyed men and those with weak vision, if you thrust before them a most beautiful volume, even if they recognize it to be some sort of writing, yet can scarcely construe two words, but with the aid of spectacles ⁽¹⁾ will begin to read distinctly; so Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God. This, therefore, is a special gift, ^(b)where God, to instruct the church, not merely uses mute teachers but also opens his own most hallowed lips. Not only does he teach the elect to look upon a god, but also shows himself as the God upon whom they are to look. He has from the beginning maintained this plan for his church, so that besides these common proofs he also put

forth his Word, which is a more direct and more certain mark whereby he is to be recognized.⁽²⁾

..... But here I shall discuss only how we should learn from Scripture that God, the Creator of the universe, can by sure marks be distinguished from all the throng of feigned gods. Then, in due order, that series will lead us to the redemption.⁽⁴⁾ We shall derive many testimonies from the New Testament, and other testimonies also from the Law and the Prophets, where express mention is made of Christ. Nevertheless, all things will tend to this end, that God, the Artificer of the universe, is made manifest to us in Scripture, and that what we ought to think of him is set forth there, lest we seek some uncertain deity by devious paths.

2. The Word of God as Holy Scripture

^{e(b)}But whether God became known to the patriarchs through oracles and visions or by the work and ministry of men, he put into their minds what they should then hand down to their posterity. At any rate, there is no doubt that firm certainty of doctrine was engraved in their hearts, so that they were convinced and understood that what they had learned proceeded from God.⁽⁵⁾ For by his Word, God rendered faith unambiguous forever, a faith that should be superior to all opinion. Finally, in order that truth might abide forever in the world with a continuing succession of teaching and survive through all ages, the same oracles he had given to the patriarchs it was his pleasure to have recorded, as it were, on public tablets. ^eWith this intent the law was published, and the prophets afterward added as its interpreters. For even though the use of the law was manifold, as will be seen more clearly in its place,⁽⁶⁾ it was especially committed to Moses and all the prophets to teach the way of reconciliation between God and men, whence also Paul calls "Christ the end of the law" [Rom. 10:4]. Yet I repeat once more: besides the specific doctrine of faith and repentance that sets forth Christ as Mediator, Scripture

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adorns with unmistakable marks and tokens the one true God, in that he has created and governs the universe, in order that he may not be mixed up with the throng of false gods. Therefore, however fitting it may be for man seriously to turn his eyes to contemplate God's works, since he has been placed in this most glorious theater to be a spectator of them, it is fitting that he prick up his ears to the Word, the better to profit. And it is therefore no wonder that those who were born in darkness become more and more hardened in their insensibility; for there are very few who, to contain themselves within bounds, apply themselves teachably to God's Word, but they rather exult in their own vanity. Now,

in order that true religion may shine upon us, we ought to hold that it must take its beginning from heavenly doctrine and that no one can get even the slightest taste of right and sound doctrine unless he be a pupil of Scripture. Hence, there also emerges the beginning of true understanding when we reverently embrace what it pleases God there to witness of himself. But not only faith, perfect and in every way complete, but all right knowledge of God is born of obedience.⁽⁷⁾ ^{e(b)}And surely in this respect God has, by his singular providence, taken thought for mortals through all ages.

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3. Without Scripture we fall into error

^bSuppose we ponder how slippery is the fall of the human mind into forgetfulness of God, how great the tendency to every kind of error, how great the lust to fashion constantly new and artificial religions. Then we may perceive how necessary was such written proof of the heavenly doctrine, that it should neither perish through forgetfulness nor vanish through error nor be corrupted by the audacity of men. It is therefore clear that God has provided the assistance of the Word for the sake of all those to whom he has been pleased to give useful instruction because he foresaw that his likeness imprinted upon the most beautiful form of the universe would be insufficiently effective. Hence, we must strive onward by this straight path if we seriously aspire to the pure contemplation of God. We must come, I say, to the Word, where God is truly and vividly described to us from his works, while these very works are appraised not by our depraved judgment but by the rule of eternal truth. If we turn aside from the Word, as I have just now said, though we may strive with strenuous haste, yet, since we have got off the track, we shall never reach the goal. For we should so reason that the splendor of the divine countenance, which even the apostle calls "unapproachable" [I Tim. 6:16], is for us like an inexplicable labyrinth unless we are conducted into it by the thread of the Word; so that it is better to limp along this path than to dash with all speed outside it.⁽⁸⁾ ^eDavid very often, therefore, teaching that we ought to banish superstitions from the earth so that pure religion may flourish, represented God as regnant [Ps. 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1; and the like]. Now he means by the word "regnant" not the power with which he is endowed, and which he exercises in governing the whole of nature, but the doctrine by which he asserts his lawful sovereignty. For errors can never be uprooted from human hearts until true knowledge of God is planted therein.

4. Scripture can communicate to us what the revelation in the creation cannot

Accordingly, the same prophet, after he states, "The heavens declare the glory of God, the firmament shows forth the works of his hands, the ordered succession of days and nights proclaims his majesty" [Ps. 19: 1-2 p.], then proceeds to mention his Word: "The law of the Lord is spotless, converting souls; the testimony of the Lord is faithful, giving wisdom to little ones; the righteous acts of the Lord are right, rejoicing hearts; the precept of the Lord is clear, enlightening eyes" [Ps. 18:8-9, Vg.; 19:7-8, EV]. For although he also includes other uses of the law, he means in general that, since God in vain calls all peoples to himself by the contemplation of heaven and earth, this is the very school of God's children. Psalm 29 looks to this same end, where the prophet—speaking forth concerning God's awesome voice which strikes the earth in thunder [v. 3], winds, rains, whirlwinds and tempests, causes mountains to tremble [v. 6], shatters the cedars [v. 5]—finally adds at the end that his praises are sung in the sanctuary because the unbelievers are deaf to all the voices of God that resound in the air [vs. 9-11]. Similarly, he thus ends another psalm where he has described the awesome waves of the sea: "Thy testimonies have been verified, the beauty and holiness of thy temple shall endure forevermore" [Ps. 93:5 p.]. Hence, also, arises that which Christ said to the Samaritan woman, that her people and all other peoples worshiped they knew not what; that the Jews alone offered worship to the true God [John 4:22]. For, since the human mind because of its feebleness can in no way attain to God unless it be aided and assisted by his Sacred Word, all mortals at that time—except for the Jews—because they were seeking God without the Word, had of necessity to stagger about in vanity and error.

CHAPTER VII

SCRIPTURE MUST BE CONFIRMED BY THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT. THUS MAY ITS AUTHORITY⁽¹⁾ BE ESTABLISHED AS CERTAIN; AND IT IS A WICKED FALSEHOOD THAT ITS CREDIBILITY DEPENDS ON THE JUDGMENT OF THE CHURCH

1. Scripture has its authority from God, not from the church

Before I go any farther, it is worth-while to say something about the authority of Scripture,⁽²⁾ not only to prepare our hearts to reverence it, but to banish all doubt. When that which is set forth is acknowledged to be the Word of God, there is no one so deplorably insolent—unless devoid also both of common sense and of humanity itself—as to dare impugn the credibility of Him who speaks. Now daily oracles are not sent from heaven, for it pleased the Lord to hallow his truth to everlasting remembrance in the Scriptures alone [cf. John 5:39]. Hence the Scriptures obtain full authority among believers only when men regard them as having sprung from heaven, as if there the living words of God were heard. This matter is very well worth treating

more fully and weighing more carefully. But my readers will pardon me if I regard more what the plan of the present work demands than what the greatness of this matter requires.

The Scriptures obtain full authority among believers only when men regard them...as if there the living words of God were heard

But a most pernicious error widely prevails that Scripture has only so much weight as is conceded to it by the consent of the church. As if the eternal and inviolable truth of God depended upon the decision of men! For they mock the Holy Spirit when they ask: Who can convince us that these writings came from God? Who can assure us that Scripture has come down whole and intact even to our very day? Who can persuade us to receive one book in reverence but to exclude another, unless the church prescribe a sure rule for all these matters? What reverence is due Scripture and what books ought to be reckoned within its canon depend, they say, upon the determination of the church.⁽³⁾ Thus these sacrilegious men, wishing to impose an unbridled tyranny under the cover of the church, do not care with what absurdities they ensnare themselves and others, provided they can force this one idea upon the simple-minded: that the church has authority in all things. Yet, if this is so, what will happen to miserable consciences seeking firm assurance of eternal life if all promises of it consist in and depend solely upon the judgment of men? Will they cease to vacillate and tremble when they receive such an answer? Again, to what mockeries of the impious is our faith subjected, into what suspicion has it fallen among all men, if we believe that it has a precarious authority dependent solely upon the good pleasure of men!

2. The church is itself grounded upon Scripture

But such wranglers are neatly refuted by just one word of the apostle. He testifies that the church is "built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles" [Eph. 2:20]. If the teaching of the prophets and apostles is the foundation, this must have had authority before the church began to exist. Groundless, too, is their subtle objection that, although the church took its beginning here, the writings to be attributed to the prophets and apostles nevertheless remain in doubt until decided by the church. For if the Christian church was from the beginning founded upon the writings of the prophets and the preaching of the apostles, wherever this doctrine is found, the acceptance of it—without which the church itself would never have existed—must certainly have preceded the church.⁽⁴⁾ It is utterly vain, then, to pretend that the power of judging Scripture so lies with the church that its certainty depends upon churchly assent. Thus, while the church receives and gives its seal of approval to the Scripture, it does not thereby render authentic what is otherwise doubtful or controversial. But because the church recognizes Scripture to be the truth of its own God, as a

pious duty it unhesitatingly venerates Scripture. As to their question--How can we be assured that this has sprung from God unless we have recourse to the decree of the church?--it is as if someone asked: Whence will we learn to distinguish light from darkness, white from black, sweet from bitter? Indeed, Scripture exhibits fully as clear evidence of its own truth (5) as white and black things do of their color, or sweet and bitter things do of their taste.

5. Scripture bears its own authentication

Let this point therefore stand: that those whom the Holy Spirit has inwardly taught truly rest upon Scripture, and that Scripture indeed is self-authenticated;⁽¹⁶⁾ hence, it is not right to subject it to proof and reasoning. And the certainty it deserves with us, it attains by the testimony of the Spirit.⁽¹⁷⁾ For even if it wins reverence for itself by its own majesty, it seriously affects us only when it is sealed upon our hearts through the Spirit. Therefore, illumined by his power, we believe neither by our own nor by any one else's judgment that Scripture is from God; but above human judgment we affirm with utter certainty (just as if we were gazing upon the majesty of God himself) that it has flowed to us from the very mouth of God by the ministry of men. We seek no proofs, no marks of genuineness upon which our judgment may lean; but we subject our judgment and wit to it as to a thing far beyond any guesswork! This we do, not as persons accustomed to seize upon some unknown thing, which, under closer scrutiny, displeases them, but fully conscious that we hold the unassailable truth! Nor do we do this as those miserable men who habitually bind over their minds to the thralldom of superstition; but we feel that the undoubted power of his divine majesty lives and breathes there. By this power we are drawn and inflamed, knowingly and willingly, to obey him, yet also more vitally and more effectively than by mere human willing or knowing!

God, therefore, very rightly proclaims through Isaiah that the prophets together with the whole people are witnesses to him; for they, instructed by prophecies, unhesitatingly held that God has spoken without deceit or ambiguity [Isa. 43:10]. Such, then, is a conviction that requires no reasons; such, a knowledge with which the best reason agrees—in which the mind truly reposes more securely and constantly than in any reasons; such, finally, a feeling that can be born only of heavenly revelation. I speak of nothing other than what each believer experiences within himself—though my words fall far beneath a just explanation of the matter.

Notes

- b - edition of 1539
- c - edition of 1543
- e - edition of 1559
- e(b) - edition of 1539 as altered in 1559

Chapter VI

1. This simile, repeated in I, xiv, 1, in Comm. Gen. "Argument," and elsewhere, is probably Calvin's decisive utterance on the role of Scripture as related to the revelation of the Creator in creation. In modern Calvin study there has been much diversity in discussions of this expression and its implications. Cf. B.B. Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, pp. 260 f.; P. Barth, *Das Problem der natürlichen Theologie bei Calvin*; G. Gloede, *Theologia naturalis bei Calvin*; T.H.L. Parker, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God: A Study in Calvin's Theology*; and the titles in note 41 on I. v. 12.
2. Cf. II, i-v.
4. Cf. II, v, 7; II, xvi, 5-12.
5. Calvin does not here offer an explanation of the manner of inspiration in the origin of the Scriptures. However, the suggestion his language conveys is not of a

mechanical verbal dictation, but of an impartation of divine truth that enters the hearts of the Scripture writers. See also J.T. McNeill, "The Significance of the Word of God for Calvin," *Church History* XXVIII (1959), 131-146.

6. Cf. II, vii and viii.
7. This sentence, "*Omnis recta cognitio Dei ab obedientia nascitur*," is quoted by K. Barth in affirming that dogmatics must presuppose Christian faith (*Kirchliche Dogmatik* I. i. 17; tr. G. T. Thomson, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* I.19).
8. Augustine, *Psalms*, Ps. 31, ii. 4 (MPL 36, 260; tr. LF *Psalms* I. 253); *Sermons* cxli. 4: "*Melius est in via claudicare quam praeter viam fortiter ambulare*" (MPL 38, 778; tr. LF *Sermons* II. 656 f.). Cf. *Sermons* clxix. 15 (MPL 38, 926; tr. LF *Sermons* II. 870 f.).

Chapter VII

1. Cf. IV, viii for a related treatment of the authority and inspiration of Scripture.
2. Chapters vii-ix form an excursus on Biblical authority. Both the doctrines of the deity of the Spirit (I. xiii, 14-15) and the redemptive work of the Spirit (Book III, throughout, especially chs. i-ii) form the immediate theological context of the doctrine of the "inner testimony." Calvin refers the reader "elsewhere" (I. vii, 5), but this has often been overlooked. It is crucial for the interpretation of Calvin whether this doctrine of Scripture is seen as complete in itself or in the larger epistemological context of III. ii. Cf. Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, p. 71, *et passim*; Doumergue, *Calvin* IV, 68, 247; Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, pp. 87, 157-164, 174.
3. Cf. Bullinger, *De scripturae sacrae autoritate* (1538), fo. 4a. The claim of church authority in the interpretation of Scripture is defended by Cochlaeus in *De autoritate ecclesiae et scripture* (1524), and in *De canonicae scripture et catholicae ecclesiae autoritate, ad Henricum Bullingerium* (1543). In the latter work (ch. iii), he states that no claim is made for the superior authority of the church over the Scripture, but holds (ch. iv) that the church has authority *circa scripturas*, and that such authority is most necessary. Cf. also John Eck, *Enchiridion* (1533), ch. i, fo. 4a-6b.
4. Cf. Introduction, pp. 1xi ff. This view of the antecedence of Scripture to the church was common to the Reformers. It appears in Luther's *Lectures on the Psalms* (*Werke* WA III, 454), where he says, "The Scripture is the womb from which are born the divine truth and the church." Cf. K. Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte* I. *Luther*, 288 ff.; R. E. Davies, *The Problem of Authority in the Continental Reformers*, pp. 41 f.; McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism*, pp. 73 ff.
5. Cf. I, vii, 5.
16. "ἀντοπιστόν." Cf. I, vii, 2 (end) and Hendry, *op. cit.*, pp. 76 ff.
17. Cf. *Summary of Doctrine Concerning the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments*, doubtfully attributed to Calvin (CR IX, 773-778; tr. LCC XXII, 171-177), esp. paragraphs v, vi.

Some Discussion Questions:

According to the feminists, when is Scripture authoritative? If the women grant authority to Scripture, who is the source of ultimate authority?

According to the church's historic understanding, who alone has authority? How was that authority conveyed to Scripture?

If as the feminists contend, Scripture is only authoritative when it agrees with the women's experience, can Scripture ever judge a feminist's behavior or beliefs? If the feminist position is true, what has to happen to the teaching that human beings are fallen? Can human beings be fallen and still "see" clearly to judge Scripture? If the feminists ability to judge Scripture must deny human fallenness(original sin), what happens to Christ as the one who atoned for our sins by his death on the cross?

What implications does it have for Christian living if as the feminists contend, we are authoritative and declare as valid only those passages of Scripture which agree with us? What boundaries are placed on our beliefs or behavior? Who or what has the authority to judge us and determine our beliefs or behavior are sinful? What are the implications of this thinking for individuals? families? the church? society?

How should the church respond to women who have been hurt by people who have misinterpreted and misapplied Scripture?

Bible Study of the Gospel of Mark

CHAPTER 2

(chapter 3 will follow in the next issue)

of THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Observe the Text to understand the author's meaning:

Read 2:1-12. This is a chapter on “sin” and “law” --notice the distinction made between God’s law and man’s and also Jesus’ response to the laws. This chapter also speaks of Jesus authority.

What is the problem that the friends of the paralytic encounter? What does the action of the friends show about their understanding of who Jesus is and what authority he has? What does Jesus initially say to the paralytic? Why is Jesus statement a problem for the scribes and Pharisees? Who is it that forgives sins? See Ex 20:7, Ex 32:32, Psalm 51, Isaiah 43:25, 44:22. What does this say about who Jesus is when he claims to forgive sins? What is the normal procedure for obtaining forgiveness of sins according to Lev 4:20,26,31,35? Who is it that pronounces forgiveness? Do you see this as an affront to the scribes and Pharisees? Why?

Other places where blasphemy is spoken of are Isaiah 52:5, 2 Samuel 12:14 and Revelation 2:9. What is blasphemy and how is it related to the second Commandment in Exodus 20:7? Is blasphemy limited to using God’s name in a curse?

Notice the dialogue with the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus deals with the unseen and then the seen. Proof of his forgiving the man’s sins is that the man is physically cured. Which is harder to say-- “your sins are forgiven” or “arise and walk?” Why? What is the response of the people?

While physical brokenness is a part of the fallenness of creation, is it always a result of a sinful act?

Read 2:13-14. What kind of a following does Jesus have? What is significant about the name Levi? According to Numbers 3, what should his job have been? What was it? What do you know about tax-gatherers? What is the significance of Jesus calling him to follow? What does it mean for Levi to follow Jesus? What does he give up? With regard to sin, what is Levi doing?

Read 2: 15-17. Whose house is Jesus eating at? Who are the guests? Do you believe from the context that they are coming in repentance, believing in Jesus? Or defiance of Him?

Who are the one’s who are sick that Jesus came to minister to? Who claim to be righteous? Isn’t that a way of saying

that they do not recognize their own sickness so are unwilling to come to the physician who can heal?

Read 2:18-20. What is the problem? Who brings the problem to Jesus? Notice in Mark Jesus’ teachings almost always come as a result of the questions of the scribes and Pharisees. He begins where they are! What is the sin that the disciples are accused of? Is fasting a law of God? Is it one of the 10 Commandments? Or is it a law of the Pharisees--a man-made tradition?

God, remember was the husband of Israel--Ex 6:7(this is the form of an Ancient Near Eastern marriage covenant. As if God said, “I will take you for my wife and I will be your husband.”), Jer 3:6-11, Hosea 3:1. When Jesus calls himself the bridegroom what is he saying about himself in relation to God?

One of the prophecies in the OT was that there would be such destruction by God that there would be no brides and bridegrooms in the land. See Jer 7:34, 16:9, 25:10. But when God restores Israel, there will again be marrying. See Jer 33:10-11. Not only is God in their midst and they should celebrate but when there is a bridegroom it is indication of God’s favor and restoration. The fasting and mourning should come when there is no bridegroom because God is judging the land and also when Jesus is not among them. When do you think that will be?

Read 2:21-22. Can you explain these statements about old and new skins? And unshrunk clothe and shrunk clothe? What happens to clothe that has shrunk when you put a patch on it that is new and has not shrunk? What happens when new wine is put in old skins? Can you suggest what Jesus is saying here keeping in mind vs. 18-20? What is the “old skins” that are inflexible? What is the rigid old clothe? The new unshrunk clothe? The new wine?

Read 2:23-28. Who initiates the conversation again with their question? What day is it? Whose law do the Pharisees claim is being violated? See Ex 20:8-11. What does it mean to make the Sabbath “holy,” if “holy” means “to set apart for God’s purposes?” See Deu 23:25. What is God’s law? Does it say that you cannot pick enough grain to eat on the Sabbath? What is the Pharisee’s interpretation of the law?

Read 1 Samuel 21:1-6, Lev 24:5-9. Jesus’ explanation goes back to the original intent of the law. He first uses David as an example and then explains the lesson in vs. 27 and finally the punch line in vs. 28. While the “law” of the scribes and Pharisees would kill by even withholding food from people, God’s law brings life--rest, restoration, renewal.

What does vs. 28 mean? What is it saying about Jesus authority? relationship to God? relationship to the scribes and Pharisees?

Interpret the Text:

1) There are two groups of laws being addressed in this chapter in vs. 1-12 what is the law? In vs. 16-17? in vs. 18-19? in vs. 23-28? Do you see a conflict between the laws of the scribes and Pharisees and the Laws of God? Whose laws are life-giving? In what way?

2) Sin also arises as an issue. Who is the sinner according to the scribes and Pharisees in vs. 1-12? who really is the sinner? Mark 2:13-14? 2:15-17? 2:18-19? 2:23-28?

3) What issue is really at stake in the controversy over whose law will be obeyed? Do you see that as an issue of “whose authority.” The one with authority makes the laws. Explain. Do you see a conflict brewing over “whose authority”, “whose laws?”

4) What identifications has Jesus made in this chapter to show his relationship with God? What has he said and done to indicate the nature of his ministry?

5) Jesus changed the Sabbath by his resurrection. He laid in the grave during the Jewish Sabbath--doing no work! Then established a new Sabbath with his resurrection. Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath--The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. Comment?

BIBLE STUDY NOTES

(Compare these notes to your thoughts after you have looked at the passages and answered the questions yourself)

Mark 2:1-12. This passage shows Jesus can restore both physical brokenness and spiritual brokenness. Jesus has authority over sin and physical brokenness. The multitudes do not give this authority to Jesus, rather they recognize that he possesses the authority to heal and forgive.

The issue of the law is raised. This time it is God’s law. Only God can forgive sins. As a human being, to claim to have the power to forgive sins is blasphemy--it is claiming for yourself what belongs to God. For Jesus to say, “your sins are forgiven” is breaking the Commandment of God given in Exodus, by usurping what only God can do--unless Jesus is God.

Here Jesus forgives the man’s sins, as only God can do, and allows the multitude to see the visible effect of that forgiveness when the man rises and walks.

Jesus has shown he has the authority to forgive sins and restore both the spiritual brokenness of sin and the physical brokenness caused by sin. The multitudes respond in amazement to Jesus authority. It is not that the multitudes give Jesus authority, but rather, they testify to the authority that Jesus possesses.

Blasphemy goes beyond using God’s name in a curse. It includes denying God is who he claims to be or attributing to God what he has not revealed himself to be. In either case

we take his name in vain and deny him the worship and reverence he deserves.

While physical brokenness is a part of the fallenness of creation, it is not always the result of a sinful act. Scripture is clear in Job and John 9: 1-5 that not all physical illness is the result of sinful acts.

Notice Jesus typically refers to himself as “Son of man” in Mark. “Son of man” is mentioned in Daniel 7:13-14 as a reference to the Messiah. God also frequently refers to Ezekiel as the “son of man.” “Son of man” is closely associated with humanity and with the Messiah--fully human, fully God.

Mark 2:13-14. Levi should have been a priest serving in the House of God. Instead he is collecting Roman taxes from the Jews for profit. Tax collectors were considered traitors and robbers. Yet, he leaves his old life and follows Jesus.

Mark 2:15-17. The healing that occurs visibly with bodies in other passages, occurs invisibly here with souls. Jesus is the physician with authority over both.

Mark 2:18-20. Fasting is not a law given in the Old Testament, it is a tradition of the scribes and Pharisees. There are references in Scripture to people fasting but nowhere does God command people to fast. Jesus is pointing them away from their rituals to the living God among them. A statement about getting priorities straight. Also a statement about Jesus’ divinity.

Mark 2: 21-22. In light of vs 18-20, Jesus is talking about the traditions and laws of the scribes and Pharisees which blind them to the living God among them. Jesus is not saying that God’s laws, given in Scripture, are the old wineskins which are inflexible but rather humanly devised laws which keep people from seeing the living God.

Do you see this as a challenge to the authority of the scribes and Pharisees? Even John’s disciples obeyed the Pharisee’s laws but Jesus and his disciples do not. Do you see this as Jesus and his disciples refusing to obey the authority of the scribes and Pharisees. They will not recognize Jesus’ true authority and Jesus rejects their false authority which keeps people from God.

Mark 2:23-28. God’s laws are not to burden and they do not destroy us--even starve us. God’s laws show us how to live as the image of God. God rested on the seventh day and therefore we as his image are to act like him and also rest. God’s laws are blessing for us. We also acknowledge God’s sovereignty even over our time schedule. God gave us the day off! He knows the tasks he has given us to do and he has determined we can accomplish his work in six days and rest on the seventh. His law does not burden us but blesses us with a day rest from our labors.

Calvin writes that the purpose of the Sabbath was so that, “men might be released from all earthly business and join together in a holy assembly.”

News from Around the World

Church Women United in Southern California hosted a rerun of Re-Imagining, 1993 on February 10-11, 1995. About 200 women came to re-imagine God, Jesus, Scripture, Church, Sexuality/Family. Presbyterian Women(PW) gives \$15,000/year to support Church Women United. Another 33% of CWU's budget, \$500,000, comes from World Day of Prayer offerings. CWU publicly affirmed the Re-Imagining, 93 conference. Re-Imagining 93 created such a furor in the PCUSA that millions of dollars in funds were withheld from the denomination.

The Jan/Feb issue of PW's *Horizons* magazine contains an article attacking the "Christian Right" written by Professor Ken Chafin of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. The "Christian Right", according to Chafin, are people who believe homosexuality and abortion are not consistent with the will of God. In response to the article, Dr. Mark Coppenger, Vice President of the Southern Baptist Convention told PFFM, "In the 1970's, Southern Baptists became concerned that they would decline along with the mainline denominations if they did not take a strong stand on the inerrancy of the Bible. Ken Chafin and others resisted this conservative resurgence, in which biblical inerrantists have won 16 consecutive elections for president. Chafin is bitter and active in vilifying the denomination. Meanwhile the SBC is adding three new congregations a day, and, this last year, passed the 4,000 mark for overseas missionaries." *Horizons* receives a \$100,000/year subsidy from PW contributions.

Re-Imagining speaker Chung Hyun Kyung was the keynote speaker at the United Church of Christ national "Faithworks" Gathering. Chung led Re-Imagining, 93 participants in New Age panicky healing. She taught the Faithworks participants the same heretical Gnostic teachings she had presented at Re-Imagining saying, "if you bring out what is within you what is within you will save you. But if you cannot bring out what is within you, what is within you will destroy you."

The Rev. Melanie Morrison and her mother Rev. Eleanor Morrison co-authored the official United Church of Christ Human Sexuality Program for Ministry and Mission entitled "Created in God's Image." Melanie Morrison as co-convenor of CLOUT (Christian Lesbians Out Together) led the lesbian, bisexual, transsexual demonstration at Re-Imagining, 93.

In November, 700 women from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America gathered in Minneapolis, to explore the feminine dimension of Christ. According to reports, Diane Jacobson, a professor at Luther Seminary in St. Paul said, "the Old Testament speaks of Woman Wisdom as a prophet, teacher, mother, lover and goddess who was beside God during creation. In the New Testament, she said it becomes clear that Jesus is Sophia."

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