

The Far Left and the Far Right

Miles J. Stanford

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Miles J. Stanford Christian Correspondence

"A LETTER OF INTENT"

October 1976

Dear Christian friend

In keeping with the entire Spiritual Sharing Service, Tri-S Series VII has to do with your spiritual growth and welfare.

We have conceived the theme as a stream, with its left bank, and its right bank. The stream proper consists of the two growth elements--the Cross, and the Christ-life.

The far left bank is composed of illustrations and documentation of the Arminian errors in the area of growth.

The far right bank consists of documentation disclosing the Reformed/Covenant Calvinist errors in the realm of growth. The chief burden of this paper pertains to this system in its relation to the identification truths of Romans Six.*

It is possible that you will experience some heart-rending shocks in your progress along these banks. But I trust any wounds will be healed by the central stream of life that flows from the Throne of God.

There is that which may be easy to grasp, and that which could prove to be difficult to understand—at least in the first reading. But the same can be said of the Word of God, hence no apology is forthcoming.

We do appreciate very much your patience and willingness to “study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (II Tim. 2:15).

"And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words... As you have, therefore, received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding with thanksgiving.

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:4, 6-9).

Your for His very best,

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Miles

* Editor's note. In the original, the term "Covenant Theology" was often used. In several later polemic articles, Miles frequently used terms like "Reformed," "Reformed Calvinist," "Covenant Calvinism," and "Neo-Puritan" to describe various, similar Reformation theological traditions. Since the Arminian tradition also approaches Scripture largely from a *covenant* rather than *dispensational* structure (not touched upon by MJS in his writings), we will use Miles' later, more definitive designations where deemed appropriate. Comments in brackets [] have been added for clarification.

THE UNDER-SHEPHERD -- Today, by God's grace, we are in the midst of a tremendous spiritual awakening. Vast numbers are being saved, and even greater numbers of believers are being enhungered for growth and awakened for service.

Commensurate with this burgeoning increase in the realm of birth and growth is the opportunity for the already growing believer to be an under-shepherd among these newborn lambs and newly awakened sheep.

The primary ministry of the under-shepherd is to provide nourishment and adequate protection for the flock. The primary characteristic of both the newborn and the newly awakened is ravenous hunger.

THE "GREAT SHEPHERD" -- Notice these few words of Scripture concerning the subject at hand. "When they had dined, Jesus said,...Feed my lambs..., Feed my sheep" (John 21:15,16). The "Great Shepherd" of the sheep said, "My Lambs," "My sheep."

We are under-shepherds to the Great Shepherd--"vessels of mercy," poured in to be poured out for His flock, His very Body. It is those who have first dined, who can best feed others. "Feed the flock of God which is among you ...not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock" (I Peter 5:2,3).

FEED AND FEND -- The hungry will eat, there is no question about that. But the responsibility of the under-shepherd to the voracious, non-discriminating eater, is to procure the pure and protect from the pestiferous.

The most obvious and widespread danger today, especially concerning the newborn and newly awakened, is the charismatic movement. This plague will be dealt with in a comparatively brief manner below since we have already sounded extensive warning in this Tri-S--Series, as well as in our books, *Abide Above* [Part Five of *The Complete Green Letters*] and [The Line Drawn](#).

CHARISMATIC EXAMPLES -- "Be not carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace" (Heb. 13:9).

In order to illustrate some of the tragic results of this false faith we will share several letters that have recently come to heart, communiques quite typical of the present-day overall problem. The first is from a layman, the second is from a pastor, and the third is from a missionary.

August 24, 1976

Dear Mr. Stanford,

This is to thank you for the tremendous help your books and other literature have been in my life. My walk in the Lord has gone various ways during the six years since I was saved, and now I firmly believe I have the right concept of the Christian life.

I was converted while watching Billy Graham on TV, and then attended an Evangelical Free church. It wasn't long, though, before the charismatic movement affected me, mainly through my attendance at a Derek Prince meeting.

Later I was swept away by the body movement in our area. We tried to emulate Watchman Nee's The Normal Christian Church Life. While in the "body" we had tongues, prophecies, exorcisms, etc., etc.

Then my girlfriend joined a Witness Lee group. I also went through a very trying time when I attempted to help a Christian homosexual find deliverance from his sin, and he wrote me a bitter letter in return not wanting to be freed at all but insisting that he be accepted as he was.*

Your literature has covered all of these areas, and I am so grateful that I now have the right perspective. I would appreciate very much if you would advise me concerning the following books in my library, as I seem now to have a check in my mind about them.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I have wanted to write to you for over a year.

Sincerely in Christ,

(Signed)

* Word has just come from this brother that after two years in a Lee group this young lady was "kidnapped" by her father, who then had her "deprogrammed" for two day by five Patrick-trained ex-cultists. At present she is staying quietly at home, glad to be free from the cult, and studying the Word.

WANTED: UNDER-SHEPHERDS! – This young man's story is quite a comprehensive commentary on present-day conditions, is it not? What is the explanation for so many new converts being captured by the charismatics? The main reason is lack of personal feeding and protection.

Is there a remedy for this widespread and critical new convert problem? Yes, there is you! If you are not already so occupied, you can be an under-shepherd to one or two lambs. You can cultivate them by fellowship and teaching, and in many ways help them to commence correctly.

COLPORTEUR -- If your personal involvement is necessarily limited, you can both supplement and multiply your care by means of literature. With careful sharing of books and tracts you can reach out near and far, warning and teaching many who need guidance and feeding.

Literature was certainly a factor in the above-quoted young convert's development, both as to warning, and rescue. Would that it had been a factor in the young lady's "rescue," also. Nevertheless, the young man received the right thing at the right time--he was straightened out via trouble and truth.

"DELIVERER" DELIVERED -- Our second letter comes from a pastor. Again the example is all too relevant; it is a picture of what is happening throughout the country. If He has not already done so, I trust the Lord will burden your heart and alert your mind so that you may be able to warn and prevent, as well as share and rescue.

September 20, 1976

Dear brother Miles,

Please send me 10 copies of The Line Drawn. Our town has been taken over almost completely by tongues-speaking, demon-commanding people!

I was one of them until the Lord sent me your Principle of Position [Part Two of The Complete Green Letters] book. Praise the Lord Jesus, I was wrestled out of it all by His grace in one day's time. The Lord is solidifying our church now. We all fell into the error and started "casting out demons," etc. I don't know why the Lord took pity on us, but He did. I know one thing though; He has given me the liberty to speak out on this subject, and speak I will!

For some time not I have been meaning to write and tell you how I cam upon your book; which, by the way, has greatly changed the entire course of my life and ministry.

Two years ago a woman called and begged me to counsel her concerning her "demon" problem. I refused at first but finally consented to help her. The first night of this nonsense found me scared half to death. She growled, spit, cried, and crawled behind the sofa. I was shocked, to say the least.

Yet this experience seemed to be a calling of God to place me in a special deliverance ministry, but as time went on I was subjected to a downward spiral that almost ruined my life. Dreadful things began to happen as I counseled and dealt with people of this type.

After about a year it was hard to find peace of any kind and it began to seem as though God had played a cruel trick on me. I had three serious confrontations with some very weird people that had me afraid to go to bed at night.

Another year of this and sin had risen to an all-time high in my life. I was about to give up when the Lord sent a preacher to my church to fill in for a Sunday. He preached from your The Principle of Position, and [The Green Letters](#).

My heart was so blessed that I could hardly wait to get him aside after the service. I asked him if he knew why I was so desperately wicked after being saved for so many years. He said the least expected thing I've ever heard come out of a preacher!

He stated that God had done it all and that I was to experience that revelation of how wicked I am in myself, and of what I am in the Lord Jesus Christ. With that he handed me The Principle of Position.

That night I entered into God's rest, and I slept like a babe. Two long years of no rest, and that total rest was the most blessed thing since being born again!

Bless you, brother Miles. I'll be looking for you in Glory!

(Signed)

LEADER LED – Dear friend, “Touch a leader and you touch a thousand” works both ways. When a pastor goes down into the black hole of charismatic error he usually takes a following from the flock down with him.

Although it is necessary to be especially careful and prayerful in sharing literature with a leader, don’t be afraid to ask the Lord for opportunities in the upper echelons. It is there that the needs are often multiplied.

MISSION MISERY – This third letter has come from a veteran missionary.

September 17, 1976

Dear brother Stanford,

I am writing about my deep concern that members of our own family, some of our dear Christian friends, and now many of our fellow missionaries, have been dragged down into “demonism.”

They are teaching that the believer can be demon possessed, and they spend much time in “casting” them out; condemning those they believe have demons; disciplining others whom they say have been born with them.

During the past several years this has become an increasing burden to me because of the tragedies I know of. I am now preparing to do some writing regarding this, Lord willing. Your book, [The Line Drawn](#), is excellent. I would like to have your permission to put it into Spanish for use here on the field. It is so badly needed!

Right now in this city all of the evangelical churches are involved in this charismatic error, even though they were found by doctrinally sound missionaries.

I will not go into detail as to my personal suffering during the past two years. Our eldest son, a Bible school and college grad, was headed for the mission field when he was troubled about a marriage problem. He was told that it was “demons,” and that he had been born with them. He was also informed that several wonderful believers in our family had “died of demons,” etc. This “counseling” ended in a divorce.

Believers everywhere need to be warned concerning the extreme danger of the charismatic error.

The Lord bless you,

(Signed)

MISSION MANDATE -- Yes, believers everywhere need to be warned, and nowhere is it more essential than on the mission field. The isolation, the illness, the lack of spiritual food and fellowship, the discouragement (often due to sparse results), to say nothing of the general condition of those who are gleaned, all combine to make the missionary a prime target for the ever aggressive charismatic pusher.

This is not to infer that most missions and missionaries are being taken over by this error. On the contrary, many missions have taken a strong stand against the charismatic threat, and have not hesitated to purge their ranks of this pernicious plague. In fact, many missions are seeing more healthy spiritual fruit produced than they have ever harvested before, and that in the midst of present-day chaotic conditions.

Nevertheless, whether it's failure or fruit, it is your responsibility to be faithful in specific intercession. It can be safely said that much of the fault out there can be traced to its source back here.

The foreign mission field for which you are burdened and to which you are giving, whether it be direct or via your church, actually constitutes a domestic mission field for you. It is essential that you keep in personal touch with "your" missionaries. Personal in prayer; personal in penmanship. Write, cultivate fellowship, and share literature as the Lord leads.

It is mandatory to ascertain that the mission you help support is not only clear of the charismatic error, but that it maintains a firm stand against it. In all too many instances, well-meaning believers have been supporting certain missions for years in the supposition that they are, as sound as they originally were.

SOUND STEWARDSHIP -- In many cases the giving is faithful, but the mission is not; the giving continues the same, but the mission has changed. Make sure that your stewardship is well-advised and that it is not supporting error.

It will pay to give close attention to the missionary prayer letters you receive, and the mission literature that comes into your home and church. For instance, take note of where the mk's [missionary's kids] are being sent to school. Find out if there is any way you can help them. And if they are being placed in such Arminian schools as Taylor, Houghton, Asbury, Nyack, or Seattle Pacific, be alerted and find out why. These and similar schools are charismatic *conditioners*, to say the least.

SHARE WITH CARE -- In His mercy the Lord has awakened you and given you a heart-hunger for spiritual growth. He has also given you access to literature for both growth in the truth and warning against error. He is giving it, not only for your benefit, but for others as well. It is to be shared in love and discretion. "There is nothing more ugly than an orthodoxy without understanding or without compassion."

If it were not such a prevalent problem it would go without saying that it is not only how one shares, but what one shares. When a believer is enticed into charismatic Arminianism, or Covenant Calvinism, it is invariably via doctrinal weakness, carelessness of walk, or ignorance. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Gal. 5:9).

Doctrinal establishment alone, to say nothing of walking in the Spirit and abiding in the Lord Jesus, would have kept the many mentioned in the three above letters from being caught by the charismatics.

STUDY WITH CARE -- It also goes without saying that the believer should be very discriminative concerning the growth literature that he studies. The main reason is for the sake of his own spiritual health and welfare. Further, much of the material studied he will doubtless recommend for the spiritual well-being of others.

It is understandable that one becomes highly enthused and bent on sharing the growth truths discovered in the Word. It is the same with books containing the identification message. Usually, in his early stages of development, the believer endorses and seeks to share any and all material that has to do with identification.

SOUND AND UNSOUND -- But that will not do. We must take care how and what we share. As we have sought to point out in previous sections of this Tri-S series, there are many authors who are sound in the identification realm but unsound in some other vital realm. Then too, there are even more writers and speakers who teach so-called growth that is based upon error concerning the identification truths.

DEVOTIONAL DISCRETION -- It is one thing to avoid and warn against literature that would spiritually cripple the believer, and it is quite another thing to avoid and warn against material that would only condition the reader for ultimate crippling.

OSWALD CHAMBERS -- The following example is not necessarily a crippler, but it is definitely within the category of a conditioner. I refer to the daily devotional book that has been a favorite of hosts of believers over the past fifty or more years: it is the best known of the many books written by Oswald Chambers--*My Utmost for His Highest*.

If I were to ask how many have used and recommended that book, I would "see" hands going up all over the country! I have heard believers eulogize the book often through the years, but only once have I heard one speak a word of caution concerning Chambers' theology.

Did you ever give consideration to that title, *My Utmost for His Highest*? Thought provoking, isn't it? Theologically provoking, too. Might it not better have been "His Utmost for My Highest?" "The glory which thou hast given me I have given them" (John 17:22).

THE GOOD -- Although Oswald Chambers was strong on exhortation and weak on doctrine, there is no question but that he had a keen mind and a heart-burden for his readers' best spiritual interests.

The book is replete with some very outstanding insights, such as: "If we are devoted to the cause of humanity, we shall soon be crushed and broken-hearted, for we shall often meet with more ingratitude from men than we would from a dog; but if our motive is love to God, no ingratitude can hinder us from serving our fellow men" (Feb. 23rd).

Again: "Christian work may be a means of evading the soul's concentration on Jesus Christ. Instead of being friends of the Bridegroom, we may become amateur providences [rulers], and may work against Him whilst we use His weapons" (March 25th).

THE BAD -- But at the same time the book contains some very harmful comments. First, let's consider Chambers' attitude concerning the eternal security of the believer.

"God will not give us good habits, He will not give us character, He will not make us walk aright. We have to do all that ourselves, we have to work out the salvation God has worked in. If you hesitate when God tells you to do a thing, you endanger your standing in grace" (May 10th).

"The experience of salvation means that in your actual life things are really altered, you no longer look at things as you used to; your desires are new, old things have lost their power. If you still hanker after the old things, it is absurd to talk about being born from above" (Nov. 12th).

"Am I set on my own way for God? We are never free from this snare until we are brought into the experience of the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire" (Jan. 28th).

The above pretty much adds up to the fact that Oswald Chambers was an Arminian, does it not? Not necessarily charismatic, but such writing is certainly conditioning for same.

THE VERY BAD -- He does not go far enough for secure justification, and that ruinous lack causes him to overcompensate regarding scriptural sanctification. Whenever the Arminian speaks of identification he invariably goes too far.

"Have I made this decision about sin--that it must be killed right out in me? Haul yourself up, take a time alone with God, make the moral decision and say, 'Lord, identify me with Thy death until I know that sin is dead in me'" (April 10th).

THE WORST! -- It would seem that Mr. Chambers attempted to set some kind of record for sheer error when he came to June 23rd: "Either God or sin must die in my life. The New Testament brings us right down to this one issue. If sin rules in me, God's life in me will be killed; if God rules in me, sin in me will be killed. There is no possible ultimate but that."

The tap root of all Arminian error is that sin is not really understood for what it is. Their estimation of sin is kept low enough for them to get "victory" over it. "Envy, jealousy, strife--these things arise not necessarily from the disposition of sin, but from the makeup of your body which was used for this kind of thing in days gone by" (Sept. 15th).

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin' (I John 3:9). Do I seek to stop sinning or have I stopped sinning? To be born of God means that I have the supernatural power of God to stop sinning.

"In the Bible it is never--should a Christian sin? The Bible puts it emphatically--a Christian must not sin. The effective work of the new birth life in us is that we do not commit sin, not merely that we have the power not to sin, but that we have stopped sinning" (Aug. 15th).

ARMINIANISM FULL-BLOWN -- The following three points are typical of Arminian teaching in the realm of "growth."

- (1) Sin is not inherited from fallen Adam; it is developed by the individual.
- (2) Justification and sanctification both consist of renewing the old-nature.
- (3) The Cross is the means of keeping "entire sanctification" entire.

DR. T. A. HEGRE -- Dr. Hegre, an ex-Lutheran pastor turned Wesleyan and then Pentecostal, in his book, *Three Aspects of the Cross*, teaches the following on the three basic points of Arminianism.

- (1) Sin is not Inherited - "All inherit depravity, is the result of Adam's sin. I do not think anyone would argue against the fact that a weakened body, an impaired mind, and disturbed

emotions are common to everyone. This, however, is not guilt. Nor would it be right to call it moral depravity since on our part it involves no choice.

"However, the Bible makes unmistakably clear the fact that everyone becomes morally depraved--that is, everyone chooses sin. In fact, a child is committed to selfishness long before reason is developed. Then when reason is developed, he continues in the same direction and makes the same choice as Adam. He makes the wrong choice right at the beginning and very early in life, for he lives in an anti-Christ and pro-self world" (p. 98).

"There is nothing essentially wrong with the old nature except when living for itself. The only time flesh or human nature is wrong and sinful is when it rules. God never intended the flesh to rule but rather the Spirit; and when the Spirit rules, the flesh is pure and right. But the flesh allowed to rule is anarchy" (p. 46).

- (2) Old Nature Renewed (One Naturism) - "Our sinful nature is our human nature in wrong relationship to the devil, and thus polluted. With this wrong relationship broken and a right relationship with Christ fully restored, the sinful nature is changed (metamorphosed) and becomes pure (like the caterpillar turned into a beautiful butterfly)" (p. 104).

"Nothing is removed in the crisis of sanctification except sin, for God does not dehumanize us. The old nature is the human nature tainted by sin; the new nature is the human nature purged from sin--the very same nature in a different relationship. Sanctification is not the eradication of a nature at all, but the cleansing of the whole personality from sin" (p. 158).

- (3) The Cross after "entire sanctification" - "Sin stems from self being in the center of the life. But when we surrender fully to Christ and trust Him to forgive and also to cleanse from all unrighteousness, then sin is removed and the taint gone. [Sound familiar?]

"The heart that is pure and filled with perfect love is ready for the anointing of the Spirit. But even then lest we begin to please ourselves, we need the daily application of the Cross to maintain the decision in the crisis of entire sanctification.

"There is the application of the Cross to the new man in daily disciplines, daily sacrifices, daily brokenness, daily intercession, and daily warfare. The new man that walks in newness of life must be disciplined. Unless the new man bears a daily cross, he will have the same old trouble" (p. 160).

As for well-meaning Arminianism, it is to be feared that its "new nature" isn't very new, its "cleansing" isn't very clean, its "purity" isn't very pure, and as for sin's "taint," 'taint gone'!

DR. J. SIDLOW BAXTER -- In our transition from considering the Arminian far left to examining Reformed/Covenant far right, we shall take a brief look at a "one naturism" teaching that might be referred to as *ambidextrous*--a little far left, and a little far right, with little or nothing in between.

Dr. Baxter's teaching in his two almost identical books, *His Deeper Work in Us*, and *A New Call to Holiness*, is a curious combination of Wesleyan-Pentecostal "cleansing holiness," and Covenant-Calvinist "law holiness."

- (1) Arminian far left - Dr. Baxter considers human nature to be not all bad, and not all good--the bad can be cleansed, the good cultivated.

"Once we grasp that in Pauline usage 'the flesh' means, not a so-called 'old nature,' but our inborn selfish and animal urges which we have inherited along with all the higher and nobler impulses of our total humanhood--once we grasp that, and then realize that the Holy Spirit can refine our whole moral nature, with all its propensities, then we have taken the first step toward a truly New Testament doctrine of holiness" (*A New Call to Holiness*, p. 202).

"Sin is a diffused infection of thought, desire, motive, impulse, inclination, and even of instinct, right through the moral nature. From the moment the Holy Spirit fully possesses us, He begins to correct, purify, refine, inbreathe and renovate all the qualities, tempers, urges, propensities, and functions of the mind, the emotions, and the will. That is how holiness begins and continues to be inwrought" (*Ibid.*, p. 116).

- (1½) True ambidexterity - "Christians can 'grieve' the Spirit away, (Eph. 4:39), even though they do not lose their regenerated life. I have known ministries, once powerful, from which the Spirit has departed; and I shall ever pray that He may not be withdrawn from my own" (*His Deeper Work in Us*, p. 224).

- (2) Covenant far right - Here Dr. Baxter emulates the Reformed/Covenant theologians who teach that Romans Six has only to do with substitution and justification.

"What Romans Six actually means is, that since in the judicial reckoning of God we died with Christ in His once-for-all penalty-bearing, guilt-removing death on the Cross, we are now to reckon ourselves once-for-all 'dead indeed' to sin and the law in a judicial sense, inasmuch as their death-penalty upon us has been executed, and they can exact no more" (*His Deeper Work in Us*, p. 105).

"Romans Six was never meant to teach an inward crucifixion and deliverance from inbred sin as is usually supposed. What it teaches is our judicial identification with Christ in His Calvary death for sin. Those two expressions, 'our old man,' and 'the body of sin,' are not names for our so-called 'old nature' at all, but Paulinisms for the whole Adam race" (Ibid., p. 214).

True to the rigid right, Dr. Baxter fastens the law upon the believer. "Inwrought sanctification is the highest Christian way of victory over sin. It is victory, not by weary struggle, struggle, struggle, against a nature which is all the time wrenching or dragging you the wrong way, but by an inward renewal of that nature itself, so that with glad spontaneity it loves and keeps the divine law" (*A New Call to Holiness*, p. 156).

We have dealt more fully with Dr. Baxter's one naturism in Tri-S-IV.

REFORMED/COVENANT THEOLOGY -- The primary burden of this Tri-S-VII has to do with a theological theory within our midst that is no less dangerous but far more subtle than the charismatic movement. We refer, advisedly, to that which is known as Reformed/Covenant Theology.

Our guest Reformed/Covenant theologians are sound enough as to the foundational birth truths. But when it comes to the identification growth truths, Reformed/Covenant Theology is totally unacceptable. It must be sadly said, and will be solidly documented, that the Reformed/Covenant theologians know little or nothing about the growth truths of Scripture.

DANGEROUS DEFLECTION -- Not only so, but this system, along with Arminianism, has been a primary factor in deterring believers from even considering the identification truths in the Word. Hear Dr. Wm. R. Newell, for instance:

"To any one who has examined their writings, there is an inescapable conclusion that the Reformed/Covenant theologians have kept the vision of believers confined generally to the propitiatory work of Christ, not seeing the end of our history in identification with Christ; thus freeing us from sin, law, and the old creation, and setting us wholly on resurrection ground, in Christ Jesus" (*Romans, Verse by Verse*, p. 255).

"NOW WAIT JUST A MINUTE, BROTHER!" -- At this point your understandable reaction might very well be, "But brother, if you are going to call into question such loyal and well-established theological giants as R. Baxter, Bonar, Edwards, Haldane, Hodge, Kuyper, Machen, Owen, Pink, Ryle, Spurgeon and Warfield, just who will we have left?"

Our gentle rejoinder, and reminder, is that we are here-dealing with the subject of spiritual growth. It might be much worse if we were to include such subjects as Ecclesiology, Eschatology, and

Dispensationalism. Actually, it does not matter who is left, as long as the Lord Jesus and His Word are right!

POISON BY WHATEVER PEN.... -- Consider for a moment. Through the years much growth literature has been made available--some now out of print, some reprinted, some printed, some being printed, and some to be printed. Along the way most of this writing has picked up and incorporated within itself a great deal of poison.

It doesn't take very much theological contamination to make a believer very sick, who in turn may infect many other members of the body. Error is a malignancy that is extremely contagious!

What we have been seeking to do in our literature, by the grace of God, is to point out that which is rank poison, as well as that which contains contamination. Poison, under whatever name or title, is poison still.

And we have sought to maintain a balance, in that our writings are designed to provide healthy spiritual food and instruction for the Lord's hungry lambs and sheep.

REFORMATION COVENANTISM -- Before delving into documentation we will briefly consider Covenantism's questionable cause and aberrant effect. If you were to follow this theology in the realm of growth you would find the law as your rule of life. Would you accept that in place of the Lord Jesus Christ as your life?

How is it possible that the theology of this brilliant and sincere corps of theologians could constitute such a threat to the believer, and that in the all-important area of his spiritual growth?

Dear friend, it is very simple, and very tragic; and we hope to make it so clear that even a wayfaring man shall not err therein.

COVENANT CONSTRICTION -- We owe much to the Reformation in its re-establishment of the birth truths, such as regeneration and justification. However, it introduced nothing theologically new; it sought only to reform the old! In a number of ways it did not break doctrinally clear of the amillennial Roman Catholic Church. Reformed/Covenant Theology later evolved within the bounds of the Reformation doctrine, and it never has emerged beyond those confines.

Dr. L. S. Chafer wrote, "There are those who, being trained to recognize no more than that which entered into Reformation theology, are restricted in their doctrinal viewpoint and who look upon added truth as a departure from standard ideas and therefore dangerous" (*Systematic Theology, Vol. IV, p. 37*).

The herculean task of the Reformation was to bring to light again the light of the world from the darkness of the Roman Church and the Middle Ages: God's free redemption in Christ--justification by [grace, through] faith alone.

Covenantism is encapsulated within its one covenant: from Adam to the end of time the Bible has only to do with the redemption of man.

THE LAW-COVENANT OF GRACE -- Let us briefly outline this greatly admired but little known theology:

(1) - Adam was placed under a covenant of works: as long as he obeyed God fully, he would live; if he broke the law, he would bring in death. The "law" was soon broken--enter death. God then replaced the Covenant of Works with the Covenant of Grace.

Under this Covenant of Grace, the Son of God became Man so as to keep and fulfill the law as man, thereby satisfying its purpose (life); and He died in order to satisfy its penalty (death).

(2) - By accepting the Saviour the believer is brought back into right relationship with the eternal, ever-binding law through the vicarious law-keeping of the man, Jesus. The believer has life because the penalty of the broken law was paid by the Saviour's death on his behalf.

(3) - The purpose of the Covenant of Grace is to bring man back to the pre-fall condition of Adam in his perfection and innocence, thereby to honor, and live by, the law as the rule of life.

(4) - Since the law is the strength of sin, when man broke it he came under the power and penalty of sin. But in Christ the believer has kept the law perfectly, and its penalty has been paid for him. Now the law to him is no longer the strength of sin and death, but rather the strength of love and life.

(5) - The believer is reminded of his position concerning sin, and life, and is told to act it all out; to make it real in experience.

(6) - The Christian is given the Spirit of Christ to help him live by the law and keep it. But due to the old nature, he is not able to fully live up to the law's demands--hence he remains in Romans Seven as an "*Oh, wretched man,*" ever depending upon his justification, and his hope of final release in heaven.

COVENANT DOCUMENTATION -- To document the Covenant cause, we will quote five of the leading contemporary [circa '70s] Reformed/Covenant theologians, namely: Dr. Robert D. Brinsmead, Dr. Francis A. Schaeffer, Dr. John R. W. Stott, Dr. Jay Adams, and Dr. D. Martin Lloyd-Jones. [Similar quotes could also be found in the preaching and writings of: John MacArthur, R. C. Sproul, John Piper, Alister Begg, Albert Mohler, and others.]

DR. ROBERT D. BRINSMEAD -- Dr. Brinsmead is editor of *Present Truth*, a magazine "dedicated to a new Reformation that will recover what the reformers bequeathed us and complete the restoration they so nobly began." [Robert Brinsmead roots were in the Arminian, law-bound realm of Seventh Day Adventism. He originally attempted to bring "reformation" to that denomination.]

Here is what Dr. Brinsmead has to say under the six representative points of Reformed/Covenant theology.

(1) Christ and the Covenant of Grace - "Christ became our representative man. He bore our nature and became so identified with us that all which He did was exactly as if we had done it. He strove with sin, the devil and death. He utterly defeated them and destroyed their power. When He lived that holy life, which measured with the claims of God's law, it was exactly the same as if we had done it" (*How to Live the Victorious Life*, p. 6).

(2) Right relationship to the Law - "Freedom from the power of sin is only found in coming to terms with the law of God. As long as we are in debt to its righteous demands, we are 'under the law' and will surely be kept in the prison house of sin. But as soon as faith takes hold of Christ's doing and dying as ours, we are justified, or set right before the law" (*Ibid.*, p. 13).

(3) Back to Adam and Eden - "The strength of Reformation theology is that it recognizes that man today is still obligated to render to God the obedience that God required of man in his sinless state. This demand of perfect righteousness cannot be annulled, modified or relaxed.

"Christ lived a sinless life in order that our faith might grasp the virtue of His obedience and be able to present to the law the perfect obedience which it rightly demands" (*Ibid.*, p. 28).

(4) Law is the strength of sin, and of life - "The strength of sin is not in sin itself, for 'the strength of sin is the law' (I Cor. 15:56). The law--yes, the holy, just and good law of God--binds a man to the service of sin by the power of omnipotent justice. Sin is the master that man chose to serve, and the law binds him in this relationship. Sin gets its legal right from the law to take control of any man who is under the law and work in him all manner of evil desires" (*Ibid.*, p.13).

"There is a direct relation between guilt of sin and the power of sin. If the guilt of sin is removed, the power of sin is broken. That is to say, as long as a man is 'under the law,' sin will be king over him, and he will be forced to surrender to its reign. But if he comes under grace, sin has no more power to rule and tyrannize" (*Ibid.*, p. 11).

"Bondage is the result of a wrong relationship to the law. A rebel who hates the law has a wrong relationship to the law. Naturally the law will bind him as a slave to serve sin. Justification means to be set right before the law. And those who are set right before the law are not bound in the prison of sin. What joy to know that when we believe in Jesus Christ, sin has lost all its legal rights over us! We do not have to serve it any more.

"Faith makes the Christian free, and by faith he maintains his freedom. This is freedom not to sin. With faith goes obedience, for the Christian now has a new relationship to the law. It is no longer his enemy but his friend. It has become 'the royal law,' 'the law of liberty' (James 2:8,12)" (*Present Truth, Vol. 2, No. 5, p. 38*).

(5) Remember your position, and act it out - "Believers are reminded that they *are* dead. (Through faith, or baptism, they have been united to Christ. God considers that when Christ died, they died.) Then they are told, '*put to death your members which are upon the earth.*' As if to say, 'God counts you as dead men, for that is what you really are in Christ. Now this gives you the right and responsibility to act like men who are dead to sin'" (Ibid., p. 19).

"The Gospel says, 'You are dead; now act like dead men. You are pure; now flee from all impurity. You are perfect; now seek to become perfect. You *are*, therefore *do!*'

(6) The believer, the Spirit, and the Law - "'By the law is the knowledge of sin' (Rom. 3:20). Conversion to Christ does not do away with the bitter knowledge of our sin, but it rather puts us where we may endure its increasing revelation" (Ibid., p. 29).

"As believers we will '*delight in the law of God after the inward man*' (Rom. 7:22), and the Spirit works in us '*that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us*' (Rom. 8:4). But alas, there is another factor which we must contend with--something that causes us to cry out in anguish, '*Oh, wretched man that I am!*' (Rom. 7:24)." (Ibid., p. 28).

"Because of indwelling sin we need mercy at the end as much as at the beginning, for the old nature is as evil then as ever. Growth in grace, therefore, does not mean becoming less and less sinful, but on the contrary, it means becoming more and more sinful in our own estimation" (Ibid., p. 32).

DR. FRANCIS A. SCHAEFFER -- Although stating it objectively, it must be with sympathetic sadness and love: dear Dr. Schaeffer, Presbyterian Covenant theologian that he is, and having written and ministered on other subjects with great help to many, including myself, knows little of our identification with the Lord Jesus as presented in Romans Six. His Reformation-bound theology prevents him from understanding, and the same must be reluctantly said of all Reformed/Covenant theologians.

THE WRONG ADAM -- The Reformers did not go on to "*newness of life*," but instead sought to reform the old. True to the Covenant pattern, Dr. Schaeffer is facing in the wrong direction.

"When I accept Christ as my Saviour, I am to be in my appointed position, in the proper place and in a personal relationship with God.

"This is that for which we were made in the first place. The only difference between our relationship with God now, and that which man's would have been if he had not sinned, is that now it is under the Covenant of Grace, and not under the Covenant of Works. That is the only difference." (*True Spirituality*, p. 89).

ROMANS SIX IDENTIFICATION? -- Here we can observe what Dr. Schaeffer considers to be our identification with the Lord Jesus in His death, resurrection, and ascension. Note his use of the law-term, "as though."

"We are in practice to live by faith as though we are dead now. '*Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin*' (Rom. 6:11). As Jesus died in history, and once for all was dead to sin, so now we are called in faith to count ourselves dead, in practice, at this present moment in history. By faith we are to live as though we have already died.

"'*Even so we also may walk in newness of life*' (Rom. 6:4). First, Christ died in history. Second, Christ rose in history. Third, we died with Christ in history, when we accepted Him as our Saviour. Fourth, we will be raised by Him as He was raised, and this will be a point in future history.

"Fifth, we are to live by faith now as though we were dead now, already have died. And sixth, we are to live now by faith as though we have already been raised from the dead. In our hearts and lives now we are to live as though we had already died, been to heaven, and come back again risen" (Ibid., p. 41).

WRONG PRINCIPLE! -- Here is the revealing explanation of the above:

"Remember, at least one man has gone to heaven and come back. I think it was Paul himself, but whether it was Paul or not, certainly there was such a man. '*I know a man in Christ above fourteen years ago... such an one was caught up to the third heaven*' (II Cor. 12:2).

"The point is that this man was caught up into heaven, and then came back. Can't you imagine this man as he came back from heaven? He had seen it as a propositional truth, as a brute fact. Would anything ever have looked the same to him again? It is as though he had died. It is as though he had been raised from the dead.

"How different this man's perspective would have been all his life. The constant pressure to conform to the world about us, the social pressure and every other kind of pressure of our day--surely it would have been broken. How could he conform to this, which is so marred, so broken, so caught up in revolution against God, so disgusting? How could he, in comparison with what he had seen?

"What would the praise of the world be worth when one had stood in the presence of God? The wealth of the world, what would it look like beside the treasures of heaven? Man longs for power. But what is earthly power after one has seen the reality of heaven and the power of God?

"Surely all of this is involved in the statement that we are to live by faith now, as though we had already died, and already been raised from the dead" (Ibid., p. 42).

INELUCTABLE LAW - Since Dr. Schaeffer misses the true principle of our identification with the Lord Jesus, he has no alternative but to live by law--we are to live "as though," and that is law.

"The true Christian life, true spirituality, is not just a desire to get rid of taboos in order to live an easier and a looser life. Our desire must be for a deeper life. And when I begin to think of that, the Bible presents to me the whole of the Ten Commandments and the whole of the law of love" (Ibid., p. 29).

"If we are considering outward things in relation to true spirituality, we are face to face not with some small list, but with the whole Ten Commandments and all of God's other commands" (Ibid., p. 6).

DR. JOHN R.W. STOTT -- Our third Reformed/Covenant guest of present prominence is represented by his book, *Men Made New*, which is composed of a series of messages he delivered at England's Keswick, of all places. True to his single covenant of redemption, Dr. Stott is forced to see only justification in the growth truths of Romans Six.

"'The death he died he died to sin, once for all' (Rom. 6:10). What does this mean? It can only mean one thing; that Christ died to sin in the sense that He bore sin's penalty. It is this sense in which Christ died to sin, and it is equally the sense in which we, by union with Christ, have died to sin. We have died to sin in the sense that in Christ we have borne its penalty" (Ibid., p. 43).

COVENANT-CRIPPLED -- The covenant by which these dear men are captured renders them simply helpless in the presence of the identification truths!

"Reckoning is not make-believe. We are not to pretend that our old nature has died when we know perfectly well that it has not. We are rather to realize that our old self--this is our former self--did die, thus paying the penalty of its sins and putting an end to its career.

"So reckon yourselves as being in fact what you are--dead to sin and alive to God. Once we realize that our old life has ended--the score settled, the debt paid--we shall want to have nothing more to do with it" (Ibid., p. 49).

"**THE SON SHALL MAKE YOU FREE!**" -- If you are careless about Arminianism you may be victimized by the "baptism"; and if you are careless about Covenantism you may be enslaved by the law.

"We are set free from the law as a way of acceptance (justification), but obliged to keep it as a way of holiness (sanctification). It is as a ground of justification that the law no longer binds. But as a standard of conduct the law is still binding, and we seek to fulfill it, as we walk according to the Spirit" (Ibid., p. 28).

"Having yielded ourselves to God as His slaves, we must obey Him. Having received the Spirit, we must walk according to the Spirit. Having been given life, we must put to death all that is inconsistent with it" (Ibid., p. 108).

"Mortification means a ruthless rejection of all practices we know to be wrong; a daily repentance, turning from all known sins of habit, practice, association or thought; a plucking out of the eye, a cutting off of the hand or foot, if temptation comes to us through what we see or do or where we go. The only attitude to adopt towards the flesh is to kill it" (Ibid., p. 91).

REPREHENSIBLE -- It is hard to imagine such things being taught from the Keswick platform; or from any platform, for that matter. Would you, or your church, tolerate such teaching? Covenant-oriented Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship features Dr. Stott at their "Urbana" missions conference, which draws some 15,000-20,000 Christian students.

DR. JAY ADAMS -- Dr. Adams is the leading Reformed/Covenant counselor of today. His teaching and counseling techniques omit the identification truths altogether, and consist almost entirely of law-keeping and the formation of habits. It would be a different story if the Reformed/Covenant theologians gave at least equal time to the Epistles that they devote to the Sermon on the Mount, and the Old Testament.

"My son, do not forget my teaching; let your heart keep my commandments; for length of days and years of life, full of peace, will they add to you" (Prov. 3:1,2, Berkeley). Structure is the means of moral living.

"Lives structured according to the Ten Commandments are by the very nature of the case so structured according to the principles upon which God structured the world. Biblically-oriented lives do not clash with the structure of the world, but rather harmonize with it. Biblical structure tends to bring more deep-seated pleasure and to foster longer, healthier lives" (*The Big Umbrella*, p. 160).

HABITUATION -- "Good counseling seeks to solve not merely the presentation or performance problems, but also attempts to break all non-biblical preconditioning patterns and to replace them with biblical behaviour. Sanctification consists of putting off the old man and putting on the new man. The 'old man' is 'put off,' partly, by establishing the 'new man.' Old habit patterns are crowded out by new ones" (Ibid., p. 218).

"Jesus learned God's will from God's Word which He applied to life. He had to learn how to develop biblical patterns by actual practice in response to life's problems. Holy living, then, involves habit. Patterns of holiness can be established only by regular, consistent practice. Just as Jesus learned obedience, we too must learn obedience by actual practice."

"God's will is often hard to do, even for a sinless Son. In the days of His flesh He prayed with loud crying and tears. And although He was heard because of His piety, yet He suffered, and through suffering was taught obedience."

"One must learn to do God's will which he has discovered in Scripture. He must practice the good so faithfully that whenever occasions to sin arise, naturally, and without deliberation, he knows what to do and does it with ease and expertness."

"Paul mentioned 'modeling' when he said, '*You also became imitators*' (I Thess. 1:6). The Greek term 'imitator' is the same word from which the English word 'mimic' comes. He wrote, '*You became imitators of us and of the Lord.*' They learned, it seems, how to imitate the Lord by imitating what Paul was doing in imitation of the Lord" (Ibid., pp. 151, 161, 168, 178).

This eminent brother may be a Covenanter, but as to whether he is a counselor or a theologian, we will leave that up to you.

DR. D. MARTIN LLOYD-JONES -- If we were to gather all of the error that has thus far been recounted from these several Reformed/Covenant authors, and then to brew it in a single caldron, we would have the teaching of Dr. Lloyd-Jones.

ERADICATION -- First of all, Lloyd-Jones states that "the old man" of Romans Six is the manner of life he lived before he was saved. And since the old man has been crucified, it is gone: eradicated.

"The 'old man' is the man I used to be in Adam. The old man that I was in Adam is the one that was crucified with Christ. It is my old humanity. It is not my carnal nature. That is still here, but the old man is gone, he was crucified" (*Romans 6*, g. 63).

This erroneous deduction gets our brother in trouble with Paul in Col. 3. "When Paul says, '*Put off the old man*' (Col. 3:9), he means that we must put off the characteristics of the life of the old man. It cannot mean anything else. I cannot be told to 'put off' something that has already been crucified" (*Ibid.*, p. 64).

SAVED=SANCTIFIED! -- According to Lloyd-Jones, since the believer's old man is gone, and he is now a new creature in Christ, he is required to live at once all that is true of him in Christ.

"'But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption' (I Cor. 1:30). If you are 'in Christ' all these things become true of you immediately" (*Ibid.*, p. 226).

"From the moment we are regenerated it is true to say of us that we are no longer slaves of sin; we are slaves of righteousness. How utterly wrong and unscriptural it is, therefore, to separate justification and sanctification, or to say that a man can be justified and perhaps years later go on and receive his sanctification. According to the Apostle's argument, this is not only wrong, it is utterly impossible" (*Ibid.*, p. 225).

COVENANT'S LAW VS. CHRIST'S LIFE! -- Dr. Lloyd-Jones falls victim to the Wesleyan error of merging justification and sanctification simply because his single Covenant [perspective] will not allow him to differentiate between position and condition. The sad result of that is Moses' law-life instead of Christ's risen life!

"The apostle is justified in saying that the law, and each individual commandment, is thoroughly good. Nothing can be better for us than the keeping of the law. '*The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul,*' as Psalm 19 tells us" (*Romans, Chapter 7*, p. 164).

THE CULMINATING COVENANT CALAMITY -- Here we have a duplication of Dr. Schaeffer's "ought to" law-principle. "How can I continue in sin when it means a life that is utterly profitless, valueless, fruitless? That is the Apostle's way of teaching sanctification and holiness.

"It is not just 'look to the Lord and abide in Him.' No, when the temptation comes, look at the old life of sin, and analyze it, and then ask, what is it asking me to do? Should this appeal to me at all? It is impossible, it is unthinkable!" (*Romans, Chapter 6*, p. 259).

We finally come to the last Covenant straw. A *hardness* permeates those who would attempt to superimpose Old Testament law upon New Testament life.

"*'Yield your members as slaves to righteousness.'* Yes, righteousness, to conformity to God's standard, conformity to God's holy law, and to what man was originally.

"What the Apostle says is that as you yield your members slaves to righteousness, and as you go on living this righteous life, and practicing it with all your might and energy, and all your time, and everything else, you will find that you will become cleaner and cleaner, and purer and purer, and holier and holier.

"But, you ask, 'Where do I get the power to do it?' You have already received '*all things that pertain unto life and godliness*' (II Peter 1:3). You do not need another experience. You do not need some new gift. You have been given everything in Christ, you are '*in Him*' from the very beginning of your Christian life.

"You are just a slacker and a cad, just lazy and indolent, indeed a liar, if you are not living this life. This is the New Testament way of preaching holiness and sanctification" (Ibid., p. 269).

IS THERE NOT A CAUSE? -- I don't know about you, but that makes me a little sick at heart. I am deeply burdened for the believers who are caught by the charismatics; I am just as deeply burdened for the Christians who are crushed by the "theology" of the Covenanters--whether it is through their churches, their conferences, or their chirography.

OFF LIMITS! -- The believer honors the law of Moses, not by keeping it, but by keeping it in its God-given place. "*For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*" (John 1:17).

COVENANT CONDEMNATION -- Concerning a section of Scripture invariably avoided by Reformed/Covenant theologians, we will let the Word of God speak for itself -- II Cor. 3:3-18:

"Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone but in fleshy tables of the heart..."

"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.

"But if the ministration of death, written and engraved in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away, how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be more glorious?"

"For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

"Seeing, then, that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: and not as Moses, who put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished, but their minds were blinded; for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.

"Nevertheless, when it (the heart) shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

"But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

LIFE NOT LAW -- It is this law-veil, so to speak, that blinds the Reformed/Covenant theologian, hindering him from seeing the life that is Christ through the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ. It is the risen Lord Jesus Christ whom the Holy Spirit ministers within the believer for his Life, and He would never subject that life of grace to the law. *"If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law"* (Gal. 5:1'8).

THE CENTRALITY OF THE CROSS -- If we have considered Arminianism to be the far left, and Covenantism to be the far right, what are we to consider as the scriptural center?

If you were to suggest the Christ-life, you would be close but still off center. The compass of Scripture does not point to true center apart from the Cross. The Cross for the old life + the Christ for the new life = the growing Christian life. *"Not I (Cross), but Christ"* (life).

THE CROSS AND GRACE -- In approaching the termination of this paper we would like to touch very briefly and simply upon the first portion of Romans Six, the great identification chapter of the Word of God (using the American Standard Version of 1901).

In tracing these verses we will carefully note two of Paul's main points concerning our identification with the Lord Jesus in His death, burial, resurrection and ascension: (1) The Cross and the Christ-life are inseparable. (2) Grace and growth are inseparable.

Paul also refutes the Reformed/Covenant theologian's contention that if the believer is allowed free grace he will become antinomian--lawless. They insist that the law is necessary to keep the believer under control and to make him righteous. They simply cannot understand that it is the law's purpose to cause sin to abound! The law makes nothing perfect (Heb. 7:19)!

As a matter of scriptural fact, Paul abnegates their accusation even before he gets into Romans Six! *"The law came in besides, that the trespass might abound; but where sin abounded grace did abound more exceedingly"* (Rom. 5:20).

IDENTIFICATION IN ROMANS SIX -- We will refer only to those verses that are germane to this paper.

ROMANS 6:2 - *"We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?"*

In our identification with the Lord Jesus on the Cross we died to, unto, the realm of, sin. That death completely separated us from the Adam, leaving us identified with the sinless Last Adam.

That positional fact renders it unnecessary for us to live any longer in the sinful Adamic life as to our present condition. We are now identified with the righteous Last Adam, the risen Lord Jesus who is our Life.

Since the Reformed/Covenant theologian restricts himself to one redemptive covenant, the resultant spiritual myopia causes him to see only justification here. To him, the verse says, "We who died for sin"

That causes him to reason that since he died in Christ for sin, his Adamic nature has been redeemed. Hence he seeks to live in his "renewed" old nature, relying upon the law to give him a righteous condition.

In thus using the law, Covenanters are more right in their wrongness than they realize, because the law was made for the old nature. They fail in *"knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man"* (I Tim. 1:9).

ROMANS 6:3 - *"Or are ye ignorant that a11 we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?"*

It is this truth of his being spiritually baptized into, identified with, the Lord Jesus in His death unto sin that the believer must see clearly if he is going to be able to count upon it by faith.

And it is this very fact that most believers are totally ignorant of, leaving them with the legal Adamic struggle of Romans 7.

ROMANS 6:4 - *"We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life."*

Death and burial are the foundation for resurrection and ascension life. Positionally identified with the Lord Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection from the realm and reign of sin, we are re-born as altogether new creations in His ascended life at the right hand of God.

We can now walk in "*newness of life*," both walking in the Spirit and abiding above in Christ who is our life. This is a far cry from struggling in the old life, bound by the law for some semblance of control. Not reformation, but positionally all new! "*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*" (II Cor. 5:17).

ROMANS 6:6 - "*Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin.*"

(1) - "*Knowing this*" - The extent to which Paul stresses death unto sin in these verses is an indication of how essential it is for the believer to know this truth. Ignorance here results in bondage to the power of sin and the law.

(2) - "*that our old man*" - Scripture presents two federal men, each the head of a race. There was the first Adam, and there is the Last Adam; the sinful first man, and the sinless Second Man; the man of death, and the Man of Life; the old man, and the new Man.

In our first and natural position our identification with the old man constituted his life as our life--our old nature, our old man. Christ is now our new life.

Reformed/Covenantism considers the "old man" simply to be the old sinful way of living prior to redemption. Now that his Adamic life is born again and become the new man, he can live with the law as his rule of life.

(3) - "*was crucified with him*" - The Adamic old man was crucified, not cauterized; it was done away in death, not reformed. The Christian life is a totally new creation, not the old life recycled.

(4) - "*that the body of sin*" - (a) There are many who believe "the body of sin" refers to our natural body that is subject to sin. (b) Others believe "the body of sin" refers to the whole principle of sin inherited from the fallen Adam.

We believe the second to be the truth of the matter, although Dr. Lloyd-Jones presents a fine argument for the first view--by far the best we have ever seen (note pp. 70-80, in his book, *Romans, Chapter 6*).

(5) - "*might be done away*" - Positionally, the body, the totality of Adamic sin was done away in death. For the Christian as a new creation in Christ risen from the dead, the Cross stands between him and the body, the principle of sin--it has been "done away" in death.

The Reformed/Covenant thought here is that the "influence" of sin upon one's body has been done away.

(6) - "*so that we should no longer be in bondage to sin*" - The Cross freed the believer from the body of sin--the entire principle including its penalty and its power. "*For he that hath died is freed from sin*" (Rom. 6:7, margin). He is no longer in bondage to sin positionally, and he need not be in bondage to sin practically--as to his condition.

The Covenanter contends that his body has been freed from the influence of sin, but then he places himself under the bondage of the law!

ROMANS 6:10 - "*For the death that he died, he died unto sin once: but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God.*"

When we know what is true concerning the Lord Jesus coupled with the fact that we were eternally identified with Him on the Cross, then we know that what is true of Him is also true of us. Hence Paul begins the next verse with "likewise," or "even so."

ROMANS 6:11 - "*Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.*"

Paul purposely "belabored" the positional truths of our death by the Cross, and our new life in Christ, so as to give us explicit truth upon which to reckon. Faith must be based upon scriptural facts! Romans 6:11 has two very distinct halves--death, and life.

DEATH - Faith is the bridge that links position and condition. The Holy Spirit brings the finished work of the Cross, our death unto sin, over that bridge and applies it to our old Adamic nature and the body of sin within.

He does not apply that finished work all at once--He does not eradicate. His application of death is closely regulated to His plan for our growth. To "*walk in the Spirit*" involves trusting the Spirit. Hence, we reckon and restfully leave the pace and development and circumstances of our growth up to His sovereign discretion. "*For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake...*" (II Cor. 4:21a).

LIFE - The Holy Spirit also teaches us the facts of life. *"Even when we were dead in sins, (God) hath made us alive together with Christ ...and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."* *"For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God"* (Eph. 2:5, 6; Col. 3:3).

As we become sure of these positional life facts, we begin to reckon ourselves to be *"alive unto God in Christ Jesus."* As we exercise faith in the Lord Jesus as our life, the Spirit of Christ progressively fosters the "fruit" of that life within--we are growing, we are being conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:28,29).

BALANCED RECKONING - If we neglect the truths of the Cross, and simply reckon ourselves alive unto God in Christ, the old nature is left free to bring us into defeat: there we are in Romans 7!

Counting upon our Cross-death and our Christ-life, the Spirit always delivers us unto death that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal bodies. That way, we all with unveiled face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (II Cor. 4:11; 3:18).

Reformed/Covenant friend, was the law--holy, just, good, and spiritual as it is--ever meant to do that? The law has to do with sin, not life; *"that sin by the commandment might become exceedingly sinful"* (Rom. 7:13).

ROMANS 6:14 -- *"For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under law, but under grace."*

All other theology to the contrary, scriptural theology states emphatically that being under grace, sin shall not have dominion over you. And the Scripture also affirms that sin shall not have dominion over you because you are not under law! Being under law does give sin dominion over you, because *"the strength of sin is the law"* I Cor. 15:56).

"Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty with which Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1).

In closing we share the following letter that just came to Cornelia [Miles' wife] from a growing Christian mother:

September 30, 1976

Dear Mrs. Stanford,

Recently I studied your husband's book, The Reckoning That Counts [Part Four of The Complete Green Letters] and the very next Sunday our pastor taught from Galatians the truths of the Cross and the believer.

It was so plain and understandable that after the service I thanked him and shared briefly what had been happening to me in my study of the identification truths concerning growth.

The Cross has become such liberty to me! My old nature really had me defeated until I realized through the scriptures of Romans 6, 7, and 8 your husband had explained, that all my efforts were doomed to failure.

It dawned upon me that the Lord Jesus was not only my Saviour, but my Deliverer and Life! Just to know and count upon the truth that His death encompassed also my sin nature and its power over me was thrilling.

Because of understanding the work of the Cross better, I am more confident in giving the Lord Jesus control of my everyday life. Now each day He increasingly reveals how awful my old nature is, while at the same time He is so much more meaningful, and He really is affecting more areas of my life that I ever thought He would.

Before, witnessing felt like a duty, but now it is so joyous to share the good news. Even going to church is really enjoyable, and being a wife and parent, too! I admit that isn't the old "me!"

In His love,

(Signed)

"In the Reformation there was, through grace, a great deliverance. The ground-work of Christianity was recovered; namely, justification by faith. But though this was recovered, it was not maintained that the old man was crucified on the Cross, and hence they only refused the exactions of popery [formal demands of Roman Catholicism], but recognized the flesh as still before God.

"Refusing the exaction was right; but the retention of that on which the exaction could be made, the old man, was the weakness of the Reformation." --J.B. Stoney (*Ministry*, #9, p. 117).

"It is no use for one to say, 'I am not looking to the law for life or justification, but merely as a rule, and for sanctification. As a rule for what? For the sanctification of what? If you say, 'for my old nature,' the answer is, so far from being 'a rule of life,' the

law is 'a ministration of death;' and so far from sanctifying the flesh, it condemns it, root and branch.

"If, on the other hand, you say it is for the new nature, then is your error equally obvious, inasmuch as the apostle expressly declares that 'the law is not made for a righteous man' (I Tim. 1:9)." --C.H. Mackintosh (*Short Papers, Vol. I*, p. 38).

"Covenant theology, which has molded theological conceptions for many generations, recognizes no distinctions as to ages (dispensations), therefore can allow for no distinctions between law and grace. This dominating attitude of Covenantism must account for the utter neglect of life truth in all their works of theology.

"No more representative theological dictum from the Covenant viewpoint has been formed than the Westminster Confession of Faith, which valuable and important document recognizes life truth only to the point of imposing the Ten Commandments on Christians as their sole obligation, and in spite of the teachings of the New Testament which assert that the law was never given to Gentile or Christian and that the latter has been saved and delivered from all law principle." --L.S. Chafer (*Systematic Theology, Vol. VI*, p. 167).

For more by L. S. Chafer on the subject, see [*Dr. Chafer on Covenant Theology*](#).