

The Outlook

DESIDERATUM — A UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
NEEDED — WIDE-AWAKE ELDERS
SODOM AT THE CAPITOL



JULY - 1977

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

Desideratum - A United Reformed Church

JOHN VANDER PLOEG

Although adopted into our English language, the word *desideratum*, as used in the title above, is Latin and may be somewhat unfamiliar. Why use it then? Because I can think of no other single word that says it all — that is, all that I wish to try to say about the matter of a United Reformed Church.

As usual, Webster puts it in a nutshell: "desideratum — that which is not possessed, but which is desirable; something much wanted." In that sense a United Reformed Church may indeed be said to be our *desideratum*.

An exciting prospect — Suppose that in God's gracious providence the day would dawn when Reformed Church bodies — of course, I am thinking particularly of the CRC — would experience a drastic housecleaning. . . . Suppose that such denominations would some day purge themselves of the foe within the gate and of those bold innovations that now threaten to undermine the Reformed faith. . . . And suppose that out of the tensions, all in God's gracious providence, a new denomination would emerge — a denomination that would not shilly-shally in its witness to the Reformed faith; but a church that would rather be unambiguous, consistent, and enthusiastic in the profession of it. . . . Just suppose that some day God would be pleased to grant this . . . allow me then to suggest as a name, that it be called *the United Reformed Church*.

Consulting the *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*, I do not find among those who call themselves *Reformed* any denomination by this particular name. Please correct me if I am guilty of an oversight in this. If anyone knows of a better name, fine! let's have it. At any rate the idea intrigues and excites me — the idea of belonging to a denomination that would be honestly, unambiguously, and enthusiastically committed to the Reformed faith in doctrine and life — and then also to have a name that says just that.

"Just dreams, fantasy," some pragmatic reader may say. "No such church body will ever be achieved on this side of heaven. The best we can do in any denomination is settle for what in German is called *realpolitik* in statecraft — i.e., be realistic instead of insisting on that which is idealistic." The idea is then that in ecclesiastical matters also, we must compromise when there seems to be nothing else to do and that we had better learn to live with the situation as best we can.

However, to be resigned to *realpolitik* in ecclesiasti-

tical and denominational matters would be a betrayal of the Reformed faith as a sacred trust. And the acid test for anyone who professes this faith is not whether he will *succeed in achieving* the ideal but whether he will remain *faithful* in pursuing it. As an unknown author once said:

*Before God's footstool to confess
A poor soul knelt and bowed his head.
"I failed," he wailed. The Master said,
"Thou didst thy best — that is success."*

The unfying principle — To be a Reformed church, not only in name but in fact, a church must be committed to the teaching of Scripture as this was rediscovered and proclaimed in the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. Looking there for the unifying principle to make a church truly Reformed we come upon the basic teaching of *sola Scriptura* — a Latin expression meaning *the Bible alone*. The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible is to be the church's supreme rule for faith and life. There we find the bedrock of what it means to be Reformed.

Many there are who have tried to unite the church — always in vain — on something other than the Word. The familiar slogan, "Doctrine divides; service unites," is false and ultimately always futile. One might just as well expect to pick fruit from a tree rooted only in thin air. René Paché says it so well in his excellent work, *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture* (Moody Press) when he writes:

"Apart from revelation, as a standard by which to evaluate and correct our fallible human notions, sinners such as we are will be forever cast upon the shore of an ocean of doubts and speculations. And when modern theology tells us that we cannot trust the Bible or ourselves, it turns us over to an uncertain fate with no hope or respite" (p. 262).

Human reason, science, commonly-accepted mores, ethnic identity — however valuable these may prove to be — may never take the place of unconditional commitment to Scripture as the basic principle for ecclesiastical or denominational unity.

God said it long ago — a directive still as valid now as it once was for Israel of old: "To the law and to the testimony! if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them" (Isa. 8:20).

"Let this be a firm principle:" says John Calvin, "No other word is to be held as the Word of God, and given place as such in the church, than what is contained first in the Law and the Prophets, then in the writings of the apostles; and the only authorized way of teaching in the church is by the prescription and standard of his Word" (*Institutes*, IV, VIII, 13).

Note also from our Lord's highpriestly prayer in John 17 how He relates the unity of His people to the truth or the Word of God. This close relation lies right on the surface as He prays: "I have given them *thy word*. . . . Sanctify them in the truth; *thy word is truth*. . . . And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. . . . that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in

me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us . . ." (John 17:14ff).

The ongoing challenge — Several years ago, the late Rev. R. B. Kuiper wrote the following in *To be or Not to Be Reformed*: "To take it for granted, as I fear some do, that the Christian Reformed Church will continue sound for, let us say, another century is to do it a vast disservice" (p. 7).

A lot of water has gone over the dam since that time, and meanwhile that complacency against which "R. B." warned so earnestly is obvious on every hand for anyone who still has eyes to see. As we rest comfortably in our affluence and freedom from persecution, the forces of evil are steadily chipping away at the Reformed faith we still profess, and they threaten to rob us of our heritage.

As I write these lines, the 1977 CRC Synod has not yet been convened and so I have no way of knowing what action will be taken on what has come to be known as "the Verhey case." The matter is so serious because the truth of the Bible is under attack. However, actually it is not the Bible that is on trial but rather the CRC that is on trial. Unless this matter is decided by Synod rightly, definitively, and unambiguously a wedge will be driven to divide the CRC even more tragically than is already the case. There are issues that agitate us that are simply not negotiable if we are sincere about really wanting to remain Reformed, and this is such an issue.

Without any attempt at being needlessly alarmist or sensational, it is not too much to say that, if the ongoing attack upon Scripture among us, continues to be tolerated, the possibility of secession from the CRC can only be expected to become a growing prospect. Any attempt to play for time and tolerance when a clearcut and crucial issue is before the church must be vigorously resisted, because in such cases time and tolerance are almost invariably on the wrong side.

You ask me: how are we to go about it to arrive at a United Reformed Church. My answer: *how I wish I knew!* There is so much at stake and we know that secession is a terribly serious business. We should be much in prayer at the throne of grace for a clear sense of direction. Meanwhile your suggestions are eagerly awaited.

Someone writes me that no church has ever been reformed from within. Apart from checking the historical accuracy of this assertion, we do believe that our God is able, in answer to the fervent petitions of His people, even to do that which may have never been done before. Impetuous steps for drastic reformation may so easily lead to abortive results that impede rather than prosper the cause. Meanwhile, we are not to forget for a moment that we have a corporate responsibility as long as we remain as members of a church when she is no longer true to the sacred trust with which she has been endowed.

Although, admittedly I am unable to clearly chart the course to achieve a United Reformed Church, I do wish to propose the following specific steps to-

THE OUTLOOK



"And the three companies blew the trumpets . . . and held THE TORCHES in their left hands, and THE TRUMPETS in their right hands . . . and they cried, The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon" (Judges 7:20).

JOURNAL OF REFORMED FELLOWSHIP, INC.

Send all copy to Managing Editor, John Vander Ploeg, 2085 Eastern Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49507. Phone (616) 452-2077

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This periodical is owned and published by Reformed Fellowship, Inc., a religious and strictly non-profit organization composed of a group of Christian believers who hold to the Reformed Faith. Its purpose is to give sharpened expression to this Faith, to stimulate the doctrinal sensitivities of those who profess this Faith, to promote the spiritual welfare and purity of the Christian Reformed Church particularly and also of other Reformed churches, and as far as possible to further the interests of all Christian action and institutions of Reformed character.

The publishers of this journal express their adherence to the Calvinistic creeds as formulated in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort, and the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.

All contributions represent the personal views of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the members of Reformed Fellowship, Inc. **Subscription Policy:** Subscription price, \$5.00 per year, \$9.00 2 years. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

EDITORIAL AND CIRCULATION OFFICES

THE OUTLOOK
4855 Starr Street, S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506, Telephone 949-5421

Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9-11 a.m.
After Office Hours please call: 452-9519

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 7383, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49510
Second Class postage paid at Grand Rapids, Michigan.
Subscription price: \$5.00 per year, \$9.00 for two years.
Gift subscriptions: \$3.50 per year.
Published monthly.

July, 1977 — Volume XXVII, No. 7

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ward meeting the ongoing challenge and ask you to consider them for whatever they are worth.

1. Let me first plead with you to *become informed* as to the issues that are agitating the church at large, and the CRC in particular. Read, investigate, and examine for yourself the issues that are agitating the church and disturbing the peace of Zion. Don't allow yourself to be confused or prejudiced by those who may make personal attacks on those who are speaking and writing to alert the church to the heretical thinking that is gaining ground among us. I sound this warning also because just today an instance of this kind of thing was reported to me. Even Calvin, Luther, and others who were leaders in the Protestant Reformation had their failings; but far be it from us to reject their great achievements because of personal frailties from which they also may have suffered. The plea is so urgent: read, study, think, judge for yourself what time it has gotten to be in the CRC. Woe be to anyone who simply refuses to be concerned as long as he knows that he is comfortably on the side of the majority without ever considering seriously whether or not he is on the side of the Lord!

2. And, when once you get to know the score, speak up or write and communicate your informed concerns and convictions to others. There is a silent majority also in the CRC that could become a potent force and determining factor in rejecting the evil innovations that threaten the future of the church if only such are willing to let themselves be heard. There is no room in the church for those who choose to be mere spectators and are unwilling to become involved when the Reformed faith is being assailed. Contributions from our readers as to how to bring into being a truly United Reformed Church are welcome, and these will be seriously considered for publication. Of course, no blanket promise can be made to publish anything and everything that is received. Discretion and good judgment will have to be observed. However, to know what our readers are thinking about the state of the church and the remedy to be pursued may, under God, prove to be of real help in coming to our sorely needed sense of direction. The cause is of the utmost importance because it concerns the precious church of our Lord Jesus Christ which He purchased with His own precious blood. The generous financial support that continues to come from our loyal supporters means so much to us. If you are now willing also to share your thoughts, ideas, and suggestions about the course to be followed, that too may energize and activate developments that are so sorely needed.

3. Moreover, please also give serious thought to the wisdom of formulating and circulating what might be called a *Reformed Faith Manifesto*. Consulting Webster once more, a manifesto is "a public declaration of intentions, motives, or views." A document of this kind should accentuate the positive in setting forth in unambiguous terms what we believe, for example, about the Bible as God's Word, the church and requirements for membership, ecclesiastical offices and

the Scriptural teaching as to who are and who are not to serve, and other matters of special concern in our time. Of course, such a manifesto should also spell out in no uncertain terms a rejection of current evils that continue to be advocated among us; for example, the so-called "new hermeneutic," the toleration of lodge members in the church, women in Church offices, a growing denigration of preaching, the adherence to and teaching of evolution, and other innovations that threaten the downfall of the church. It may be objected that we already do have our creeds and doctrinal standards and that these should be sufficient. However, it should be obvious, as we realize what is being tolerated today notwithstanding a profession of these creeds and doctrinal standards, that it has now become imperative to clearly and unequivocally cross all the *t's* and dot all the *i's* so that there may be no misunderstanding as to what is Reformed and what is not. With the Lord's blessing, such a Reformed Faith Manifesto might help us along on the way to what eventually might prove to be the United Reformed Church for which we long so eagerly. Will such a URC be realized before Jesus comes? Only God knows.

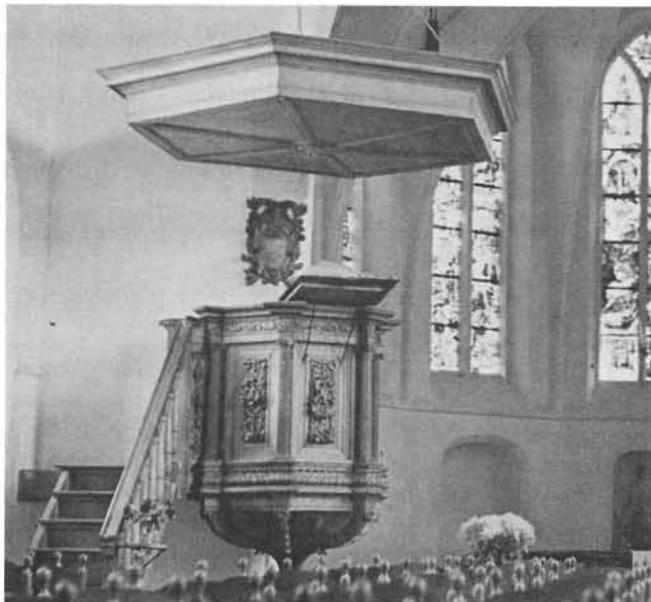
4. Finally, allow me once again to urge concerned members of the CRC and of other Reformed bodies to *organize Reformed Fellowship local chapters* in the pursuit of the goals we cherish. In union there is strength. If you are interested in promoting the organization of such a chapter in your area, feel free to write to Reformed Fellowship, Inc., P. O. Box 7383, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49510. Assistance and suggestions as how to go about this will gladly be sent upon request. Several areas throughout the church now have such chapters for regular meetings and mutual encouragement and inspiration. Although such beginnings may be small and the efforts may seem feeble, there is no limit to what our God is able and may be willing to do. Of course, you and I are not a John Calvin or a Martin Luther, but remember they were also mere men like us and they had no monopoly on God's grace and willingness to help.

NOT AN EASY LIFE

J. GRESHAM MACHEN

These words, reprinted from *The Presbyterian Journal* (May 4, 1977) were delivered by the late Dr. J. Gresham Machen to Princeton Seminary students before he left the Presbyterian Church USA. They are good counsel also today for our candidates for the ministry in the CRC.

You will have a battle when you go forth as ministers in the church. The church is now in a period of deadly conflict. The redemptive religion known as



Christianity is contending in our own Presbyterian Church, and in all the larger Churches in the world, against a totally alien type of religion.

As always, the enemy conceals his most dangerous assaults under pious phrases and half truths. The shibboleths of the adversary have sometimes a very deceptive sound. "Let us propagate Christianity," the adversary says, "but let us not always be engaged in arguing in defense of it; let us make our preaching positive, and not negative; let us avoid controversy; let us hold to a person and not to a dogma; let us drop small doctrinal differences and seek the unity of the Church of Christ; let us drop doctrinal accretions and interpret Christ for ourselves; let us look for our knowledge of Christ, not to ancient books, but to the living Christ in our hearts; let us not impose a Western creed on the Eastern mind; let us be tolerant of opposing views."

Such are some of the shibboleths of that agnostic modernism which is the deadliest enemy of the Christian religion today. They deceive some of God's people some of the time; they are heard sometimes from the lips of good Christian people, who have not the slightest inkling of what they mean.

But their true meaning, to thinking men, is becoming increasingly clear. Increasingly, it is becoming necessary for a man to decide whether he is going to stand or not to stand for the Lord Jesus Christ as He is presented to us in the Word of God.

If you decide to stand for Christ, you will not have an easy life in the ministry. Of course, you may try to evade the conflict. All men will speak well of you if, after preaching no matter how unpopular a Gospel on Sunday, you will only vote against the Gospel in councils of the Church the next day; you will graciously be permitted to believe in supernatural Christianity all you please if you will only make common cause with its opponents.

Such is the program that will win the favor of the Church. A man may believe what he pleases, provided he does not believe anything strongly enough to risk his life on it and fight for it.

A NEGLECTED OFFICE

needed -

Wide-Awake Elders

PETER Y. DE JONG

Dr. Peter Y. De Jong wrote this article for the December-January 1952 issue of *Torch and Trumpet* (former name of this publication.) Dr. De Jong is pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Sheldon, Iowa.

Today the feeling is widespread that the Christian Reformed Church is passing through a period of spiritual declension. Although the churches are still crowded with worshipers who give liberally, we are facing an attitude of smugness on the part of many who think that we have "arrived." They are willing to expand the practical programs of the church but give little consideration to the basic principles of Reformed faith and practice.

Many are the remedies prescribed for this disease with which we are all too familiar.

Some insist that we must stimulate reading among our people; others that we need a new type of preaching in our pulpits; still others that we will have to attract our young people by informal services and social hours. In many cases the blame is placed squarely on the shoulders of the ministers, where undoubtedly a large share belongs. Others would blame our people for being materialistic and pleasure-mad. And in accordance with the diagnosis the medicine is prescribed. But what is often forgotten is that God has given us one powerful weapon for the defense of the faith and practice which we claim to love. And this weapon is too often left unused. We are referring to the eldership in the churches.

An Important Function — In every well-organized local congregation there are three offices reflecting the triple office of the Savior.

But in our evaluation of them, we often fail to give the proper Scriptural emphasis. Quite generally our people think of them as constituting a hierarchy, headed by the ministers, under whom and of far less importance are the elders, and finally, as least significant of all, the deacons. As a result, ministers are expected to perform all the work in the congregation. According to many of our people the elders should not be asked to teach catechetical classes, visit the sick, or even engage in family visitation without the pastor.

However, this is not the position officially maintained by our churches.

On the basis of Scripture the Reformed churches have always insisted on the significance of the eldership for the practical life and order in the congregation. While the minister is but one, the elders are several. While the minister moves about from church to church under ordinary circumstances, the elders usually remain in the local congregation. Historically speaking, the ministry of the Word and the sacraments is an outgrowth of the office of elder or bishop referred to often in the New Testament. A congregation needs far more an excellent staff of spiritually-minded and intelligent elders than an unusually gifted minister of the Word.

A Sad Deterioration — While the churches have held this office in high esteem theoretically, practice has not kept pace. This has especially been the case during the past generation. There is a trend among our people which betrays the superficial standards which many employ when judging the credentials for eldership. In the minds of many the incumbents of this office are much like a Christian businessmen's organization who occupy a prominent place in church on the Lord's Day but do very little spiritual work in the congregation during the week. Too frequently the consistory is far busier with all kinds of building plans than with the spiritual needs of the people. The chief concerns on the part of some, if not many, seem to be a growing membership roll, friendliness at the church doors, organizational efficiency, and the success of the latest financial drive.

As a result the more important matters are often neglected.

There are congregations where family visiting is grossly neglected, the sick are visited by none but the pastor, and the broader program of the denomination is all but unknown. Even where there is concern for the spiritual welfare of the local congregation, there is on the part of most elders little intelligent understanding of and wrestling with denominational problems.

How vastly different this was some forty and fifty years ago!

Of course, at that time our people couldn't concern themselves much with building projects, sociability, and financial drives of all kinds. However, there was a conscious and consistent attempt on the part of many elders to "keep up" with the actions and ideals of the denomination. The elders read the religious periodicals, studied the *Church Order*, interested themselves in sound doctrine, perused the *Acts of Synod* faithfully, and took a lively part in debates on major issues.

Today this whole field is left fallow by most of our elders. As a result it has by default become the sole responsibility of the ministers. Voices warn us against a growing "clericalism" (rule by the clergy) in our churches. Yet a sizeable share of the fault for this lies directly at the door of the elders. Let's ask some pertinent questions concerning this matter.

It might be very necessary to ask first of all whether the elders, as a rule, care about knowing

precisely what is going on in the Christian Reformed Church on the classical and synodical levels. Isn't it a known fact that often the elders are much inclined to vote at such meetings as the ministers direct? How often do they take an active part in molding the life of the churches at these broader levels? Have we perhaps reached the stage where the elders, like most of the members, are satisfied with conditions as long as the wheels of the denominational machine are well greased? It seems as if we are beginning to pay a fearful price for having concentrated power in the hands of a few.

It may be replied, but do our elders really know what is going on in the church? Even if they desire information, is this obtainable? Perhaps this is to a large extent the heart of the problem. Let us admit that there are members of boards who seem to feel perfectly justified to withhold information from classical assemblies concerning the work of the denomination and the policies which are followed. However, in spite of such situations there are surely several avenues of obtaining the needed information which too many elders leave unexplored.

How many are aware of the basic problems of principle and practice facing our mission program at the present time? How many take time out to check the reports of the Back to God Hour Committee and the Home Missions Board? How often are they interested enough to seek answers to basic questions concerning the situation in Calvin College and Seminary? Do most of them study the material presented in the synodical *Agenda*, so that they can defend intelligently their position on important matters? How many are conversant with the decisions reached at the last Synod? Let us never forget that the duty of the eldership is to rule the house of God well. To that end they must know the facts and be able to evaluate them critically.

A Proposed Solution — We are fast approaching the days when new elders will be elected and installed in the churches. Hence now is the time to give some serious consideration to the problem of making our elders more aware of their God-given duties on the level of denominational life.

The chief characteristic of an elder should be wholehearted consecration to the Lord and therefore to his Church.

The elder is not first of all called by the congregation but by God Himself who has listed in the Word His qualifications for eldership. The necessary credentials are not that he should be a nice fellow, able to get along with people, and pliable to the point of compromise for the sake of peace. The enemy is undermining the Church which Christ loves. He is marshaling all his forces against the kingdom of heaven. And if he succeeds in penetrating the broader assemblies with their boards and committees, he will in time devastate the spiritual life of the local congregation.

We must call ourselves back to a thorough consideration of what God demands of the elders. They

are exhorted to exercise the oversight of the flock entrusted to their care and to rule the house of the Lord well. The *Form for Ordination* specifies at least the following tasks: (1) maintaining the purity of the Word and sacraments; (2) upholding good order in the church; (3) guarding the sacredness of the offices; (4) exercising Christian discipline faithfully; (5) promoting the faithful discharge of the offices by their fellow-officers (mutual supervision); (6) defending the sheep-fold of Christ from the wolves of the world, and (7) reproofing all who are disorderly in the body of Christ. What is begun on the level of the local congregation must be continued in and through our classical and synodical gatherings. The welfare of the whole Christian Reformed Church should be as zealously guarded as the spiritual prosperity of any single congregation.

That this is a tremendous program goes without saying. No one is sufficient to these things of himself. Yet we may with boldness ask the Lord for grace and strength in the blessed assurance that He gives liberally and upbraids none who seek His help.

In order that this part of the elders' task may be more faithfully discharged, perhaps a few practical suggestions are not out of place.

(1) Let every elder pledge himself to spend two hours or more each week, in addition to his regular congregational duties, for the purpose of developing himself through study. This will mean perusing the *Agenda* and *Acts* of the synods, various religious periodicals, and any books and pamphlets dealing with his task.

(2) Let each elder regularly attend the meeting of the Elders' Conference and help to make these meetings effective instruments for the development of himself and his fellow-elders.

(3) Let each elder insist on a thorough discussion in consistory and classis and synod of the basic issues which face the churches. Too many ministers and elders, we fear, are interested chiefly in getting home early from every ecclesiastical assembly.

(4) Let each elder and every consistory protest against any action violating good order in the churches, in spite of the fact that such will make elders and consistories tremendously unpopular.

(5) Let each elder constantly remind himself that the welfare of Zion depends not so much on beautiful buildings, friendly personnel, and an elaborate organization as on the blessing of the Holy Spirit. And that blessing may be expected only when we walk in the path of faith and obedience.

Let not the elders hesitate to stand as watchmen on the walls of Zion. And when they become unpopular because of their loyalty to God and His Word, they should remember that our Savior was not popular either. It may be well to remind ourselves often of His words, "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his teacher, and the servant as his lord." Only then may our elders in humble confidence expect to hear the commendation of Him whom they serve, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant...."

"I was in prison, and ye came unto me"

GERALD KEY

Correctional Chaplains Gerald Key and Andrew Vander Wall are both members of the East Paris Christian Reformed Church. In this article, Chaplain Key tells of their challenging prison ministry and says also that both he and Chaplain Vander Wall are available to speak for societies, Sunday Schools, and other groups to tell about their work.

The church of Jesus Christ has an unfinished task. Jesus commanded His church to bear witness of Him to all men (Acts 1:8), to disciple all people (Matt. 28:19-20), and to succor those in need, especially the brethren. Fulfillment of these commands is beyond the capability of a single congregation, any particular denomination, or a single aspect of the Christian ministry. Yet the body of Christ, the whole church, has within the resources to accomplish what Christ has commanded.

We would like to share with you a few glimpses of the Correctional Chaplain, or as some prefer, the Institutional Chaplain. Would you believe that one of our churches has two laymen as full-time chaplains in the jail and prison ministry? They are under the sponsorship of The Forgotten Man Mission of Grand Rapids, Michigan, which seeks to provide chaplains for the jails and prisons in the State of Michigan. These two men are members of the East Paris Christian Reformed Church. Chaplain Andrew Vander Wall works in the Kent County Jail, with follow-up work at Jackson Prison. I work in the Kalamazoo and Van Buren County jails and also do follow-up work with the men sent to Jackson Prison who want further understanding in the Word.

The primary concern of the chaplain is ministering to the inmates. He also serves their families, the institution's staff, and the community. The first and most important task of the Christian Correctional Chaplain is to communicate the gospel as a servant of Jesus Christ.

The Chaplain's concern for the whole man will cause him to become involved in many areas of endeavor besides his religious duties; such as, the inmate's personal and family needs and problems, and his physical needs and problems. He seeks, with God's leading, in all the inmate's needs and concerns, to point him to the Light of the World: the Peace which passeth all understanding. So the Correctional Chaplain deals with people in trouble, serious trouble. He will do much counseling, and teaching of Bible Classes, using Bible Courses to get the men and women interested in understanding and studying the Word. He seeks to give a Bible to each inmate who wants one, and is willing to read it.

I am wondering at this point, if we can learn some-



thing from the inmate. We give them a choice of the "King James Version" or "The Way," and in most cases within a week or ten days the inmate who took "The Way," will ask to have a "Bible," referring, of course, to the "King James Version."

There is an urgency that the Chaplain faces in the local jail. Many are incarcerated for only a short period of time, perhaps less than one month, and most not over 90 days. So it is important to initiate *early contact*.

The Chaplain's ministry will be to people with varied backgrounds; educationally, socially, economically, religiously, and morally speaking. He deals frequently with people with exceptional and severe problems. Often much of his ministry must be conducted in very distracting environments.

I believe that some of the inmates are sent to jail in God's Providence, so the Chaplain can point out to them that Jesus is Lord; not their drugs, dope, other people's property, drink, self, money, etc. God stops them, and they have 24 hours a day to analyze their lives, and where their goals in life are. The Chaplain at this point is often used of God to point the inmate to the only comfort in life and in death. God has stripped the inmate of everything, and he sees his need for Salvation, the gift of the Father in His Son Jesus Christ.

Here we see the power of Satan at work, too. He (the Devil) at times lets the inmate claim to have religion in order to impress the Judge that he is now a Christian. This is often referred to as "Jail-House Religion," only to be used for the inmate's good, and not a real Conversion. So the Chaplain must ever be alert so that he is not being used by the inmate.

The Chaplain needs to be a man of God, called to his ministry, for he is often being tested and tried by the inmates. He should fellowship with God through prayer, and in the Word, so he will be filled with the Spirit to know the will of God in dealing with these men and women.

Where do you as church and members come into

the picture of the Jail Ministry? These inmates are members of the community, and we are told to go into highways and byways (side-streets), and compel them to come in. When an inmate shows a real desire to change, or becomes a Christian while incarcerated, you, as a church, should welcome him into your fellowship; and, as a living member, you should seek to be to him a friend that "sticks closer than a brother." If that inmate is not accepted by you or your church, and he goes back to his old gang, what can you expect from him as a citizen in your community?

What are you and your church doing with the call from many local jails, "Come over and help us"? Are you beginning with your neighbor, or doesn't he or she need the gospel? Doors are opening. Workers are needed. If you can't work, you can pray for this often difficult and trying ministry. Perhaps the Lord has blessed you, so that you are willing to underwrite the cost of several Bibles, so that each inmate may have his own.

What lies ahead for the Correctional Chaplaincy? This century has seen the development of a number of new religions. Some of these now have a considerable number of adherents among the incarcerated; in some cases, the new religion exists, almost exclusively among prisoners (e.g., The Church of the New Song). As each group seeks to demand of the government "their rights" to have a Chaplain representing their church, the government may give up sponsoring (underwriting) Chaplains. Then the church should be ready to take up the task so often neglected up to now. Is the Lord preparing us for the challenging task of ministering to our neighbors incarcerated in our local correctional institutions? Pray that the Lord of the Harvest may send forth laborers, and a membership which will, with material blessings which God gives, support such a ministry.

Chaplain Andrew Vander Wall and I will be most happy to speak to your groups, societies, Sunday School, etc., on the Prison Ministry. Brethren, pray for us. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it."

These Chaplains may be reached at:

Forgotten Man Mission
1108 Leonard Street, N.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

A FIRST

A hearty thank you to a generous donor who also sent a copy of his will in which the Reformed Fellowship, Inc. is also included as one of the beneficiaries.

Other anonymous donors are also assured of our appreciation for their financial contributions, both large and small, that make it possible for the Fellowship to remain solvent.

TV Violence - and YOU



SIMON C. WALBURG

In his protest against TV violence, Simon C. Walburg writes: "It is . . . stated that between the ages of five and fifteen the average child sees 13,000 persons killed on television. This child also sees rapes, muggings, robberies, and other forms of physical violence." Mr. Walburg is a member of the Oakdale Park Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he has served as an elder and also as president of the men's society.

An Outdoor's Editor recently stated, "Killing people is all right these days, but don't go shooting any animal." Odd as this may seem, this is the message we get when we watch our TV's. Sitting in front of the television on an average evening we see all kinds of killing of people. This is accomplished by handguns, shotguns, rifles, clubs, knives, by choking and other ways too numerous to mention. But let this same TV show the cruel killing of an animal, the hue and cry of the do-gooders will go up seventeen decibels. They'll say, "Don't show that kind of show when kids are watching, it's too cruel." But these same folk will share the TV with youngsters while Matt Dillon guns down some villain on "Gunsmoke," or Kojac chases some criminal that has just killed or robbed someone.

Why, O why are we getting so cross-eyed in our evaluations? We prefer puppies to people and cats and canines to men who are the crown of creation made in the image of God. We shuddered at the ghastly atrocities inflicted by the Nazi regime at Dachau, yet today we scarcely wince at the slaughter of unborn babies and we gobble up blood-letting scenes on our TV's and in theaters. Certainly we are becoming twisted in our value judgments. On the one hand we can enjoy the music of Beethoven, Bach, and Mozart and the artistry of a Rembrandt, while at the same time we delight in the degenerate acts of decadent Rome. I'm starting to wonder. I'm beginning to think it would be wise to get in the dog coop with Fido. Then at least we would have the Humane Society to protect us.

According to a Michigan Citizens for Life periodical, "Don't steal an eagle egg." If you do, it can cost you \$5,000.00. Or a year in prison. Or both. Eagles are protected by federal law against harm or harassment by the citizenry. The penalty for so much

as stealing an egg from a nest has been stipulated by Congress.

Don't gas a beagle. Senator Humphrey abhorred the idea of using dogs in any tests of clinical, biological, or radioactive warfare materials. His amendment banning use of appropriated funds for such purposes was overwhelmingly approved in the Senate and accepted by the House of Representatives.

BUT NOW – GET THIS – *Babies you can kill!* According to our U.S. Supreme court, the word "person" as used in the Fourteenth Amendment does not include the unborn. Last year in the United States more than 1,000,000 unborn babies were "terminated" through "Abortion on Demand." Terminated means killed. Killed without the murderers facing a penalty of any kind.

So what kind of a Society do WE want? People get exactly the kind of government they deserve. And this "killing" attitude is stimulated by the violence on our TV's and theaters of today. So its up to US! If we just keep sitting there and doing nothing about it and don't complain, some court will soon decide that old folks are sort of troublesome too. Or cripples. Or readheads. Or southpaws. After all the principle is the same.

I ask, WHERE DO WE TAKE A STAND AS CHRISTIANS? I hear practically NO VOICE in our Christian community opposing all these dastardly deeds (there are a few meager exceptions). When it comes to sports and fun we are vocal enough. When it comes to an increase in our salaries we are not to be intimidated.

■ It reminds me of the time I was shopping in a large department store. Seemingly from nowhere a man approached me with a bleak look on his face. He said nothing. He simply handed me a red, white, and blue pamphlet that stated, "HELLO. I am a deaf mute. Please forgive me for bothering you. I am selling this card to support my family. Will you kindly buy one? Pay any price you wish." Stymied, I looked at the man – then instinctively I reached in my pocket and handed him a coin. But I was puzzled. Was this man really a deaf mute? Or was this a gimmick, an easy way to collect money for a lazy loafer? Then the thought struck me, are we as Christians acting like deaf mutes? Are we hiding behind this label so we won't have to face up to the violence all around us? Are we afraid of persecution or harassment if we SPEAK OUT for the truth? As a recent article stated, we as Christians, like a turtle, HAVE TO STICK OUT OUR NECK if we want something to be done about the evils of the day.

So, we are smugly hiding in our shell (like a turtle) complacently waiting – waiting for somebody to speak out? Or was it correct when someone referred to our churches as a Sleeping Giant? Significantly, in spite of our deaf-dumb attitude (though there are exceptions) the world – I repeat THE WORLD (not the church in general, mind you) is starting to wage a war on TV violence.

In Chicago the National Congress of Parents and



Teachers will tackle violence on television. This TV violence, according to Dr. Anne Somers of Rutgers University, has become a major form of pollution and seriously threatens the health of America's youth. It is further stated that between the ages of five and fifteen the average child sees 13,000 persons killed on television. This child also sees rapes, muggings, robberies, and other forms of physical violence. With this in mind the national P.T.A. is launching a national project to study the influence of television violence on children and youth.

In addition to this Governor Milliken in Lansing, Michigan, states, "Television must limit violence on the air waves or the public will force controls from outside the industry." The Governor said he was absolutely appalled at some of the things he saw on TV, terming some of the recent programs "absolutely without a sense of redeeming value. They were," he continued, "pure, unadulterated violence designed by the New York programmers and the big networks simply to pander for the sake of profit."

■ Encouragingly, in the *Sarasota Herald Tribune* of Florida, February 26, 1977, a bold type caption declared, NETWORKS RESPONDING TO PLEAS FOR LESS VIOLENCE ON THE TUBE. Let us hope this is true. This article also stated that the American Medical Association urged sponsors to drop out of shows that rated high on the violence scale. And groups as diverse as the Southern Baptist Convention and the Screen Actor Guild joined in the anti-violence clamor.

In fact, opposition to TV violence and a willingness to fight it at the supermarket level aren't limited to do-gooder groups. In a recent Gallup poll a majority of parents questioned said they believe there is a direct link between televised violence and rising crime in the streets. Further, listing the five shows most violent as: The 6 Million Dollar Man, Hawaii Five-O, Baa Baa Black Sheep, Baretta, and Starsky and Hutch. Ironically, while visiting some relatives recently a four-year-old boy wanted a 6 Million Dollar man for his birthday. Goes to show how these characters burn their filth into a child-brain.

Also pressure groups have taken aim at the broadcaster's most vulnerable spot — their money belts. In

other words there is a concerted effort to boycott those advertisers whose products are televised in conjunction with violent programs. In fact Frederick S. Pierce, president of the ABC television network flew into Hollywood with an edict to producers: "No more violence. Period. Period. Period."

■ So there is hope. A glimmer of light is on the horizon. But remember you and I can help make this dream of a less violent television programming come true by our efforts. Let us be up and doing! The question: Are we going to be a Sleeping Giant with lockjaw? Or are we by God's grace going to strive to be a golden-voiced witness to this generation? Remember, "You are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14).

No! This is not the end. This is the beginning! And the beginning is up to YOU and ME. Now! TODAY! Start writing your TV stations how you feel about this violence on television and the damage it is doing to our growing children. Inform your Commissioners, your Mayor, your Congressman. Maybe even give President Carter a ding-a-ling on his new hot-line. Vocalize your protests — possibly even in the Public Pulse of your local newspaper. Our *Grand Rapids Press* has a circulation of about 130,000. Think of the potential. BUT, before you do all this, pray for guidance, for courage, for persistence, so that we may win over this immoral monster that is invading our hearts and our homes.

1977 FOUNDATION DAY ACTIVITIES IN CANADIAN CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS: A SUCCESS!

FRED R. VANDER VELDE

Executive Director, Canadian Christian Education Foundation

For years the Christian Educational Foundation in the U.S. and more recently since February 20, 1975, the Canadian Christian Education Foundation Inc. has a slogan: *Foundation Day Strengthens Christian Schools Through Christian Textbooks*. All member NUCS Christian Schools in Canada and in the U.S. are familiar with this historic slogan.

Many students, teachers, school boards, parents, and friends of Christian Education, have been waiting for the final results, once again, on monies collected in each local Christian school in Canada by the students this year.

Foundation Day was designated this year for February 11, 1977, and was observed in most member NUCS Christian Schools in North America. Some schools, however, were forced because of inclement weather this past winter, to postpone Foundation Day. For example, in Clinton, Ontario, because of severe weather conditions during February they decided to hold Foundation Day, April 6, 1977. The same evening, I was privileged to speak to the Parents Teachers Association meeting, at which two students presented yours truly, with a large plastic bag containing monies (\$122.31) the total amount collected by the students. This is what two students said: (Jeanette Raidt) — "On behalf of the students of our school, we would like to present this gift to you." (Ruth Ann Dykstra) — "We hope this money and other gifts you receive will enable you as a Foundation to provide us with many new books."

Some schools had Foundation Day activities (spread over a week) that were planned and organized by very innovative Student Councils. Activities such as a penny race, a sponge throw (at the teachers), a pizza day, a hot dog day and even student-teacher basketball games, this year raised to-date, well over \$6,721.03. This is an increase of \$958.26 compared to 1976 figures. The following schools in Canada faithfully participated:

ONTARIO

Athens	\$ 23.50	Kitchener —
Aylmer — Immanuel	75.00	Laurentian
Barrie — Timothy	33.70	Listowel
Belleville District	25.00	London — Parental
Bowmanville — Knox..	400.00	Oshawa — Emmanuel
Brampton — J. Knox.	159.47	Ottawa Christian
Brantford	42.36	School Association
Burlington — Trinity..	350.00	Sarnia
Chatham — Calvin....	153.47	St. Thomas —
Chatham and District High	96.51	Ebenezer
Clinton	122.31	Strathroy — J. Calvin
Drayton — Calvin	144.22	Thunder Bay
Dundas — Calvin	250.00	Rexdale — Timothy...
Dunville — Parental	76.00	Woodbridge — Toronto
Fruitland — J. Knox.	126.30	District High
Georgetown	76.55	Trenton
Guelph — J. Calvin ...	22.56	Wellandport —
Hamilton — Calvin ..	131.62	Calvinistic
Hamilton Dist. High .	79.49	Williamsburg —
Jarvis	177.55	Timothy
Kingston	46.00	Woodstock — J. Knox
		Wyoming — J. Knox

NOVA SCOTIA

Kentville —
Kings County

MANITOBA

Winnipeg — Calvin....

ALBERTA

Calgary	441.50	Lacombe
Edmonton — East	108.35	Lethbridge —
Edmonton — High....	81.13	Immanuel
North Edmonton	94.73	Red Deer
West Edmonton	129.49	

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Abbotsford	270.85	Haney Pitt
Agassiz	46.95	Surrey — Shannon
Burnaby — J. Knox ..	293.37	Heights
Delta — Ladner	60.00	Vancouver
Houston	31.66	Victoria — Saanich
Maple Ridge —		108.09

As you can see, more than the majority of our Canadian Christian Schools participated during FOUNDATION DAY week.

The theme this year was *Lots of Plusses* which refers specifically and primarily to the increasing number of curriculum materials, which are made possible through gifts to the Foundations. In a secondary way, the theme refers to other benefits of observing Foundation Day last February such as appreciating Christian Education.

Both the U.S. Foundation and the Canadian Christian Foundation use these gifts received on Foundation Day, along with other private donations, church offerings, etc. for the writing of new Christian learning materials which the National Union of Christian Schools publishes.

Such curriculum materials are prepared especially for the member NUCS schools in North America and occasionally in other continents. Much is accomplished each year by the NUCS and the respective education committees in each District.

It may not be well known, but the fact is that about 20 students and teacher books and several audio-visual aids are prepared every year. A number of teacher institutes and workshops are also conducted.

Thanks to thousands of students, and their committed Chris-

tian teachers, Foundation Day activities were indeed a success again this year. Yes, *Foundation Day* has been a signal blessing year after year. As a funding organization for the member NUCS schools in Canada, we will continue to work and pray, soliciting funds from across Canada, so that we, CCEF and CSEF, may be able to continue to underwrite the ongoing curriculum program.

This year, the Foundation is committed to underwrite \$30,000.00 worth of Curriculum projects and the U.S. Foundation is committed to underwrite well over \$62,000.00. Isn't this *Lots of Plusses*?

Textbooks, Christian textbooks that open up our Father's world to the student, are the reason for us being the underwriters. We believe so strongly in the need for sound, well-researched, professionally produced and Christ-centered learning materials that it has become our full-time concern to "drum up" support throughout Canada to benefit NUCS schools. Our children — yes, God's precious children — will need Christian learning materials not only this year, but in years to come, so that they may become mature Christians for the secular world which awaits them, when they leave the halls of learning.

We are grateful that again this year's Foundation Day activities in the member NUCS schools across Canada from coast to coast was a success. We trust that those schools that did not participate this year on Foundation Day will also join us for 1978 to collect for curricular development for the NUCS. All monies raised on Foundation Day will be used for current curriculum expenses toward our goal of \$30,000.00 this year.

We are grateful for the positive support shown towards the work and program of the CCEF by our students, teachers and parents alike accross Canada. As one of the teachers wrote in his letter: "As the need for Christian Education becomes more and more apparent to people so also the need for Christian curriculum material becomes more necessary. Our students enjoyed donating this money for this important cause and we all together, as a Christian School society, wish you God's blessing as you continue your work in curriculum development for the Christian schools."

We are happy with this kind of support and tremendous response shown by teachers and students alike to see that they really had a part in giving of their time and effort for Foundation Day.

The God of the Scripture requires us that we shall instruct our children diligently in "His wonderful works that he hath done" (Ps.78:4). In order to effectively accomplish this God-given mandate, we need *tools* for our Christian teachers in our schools, so that our children will be trained with a Christ-centered curriculum program.

That is why we are so thankful and pleased that, despite our weaknesses in our Christian schools, we still find a strong united emphasis on intellectual achievements and a better understanding for a sound, well-balanced curriculum program.

Despite the high costs involved, with the help of and generous support of students, teachers, and parents the following books have been published by the NUCS:

1. BIBLICAL STUDIES

4-6 Revelation Response — 2nd edition, student and teacher books, new and revised.

Biblical Perspectives — a six book series on Christian ethics for high school students.

2. SOCIAL STUDIES

Confederation in Canada — a Christian interpretation of the British North American Act.

The Reformation — another student book in the Christian Perspective in History Series.

Famous Persons in New France — a reader for 5th graders especially in Canadian Christian schools. Trial edition.

Difficult Journey — a study book on the Native People of Western Canada, a counterpart of *Three Indian Tribes of the Southwest*. Trial edition.

3. ART

Children's Art and the Christian Teacher — revised, with an appealing soft cover.

4. MUSIC

Hymn of the Month — teaching materials to promote hymn singing in schools, homes, and churches. Instrumental scores available too.

Folk Hymnal — a popular book of songs selected through NUCS sponsored contest.

5. LANGUAGE ARTS

Soundings — a series of five thematically arranged literature books for grades 6-8. Usable for grades 5-9. Top-notch Christian reader series with international scope.

6. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Changing God's World — grades 9-12. A student book on sensitive areas of Christian thought. Trial edition.

Reading God's World — a laboratory-centered science curriculum for grades 4-6. Many units in trial editions. Accent is on knowing creation.

Using God's World — several student books — units — for grades 4-6 with accent on the wise use of God's world. Also trial editions.

Needless to say this list is not exhaustive. For a complete list of publications, write us and see for yourself how your gift to both the CSEF and CCEF is working.

May God give us together the courage and commitment to unitedly underwrite the ongoing Curriculum program as channeled through and approved by the National Union of Christian Schools Board of Directors for the benefit of all member schools. Through this kind of common commitment, I am confident God will continue to bless our humble efforts.

As communities, or individuals, have we done our share in this part of God's kingdom for the sake of His precious children? It's a matter of the Heart, His, Yours, and the CCEF's. We together with the Christian school teachers confess: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth forever" (Ps. 111:10).

SODOM AT THE CAPITOL



REV. PETER DE JONG

This year a bill has been introduced to the U.S. House of Representatives by Mr. Koch for himself and 25 others to outlaw all discrimination against homosexual activities. This Bill (H.R. 2998), which may be cited as the "Civil Rights Amendments of 1977" would "prohibit discrimination on the basis of affectional or sexual preference and for other purposes," explaining that these words mean "having or manifesting an emotional or physical attachment to another consenting person or persons of either gender, or having or manifesting a preference for such attachment." The various sections of the bill

Rev. Peter De Jong is pastor of the Christian Reformed Church of Sutton, Michigan.

amend existing laws so as to forbid any such discrimination in "public accommodations," in "public facilities" in "public educations," in "federally assisted opportunities," in "equal employment opportunities," in "housing sale, rental financing, and brokerage services, and in "education programs receiving federal financial assistance." (A late news item informs us that the federal government is already throwing public housing open to unmarried and homosexual couples living together.)

Implications — Consider some of the obvious implications of this far-reaching piece of legislation. It would evidently nullify all laws which still forbid or deter homosexual activity. If you owned a house or apartment it would appear to make it impossible for you to prevent a renter from turning it into a house of prostitution. If some teacher in a public school chose to live as a homosexual and to promote this way of living among his or her students it would forbid anyone to object or to intimate that such a life style was in any way inferior to that of a normal family.

God's Word and Its Rejection — If this bill passes it will give legal approval and protection among us to some of the worst vices that prevailed in the ancient pagan world. These vices were common place in the lives of the nations which surrounded Israel. The Lord in the laws which He gave prescribed the death penalty for all who engaged in such activities (Lev. 20:13) and explained that the prevalence of such vices among the Canaanites was the reason why He has destroyed them (Lev. 20:22, 23; 18:22-30). That vice in the city of Sodom is shown as the occasion for its destruction (Gen. 19). The Apostle Paul in the letter to the Romans (1:26, 27) directed attention to such perversions as part of the revelation of the "wrath of God . . . revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" who persisted in rejecting His revelation (vss. 18ff.). God "gave them up" (abandoned them) to such "vile affections" and unnatural vices when they "worshipped and served the creation rather than the Creator."

In his letter to the Corinthians (I Cor. 6:9, 10) Paul warned that those who engage in such unrighteousness "shall not inherit the kingdom of God." These practices were common in the old Greek world, as Plato, for example, took them for granted; but under the influence of the gospel they came to be prohibited and penalized by law. What we are now seeing is that these God-given laws and moral standards, which under the influence of the gospel through the centuries came to be accepted as basic to our civilization, are being systematically rejected in our own and other countries. As the gospel and its influence are driven out, the old paganism with its accompanying vices returns. We ought to observe that this new development, so generally considered "progressive" is not the same thing as the old paganism but something worse. When God's light is rejected, the responsibility is greater and the judgment will be worse than when that light was not yet seen. The Lord

repeatedly said that "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment" than for those who heard his gospel and then rejected its light (Matt. 10:15; 1:123, 24).

A Predicted Development — The Lord warned that as the world plunges deeper into rejection of Him and His revelation in preparation for its final judgment we may expect to see just such developments as these. The multitude of allusions in the Bible to the moral degeneracy of Sodom and its resulting destruction call attention to this event as a preview of what is happening and will happen to the world (cf. II Pet. 2:6 and Jude 7, two of many such references).

Church Compromises — Even more ominous than the way these old vices are returning to public acceptance and promotion is the way much of the church and its related institutions instead of opposing and warning against these developments inclines to make allowances for and to accept them. Recall how our CRC Synod in 1973, while still condemning homosexual practice, in the report which it accepted questioned whether the harsh condemnations expressed in the Bible still apply in our time of better knowledge (Acts, 1973, pp. 619, 621). In the Winter *Quarterly* of the Christian Health Care Center (Wyckoff, N.J.) Dr. John Bostrom, one of the directors, writes on the subject of homosexuality, mentioning especially three attitudes in the church toward it, (1) Some regard it as "willful sinfulness against God." (2) Others consider it as a "psychological state," "not sinful," but as a practice, "sinful. (3) "A more recent view holds that neither the psychological state nor the homosexual act are wrong in themselves. Homosexuals like heterosexuals, are therefore asked to channel their sexual drives and make them part of a lasting and loving relationship with another person. It is well known that experiments with formal marriages have begun." Perhaps even more significant is the doctor's conclusion: "So much is unknown about homosexuality that it is not my purpose to sell a particular point of view as to its cause or treatment, nor what attitude, specifically, the Church should have toward it. Rather I would simply urge us all to avoid stereotypes and give persons with a homosexual bent the same loving concern that we give heterosexuals."

Our Duty — We must indeed be sympathetic in dealing with all kinds of people, including criminals, but does this justify Christians and churches taking an attitude of neutrality to or even giving protection to what God has said are crimes deserving the death penalty which have brought His judgment upon other civilizations and which are bringing that judgment upon ours? Is it not time for Christians all over the country to take notice of what is happening and to urge our representatives in Congress to reject the protection to vice offered by this House Bill HR 2998? Let's write letters to our congressmen urging them to oppose this bill because it is an attack on the God-

given standards of morality and decency upon which our society is based and upon the family as the basic institution of that society. To give protection to such vices as these must contribute to the downfall of our civilization, as it has to others before ours. If we as Christians do not speak up to oppose such vicious legislation as this we become partly responsible if it becomes law. Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savor . . . it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men" (Matt. 5:13).

FOR ELDERS AND DEACONS

(10)



REV. HARRY G. ARNOLD

Deacons — Ministers of Mercy⁽¹⁾

In this tenth article in his series, *For Elders and Deacons*, Rev. Harry G. Arnold writes: "It is very clear that the Reformed church views the task of the deacons as that of ministering to the needy. While the members of the household of faith receive the priority in this ministry of mercy, there is no exclusion of the needy in general from this ministry." Rev. Arnold is pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Lansing, Illinois.

Article 2 of our Church Order states: "The offices instituted by Christ in His church are those of the minister of the Word, the elder, and the deacon." Since some attention has already been given to the minister of the Word and the elder, let us now focus our thoughts on the deacon.

It ought to be said, first of all, that all Christian churches recognize the office of deacon as a permanent office in the church along with that of the office of elder (which includes our ministers). James Bannerman tells us:

The original institution of these offices in the New Testament Church, the appointment of distinct men to exercise the duties of them, and the separate names, commission, and authority assigned to them, are matters lying so conspicuously and markedly on the surface of Scripture, as to have called forth a very general acknowledgment from all parties of the existence and

permanent standing in the Christian Church of two orders of presbyter, or elder and deacon. (*The Church of Christ*, Vol. 2, pp. 296-297).)

However, while all Christian churches acknowledge the office of deacon, all are not agreed on the task of deacon. Hence, there is sometimes confusion in our minds as to exactly what the deacon is to do. Different denominations use the deacons for different purposes. It is not surprising, therefore, if some of this ambivalence of thinking – with respect to the deacons' task – should carry over into our own attitudes toward the office. Dr. Peter Y. De Jong points out the way that different denominations view the task of the deacons. He writes:

There are deacons, chiefly in the Presbyterian and Reformed churches, charged with the task of relieving the needy of Christ's flock. In other denominations, such as the Congregational and Baptist, they are regarded as assistants of the pastor who aid him in the spiritual supervision of the congregation. In the hierarchical churches, especially the Roman Catholic and Episcopal, the deacons have been invested with the power to preach, baptize and assist the higher clergy at the time of public worship. (*The Ministry of Mercy for Today*, p. 43.)

Further, even within our own Reformed community of churches there has been much discussion in late years of the origin, nature, and task of the diaconate. Both in America and Europe, increasing attention has been given to the place of the diaconate in the life of the church. This is good since eventually a clarification of thought should come about by the discussion.

In general, it may be said that within the Reformed community of churches there is a basic consensus that the central task of the deacon is that of extending mercy in the name of Christ. Yet even within this basic consensus there is a wide difference of opinion as to how the deacons must accomplish that task. In this article we shall limit ourselves to the origin, nature, and task of the deacon.

The Origin of the Office – It is true that the New Testament tells us very little about the origin of the office of deacon. It has been generally assumed in the history of the church that the choosing of "the seven" in Acts 6 is the basis for what we have come to know as the diaconate. However, there are those who question this identification of the two. There have been prominent leaders in the church who believe that Acts 6 records the institution of the eldership. More recently, Hans Kung, a Roman Catholic theologian, has come out in support of this view. He writes:

The seven seem to have had a much greater authority than the deacons mentioned by Paul; in addition to caring for the poor, they preach and baptize (cf. Acts 8:16 and 40). . . . And it seems more reasonable to identify them with the later presbyters or elders than with the deacons. (*The Church*, p. 401.)

I cannot agree with this interpretation. It seems

to me that Acts 6:1-4 is a record of the institution of the diaconate, or at least its precursor. Luther and Calvin both turned to this passage for the foundation of the office of deacon. For myself I find Bishop Lightfoot's argumentation most convincing for the identification of Acts 6 with the institution of the diaconate. He writes concerning this passage:

I have assumed that the office thus established represents the later diaconate; for though this point has been much disputed, I do not see how the identity of the two can reasonably be called into question. . . . The functions moreover are substantially those which devolved on the deacons of the earliest ages, and which still in theory, though not altogether in practice, from the primary duties of the office. . . . Lastly, the tradition of the identity of the two offices has been unanimous from the earliest times. ("The Christian Ministry," in *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, p. 108.)

It is clear that historically the Reformed Churches have viewed Acts 6 as the origin of the office of deacon. Our *Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons* clearly identifies Acts 6 with the origin of the office of deacon; and then adds: "Since that time the Church has recognized this service as a distinct office." This appears to be a legitimate conclusion from the work assigned the seven and from the tradition of the church which identifies the seven with the office of deacon. As a matter of fact, only if Acts 6 is granted to be the origin of the diaconate do we have a description of its function. For the only places where the office of deacon is mentioned in Scripture simply name the office (Philippians 1:1), or describe the qualifications for those who would hold the office (I Timothy 3). Hence, the Reformed churches ought to maintain that which carries with it the weight of history, namely, that Acts 6 records the origin of the office of deacon.

The Essence of the Office – The deacon is essentially one who serves. The essential character of the office may be determined by the name *diakonos* which means "a servant" or one who ministers to another. The word is not limited to those who hold the office of deacon. The apostles, for example, were also called ministers as also was Christ Himself. To state it in the words of Martin Monsma:

In general it may be said that in Scripture the word *diakonos* refers either to the ministry of the Word or the ministry of mercy. (See Matt. 25:44; Mark 1:13; Luke 8:3; Acts 1:27; Acts 6:4; II Cor. 4:1; Col. 4:17.) In all these passages the word *diakonos* or a word derived from it is used.

Today we still speak of the servants of the Word as ministers of the Gospel. As a rule they are simply called ministers. These office-bearers, on the other hand, who in a special way are required to show mercy, are never called by this name, although the word deacon (*diakonos*) signifies a minister. The name deacon, therefore, tells us that he is a minister, a minister of mercy. (*The Revised Church Order Commentary*, p. 102.)

That the deacon is a minister of mercy accords well with the very origin of his office which was "to serve tables." While the office itself was regarded as extremely noble, and important enough to require men of exemplary qualifications, yet it was a service ministry and a "help" to the apostles. Thus, the Reformed churches have always viewed the office of deacon as one of ministering to the material needs of God's people. This is beautifully expressed in the words of the *Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons* as follows:

The office of deacon is based upon the interest and love of Christ in behalf of His own. This interest is so great that He deems what is done unto one of the least of His brethren as done unto Him, thus appointing the needy to represent Himself in our expression of sympathy and benevolent service on earth.

Somewhere along the line in the history of the early church, the office of deacon became deformed. That is, it was pressed out of shape from its original nature as a ministry of mercy and was made into a spiritual ministry; an apprenticeship, so to speak, to the priesthood. Calvin complains against this abuse of the diaconate by the Roman church of his day when he writes:

Similarly, when they consecratedeacons, they do nothing about their true and proper office, but ordain them only for certain rites concerned with chalice and paten. (*Institutes*, 4.5.4, p. 1088.)

His complaint in another place is that the deacons no longer care for the poor and needy, but rather spend money — that ought to be given to the poor — on church property (*Ibid.*, 4.15.16). Thus, the office became that of an assistant to the priests, and an administrative office for the care of church property.

The Reformed churches, under Calvin's direction, restored the office of deacon to its rightful character, namely, a ministry of mercy to the needy. In fact, Calvin believed that there were essentially two kinds of deacons: those "who distribute the alms," and "those who had devoted themselves to the care of the poor and sick" (*Ibid.*, 4.3.9, p. 1061). In the course of time, the Reformed churches came to emphasize that the essence of the deacon's office is to assist the needy. The actual care of the poor and sick has been left to other agencies, such as hospitals and institutions of mercy, as a rule. Nevertheless the deacon remains the minister of mercy in Christ's church.

The Task of the Office — There are two places where the Reformed churches have set forth the task of the deacon. The one is the *Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons* and the other is the *Church Order*. The deacons' task as set forth in the Form is as follows:

The work of the deacons consists in the faithful and diligent ingathering of the offerings which God's people in gratitude make to their Lord, in the prevention of poverty, in the humble and cheerful distribution of gifts according to

need, and in the relief of the distressed both with kindly deeds and words of consolation and cheer from Scripture.

Deacons should note carefully that the church has assigned a large task to them. Sometimes the complaint is heard that our deacons don't have enough to do. If that is so, then it is only because they have not fully executed their mandate. Theirs is not merely a humanitarian distribution of gifts to the needy; but rather a ministry of mercy in Christ's name. Hence, they are to seek to prevent poverty, which is a large task in itself. But, above all, they are to become adept at relieving the distressed "both with kindly deeds and words of consolation and cheer from Scripture." That the Christian Reformed Church takes this task seriously is discerned from the questions regarding the deacons which are to be asked at church visitation. Synod has prescribed that some of the questions to be asked shall be: "7. Do they minister to the distressed with kindly deeds and words of consolation from Scripture?" To be a good deacon — a minister of mercy — one must know the Bible and be able to use it. Like the early deacons, our deacons ought to be "men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom" (Acts 6:3). Such men will know how to apply the Scriptures in ministering to the needy.

The *Church Order* is in basic agreement with the above statement regarding the deacons' task when it states in Article 25a:

The task of the deacons is to administer Christian mercy toward those who are in need, first of all toward those of the household of faith, but also toward the needy in general. In executing this task they shall diligently collect, administer, and distribute monies and other gifts, and shall serve the distressed with counsel and assistance.

It is very clear that the Reformed church views the task of the deacons as that of ministering to the needy. While the members of the household of faith receive the priority in this ministry of mercy, there is no exclusion of the needy in general from this ministry. Surely, if believers are taught to feed their "enemy" (Rom. 12:20), then the church's ministers of mercy ought to care for the needy in general, even though they be outside of the church.

In order to accomplish their task, the deacons must have adequate funds. It is their duty to request sufficient offerings that the needs of the poor can be met. When funds are insufficient the deacons must not allow the poor to be neglected, but rather request more help from the congregation. The congregation must occasionally be reminded of the charge it received when the deacons were installed:

Provide the deacons generously with the necessary gifts for the needy, remembering that in so much as you do it unto the least of these His children, you do it unto Him.

Deacons, yours is a high and holy calling. You represent Christ in His care of the needy. You are ministers of mercy. Exercise yourselves as men called "of God's church, and consequently of God Himself,"

to your holy office. Seeking to fulfill your office with all godliness of example, it will be true of you as the *Form for Ordination* says:

Thus conducting themselves as worthy representatives of Christ's loving care, and faithfully ministering in His Name to those who are the beloved of God, they *gain themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

"May God give us to see in the ministry . . . of the deacons the care and love of the Savior."

OUR QUESTION



REV. HARLAN G. VANDEN EINDE

Rev. Harlan G. Vanden Einde is pastor of the Oakdale Park Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. All questions for this department are to be sent directly to his address:

**Rev. Harlan G. Vanden Einde
1000 Hancock, S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507**

This department is *for everyone*. No signatures are required and no names will be published. Your questions will be gladly received and answered as promptly as possible.

Question — A reader from Canada asks that I explain the difference between demon possessed persons and mental illness." From further comments in the reader's letter, I gather that she is most interested in knowing if there is a difference between the two, or if they in any way are related.

Answer — Let me begin by saying that a subject as big as this can hardly be given thorough treatment in a brief column of several paragraphs; nor do I pretend to be able to exhaust the subject here. My intent is to comment briefly on the issue and encourage the reader to pursue the matter further from the numerous books dealing with this subject.

Let it be said immediately that there is a difference between demon possession and mental illness. Though the term "demon possession" is not found in the Bible, the New Testament does frequently mention "demoniacs." They are identified as having "a spirit," "a demon," "demons," or "an unclean spirit." Such "demonized" victims are subject to periodic

attacks of one or more demons, who derange them sometimes both physically and mentally during the seizure.

Mental illness, on the other hand, is a sickness of the mind, and is due to very natural causes. It may result from a defect in the brain, and that defect may be congenital (that is, existing at birth), or it may be accidental. It may result from a hardening of the arteries which restricts the flow of blood to the brain. Sometimes the brain cells simply wear out, and the mind does not function properly, as in senility. Poisonous infections from other parts of the body and disorders in body metabolism may also affect the way the mind functions. Even heredity may play a part.

Merril F. Unger has authored a book entitled *Demons In the World Today*. In a chapter entitled "Demons Against Men," he writes: "Many mental and emotional illnesses are, of course, due to natural causes, such as overwork tension, fatigue, malnutrition, organic diseases, etc. Such disorders can be treated effectively by a physician, neurologist, psychologist, or psychiatrist. Demonic spirits may have little or nothing to do with such disorders of the mind. The causes are purely natural and may be corrected by purely natural means. This is not surprising since the Creator has placed the creation and His creatures under the normal operation of the laws of cause and effect" (p. 29).

So to conclude that every person with a mental illness of some kind is in some measure demon possessed would be very fallacious. To say that is not to rule out demon possession, but to say there is a difference between the two.

Demons do exist. To quote again from Unger's book, "Evidence from Scripture, nature, history of comparative religions, and human experience all testify to the existence of evil supernaturalism. In this realm, the invisible, hierarchical, spiritual personalities operate who are called 'principalities . . . powers . . . world rulers of this darkness . . . spirits of wickedness in the heavenly realms' (Eph. 6:12). These spiritual agencies are servants of Satan, 'the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience'" (Eph. 2:2), (p. 13).

Unger continues, "According to Scripture, Satan and demons not only exist, but they work among humanity, particularly in those who, like Statan, disdain God and openly rebel against his laws. Demonism certainly impinges on human experience and human conduct (Eph. 2:2). Pastoral counseling psychiatric and psychological therapy, and even medical treatment should take these demonic factors into consideration" (p. 13).

Though all of our diseases and sicknesses are the result of sin and sin's power in the world, demon possession and mental illness are not the same. Let us thank God that He has promised us a life free from sin and Satan's power in the life to come for Jesus' sake. And let us rejoice in our union with the resurrected, ascended Christ, who has all things in subjection under His feet (Eph. 1:22).

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DEPENDENCE - not INDEPENDENCE

Meditation



REV. GARRETT H. STOUTMEYER

For what great nation is there, that hath a god so nigh unto them, as Jehovah our God is whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that hath statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law, which I set before this day?" — Deuteronomy 4:7-8

July is the month of very important holidays in both Canada and the United States. Dominion Day, often popularly called "Canada Day" celebrated on July 1, commemorates the day (July 1, 1867) when the provinces of Canada were united in one government. Dominion Day is a time for patriotic parades, programs and national activities. It was on July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress of the United States adopted the Declaration of Independence. The two hundredth birthday of the United States seems but yesterday. July is also the month for very similar national holidays in the Philippines, Argentina, the Netherlands, and Peru, etc.

Perhaps the celebrations in each country are remarkably similar! To be sure they are holidays marked with great festivities. I do not, however, ever recall that the 4th of July in the United States in my lifetime was observed as a day of national mourning. I remember fireworks but no weeping! Celebrations but no calls or presidential summons to reconsecration before the Lord of the nations! No one though will deny that whether we live in the United States or Canada, the Philippines or Argentina, etc., that this should be a time for both individual and national mourning. Mourning over national and international lawlessness, mounting immorality and creeping humanism. Irreligion, infidelity and indifference to the Word has almost totally replaced the faith of the founding fathers of this republic as a "nation under God."

Centuries ago the Hebrews had reached the plains of Moab in their progress toward Canaan. The land

east of the Jordan was conquered. All that remained was the crossing of the Jordan and the entering of the promised land. Only their leader of forty years was not to enter with them. Therefore, he used his farewell occasion to both rehearse their history and remind them again of God's strong claim on their allegiance. In this text he reminds them that theirs was the special privilege of having God near unto them as their God.

Now we know that **no** nation is Canaan, that is "the promised land." But of what nation in history — past or present, or future — is this declaration and/or question not true? "For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it, as the Lord our God is near to us . . . ?" Israel's God was a God ready at hand but ready to expose! Ready to judge! To all, Psalm 145:18 declares, "The Lord is near to ALL who call upon Him. . . ."

And that is still the "HINGE" of national greatness!! Listen: ". . . whenever we call upon Him." More often than not the Throne of Grace is grossly neglected! Oh, that the spirit of celebration nationally in this month of July were a spirit of prayer instead of pride, of deep contrition instead of blind optimism. The late Dr. Walter A. Maier of Lutheran Hour fame once said: "A defenseless nation with prayer is better protected than a heavily armed nation without prayer."

A further qualification in the text is so critically important. The little word "We." Because the Bible teaches that only the people of God can pray acceptably, doesn't it? To quote the remainder of the 18th verse of Psalm 145: ". . . to all who call upon Him in truth." That is why "WE" must pray for our nation(s). If the righteous do not pray, who will?

Moses, further reminded the Israelites of their DEPENDENCE UPON GOD'S PROVISION: "And what great nation is there, that hath statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law which is set before you this day?" In this same chapter they were very solemnly warned in the second verse that absolutely nothing was to be added to or subtracted from God's Moral Law. They were not to alter it or tamper with it!! The Law of Sinai was to be forever the cornerstone of their national life and honor.

Whether it be the United States "Declaration of Independence" or that of any other country, there is no law so "righteous" as Gods' Law!! But can it be said that God's Law is today the law of the country in which we live? In most nations, if not in all, the unqualified answer is unequivocally "NO!" We have squandered our ancient birthright! We continue to break not one but all of God's commandments! We are by nature "prone to hate God and our neighbor. And the **ONLY** answer out of our national ills is to be found in Proverbs 14:34: "Righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach to any people." Our wrongs *cannot* be righted without genuine contrition and thoroughgoing repentance.

And in verse one of this same chapter GOD'S PROMISE is appended: ". . . that you may live."

Rev. Garrett H. Stoutmeyer is pastor of the Faith Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Far from existence we are summoned by our Creator to life in its God-ordained sequence and purpose. Life is promised to the obedient and death to the disobedient.

We may cross our heart and solemnly pledge allegiance to our country; but our first, our foremost and fullest, responsibility is to pledge renewed allegiance to our God, to His Presence, His Provision, and His Promise.

*This country's sin is ours, O God,
Your judgment duly earned;
For we have worshipped gods of gold
and Your commandments spurned;
But now, O Lord, we seek your face,
and in your mercy trust,
Forgive our sin and heal our land,
remember we are dust.*

(Mae Probst)

WHAT WE Believe



(5)

REV. ELCO H. OOSTENDORP

GOD — THE CREATOR

This is the fifth in a series of articles on Reformed Doctrine, under the heading, *What We Believe*. The familiar question-and-answer method, used so effectively by Bosma's *Reformed Doctrine* of a bygone day, is being followed. Rev. Elco H. Oostendorp (retired) of Hudsonville, Michigan deals with the "Doctrine of God" in these opening articles.

How did God begin to carry out His eternal plan for the world?

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," Genesis 1:1. This is the first article of the Apostles' Creed not only, but in many ways the doctrine which is basic to all other articles of the Christian faith. By creating the universe and the human race God established the relationship between himself and men—and angels too—which made possible the fall into sin and the work of redemption in Christ.

What is meant by creation?

Creation is often described very simply as making something out of nothing. However, the Bible uses this word in two senses, and we may therefore speak of a primary and secondary creative activity of God. Genesis 1:1 speaks of that activity of God by which He brought into existence the matter out of which the universe is made. The rest of the chapter describes how the Lord ordered what was at first a chaos into a cosmos. In Genesis 1:2 we are told that the creation was at first without form and void and darkness was on the face of the deep, while the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. Then in six days God transformed this unorganized "stuff" into the wonderful world or universe which He pronounced "very good." The crown of creation was the making of man out of the dust of the earth (Gen. 2:7) and a woman out of man's rib (Gen. 2:21, 22). Men, male and female, are made in the image of God, and given dominion over all the creation (Gen. 1:27, 28 and Psalm 8:5-8).

Do we believe the so-called "gap" or "restitution" theory of creation?

No. This theory teaches that there was a long time gap between the first and second verses of Genesis 1. Verse one records the creation of the first heavens and earth, which became waste and void because of the fall of Satan and his angels. The rest of the chapter then tells about the restoration of the earth rather than its creation out of nothing. This interpretation is taught in the Scofield Bible notes, and due to the wide popularity of that Bible in evangelical circles, is accepted by many today. Space does not allow a detailed refutation, but the supposed Scriptural evidence adduced for this idea is very weak. The theory is often appealed to as a very satisfactory explanation of many apparent contradictions between scientific findings and the Genesis record, the idea being that long geological ages and many fossils can be explained this way. It should be obvious that the chaos described in Genesis 1:2 and the creative process outlined in 1:3 to 2:3 do not allow for such an explanation at all. It is indeed amazing that such a speculation could find such uncritical acceptance among so many who pride themselves on taking the Bible literally!

Why has the doctrine of creation become very important in recent times?

Because of the rise of the evolutionary theory, especially since 1859 when Charles Darwin published his *Origin of Species*. Although evolution as taught by Darwin and others does not give a theory of the origin of the universe, it does try to explain the present condition of the earth and life upon it in terms of a gradual process which is quite different than the fiat creation of Genesis and other Scriptures. In view of the fact that our confessions date from a period when this theory had not been developed, they do not address themselves to the problems it raises. This is strikingly evident in the emphasis of

Articles XII and XIII of the Confession of Faith and also Answer 26 of the Heidelberg Catechism. The confessions are interested in creation as it has a bearing on our relationship to God as our Father in Christ, and are more concerned with the spiritual than the natural world. This is especially evident in the Belgic Confession, Article XXX, which is headed: "The Creation of All Things, Especially The Angels." It is also instructive to notice that both the Confession and the Catechism closely connect creation and providence, so that while the Confession has a separate article on each, it already mentions providence in the article about creation. Which leads us to the following question.

What is the relationship between creation and providence?

By speaking His word of creative power (Psalm 33:6 and 9) God gave the creation an existence distinct from His own. The Bible always speaks of creation — with one or two exceptions — as a past act of God. Compare for example Hebrews 11:3 and Revelation 4:11. Providence is the activity of God by which He upholds and governs His creation. Although God is still at work in the world He rested from the work of creation, as Genesis 2:1-3 and Exodus 20:11 clearly teach. This is a very significant fact to remember, for when science tries to speak about origins and how God made the world and living creatures, it must always do so in terms of its observation of developments since the creative activity of God has ended. That is why our knowledge of creation must come from revelation for we cannot observe it anymore. Although we cannot deny that there are problems that arise from discoveries in geology and archaeology, astronomy and biology and other sciences, these can never touch our faith in God as Creator.

Why is it important that we believe the historicity of the Biblical account of creation?

This account in Genesis 1 and 2 is most closely connected to the record of the fall in Genesis 3. Paul teaches very plainly in Romans 5:12-21 that it was in Adam's fall that we all became sinners and that as we died in Him so also we are saved and made alive in Christ. While belief in creation is also of great significance for our understanding of nature and the "cultural mandate" to rule over creation as God's servants, our confessions are especially concerned to maintain that God created man good and in His image, that man fell by his own sinful choice, and that salvation is a restoration of what was lost by the fall. Among the many Scriptures which stress this fact we mention only Revelation 4 which speaks of creation, and Revelation 5 which is a vision of the Lamb who by his blood has ransomed men of every nation for God and made them priests and a kingdom to reign on the earth.

What do we believe about the creation of the angels?

The Bible does not state specifically the time of the creation of the angels. From the fact that Satan

fell and tempted Adam and Eve soon after their creation we may conclude that they were created before man was. As the Confession states in Article XII, we believe that they were all created good, but that now there are also evil, fallen angels, of whom Satan or the Devil is the head. They form a kingdom of darkness. This evil power is not able to go beyond God's control (cf. the Book of Job, and passages like Luke 22:31, 32), but it is nevertheless dangerous and real. As the Catechism says (Q. and A. 127), "our sworn enemies, the devil, the world, and our own flesh, cease not to assault us." The revived interest in angels, both good and bad, as evidenced for example, in the great popularity of Dr. Billy Graham's book, is an encouraging development. We can indeed be thankful that there are hosts of "ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation" (Hebrews 1:14). With them and all creation, we join in praise to Him who is worthy to receive glory and honor and power because He has created all things, and by His will they existed and were created.

An Exciting Exercise



REV. FRED VAN HOUTEN

"After preaching the Word of God for many years," says Rev. Fred Van Houten, pastor of the Christian Reformed Church in Sully, Iowa, in this article, "it is now more than ever my chief delight. Studying the Scriptures in the deepest way I can is an exciting exercise. There would not be that excitement and thrill if I made some of the historical events symbolical expressions, if I believed the authors were time bound and culturally conditioned, if I did not believe these authors spoke from God."

Are you excited about your work?

People, personalities, pressures, and problems can make you unhappy, but you can be thrilled with your job if you realize it is God's assignment for you.

God's Writings — In the plan and providence of God I study the Bible and apply it to life today. I want to do this in the very best way I possibly can. Teachers and professors study diligently the writings of men to teach knowledge to their students. People

who are competent in their work and industrious in their profession must experience a certain drive that enables them to overcome difficulties and discouragements.

In my way I study the writings of God. This is thrilling! It is an exciting exercise! What do people need more today than to know what God has written in His Word? To be sure, I believe in organic inspiration of the Bible, but this is what the Scriptures mean to me – God's writings. This calls for my very best efforts and most diligent study in the exercises of Holy Writ. I am a steward of such a precious possession.

Without any hesitancy or explanation whatever, with all my heart I am "believing without any doubt all things contained in them" (Confession of Faith, Art. 5). To me the words "inerrancy" and "infallibility" apply to every Scripture, and I don't have to limit such applications to "God's redemptive revelation in Christ." If I would imply such a characterization, what of some of the historical events in the Bible, e.g., the first chapter of Job or Genesis! My understanding is not my criterion. My faith is. "By faith I understand" (Hebrews 11:3).

The Original Writings – In our circles we use the expression "verbal inspiration" or "plenary inspiration." By it we mean that the Holy Spirit "breathed in" the writers even the words they used. It must be remembered, however, that these expressions apply to the "autographa," the original writings as they left the authors' hands. The trouble is that some Christians apply these characterizations to the King James Version. To date it may be the best translation, as many believe, but it is only a translation.

Why did not God allow the original writings to be preserved? With God's writings and the inbreathing of the Holy Spirit, would you not think that He would have preserved them somehow and somewhere as they were? Would it not be marvelous if someone could still find them, as the Bedouins found the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947? With our many versions and translations today, which seem to confuse some people, would it not be great if we could know exactly what these "men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit"? (II Peter 1:21).

Although we can ask these questions in all sincerity, we know it has not pleased God to preserve the original Scriptures in this way. Maybe it is better that they were not preserved intact. Knowing the history of the Christian Church as we do, such precious manuscripts would have been venerated and perhaps even worshipped. Even our best and oldest manuscripts are copies of copies of the master copy. When the New Testament writers quoted the Old Testament, they commonly used the Septuagint, the translation of the Old Testament in Greek written about 250 B.C. The Holy Spirit led them in this use of the Scriptures.

Textual Criticism – This expression does not have anything to do with higher criticism of the Bible. It

means the science of comparing, contrasting, and evaluating the various manuscripts. There are many of these documents, and it is an exciting exercise to study them. For the most part, the differences are very slight and have no effect on Biblical theology. The objective of this art is a sincere and diligent attempt to get at the original text. This is the work of qualified philologists, but all Scripture exegetes and expositors should learn something about it.

In the footnotes or sidenotes of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament these little alterations are listed. They are worth studying. I never cease to admire these copyists who through many centuries transcribed these manuscripts in their own handwriting or hand printing. Some letters of the Hebrew and Greek alphabet are very similar, especially in the ancient script. What an exciting task! Why did they do it? It all tells me of the Providence and direction of God, as well as the complete dedication of these scribes to the Word of God.

King James Version – Some time ago I received in the mail a copy of a small booklet *The King James Version Compared to Dr. Taylor's Paraphrase*, written by Oliver B. Greene. Personally, I do not think much of paraphrases except for the purpose of Bible study. Some people use only *The Living Bible* and I believe that can be dangerous. At least it is inadvisable. But this writer is something else! He writes, "In the Bible I use – which I have studied countless hundreds of hours and preached from hundreds and hundreds of times – I do not see one word about any changes in future editions. My Bible is the *same* today as it was when I was *born again* forty years ago. The *reason there will be no changes in future editions* is stated in Psalm 119:89, 'Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven!'" Isn't that something? This is to equate the King James Version with the original writings, and it did not appear until 1611!

Now it so happened that the Greek text which the King James translators used as their source was compiled largely from manuscripts which date from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries A.D. Since 1611 a number of Greek manuscripts have been found which date from the third and fourth centuries A.D. These early documents surely enable textual scholars to discover a text closer to the original. One of these tremendous discoveries is the excellent CODEX ALEPH found by Tischendorf in 1859, dating to about 300 to 350 A.D.

Later Versions – An illustration of a variation in versions is in order. A beautiful verse in Scripture is I John 3:1. The King James Version translates it, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God, therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." The American Standard Version has the second clause this way – "that we should be called children of God and such we are. For this cause the world knoweth us not." Almost all the subsequent translations include those words "such we

are." The New International Version has "And that is what we are."

Why this difference? This example takes us to the heart of the problem concerning the Greek text. When one looks at these words "we are" and their position in the verse, one can understand. Happily for us, scholars were able to discover early manuscripts which retained the "we are." This is not much of a change, and it does not alter our theology, but in our times of testing and trying, these little words meet us as a gracious testimony from God that "we are" indeed His children.

Many archaic words and expressions in the KJV could be listed. Although it is not popular outside the Christian Reformed Church, the ASV is an excellent translation as far as the original languages are concerned. The "Received Text" used by KJV is not a bad or heretical text. One of the best modern editions of the Greek text was published in 1882 by Westcott and Hort, and it influenced the ASV translation considerably. Yet Hort wrote the following concerning the "Received Text":

With regard to the great bulk of the words of the New Testament, there is no variation or other ground of doubt, and therefore no need for textual criticism. . . . We find that, setting aside differences of spelling, the words in our opinion still subject to doubt make up about one sixtieth of the whole New Testament.

The only reason Westcott and Hort or any modern translators revised the "Received Text" is because the more recent manuscript discoveries reproduce more accurately the original wording of the New Testament. Very likely no other version besides King James will have served so well and so long, but thank God for the more recent discovery of Bible manuscripts which enable us to know the Scriptures more meticulously. I for one think very highly of the New International Version. Just as the New Testament was written in the language of the common people, so today the Word of God must communicate to all men in all ages in all places. For this reason there may be a new version of the Scripture in another fifty years or so.

Good Commentaries — Since my day at Calvin College and Seminary, requirements in the original languages of the Bible have been reduced somewhat. However, there is still a good emphasis on philology for a minister of the Gospel. Every day I thank God for my good education at Calvin. I have enjoyed immensely further studies in the Bible, especially in the sphere of exegesis. In all humility, I want to stand at the pulpit on the Lord's Day with a thrilling knowledge of what the Spirit says to the church. May I be satisfied with anything less? Does the body of Christ deserve anything less? Does God call me for anything less?

Not all those who preach the Word are able to take a course in textual criticism. Not all who speak to audiences have studied Hebrew and Greek. Today we are grateful for good commentaries which can aid

a great deal in helping a preacher to exegete the Scriptures. The Old Testament commentaries of Leupold and Young are excellent. The New Testament commentaries in the New International series and those by Dr. William Hendriksen are extremely valuable in exegeting and explaining the text from the original languages. The diligent and thorough use of these volumes is reassuring for one who is called to preach the Word. "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15).

After preaching the Word of God for many years, it is now more than ever my chief delight. Studying the Scriptures in the deepest way I can is an exciting exercise. There would not be that excitement and thrill if I made some of the historical events symbolical expressions, if I believed the authors were time bound and culturally conditioned, if I did not believe these authors spoke from God. Although the entire Bible has been given to men many centuries ago, and I have been privileged to study it for many years, I still feel like Tischendorf when he discovered that great manuscript of the New Testament:

I knew that I held in my hand the most precious Biblical Treasure in existence — a document whose age and importance exceeded that of all the manuscripts which I had ever examined during twenty years' study of the subject. I cannot now, I confess, recall all the emotions which I felt in that exciting moment with such a diamond in my possession. ●

COMING

See the August issue for *Review of Synod* by Rev. John H. Piersma. As pastor of the Bethany CRC of South Holland, Illinois, Rev. Piersma served as a delegate from Classis Illiana at the 1977 Synod. Recently he accepted a call to become the pastor of the First CRC of Sioux Center, Iowa.

Church Census:

*That vacant, varnished seat, alas,
Stares at us like an eye of glass.*

S.C.W.

* * * *

*The true test of love of God I'm sure,
Is loving first the folk who live next door.*

S.C.W.

A LOOK AT BOOKS

IN SEARCH OF GOD'S IDEAL WOMAN, by Dorothy R. Pape; Inter Varsity Press, 1976; 361 pp., \$4.95. Review by Rev. Jelle Tuininga of Smithers, B.C.

The sub-title of the book is: A Personal examination of the New Testament. That is not entirely accurate, for the book contains a great deal of biographical material and historical information dealing with the topic of women.

The book is made up of three basic chapters: I. Woman in the Gospels; II. Woman in Acts; and III. Woman in the Epistles. Each chapter is divided into several sub-chapters or sections. The third chapter is by far the longest. That is not so surprising, since it's in Paul's epistles where we are faced with the most explicit and didactic material concerning the place and task of women, particularly in regard to the church. The author herself states that "this section proved a much less pleasant, and much more difficult, study than that in the Gospels and Acts" (p. 103). That it is more difficult, I can imagine. Why it should be "less pleasant" I don't know, unless it's because Paul says too many things that are awfully difficult to bring into harmony with much of the thinking of the present-day popular Women's Liberation movement. I get the distinct impression that this is what has "bugged" the author somewhat. Not that Mrs. Pape herself is a "Liberationist." She has at various points registered criticism of the movement. At the same time, I'm afraid she has been too much influenced by the movement herself. One cannot escape the conclusion that she has "an axe to grind." That makes the book both disappointing and one-sided. While she seems to come on rather strong and self-confident in the introduction, she does admit at the conclusion that the book "certainly is not meant as an authoritative statement on doctrine, but as useful data for those who are wrestling with the problem of the position of women in the church in these days..." (p. 358).

I can only emphasize that first statement of the author's conclusion, and I hope the fact that the book has the "imprimatur" of the Inter Varsity Press

will not be looked upon by evangelicals as an indication that all is therefore well. For all is not well, as I will try to indicate.

In the first place, I find at times what I would almost call a "flippant" attitude toward the Bible. Basically, I believe, it boils down to a faulty view of inspiration — the root, I am convinced, of many of our problems today. Already in the introduction the author states that no one really knows who Lemuel was (Prov. 31), and it is possible that the poem "is a later addition to Solomon's proverbs. I could not help wondering why God had caused it to be included in the canon of Scripture" (p. 14). As for Solomon, he obviously did not apply the wisdom found in Proverbs to his own life — with his 700 wives and 300 concubines. "In these circumstances, would his advice carry much weight? . . . Like most of us, he found it easier to put all the blame on others, the women in this case and none on his own weakness" (*Ibid.*).

I find that a very strange way of speaking about the Scriptures! As if those were no more than the personal opinions of Solomon himself. I always thought that God, out of a special concern He had for us and our salvation, committed his holy and divine word to writing, that men of old spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit? Timothy speaks of "silly women laden with sins" and "old wives' fables." "This sounds rather different from any of Christ's words about women" (p. 103). About Paul's advice for the women to be silent and ask their husbands at home: "We can be thankful today it is not considered immodest for a woman to question the speaker afterward or to phone the minister . . ." (148). On I Timothy 2:11-14: "This English version certainly seems to limit a woman to being a perpetual bench-warmer, forever learning but never having an opportunity to pass her knowledge on . . ." (149). (Cf. also p. 222 to the same effect.) Again: "Paul's letter to Timothy was personal. His view on woman's not teaching does not appear in any other New Testament document . . ." (*Ibid.*). On that same basis the virgin birth has been denied — only one gospel mentions it!

You see what I mean by a faulty view of inspiration? That certainly has never been the way the Reformed tradition has spoken about the Holy Scriptures. There's a lot of debate nowadays about who said what: Did Matthew say this, and did he borrow from Mark, and was Mark depending in turn on "Q," and what now were the actual words of Jesus? As if it makes any difference who said it! It's in the Bible, isn't it? And we "believe without any doubt all things contained in them" (Holy Scriptures) don't we? Or do we? What does it matter who said it, as far as its authority is concerned? Mark's words or Paul's words are as good as Jesus' words — they are all the words of God.

And all this argumentation as to who said it or who borrowed from whom is so much useless speculation.

One of my professors used to say that he disliked a "red-letter" edition of the Bible (Jesus' words in red), because the entire Scriptures spoke of Him. He was right. But now we're going back to a red-letter edition that is far more dangerous. It is important to see the unity of Scripture, to compare Scripture with Scripture, to realize that it cannot contradict itself, and that it is therefore wrong to try to pit Scripture against Scripture. So it's not Paul *versus* Jesus or Paul *versus* himself (*a la Jewett*) but Paul *and* Jesus and Paul *compared* with Paul. Galatians 3:28 in no way contradicts what is said in I Corinthians 14 and I Timothy 2, and may not be construed that way. What Paul teaches in Galatians 3:28 is that faith in Christ Jesus transcends all social, racial, cultural, and sexual differences. All men (mankind) are equal in Christ, just as they are equal before the face of God. The Bible teaches that with unmistakable clarity. But that is something entirely different than to say that in all other respects they are also equal. Children are not equal with parents, and women are not equal with men, and never will be this side of heaven. God created distinctions and differences among men, and we must recognize them. But that is *not* (I repeat: *not*) a matter of inferiority or discrimination. And it's high time we get that straight for once. More than once the author of this book mentions that word "inferiority," as if that was or is the issue, cf. pp. 23, 183, 249. She concludes on page 358: "We found no evidence [in the Bible, J.T.] that all women are inferior to . . . all men." Of course not! That's not the point, and never was. Differences in sex, in task, in office, in social position, do not (necessarily) mean inferiority. Does the fact that children have to obey their parents make them inferior to parents? Or workers to boss, or wives to husbands? Let's get rid of that silly notion once and for all! That is not the issue at stake in the whole debate about women in the church. In the history of the church women may have been, and often were, looked upon as inferior, but Paul's advice to women to be subject to their husbands or to be silent in the church has absolutely nothing to do with discrimination or inferiority. And so it's time we stop using these loaded terms from the Women's Lib movement.

What is more, it's time we realize that "Christian feminism" is as much a contradiction in terms as "Christian male-chauvinism." The two exclude each other, Scanzoni, Hardesty and others notwithstanding. That is another elementary lesson some of our Liberationist enthusiasts ought to learn. Don't try to baptize feminism with Christianity.

There are examples of questionable exegesis in the book also. Elizabeth's barrenness and reproach is not seen at

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all in the light of O.T. Messianic hope (p. 27); Paul should have had compassion for the slave girl in Philippi, as Christ would have had, instead of becoming irritated and angry with her (97, 98); regarding Psalm 51:5, "we can only conclude that there was something irregular about David's birth" (271) — that's the weirdest I've heard yet; "as even the law says" (I Cor. 14:34) is a reference not to Genesis, but to the oral rabbinic law (146), and Peter incorporated that into what he said about Abraham and Sarah too (288). One can question whether this is worthy of the name exegesis.

What is Pape's personal view regarding Paul's teaching in I Corinthians 14 and I Timothy 2? That it is not God's permanent command, but written only in connection with the circumstances of that day (pp. 158-160). She tries to bolster this view by using other biblical references — foot washing, the eating of blood (Acts 15), Paul's advice to Timothy to use a little wine for the stomach, etc., all of which are ignored by evangelicals today. The fact that she has to use these examples reveals to me more the weakness of her position than anything else. That is not using the Bible seriously.

At times the author is guilty of setting up straw men and then knocking them down. For example, the heading of subchapter 12 reads: "Woman's Church Role: Mute Benchwarmer?" After such a biased beginning, it's hard to say anything unprejudicial. Also, as in other books of this nature, man's "headship" over the woman and her subjection to the man (particularly in husband/wife relationships) is often seen in terms of boss/slave — a domineering husband who lords it over his helpless wife. But that is a *secular* view of authority and headship, and has nothing to do with the Bible's view of things. Once Paul is read in terms of such a view, then of course it becomes necessary to relativize him somewhat. But then we're only knocking down a straw man, and the sooner we realize that, the better. That's again not to say that husbands, even Christian husbands, have always understood their role correctly. But we don't correct one evil by perpetrating another. Here Larry Christenson is right (quoted by the author with approval): "A husband who fails to lecture his wife on her duty to be submissive to his authority has already yielded up the ground of his authority."

After a good deal of egalitarian em-

phasis whereby the author seeks to show the equality and similarity of male and female, it strikes one as a bit humorous to read the almost grudging admission: "God did create two sexes, however, and obviously with some purpose. So we shall now try to discover . . ." (168). It reminds me of a letter I once received from a recently married girl who was quite enamored with Women's Lib. After describing in some detail how they were going to do things together as husband and wife, she added, again somewhat humorously, "Of course, since my husband can't bear children . . ." she would, after all, have to assume that role. How ridiculous can we get? In her better moments the author says better things too:

It is interesting that in a secular survey of families in Hamilton, Ontario, the happiest families were generally those where the husband was regarded as head of the home.

A wife usually has her own special creative joy and responsibility in the bearing and upbringing of children. . . . (284)

God's ordinances prove to be right after all! Notwithstanding all our desires and efforts to change them.

Let me give a few more good quotations from the author to show that, in spite of herself, she has some important things to say:

. . . some women have refused self-subjection to husbands because of a false view of emancipation. This seems true especially today when so much stress is placed on individual rights. Some forget that true emancipation comes only from Christ and that his desire is that all his followers live in a spirit of meekness, "submitting themselves to one another." How much more, therefore, should a Christian wife submit to the man she has chosen in love (290).

When children are in the home, they are the wife's primary responsibility (329).

I am afraid most people will find that if they have not done much with their children in the young and often rather tiresome stage, they will lose communication with them in the teen years (335).

No, the book is not all bad. In fact, all women (and men) should read subchapter 20, "Woman as Mother." An excellent chapter, the best in the book.

It contains a lot of good sound advice for mothers, also about bringing up children. I wish I could be as enthusiastic about the entire book.

Can we find God's ideal woman? That question is left unanswered and open-ended, probably wisely so. Common or practical sense even seems to take over toward the end of the book in connection with women in the special offices of the church: "I have recently heard of a husband's being minister in one church and his wife assistant minister in a neighboring area, but marriages or churches which can successfully survive such an arrangement for long are rare, I believe . . ." (p. 359). A bit more of this ordinary plain common sense on many of these questions, also with respect to what the Bible says about them, would have prevented many of these books from being written. Too many are a lot of sound and fury, signifying nothing, or making a mountain out of a molehill. It is to be hoped that we will regain some of this Christian common sense and spend our time on something better than writing (and reading!) long reports and books that get their impetus from the (passing) spirit of the age, and too often imbibe large doses of that spirit.

BOOK NOTES

Recent Reprints

REV. JEROME JULIEN

COMMENTARY ON ROMANS, by Martin Luther. Translated by J. Theodore Mueller. Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1976. xxvi, 223 pp. \$4.95.

An old, established devotional commentary by the Reformer for whom the Book of Romans was so influential. Obviously the theological leaning is Lutheran. Thankfully Kregel has made this volume available once again.

THE NATURE OF ANGELS, EIGHT ADDRESSES, by Alexander Whyte. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1976. 221 pp., paper \$2.95.

All but one of these addresses have to do particularly with the nature of angels. Several abound with references to great literature. An appendix gives quotes from Dante. Whyte was a Scottish preacher with a reputation for being graphic in his presentations. This book will tell you in beautiful prose something about angels, but do not expect a definitive discussion about those created spiritual beings.