WHAT PRICE CO-OPERATION?

ECCLESIASTES 3:7, “A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.”


In “The Covenanter Witness” for March 15, 1944, there appeared an editorial entitled “Then Silence Is Golden,” setting forth and defending the proposition that it is right for orthodox Christians to unite with modernists in co-operative organizations and enterprises on a basis of mutual silence regarding points of difference, so long as modernism is not made a positive issue.

It is with reluctance that I undertake publicly to oppose a position advocated in an editorial in our official church paper, but I feel that in faithfulness to my obligations as a minister of the Gospel and pastor of this congregation it is my duty to do so. There is indeed a time to keep silence, and a time to speak. When co-operation with modernists in a religious fellowship is advocated by our own church paper, it is time to speak out plainly against it.

Eighteen years ago I joined the Covenanter Church because I wanted to belong to a church that was wholeheartedly loyal to the truths of God’s Word, a church in which I would not have to devote my energies through the years to fighting unbelief and error within the church. I came from a denomination which even then was honeycombed with modernism, and which since that time has sunk to unfathomable depths of apostasy and defection from the truth of God.

I wanted to avoid controversy and to be able to devote my time and strength to the positive aspects of the work of the ministry. In my youthful optimism I thought that the Covenanter Church was a fortress of sound doctrine which the assaults of modernism could not undermine. Now, eighteen years later, I have come to realize how mistaken I was—not mistaken in joining the Covenanter Church, but mistaken in dreaming that in the shelter of the Covenanter Church I could avoid the stress of conflict with modernism.

For it is clear today that the Covenanter Church is in dire peril of being seriously affected by the spirit of modern religious thought. I do not mean that ministers of our own church disbelieve the truths of Christianity as the modernists do. But the menace of modernism to the Covenanter Church is apparent in two respects. First, there is widespread lack of understanding of what modernism is; and second, there is widespread lack of realization of the seriousness of this threat to the Christian religion. It is clear that many Covenanters, even ministers, fail to discern the real meaning and nature of modernism, and fail to see that modernism is not a variant form of Christianity but a pagan religion and that its prevalence implies the eclipse of true Christianity.

First I shall give an analysis of the editorial
in "The Covenanter Witness," and then I shall present a criticism of the position taken in the editorial.

I. ANALYSIS OF THE EDITORIAL

The editorial opens with a description of the 1944 Preaching Mission in the city of Topeka. The activities, results, and sponsorship of the Preaching Mission are set forth. It is stated that "the churches were brought into closer fellowship and, we trust, a better understanding of the underlying unity of Protestantism." No effort was made to incorporate the Catholics and Jews in the movement. Church unity was frequently suggested, and closer fellowship and cooperation were emphasized.

Next the editorial offers a criticism of certain features of the Preaching Mission. Conscientious conservatism was held up to ridicule and liberalism was idealized by some of the speakers. The attitude of some of the speakers was perhaps not entirely fair to old-fashioned Christians. This is illustrated by three specific instances of unfairness on the part of speakers in the Preaching Mission.

The editorial then raises the question, "If churches are to be brought into cooperation, why lay special emphasis on our differences of viewpoint?" The modernist or "liberal" wants others to join his movement on his terms, that is, on the basis of "liberalism," and is not willing to join a conservative movement on conservative or orthodox terms.

In discussing Paul's statement, the editorial affirms that Peter was a "conservative" whereas Paul was "a liberal," thus giving the impression that the difference between "liberalism" and orthodox Christianity is merely a matter of temperament or psychological attitude.

In discussing Paul's statement, the editorial affirms that Peter was a "conservative" whereas Paul was "a liberal," thus giving the impression that the difference between "liberalism" and orthodox Christianity is merely a matter of temperament or psychological attitude.

Co-operation with modernists on an "a silence basis" is next defended on the ground of Genesis 14:13-16, the account of Abraham's confederacy with the three Amorite brothers, Mamre, Eschol, and Aner, and their joint military expedition to recover the persons and property that had been carried away by Chedorlaomer and his allies.
The editorial points out that these Amorites were unbelievers in the true religion, and sees in Abraham's confederacy with them a warrant for orthodox Christians co-operating with modernists so long as modernism is not explicitly made an issue.

Finally, the editorial states that there are today several interdenominational organizations seeking to represent and speak for Protestantism. Some of these "seem to us too broad in their views"; others "are too narrow in their programs of activity, and too dogmatic about what we must believe to be considered eligible for membership."

The editorial closes by asking: "Is there not some way by which we may learn to co-operate for common ends on a basis of mutual silence—or points of disagreement?"

II. CRITICISM OF THE EDITORIAL

With the remarks about the undesirability of "liberal" we are in hearty agreement. They are not really liberal but very illiberal in their treatment of those who conscientiously differ from them. And we agree with the editorial that this tendency to cast asides and ridicule on orthodox Christians, while it is an unfair practice, does not in itself constitute a legitimate ground of separation. If this unfair attitude were all that is wrong with the modernists, we could bear it with Christian patience. Also, this tendency is only incidental, a mere superficial symptom of the actual disease of modernism. The real objection to the modernists is not the way they talk about orthodox Christianity, but the fact that modernism is a complete philosophy of life and of history which is irreconcilable with historic Christianity.

"THE UNDERLYING UNITY OF PROTESTANTISM"

The assumption on which the entire editorial is based is set forth in its second paragraph, namely, "the underlying unity of Protestantism." This conception is a delusion which vitiates the reasoning of the entire editorial. Protestantism today has a specious superficial unity running through its multiplicity of denominations, whereas underneath there lies a cleavage as deep as the bottomless pit.

This cleavage has nothing to do with denominational divisions. Practically every one of the major denominations of our land is a house divided against itself, with the membership arrayed on opposite sides of this great gulf. On the one side is modernism; on the other side is historic Christianity; and between these two, in the things that really matter, there is absolutely no common ground but only a bottomless chasm.

If we share the editorial's starting point, a belief in "the underlying unity of Protestantism," we shall have to assent to its conclusion, that cooperation with modernists on "a silence basis" is legitimate. If we hold that modernism is a superficial rift which does not destroy the solid unity underneath, then we can go a long way
in fellowship and co-operation with modernists. If we still think that the great division of the visible church is the division into Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans, Covenanters and so forth, then of course we will feel that we can co-operate in joint enterprises on "a silence basis," for in that case the points to be silent about would be merely denominational differences within Christianity, not differences between Christianity and a contrary system.

But if we have come to see that the division into denominations is as nothing when compared with the deep cleavage between modernism and orthodoxy, then we will realize that "the underlying unity of Protestantism," though it doubtless existed a hundred or even fifty years ago, is today merely a dead fossil of a bygone era. For modernism has split the visible church into two irrecconcilable camps whose philosophies of life are radically different. We must awake to the fact that modernism is not merely a special interpretation of particular doctrines, but a total philosophy of life that cannot be reconciled to historic Christianity. And interdenominational organizations such as "The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America" not only tolerate modernism but are actually dominated by modernists and saturated with the viewpoint of modernism. No person who knows the names of the men who occupy positions of leadership in the "Federal Council" and who is familiar with their activities, past and present, need have any doubts about these facts.

Why Emphasize the Differences?

"Why lay special emphasis on our differences of view point?" asks the editorial. The answer is, Just because these differences are not superficial but concern the very essence of Christianity. They actually constitute the difference between Christianity and non-Christianity. It is obvious, of course, that modernists and orthodox Christians have many things in common. They share, in general, the same forms of church government, the same modes of worship, the same religious and social customs and habits. They read the same Bible, and use, more or less, the same religious vocabulary. But all these points of resemblance are relatively superficial and do not touch the essence of Christianity. On the other hand, the points of difference between modernists and orthodox Christians go to the heart of the matter. They are the things that determine the real nature of our religion. Now what are these points of difference? I shall discuss six of them.

Different Standards of Truth

First of all, modernism and orthodox Christianity have different standards of truth. Both read the same Bible, but their attitudes toward it are as far apart as east is from west. For the orthodox Christian the Bible is a special, supernatural revelation of God, the only infallible rule of faith and life. For the consistent modernist, the Bible is an account of the evolution of the religious experience of the Hebrew people.
For the modernist, not Scripture but experience or conscience is the real standard of truth. Needless to say, the consistent modernist regards the Bible as a patchwork of truth and falsehood, not to be thought of as wholly true any more than we would think of Grimm's Fairy Tales as wholly true. The orthodox Christian holds that the Bible is useful because it is true; the modernist, on the other hand, affirms that the Bible is useful in spite of being largely untrue.

**Different Gods**

Second, modernism and orthodox Christianity do not worship the same God. They seem to worship the same God, but actually they do not. There is only one living and true God, the God revealed in the Bible, who is a Trinity, one God in three Persons, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. Now the consistent modernist is a Unitarian, that is, he believes that there is only one Person in the Godhead. He may pay lip-service to the idea of the Trinity, because the church he belongs to may require this of its ministers. But when his sermons and writings are studied carefully it will be seen that he does not really believe that there are three Persons in the Godhead, the same in substance and equal in power and glory.

The Triune God is the only God that really exists; all others are mere figments of the human imagination. The modernist, with his Unitarian belief, is worshiping an imaginary god. Consequently, he is an idolater, even though he does not bow down to images made of wood and stone.

**Different Conceptions of Christ**

Third, modernism and orthodox Christianity have radically different conceptions of Jesus Christ. The consistent modernist regards Jesus Christ as the product of the evolution of the human race, the finest and noblest specimen that humanity has yet been able to produce; a good man and a great teacher, of course, but after all merely a human being, a product of this world. The orthodox Christian, on the other hand, believes that Jesus Christ is a divine Person possessing a human nature; that he is literally the Creator of the entire universe; that he is God and of the same substance with God the Father.

These two conceptions of Christ are mutually exclusive and irreconcilable; between them there is only an unbridgeable chasm. To be sure, the typical modernist talks glibly about the "divinity" of Christ and the "deity" of Christ, and some modernists do not hesitate to affirm that Jesus is God. This sounds very reassuring until we investigate just what the modernists mean by these terms, when our confidence is rudely shattered. The modernist who says he believes in the "divinity" of Christ is likely, if sufficiently pressed, to explain that he believes Christ is divine because he was so perfectly human; believing in "the essential divinity of humanity" he cannot avoid believing in the "divinity" of Christ. As Dr. J. Gresham Machen...
pointed out by one of his books, when the modernist says that Jesus is God, it is not because he has such a high view of Jesus, but because he has such a very low view of God, a view of God that verges on Pantheism.

**Different Conceptions of Christianity**

Fourth, modernism and orthodox Christianity have radically different conceptions of the structure of Christianity. The modernist is a naturalist, that is, a thorough disbeliever in the supernatural. His great axiom is that miracles never happened. According to his philosophy, a real miracle would be so incredible that no amount of evidence could convince him of its reality. Therefore he goes through the Bible from beginning to end and "interprets" it in accordance with this philosophy. Mankind was not specially created, but evolved from the lower animals. Jesus Christ performed some remarkable works, but they were not really supernatural, somehow they were wrought through natural laws. Jesus Christ rose from the dead, but not literally in the same body in which he suffered; rather, his resurrection consists in his continued presence and influence in men's hearts and lives. And so on, with every supernatural element in the entire Bible. All must be "interpreted" in accordance with his naturalistic philosophy.

After he has eliminated the supernatural from the Bible by this process of "interpretation", the modernist can still claim to be a Christian because he holds that Christianity is not dependent on historical facts and actual events that happened at particular times and places; it consists of "ideals" and "spiritual values" which remain the same regardless of what is done with the historical facts. This is why the novelist Pearl Buck, who is a thorough modernist, could say, as she once did, that she could be a Christian just the same even if it could be proved that Jesus Christ never lived. Never mind the historical facts, says the modernist, just cling to the "ideals" and "spiritual values" and let the facts go.

The orthodox Christian, on the other hand, is a thorough supernaturalist. He realizes that the supernatural elements in the Bible are not unimportant superficial features, but the very warp and woof of the history of redemption. As Paul wrote, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." Remove the supernatural from the Bible, and you have removed Christianity. Nullify the supernatural by "interpreting" it in accordance with a naturalistic philosophy, and you have nullified Christianity. Discredit the historical facts of redemption, and you have discredited the whole plan of redemption and demolished the Christian religion.

**Different Conceptions of Sin and Salvation**

Fifth, modernism and orthodox Christianity have radically different conceptions of sin and
The modernist believes in "the Universal Fatherhood of God": he holds that sin is an evil, but not enough of an evil to separate mankind totally from God and condemn the human race to everlasting punishment. He tends to think of sin in human or social terms; he defines it not in relation to God but to human society.

Regarding sin in this inadequate way, the modernist thinks that slight remedies can correct it. He abhors with all his soul the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement, that Christ offered himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and reconcile us to God. Some modernists go so far as to call this doctrine "the theology of the slaughter-house"; others are more moderate in their language, but equally opposed to the doctrine.

Abhorring the Scriptural doctrine of the atonement, the modernist tends to accept the "example theory," or the "moral influence theory," or the "governmental theory," or the "mystical theory," or some other false theory of the atonement which removed the real offence of the cross. To be sure, he loves to talk about "the cross" and "the atonement," but on careful investigation it will be found that he has substituted a false theory for the Scriptural doctrine.

And so the modernist doctrine of salvation boils down to this: Christ is an example, not a sin-offering; and the sinner is saved, not by supernatural divine grace through the work of a Mediator, but by his own works and character.

The modernist way of salvation, in a nutshell, is just salvation by character.

The orthodox Christian, on the other hand, realizes that sin is an absolute evil that has totally corrupted man's nature, wholly alienated man from God, and brought on the human race the wrath of God, a just condemnation to eternal punishment in hell. Because sin is what it is, all schemes of self-salvation, whether by good works or good character, are foredoomed to dismal failure. Only the supernatural grace and power of Almighty God can save a sinner. Over against the modernist idea of salvation by character, the orthodox Christian affirms the Scriptural doctrine of salvation by grace.

DIFFERENT CONCEPTIONS OF FAITH

Sixth, modernism and orthodox Christianity have radically different conceptions of the nature of Christian faith. The orthodox Christian regards Christ Himself as the object of faith; he believes in Christ. The modernist, on the other hand, regards Christ as an example of faith; he speaks of "having faith in God through Christ"; or if he uses the traditional terminology by speaking of "faith in Christ," he interprets this to mean "faith in God like Christ's faith in God." Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick's famous sermon, "The Peril of Worshipping Jesus," is a case in point.

We have seen that modernism and orthodox Christianity (1) have different standards of truth; (2) do not worship the same God; (3)
have radically different conceptions of Jesus Christ; (4) have radically different conceptions of the structure of Christianity; (5) have radically different conceptions of sin and salvation; and (6) have radically different conceptions of the nature of Christian faith.

The editorial asks, "Why lay special emphasis on our differences of view point?" and we repeat, just because these differences are not superficial but concern the very essence of Christianity. If anyone doubts this he should by all means read Dr. Machen's book "Christianity and Liberalism."

The editorial quotes Paul's words in I Corinthians 10:27, 28, "If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that showed it, and for conscience sake." By analogy this is applied to the question of fellowship with modernists in a religious organization: "If a Modernist invite you to a conference and ye be disposed to go, join in the program without question, for conscience' sake. But if the question of Modernism is made an issue, then it is time to withdraw."

Now this analogy is an unwarranted and unsound interpretation, because Paul was discussing a question of social fellowship and we have no right to apply his words to a question of religious fellowship. The two are definitely not parallel. In the matter of social fellowship it is legitimate for a Christian to join with unbelievers so long as unbelief is not made an issue; similarly, it is legitimate for a Christian to join with modernists in a purely social organization so long as modernism is not made an issue. But that is very different from saying that it is legitimate for a Christian to join with unbelievers in a specifically religious organization.

If we want to draw an analogy from Paul's words, a true parallel would be the question of membership in a Parent-Teacher Association most of the members of which are modernists. An orthodox Christian can belong to such a social organization, regardless of the religious views of the other members, so long as religion is not made an issue. But if the Parent-Teacher Association engages in propaganda advocating the theory of evolution, or unsound religious education, then it is time to withdraw. Similarly, a Christian physician can join a medical association, regardless of the fact that most of the other members may be atheists or infidels, so long as it is merely a professional organization, and atheism or infidelity is not made an issue. But if the medical association engages in religious activities or propaganda contrary to the truth of Christianity, then it is time to withdraw. Very different is the question of orthodox Christians having fellowship with modernists or unbelievers in specifically religious
organizations. By confusing these two questions, the editorial grossly misrepresents the teaching of the apostle Paul. That Paul did not sanction religious fellowship between Christians and unbelievers is evident from his words in 1 Corinthians 6:14, 15, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for ... what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" Essentially the same teaching is set forth in 1 Corinthians 5:9-11.

Was Paul a Liberal?
The editorial informs us that Peter was "a conservative" whereas Paul was "a liberal," thus giving the impression that the difference between "liberalism" and orthodox Christianity is merely a matter of temperament or psychological attitude.

These terms "conservative" and "liberal" are admittedly unsatisfactory because, in their original and proper meaning, they are necessarily somewhat relative, and because there is no universally accepted definition of them as applied to the sphere of religion. However in contemporary theological controversy the term "liberal" has come to have an absolute or positive meaning, being used interchangeably with "modernist" to indicate a person who professes to be a Christian, yet rejects the supernatural character of Christianity.

Now it is perfectly clear that the apostle Paul was not a liberal in this sense, and that so far as the issues involved in the present conflict are concerned, both Peter and Paul were whole-heartedly on the side of supernatural Christianity. The real "liberals" of those days were not Paul and Christians like him, but the Sadducees, who were rationalists and denied the supernatural. Paul opposed them consistently, both before and after his conversion to Christianity.

Abraham's Confederacy with Unbelievers
Abraham entered into a league with the three Anakite brothers Mame, Eshcol and Aner, and together they pursued Chedorlaomer and his allies and recovered the persons and property that had been stolen. Pointing out that these Amorites were unbelievers in the true religion, the editorial sees in Abraham's confederacy with them a warrant for orthodox Christians cooperating with modernists so long as modernism is not explicitly made an issue.

This interpretation is just as unsound as the misunderstanding of Paul's teaching that we have just considered. A military alliance for purely secular purposes, between Christians and unbelievers, may be legitimate under certain circumstances, but this does not justify having religious fellowship with unbelievers or modernists. There is no reason whatever to suppose that Abraham had religious fellowship with these Amorites in any way whatever. If bandits have robbed a bank and kidnapped the cashier and tellers, Christians and unbelievers can join together in a sheriff's posse to hunt down the
criminals and recover the persons and property, but this is no warrant for religious fellowship and cooperation between Christians and modernists.

Moreover in pointing out that the Amorites were 'unbelievers,' the editorial by implication contradicts itself and proves too much. It started out with the assumption of "the underlying unity of Protestantism," implying that modernists, in spite of their doctrinal errors, are adherents of the same religion as the orthodox Christian. Then in discussing Genesis 14:13-16, the editorial points out that the Amorites were "unbelievers," that is, adherents of a different religion from Abraham, another form or branch of the same religion, but a totally different religion. In using Abraham's confederacy with the Amorites to justify religious fellowship with modernists, the editorial proves too much. The same argument, if it were sound, would justify having religious fellowship with infidels, Theosophists, Christian Scientists, Mormons and Rosicrucians, not to mention Mohammedans, Buddhists and Zoroastrians. Why not, if Abraham's military league with the Amorites is to be a pattern for our religious fellowships?

The editorial points out that "no effort was made to incorporate the Catholic and Jews in the movement." Why not? Certainly the Catholics and Jews are not farther from the truth than Manner, Ehrlich and Aner were. If Abraham's league with them is a pattern for our religious connections, why not invite the Catholics and Jews to participate, and receive them with open arms?

Several years ago a well-known and respected Covenant minister said to me, "This may sound shocking, but I would rather have my children grow up as good Catholics than have them grow up to be liberal Protestants." He was undoubtedly right. I have not the slightest hesitation in endorsing his statement. The Roman Catholic Church, viewed in its entirety, is of course an antichristian system, yet it contains the fundamental truths of supernatural Christianity, overlaid with a mass of error and superstition. Modernism, on the other hand, is devoid of truth; it is a false system from beginning to end. In fact, genuine modernism does not even really believe in the existence of such a thing as truth, absolute truth that is universally and perpetually valid. Modernism believes that truth changes with the times.

**SHALL WE ENTER WHERE CHRIST IS EXCLUDED?**

By implication, the editorial advocates that we enter where Christ is excluded, that is, where the real Christ, the Christ of the Scriptures and of historic Christianity, is excluded. Make no mistake on this point: the Christ of the Scriptures is excluded from these modernist-dominated organizations.

He is not explicitly excluded, of course, but
he is excluded by the purely human Jesus who has usurped his place. And we are to leave our blessed Saviour, the Christ of the Scriptures, outside the door, while we go into these fellowships with modernists, agreeing to remain silent about our Lord's true deity so long as the modernists leave their modernism in the form of a tacit presupposition and do not make a positive issue of it.

If we are to co-operate with modernists, the price we must pay is silence about the fundamental truths of supernatural Christianity. The editorial advocates paying that price. But the price is too high. No Christian can afford to pay it. We dare not enter where our Lord must be left outside. "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."
ian terminology, orthodox Christians who are awake to the theological issues of the present day feel bound to oppose them to the uttermost and can never seek a negotiated peace with them. But it is far from being a case of opposing them because "they follow not us."

**What is Modernism, After All?**

What is modernism, after all? It is not a variant form of Christianity, but an alien system of religion derived not from the Scriptures but from the speculations of modern philosophy and cleverly attached to the visible organization of Christianity. It is not a different branch of the same tree, but another tree of an entirely different species, a different religion with a totally different scheme of salvation, namely self-salvation by the cultivation of character.

Modernism is fundamentally dishonest, though often unconsciously so, in its continued use of the terminology of historic Christianity after the true meaning of this terminology has been rejected. Thus modernists are really dishonest when they continue to use such expressions as "the divinity of Christ" and "the atonement," for they have rejected the truths for which these words really stand and have placed radically different ideas in their place.

Modernism is characterized by omission as well as commission. There are radically modernistic sermons which nevertheless do not contain a single untrue statement. One can go through them sentence by sentence and not find a single statement that is contrary to the Scriptures. Yet the effect of the whole may be intolerably harmful by reason of the things that ought to be included but were omitted. If a man preaches on "How to be Saved" and says a lot of things which are true, but just omits to mention, *faith in Jesus Christ,* such a sermon may be even more harmful than one which actually teaches positive false doctrine about the way of salvation. No lie is so dangerous as a subtle half-truth.

We Covenanters need to wake up and realize that the most dangerous modernists are not the blatant, open blasphemers and scoffers, but the very kindly and likeable men who preach eloquent sermons and just subtly omitt the things that they ought to say. The apostle Paul did not need to warn the Galatian Christians about a false gospel preached by devils from the pit, but he did say to them: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8).

We should realize, too, that modernism is not merely a false system of religion; it is also a virus of deadly infection. No church is immune to this deadly virus, and the history of Protestantism during the past hundred years shows that its attack is extremely insidious. The denominations which today are almost hopelessly sunk in the apostasy of modern unbelief, once were sound, orthodox Christian churches proclaiming the gospel of God's grace to a lost world. None
of them adopted modernism suddenly, by de-
liberate intent, after facing the issues candi-
ly. They sank into modernism as gracefully as snow-
flakes fall on a calm winter night. They
slumbered off in a false assurance that all was
safe, and modernism did its deadly work un-
observed; and when some of the members
finally awoke to the realities of the situation, it
was too late to offer any effective opposition,
for modernism was already in complete control of
the denominational machinery.

Half a century ago the Presbyterian Church
in the U.S.A. was soundly orthodox so far as the
fundamental doctrines of supernatural Christi-
anity were concerned. Today more than twelve
hundred ministers of that denomination have
signed a document stating that
the fundamental
doctrines of Christianity are merely "theories"
and should not be required even of ministers
of their denomination. The few who have dared
to protest against this state of affairs have been
disciplined and cast out of the church. In 1893
the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. suspen-
ded Dr. Charles A. Briggs from the office of the
ministry because he did not believe
in the in-
falibility of the Bible; in 1936 the same de-
nomination suspended Dr. J. Gresham Machen
from the office of the ministry because of his
vigorous championing of the truths of super-
natural Christianity. What was heresy in 1893
had become the dominant viewpoint of the de-
nomination by 1936.

Now if we Covenanters are going to associate
with modernists and co-operate with them in
religious fellowships and organizations, we too
will be infected with this deadly virus of modern
unbelief. It is incredibly subtle, and we are any-
thing but awake to its dangers. If the present
trend toward co-operation with modernists con-
tinues, in twenty-five or fifty years the Cov-
enanter Church may be hopelessly sunk in the
miasma of modern unbelief. Now is the time to
execute a right-about-face and see that from now
on we hold fellowship only with those who be-
lieve the fundamental truths of God's Word.

It is very comfortable to assure ourselves that
there is no modernism in the Covenantier Church.
We like to feel that "it can't happen here." But
that is exactly the way the denominations which
today see submerged in modernism reassured
themselves a generation or two ago. It did
happen there, and it can happen here.

NeutraliTy Is Impossible

In this matter of religious fellowship and co-
operation, neutrality as to the fundamental
truths of supernatural Christianity is impossible.
Moreover, non-belligerency in this matter is
disloyalty to Christ. It is the will of God that
every thought be brought into captivity to the
obedience of Christ. We may not enter a re-
ligious organization on the basis of silence about
the things that matter most. In the sphere of
religious fellowship there is no neutral territory,
no middle ground, no "no-man's-land" between
modernism and orthodoxy; there is only a bot-
tomless chasm, and if we try to ignore this, we shall be in serious danger of succumbing to modernism ourselves. Principiis obsta! Resist the beginnings of evil things! Modernism is knocking at the doors of the Covenanter Church today. If we insist on taking fire into our bosom, we are going to be burned.

POSTSCRIPT

In an explanatory note in “The Covenanter Witness” for March 29, 1944 (page 255), the editor asserts that his editorial “When Silence is Golden” has been misunderstood and that he did not mean to advocate the tolerance of false doctrine.

Following this he repeats the principal thesis of the editorial by saying: “We still think there are times when silence is golden and certain questions are irrelevant.”

The editor’s explanatory note makes it plain that he regards an organization composed of modernists and orthodox Christians together as “a battalion of the Lord’s army” for the purpose of making “Satan as uncomfortable as possible.” Thus it is obvious that he regards modernism as a legitimate form of Christianity, and that he looks upon modernists as fellow soldiers in the Lord’s army, Christian brethren fighting side by side with orthodox Christians against the devil.

The editor adds, “Could we hope to defeat Hitler if we interjected the question of Modernism vs. Fundamentalism, Evolution vs. Special Creation, Republicans vs. Democrats, or any other irrelevant controversy into the induction centers? Even in this holy (?) war, we count these irrelevant.”

Now it happens that Uncle Sam is rather particular about the beliefs of the soldiers inducted into our army. Is it irrelevant whether a soldier prefers the Nazi form of government to the American form of government? Is it irrelevant whether a soldier is pro-Nazi instead of pro-American? Well, those who exhibit tendencies in that direction are well looked after by the FBI and not inducted into the army. But the modernist who accepts modernism and evolution instead of supernatural Christianity is just as dangerous to the Christian Church as a pro-Nazi soldier would be to the American army. A man who preaches modernism and evolution is just as much an enemy of true Christianity as a German spy in a U.S. Army uniform would be an enemy of our country.

The editor seems to imply that the question of modernism vs. fundamentalism and the question of evolution vs. special creation are irrelevant in the warfare between Christianity and Satan’s kingdom. I do not see how any other construction can be placed upon his words. But we must certainly realize that both modernism and evolution are Satan’s implements, and that the man who wields them is fighting on Satan’s side. Nobody who believes in modernism and evolution is really fighting the devil. On the contrary, he is actually aiding the devil, fighting
the devil's battles for him. If the propagation of modernism and of the theory of evolution are not the devil's work it is hard to see what could be regarded as the devil's work. Nothing has so interfered with the salvation of immortal souls as the propagation of evolution and modernism. No wonder Satan uses these very effective weapons.

We read in the Bible that the Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. These works of the devil include modernism and evolution. How can the editor of "The Covenanter Witness" imply that modernism and evolution are irrelevant in the conflict against the devil? If the Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, are we going to co-operate and hold religious fellowship with people who are striving to promote what really are the works of the devil?

Of course the modernists do not believe in a personal devil. But that doesn't mean that they are not doing his work just the same. Of course they don't mean to be doing Satan's work. They are like the people whom Christ called "blind leaders of the blind." But we are not discussing their motives and intentions; we are considering the real character and effects of their work. The sober truth is that while modernists do not believe in Satan, nevertheless Satan is using them to deceive and bewilder people and lead them away from the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. How then can we look on modernists as fellow-soldiers in the Lord's army, fighting side by side with us against Satan?

What the editor of "The Covenanter Witness" fails to grasp is that modernism is not a form of Christianity at all, but a contrary system; that the modernist must therefore be regarded not as a Christian brother but as an opponent; that in utter reality the modernist is not fighting the devil but helping the devil.

If we as orthodox Christians are to be loyal to Christ there is just one attitude toward modernism and modernists that is right for us to have, and that is the attitude of separation from them, opposition to them, and competition with them to the uttermost.

When a person really grasps the meaning and menace of modernism, he realizes that to talk of fellowship and cooperation with such persons is a mockery. "What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (II Corinthians 6:15).

The End.